



HSC Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

# VSB Befriending Scheme Newsletter

WINTER 2008

## Christmas comes early to VSB's Befriendees!



Belfast Central Mission was the place to be on Wednesday 10 December, as this was the venue where VSB hosted a Christmas dinner event for socially isolated older people living in Belfast. This event brought together eighty people, including older people who receive support under VSB's Befriending scheme, volunteer befrienders and drivers, representatives from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and VSB project staff. Special guest, the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Tom Hartley,

welcomed everyone and paid tribute to the two main groups represented on the day - the older people of Belfast, who over the years have all played their part in making Belfast the thriving city it is today, and to the volunteers, without whom, much of the great community development work that

takes place, quite simply would not be possible.

Local poet, Tommy O'Hara,

came along and read a selection of his much loved poems before dinner was served. The entertainment

didn't stop there though as, after dinner, the girls from Victoria College's school choir sang a variety of traditional Christmas carols.

This annual event is always held very dear by the older people who attend as it enables them to enjoy the Christmas festivities as part of a wider group of friends. The only person missing on the day, due to a somewhat busy schedule, was Santa himself. Nobody seemed to mind too much however as thanks to the generosity of staff at NISRA, everyone received a nicely wrapped Christmas gift!

***So here's looking forward to another early Christmas shared with VSB friends in 2009!***



## KEEP WARM AND KEEP WELL THIS WINTER

Here are some tips for keeping warm and well this winter from the Department of Health and the Energy Retail Association :

- **Eat well** : Food is a vital source of warmth and energy. Stock up regularly on hot meals and fluids throughout the day to help keep your body warm.
- **Get a flu jab** : If you are over 65 or if you have a long term health condition you are entitled to a free flu jab. Contact your GP now if you haven't got it yet.
- **Keep your home heated** : Set your heating at the right temperature to keep warm - approx 21°C
- **Wrap up well both day and night** : Wearing the right clothing at night is just as important as wrapping up during the day.
- **Extra warmth** : Use an electric blanket **OR** hot water bottle but **NEVER** use both together
- **Get financial support** : There are grants and benefits available to help with keeping warm – Winter fuel Payment, Warm Homes Scheme (more information opposite on these grants)



### Winter fuel payment :

This is an annual grant available from the Department of Social Development to help with heating costs.

Everyone over 60 can claim the Winter Fuel Payment.

If you are in receipt of benefits, contact your local Social Security Office to apply for your payment, otherwise contact the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline on 08459 15 15 15. Lines are open from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday

### Warm Homes Scheme :

This grant is funded by the government and is aimed at helping to keep your home warmer and more energy efficient. It provides a package of insulation measures.

If you are over 60 and are in receipt of income or disability related benefits such as Pension Credit or Attendance Allowance, you are eligible for assistance.

In addition to this, over 60s who are eligible for the Warm Homes Scheme grant are also entitled to upgrades or installations of central heating systems.

For more information contact EAGA on FREEPHONE 0800 181 667 or contact your local Social Security Office.

## Santa's little helpers!



VSB have been working with staff and pupils from Victoria College Belfast again this year on the Christmas food hamper appeal to support older people and families in need over the Christmas period. Over sixty hampers were donated by the College and pupils assisted VSB staff and volunteers with deliveries to older folk across Belfast. The larger hampers were distributed to Home



Start, an organisation that works to develop the confidence and independence of families with young children.

A huge thank you to all staff and pupils at the College for their time, commitment and generosity that made the hamper appeal such a success!

**A large print version of this newsletter is available by contacting VSB on (028) 9020 0850**

## Feel Secure and Confident in your own home!!!!



**Prevention is always the key to a safe, secure home**

HandyVan is a unique and FREE home support service from Help the Aged to help you feel safer in your home.

We are all vulnerable to burglary and unwanted visitors in our homes but this service may just be the very answer to helping you feel safer, securer and more confident in your own home.

HandyVan fitters will endeavour to help you ensure that your home is free from the risk of burglary, fitting security equipment such as door chains and viewers, window locks and installing safety features such as smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

If you meet the following criteria you could be entitled to this service from Help the Aged:

- Applicants are 60 years of age or over.
- Applicants' disposable savings/assets do not exceed £20,000 (not including the value of their home).

Handy van fitters operate in the area.

If you feel you would like to avail of this service please contact the handy van service at Help the Aged  
**0845 026 1055**

## DIRECTORY FOR SENIORS

Belfast Healthy Cities has recently launched an exciting and extremely



useful publication specifically for older people – the 'Seniors Info' Directory!!! This directory will provide information, advice and contact details on a range of important topics such as ;

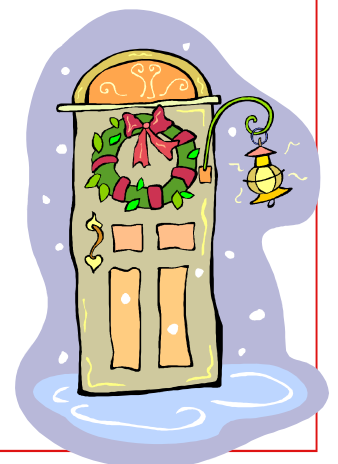
- Heating your home
- Preventing Crime
- Home safety
- Benefits and financial advice
- Housing advice
- Health and well-being
- Support groups
- Rights and advocacy
- Learning and leisure
- Emergency numbers

If you would like to receive a copy of the publication contact Maura Ahern 'Belfast Healthy Cities' on 028 90 328811 or Adele Keyes Belfast City Council on 028 9032 0202

## BEWARE OF BOGUS CALLERS

Christmas time especially, is a time where we all need to be more vigilant for unwanted visitors. Here are a few tips from Belfast City Council on how you can stay safe and protect yourself and your home .

- Keep a security bar or chain on your door when answering the door to someone.
- NEVER let the caller in if you do not know them. If you are expecting a visit from a company ie NIE or Phoenix gas ensure they show you their appropriate identification. A proper ID should contain a photo of the person carrying it and, if in doubt, you should call the company in question and ask if the caller is legitimate.
- Plan ahead. Are you expecting anyone? Has someone made an appointment to see you? Most large companies will notify you in advance if they plan to pay you a visit and they will be happy to wait while you check their identification. If you have any doubts about a caller, trust your instincts. A genuine official can always make an appointment to see you at a later date or when someone is with you.
- Remember, these same rules often apply to telephone enquiries too, particularly if you receive a call requesting personal information, such as bank details.
- Keep your front and back door locked at all times.
- Do not accept goods or repairs from callers you don't know.
- Do not keep large amounts of money in your home.
- Look out for your neighbours, join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme or residents' group.



## FREE bin lift service

Belfast City Council are offering a free bin lift service for people who are unable to leave their bin out for collection. The refuse collectors will bring your bin out for collection and return it to the same spot. To avail of this service you will need to get a letter from your doctor to say that you are unable to leave out your bin by yourself.

For more information contact Belfast City Council on **028 9027 0230**



## Did you know that Belfast City Council offers a FREE Bus service to Roselawn Cemetery and City of Belfast Crematorium

Belfast City Council is running a free bus service for older people travelling to and from Roselawn Cemetery and City of Belfast Crematorium.

It is available on Tuesdays and Fridays from various locations around Belfast.

The bus drops passengers off at their family grave or memorial tree in Roselawn Cemetery.

After the bus has returned to pick you up, it stops at City of Belfast Crematorium where toilet facilities and refreshments are available.

Call **028 9027 0296** for more information or to book a place.

## Whats on in your local community centre?

Belfast is fortunate to have an abundance of community centres throughout the city. They run many different activities and seasonal events for the older people in their area. Do you know what's on in yours?

Ring Claire or Victoria at VSB now to find out where your local centre is and get the contact details!

## We would like to hear your opinion

What do you think of the services we at VSB provide?

What do you like? What do you not like? How could we improve?

We extremely value your ideas and opinions so please let us know!!

Ring Claire or Victoria at VSB on **028 9020 0850** or write to us at the address below.

## SAVE ON YOUR ENERGY BILLS THIS WINTER!!!

Here are a few tips from the Energy Retail Association for saving money on your energy bills this winter

- **Heat your home well:** Set your thermostat efficiently : Set the thermostat at approx **21°C (70°F)**. Set the timer to come on before you get up and go off when you go to bed. In colder weather set the timer for the heat to come on earlier rather than turning the thermostat up
- **Keep out draughts:** Shut your curtains and close doors to help keep the heat in.
- **Insulate efficiently:** Improve the insulation in your home – the Warm Homes Scheme provides grants for improving insulation.
- **Switch Off :** Switch appliances off rather than leaving them on stand-by.
- **Use what you need :** Only boil as much water as you need but remember to cover the elements in the kettle.
- **Energy Savers :** Replace your light bulbs with energy saving light bulbs – The warm Homes Scheme can help with this.
- **Keep warm and Safe:** Ensure open fires are well ventilated, use a fire guard, don't hang washing near the fire and if you have an open fire or use a heater in your bedroom at night ensure to leave a window or door open for ventilation.
- **Checks :** Ensure your heating system, electric blankets and other appliances are checked regularly. Belfast City Council runs a Home safety check scheme. The check offers advice covering all areas of home safety. For more information on this service contact Belfast Council on 028 9091 8715.

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**Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**