

Greater Shankill Senior Citizens Forum

The next meeting of the Forum will take place at 10.00am on Thursday 28th January 2010 in Church of God, Conway Street, Belfast.

The Forum is also taking part in training on lobbying and advocacy for older people – this is being delivered by the Workers Educational Association as part of the Changing Ageing Partnership. If you would like to join the Forum or find out more about its activities please contact **Jean Kennedy** Chairperson on **028 90 238977**.

Concerns about Cold Snap

At the start of the year Age Concern and Help the Aged urged people to be good neighbours during the current cold snap. The Charity is calling on everyone to keep an eye out for older family, friends and neighbours amidst concerns that the extreme temperatures could result in a repeat of last year's excess winter mortality 10-year high. For many older people protection against the cold can be a matter of life and death, with around three quarters of

last year's excess winter deaths recorded among people aged 75 or older.

Advice and information is available on this and a range of issues affecting older people via **SeniorLine** on **0808 808 7575**.

The following websites also have dedicated information for older people about coping with cold weather.

www.helptheaged.org.uk
www.ageconcern.org.uk
www.direct.gov.uk
www.nhs.uk

Cold Weather Payments

The Department of Social Development has announced additional cold weather payments for eligible individuals, following the sub-zero temperatures. The £25 payment is paid automatically by the Social Security Agency to qualifying groups. If you get any Pension Credit, you will get an extra payment each complete week that the weather is very cold. This Cold Weather Payment is £25 a week and is made for any period of seven days when the temperature is freezing or below, or it is forecast to be that cold. This payment will be sent automatically – you do not have to claim it. Visit www.nidirect.gov.uk to check if you are entitled to a payment.

Winter Fuel Payments

You may get a Winter Fuel Payment if you are aged 60 or over to help pay for keeping warm in winter. The tax-free annual benefit is normally paid from November – most payments should have been made by Christmas.

You may get a Winter Fuel Payment (WFP) for winter 2009-2010 if the following apply: You're aged 60 or over during 21 to 27 September 2009. You normally live in Great Britain or Northern

Ireland

Eligible people aged 60 -79 can get up to £250 and up to £400 if they are aged 80 or over. Couples both aged 60 or over who qualify and who are receiving Pension Credit or income-based Jobseeker's Allowance will get one payment made to the person receiving that benefit, the other person is not entitled to the payment.

More information about the winter fuel payment is available from www.nidirect.gov.uk

Roselawn Bus Timetable: February 2010

Don't forget to take advantage of the older persons bus service to Roselawn provided by Belfast City Council from pick-up points across Belfast and weekly from the city centre. To book a seat please telephone **028 90 270296**.

FEBRUARY 2010 TIMETABLE

Tuesday 9.45am pick-up:

2nd - EAST Dee Street Community Centre
9th - SOUTH Donegall Pass Community Centre
16th - WEST & SHANKILL Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road (and on to Twin Spires Centre, Falls Road for 10.00 am)

23rd - NORTH Loughside Recreation Centre

Friday 2.00pm pick-up:

HSBC Bank, 5 Donegall Square South
 (Back of City Hall), **5th, 12th, 19th & 26th**

Good Morning Ballysillan

Are you an older person living on your own and need a reassuring call every day? The Good Morning service can help you if you are living in the Greater Shankill area – please telephone **9071 9200** for more information.

Extra Free Home Insulation Measures

The Northern Exposure programme has announced that it has an additional 20 opportunities for free insulation measures available for homeowners or private renters in North and West Belfast. This may be suitable for older people as well as others who qualify – you need to meet the following criteria:

You live in North or West Belfast

And You are an owner occupier or private renter

And If single, have income less than £18,000

Or If a couple or single parent, have income less than £25,000

Or If over 70 years of age, regardless of income

Householders will be asked to provide proof of income and proof of ownership or tenancy agreement when the surveyor visits their home. There is about a 6 week timeframe from point of referral to the surveyor's visit.

The deadline for enquiries is the end of January 2010 – please contact Angela Gracey at National Energy Action Northern Ireland for more information on **028 90 239909** or e-mail angela.gracey@nea.org.uk

Stamp out cold with fuel savings

Householders are being advised to beat the big freeze by using fuel saving stamps to pay oil bills. With the recent very cold spell and rising fuel prices Belfast City Council is reminding everyone, especially older people, that they can pay fuel bills by saving £5.00 stamps using the council's 'Be Warm' scheme.

Stamps are available across the city from leisure centres and retailers as well as a number of local credit unions.

Councillor Diane Dodds, Chairman of the council's Older Persons Reference Group said: "It is timely to remind everyone, but particularly older people, that they needn't skimp on heat for fear of fuel bills when there is an easy way to pay towards them."

"The reason we originally introduced the 'Be Warm' scheme which allows anyone to buy £5.00 fuel savings stamps to go towards oil bills is so that people wouldn't face large fuel bills."

"The cards are available from participating retailers, and a large number of oil companies have signed up to accept the card so people aren't limited in their choice of oil supplier."

Since the scheme first began as a pilot in January last year, savers have put by more than £35,000 towards fuel bills.

For more information please call **Belfast City Council** on **028 9027 0428** or email bewarm@belfastcity.gov.uk. Further information can also be found at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/bewarm

Seniors Information Directory

The Seniors' Info directory contains a wide range of valuable advice and contact numbers for older people in Belfast including information on staying warm e.g. energy efficiency and hypothermia. It can be accessed via the Belfast City Council web-site at www.belfastcity.gov.uk/seniorsinfo/index.asp or telephone **028 90 320202** or e-mail seniorsinfo@belfastcity.gov.uk.

Belfast Parks Photo Competition

Belfast City Council is launching its third annual Parks Photographic Competition and with a theme entitled 'Belfast Parks' the field is wide open for you to choose a scene that best represents parks to you.

The competition is open to all amateur photographers and prize money will be awarded for the best photo by a club photographer, best photo by a member of the public and best under-16 photo. Bloomingdale Nurseries are the sponsors again.

Organiser, Alice Blennerhassett, said: "Parks and open spaces play an important part in the lives of the people who live and work in Belfast and we are very keen that everyone makes use of the green space on their doorstep."

"The standard of photos is so high we have to have professional help judging the best ones. We have had photos of events, buildings, landscape, flora – and all of them have been beautifully chosen."

Are you an older person who uses any of the local parks e.g. Woodvale Park? Get your camera out and take part in the competition.

More information on the competition rules, the closing date and how to enter are available on our website www.belfastcity.gov.uk/parks or by contacting the parks department on **028 9027 0467**

Forum Reviews Rest Garden Plans

Members of the Greater Shankill Senior Citizens Forum recently met with Stephen Quinn from the City Council Parks Department and Councillor Hugh Smyth to look at the plans for the new memorial stone to be erected in the Shankill Rest Garden. The stone and a landscaped area around this should be ready for the end of January 2010. Local people will have the

opportunity to scatter the ashes of loved ones in this area and to have an inscription put onto the memorial stone. This is an issue close to the heart of members of the Forum who have lobbied hard on this issue over the last couple of years. It is also hoped that local people will learn more about the long history and importance of the graveyard to the local area.



Members of the Greater Shankill Senior Citizens Forum discussing plans for the new memorial stone to be erected in Shankill Rest Garden in January 2010. Standing centre is Councillor Hugh Smyth with Stephen Quinn, Parks Manager, Belfast City Council.

Shankill History Programme

Do you want to learn more about the history of the Shankill area? There will be a course on the history of the Shankill running from January onwards in the common room, Habinteg, Conway Street, Belfast. For more information on dates and times please contact **Jean Kennedy** on **028 90 23897**.

Lyric Theatre Offer for Community Groups

Are you part of a community group, older persons group etc – then the Lyric Theatre has a very special offer for you. It is providing a £5 ticket offer for eligible groups to see the world premiere of Owen McCafferty's new play – "The Absence of Women". The Absence of

Women is a funny and poignant play about the life journey of two ordinary and lonely Belfast men.

This offer applies on the 8th, 9th and 10th February for the 7.30pm performance. To book please phone the Box Office on **028 90 385673** and quote Community Offer.

Over 75 – Get your free TV Licence

It is estimated that more than 40,000 people in Northern Ireland bought a relative aged over 75 a TV this Christmas. TV Licensing is reminding people

if they are aged over 75 that they are entitled to a free TV Licence and over 88,000 people in Northern Ireland are already taking advantage of the concession.

People applying for their free licence for the first time, or those aged 74 wishing to apply for a short term licence to take them up to their 75th birthday, simply need to fill in a short form at www.tvlicensing.co.uk/over75. What's more, if you live with an older relative, their free licence will cover all the equipment in the property, meaning many more people could benefit.

Any over 75s can also apply by telephoning **0844 800 5875** or by writing to TV Licensing, Bristol BS98 1TL, giving the name, address, date of birth and National Insurance Number of the person aged over 75.