

CASTLEREAGH LIFESTYLER FORUM ANNUAL REPORT

Castlereagh Lifestyle forum is made up of older people's groups across the Lisburn and Castlereagh area and one or two representatives attend our monthly meetings. We are cross community and intercultural forum and our aim is to alleviate isolation and look at the public transport situation. We meet at Lough Moss Leisure Centre, Carryduff approx. 9 times in the year on the first Thursday of each month. We do not meet during July and August. The committee along with two facilitators one from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and Lisburn and Castlereagh Community Development officer also meet before members meeting to discuss Chair's business and arrange speakers etc .

The forum is more than just an old people's group it is a voice for them. Our aim is to look at the best way for Castlereagh to connect with Lisburn and how to build a single point of contact for the Greater Lisburn and Castlereagh area. Castlereagh Lifestyle forum focuses on health and well-being, community safety and speakers and events are arranged to give the members information and knowledge to pass to their own groups. The emphasis now is about scams and we provide speakers and information to make older people scam wise and stop them unwittingly signing up to false information.

The distance between the connecting areas does cause difficulties in recruiting new members. We do advertise our forum at events through use of pop up stand and flyers as well as seeking help and advice from Age NI and other agencies. Samples of some of our events/speakers are as follows:

Chest Heart and Stroke gave a talk on the work they carry out. The speaker explained the heart was a muscle and emphasised the importance of exercise and diet to maintain a healthy functioning heart. Members were given an opportunity for those who wished to have blood pressure taken.

A speaker from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust gave useful advice on the amount of sugar added to different types of food and drinks. She passed a cup round which was at least half full of sugar cubes. Everyone was amazed to think they would be consuming so much sugar through their favourite food and drinks. Members appreciated the information and sample recipes were handed out for their respective groups.

.Active Aging event run by PSNI/Fire Service/Public Health Agency and other agencies provided information and guidance on personal security and scams, medication management, fire safety in the home, health checks and armchair aerobics.

Two Workshops were held with Age NI to look at the best way forward for the Lifestyle forum, Members were given Options Choices – remain as a forum and change the name, change to a social group for Belfast and LCCC members, meet only three or four times per year. The overall response was that the forum should continue with improvements made to increase membership and find a more central point for meeting.

Taster session of light exercise which was a choice - if anyone felt unable to stand for long could use the movements sitting. The more fitter were able to stand and afterwards everyone had a short time of meditation to relax them. The choice of exercise was suitable for those attending. Everyone enjoyed.

Discussion time about what speakers were of interest to members and if anyone had any ideas these would be noted and where possible included in some of the monthly meetings.

Two social events - one engaging with the local primary school at Carryduff who provided music at Christmas event. The pupils were in the 8-9 age bracket and they brought along their violins. They played Christmas music accompanied by teacher playing piano and afterwards we all joined in a sing-a-long. Our engagement with the pupils was much appreciated by the Headmaster of St Joseph's Primary School, Carryduff as it gave the pupils confidence to provide entertainment for older people.

We shared a St Patrick's event with a different flavour along with our intercultural friends sharing and exchanging culture and food. Our Indian and Chinese provided food tasting of their specialities and we arranged young people between 8 – 12 years to show off their Irish dancing skills, steps and costumes. We also had a short talk about the life of Percy French followed by an elegant dance performance by one lady using the sign language to demonstrate the words of the song Mountains of Mourne. Our third person gave a talk about Gaelic language and the meaning of some townlands and other places.