

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Firstly, we would like to extend thanks to all volunteers, residents, agencies and funders who supported Lagmore Community Forum (LCF) In the reporting period., during which Lagmore Community Forum have continued to work for the benefit of the people of Lagmore according to our Articles of Association and public benefits. We continue to operate as a volunteer run organisation, with no paid members of staff.

Inter-Agency Meetings

We continue to attend and participate in meetings with local statutory agencies which involve issues, such as, social, housing, environmental and economic concerns. We continue to sit on Boards and committees, and participate in groups, including:

- Radius Housing Board
- Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP)
- Colin Environmental & Recreational Subgroup
- Fuel Poverty Coalition
- BMRG (Belfast Metropolitan Residents Group) – group responsible for the planting of The Million Trees
- Representation on Committee of Lagmore Youth Project
- Urban Villages Initiative Strategy Group
- West Belfast HCN (Housing Executive)
- Supporting Communities
- Supported other community groups, such as, Westland Residents, by knowledge sharing.
- CRIS (Community Relations in Schools)
- Facilitating First Communion Celebration events with Christ the Redeemer Primary School

Advice Services

We now have a qualified advice worker providing a weekly advice surgery for the community. The Advice Surgery is a free and confidential service and offers independent advice on issues, including:

- Benefits
- Education
- Employment Rights
- Welfare rights

Defibrillator

Thanks to fundraising efforts from young people and ballots sold at our Christmas event we were able to have a defibrillator installed on the outside of our building, providing 24 hour availability. Because of the 24 hour access our defibrillator is registered with Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and on telephoning 999 in the event of heart issues, patients' families are given directions to access the defibrillator. We are one of only three 24 hour available defibrillators in the Colin area.

Programmes and Workshops

- Blue Butterfly Stage School, which provides drama classes for children aged from 4 years up. These classes are held weekly.
- McGowan Moore Academy of Irish Dancing hold classes every Tuesday.
- In partnership with WBPB we provide revision classes for GCSE students in English and Maths. This is a vital service enabling all young people in the Colin area the opportunity to ensure they have the qualifications they need to move forward in their education.
- The local Versus Arthritis group continue to meet on the first Tuesday of every month.
- We facilitate the use of our building as a Contact Centre for Social Services
- Urban Villages Initiatives Thriving Youth funding allows for a youth Dropin to take place weekly on Monday nights
- Facilitating Holistic Mums (Who have no premises) to run their group and programmes
- Colin Crescendo choir meet on Tuesday night
- Yoga with Rosie every Wednesday night
- Floristry workshops with Frugal Flair florist which also include mindfulness activities
- Nutrition and Healthy Eating with P25 Nutrition in groups of 6-week classes. These classes are held on Wednesday nights and Thursday mornings. The aim is to show people how to cook and eat healthily on a budget. These classes are highly successful, and we aim to repeat them again.
- Friday morning is booked by the "Knit and Knatter" craft group. Run by LCF, we do knitting, sewing, crochet and other crafts. We have guest crafters who come along and facilitate craft classes. These activities promote positive mental health and reduce social isolation. During the cost-of-living crisis, LCF has offered a warm and welcoming environment for residents who may be struggling to eat and heat their homes.

Funded Programmes

Thanks to funding from Urban Villages Initiative “Keeping Warm, Staying Safe” we were able to commence a weekly intergeneration Luncheon Club. Attendees were provided with a hot lunch – vegetarian option included!. We played games, did quizzes, Bingo, and general fun. They were also given a keep warm pack which included, hats, gloves, hand warmers, foot warmers and throws, we also provided fuel poverty advice. This has been a great boost for people who suffer from poor mental health, isolation, and loneliness. We are continuing the Luncheon Club after funding is finished at the end of the financial year.

- Urban Villages Initiative Thriving Youth Workshops
 - Community Relations
- Urban Villages Initiative Capacity Build Workshops
 - Community Resilience Building
 - Community Development
 - Confidence Building
- PHA funding for Holistic Mums enabling them to deliver a range of well being programmes for mums during the perinatal period.
- CFNI (Community Foundation Northern Ireland)

We have been able to facilitate community consultations on planning for new housing developments in the area. Translink also held a consultation evening with residents when issues arose regarding busing problems in the area.

Statutory bodies and other groups have held their meetings in our building including, CNP Board, Environmental Sub-group, Urban Villages Initiative Steering Group, Supporting Communities, and others.

Events

Among the events held and driven by LCF we have had:

- Easter Egg Hunt
- Halloween event where children are given a pumpkin, a set of cutters and an artist demonstrating and helping the children to carve pumpkins.
- In this reporting period, in collaboration with other local groups, we held a successful Christmas Market over a 3-day period. It was a smaller version of Belfast Christmas market with stall holders working from cabins. Most stall holders were local people and food vendors were also on site. A 12ft, well lit, Christmas tree was put in place. Santa was in attendance and all children attending received a free selection pack and a free photograph. Residents warmly received this, and it meant that in these tough times for people no child had to miss out on a visit to Santa. We are incredibly grateful to **Radius Housing** for the funding they gave to help with this event.

With so many restrictions in place for community groups during and after Covid, we tried to use our time productively and attended and participated in different training opportunities. We now have a range of qualifications in place.

- Irish Sign Language classes
- Digiskills
- St Johns Ambulance First Aid Training
- ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and Trauma Informed Practices Diploma Level 3
- Reflexology
- Counselling – Level 1
- Holistic Therapies - Level 3
- Safeguarding Practices for Children and Vulnerable Adults
- CPR Training
- Fire Safety Training
- Leadership Management
- Community Development – Level 3
- Supporting Families

This year saw us having a new computer system installed which gives us a dedicated email address and Cyber Security enabled. Being a voluntary organisation, we find it difficult at times to man our office constantly. The phone system now in place allows for calls to be transferred to mobile phones so no calls in the future will be missed.

We have also renewed and continued membership of various organisations including:

- NICVA
- YANI
- Bryson Energy Play Store

With a lot of advice and assistance from Murray Watt – Supporting Communities we took on the task of bringing all our governance up to date. This included reviewing and updating our policies and procedures. A governance check has now been completed and all our policies and procedures have been updated.

Following on from, and recovering from, the restrictions arising from Covid, we – Board members – have had a remarkably busy year with a lot being accomplished and we hope to see this continue in the years ahead.

We face challenging times ahead, due to the loss of Urban Villages funding, with the Colin area no longer categorized as an Urban Village regeneration area. It was to have ended in March of this reporting year but an extension of one year was given. LCF has now prioritised the need to source replacement funding streams.

There are a few people who we would like to thank for all their help, encouragement, and advice. These include Martin Connolly from Sally Gardens in Poleglass, Annie Armstrong from CNP, Murray Watt from Supporting Communities and Philp Magee from Urban Villages Initiative. We look forward to continuing to work with them in the time ahead.