

# **Irish Elderly Advice Network**

## **Winter Newsletter 2011-2012**

**London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB**

**0207 428 0471, [irishelders@btconnect.com](mailto:irishelders@btconnect.com)**

**Registered Charity No: 1115711 Company Reg No: 5642515**

### **Message from the Chairperson, Alice Kennedy**

Dear All,

On behalf of the Irish Elderly Advice Network, I would like to wish you all a happy Christmas and good health for 2012.

On behalf of all the Trustees I want to say thank you to Seamus Mulready, who retired this year. I want to thank Seamus for all his work and his dedication over many years to providing a service to elderly Irish people. This has really made a difference to their lives and his skills, knowledge and kindness will be greatly missed by many people.

In the last year, we have met with many hundreds of older Irish people to provide help and support. We have seen an average of eighty people per month at the outreach services in East London and Kilburn and have helped people with a huge range of issues. We have been particularly pleased with the success of our housing advice service, which has helped over forty people to move into more suitable accommodation where they can be comfortable and happy as they become older.

We were very pleased to have a visit from Michael D Higgins, the President of Ireland, during the election campaign and I want to extend to him our warmest congratulations on his election. The Irish Elderly Advice Network was mentioned a number of times in the Irish Times while covering Michael D's visit.

Best wishes to all, Alice Kennedy, Chairperson

## Visit of President Michael D Higgins to the Irish Elderly Advice Network



Picture of Michael D Higgins in the Irish Elderly Advice Network office, October 2011

Michael D Higgins visited the Irish Elderly Advice Network as part of his visit to London to meet with the Irish diaspora during the Presidential election campaign. One of the key messages of his visit to London was the need for recognition of the emigrant voice in Ireland's democratic system.

*'I would earnestly hope that today's emigrants will savour their lives and remember that they have a nation still, and a home to return to. I hope and expect that they will remain a part of the national conversation, a part of our evolution towards a better life for all in Ireland and with a fulsome degree of engagement with those less fortunate than us abroad'*

**Michael D Higgins**



Picture: Michael D Higgins meeting older Irish people, including one of the founders of the Irish Elderly Advice Network, Bridie McGowan, and a choir member, John Harkin.

## Irish Elderly Advice Network Office, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB

We run a busy and open service here in Camden where we will always try to help with whatever problems or issues you have. Between the three members of staff - Sally, Nora and Margaret - we have many decades of welfare rights advice experience and a strong belief in the importance of welfare rights work. This work is especially important now, with a political and economic context causing a reduction in welfare resources and resulting in people having difficult times. If you need any help, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### **We run two parallel services from the office:**

- Drop-in service: You can visit our office between 10am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday, without an appointment.
- Appointment service: We are quite busy so it is better to make an appointment in advance if possible. Please call us on 0207 428 0471 to make an appointment.

## **Update on changes to Pensions, Tax and Benefits**

### **Housing Benefit**

From April 2011, Housing Benefit has been capped at £400 a week for a four bedroom house, £340 for a three bedroom, £290 for a two bedroom and £250 for a one bedroom property.

If your housing costs are more than this, you are expected to make up the difference. However, it is possible to apply for a discretionary additional payment from your local authority for a period of one year (but they can refuse your request). Please contact us for help if this applies to you.

### **State Pension**

From April 2012 the basic State Pension will increase from £102.5 to £107.45 per week for a single pensioner and from £163.35 to £171.85 for a couple.

### **Pension Credit**

From April 2012 the Guaranteed Pension Credit will increase from £137.35 to £142.70 per week for a single pensioner and from £209.70 to £217.90 per week for a couple.

### **Personal Allowance (Tax)**

The Personal Allowance is the amount of income you can have before you need to pay any tax. From April 2012 Personal Tax Allowance will increase as follows:

- Up to age 65 - £7475 increases to £8105
- Age 65 to 74 - £9,940 increases to £10,500
- Over age 75 - £10,660

### **Winter Fuel Allowance**

Winter Fuel Allowance has been reduced. For households where at least one person is over 80, it has been reduced by £100 to £300. For pensioners under the age of 80, it has been reduced by £50 to £200.

## **More Information**

If you would like more information on any of the above entitlements please contact Nora, our Welfare Rights Advisor specialising in welfare benefits, on 0207 428 0471 or by email to [nora@irishelders.org.uk](mailto:nora@irishelders.org.uk). You can also just pop into the office anytime between Monday and Friday, 10 to 4.40pm. You do not need an appointment.

## **Irish Elderly Advice Network Outreach Advice Service**

### **Kilburn Outreach Advice Service for older Irish people, Wednesday 10am to 1pm, Mazenod Community Hall, Quex Rd, Kilburn**

This is a drop-in advice service and is accessible to all. Nora, our Welfare Rights Advisor is happy to help with UK and Irish Pensions, Pension Credit and all benefits, and any other issue you have.

### **East London Outreach, Thursday 10.30am to 1pm, Durning Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate**

Sally, our Director and Development Coordinator, runs a drop-in advice service (accessible to all) in East London for older Irish people. Please come and see Sally if you live in any of the East London Boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Newham, Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Havering, Barking & Dagenham and areas of Essex.

**Please note: Durning Hall is just two minutes' walk from Forest Gate railway station.**

### **Marian Community Centre, 15 Stafford Rd, Carlton Vale, NW6, Wednesday from 1.30 to 2.30 (with prior arrangement)**

We can visit the Marion Centre if someone there would like to see us and cannot visit one of the other centres. **If this is your community centre and you would like to see us about something please contact our office on 0207 428 0471 and we will come to the centre.**

## **Home Visits**

If you cannot travel, we are able to make home visits. Please call 0207 428 0471 to make an appointment for one of our Advice Workers to come and see you.

## **“Calling on East London Irish Pensioners!”**

### **East London Information Meeting for East London Irish Pensioners**

**Find out about our services, how we can help and how you can get involved with the Irish Elderly Advice Network and be part of a new East London Irish Pensioners Consultative Forum.**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 1pm- 3.30pm**

**Durning Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate E7 9AB, (Disabled access)  
Refreshments provided**

Are you living in Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge, Hackney, Waltham Forest, and the parts of Epping and Brentwood in Essex that are close to East London? If so, would you like to be part of a new East London Irish Pensioners Consultative Forum?

We want to hear your views about the area, the services that are available and those that are not, our outreach service at Durning Hall and any other issues you feel are important to older Irish people. It would also be a good opportunity to meet other older Irish people living in East London.

### **The Good Neighbour Scheme and Combating Loneliness**

One of the major aims of the Irish Elderly Advice Network is to tackle loneliness and isolation. This was picked up in a recent article in the Irish Times, covering the election visit by Michael D Higgins.

IN 1994, three Irishmen were found dead in their local authority flats in London by council workers in the space of a few months. One had lain there unnoticed and unmissed for nine months; one for six, the other for three.

The horrific discovery spurred Irish emigrants Bridie McGowan and Margaret Burke and others to found the Irish Elderly Advice Network, which today with three staff keeps links open to 4,000 elderly Irish throughout the city.

“Things have improved,” McGowan, a native of Lough Brin

**Recent article in the  
Irish Times**

**Facts:** 6 per cent of older people leave their house once a week or less; 9 per cent say they feel cut off from society; 12 per cent of older people feel trapped in their own home; 36 per cent feel out of touch with modern life; Over half of all people aged 75 and over live alone with television as their main company. Nearly 200,000 older people don't get help to get out of their home.

**If you would like to help tackle loneliness and isolation of older Irish people, why not become a Good Neighbour?**

We have run a Good Neighbour Scheme for a number of years for older people. The scheme involves friendly older Irish people visiting other older Irish people, giving them companionship and a helping hand from time to time. The Good Neighbours pop in to see people for a chat and a cup of tea, maybe doing a bit of shopping for them, maybe taking them to the shops every now and again.

**\*Good Neighbour Scheme Meeting\***

**3pm to 5pm, Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012,**

**London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB**

**Call Nora, our Good Neighbour Scheme co-ordinator, on 0207 428 0471 for information or just come along on the day**

**If you would like to be a Good Neighbour or have a visit from a Good Neighbour, please come along!**

**Refreshments provided.**

**Update on Health Benefits**

**Disability Living Allowance - Care Component**

Highest rate: £73.60, Middle rate: £49.30, Lowest rate: £19.55

## **Disability Living Allowance - Mobility Component**

Higher rate: £51.40, Lower rate: £19.55

### **The Government's 'Right Payment programme'**

The Government has instructed the Disability Benefits Section to carry out a review of every person currently receiving Disability Living Allowance, Incapacity Benefit and Employment Support Allowance. This is a major task and it will take some years to complete.

If you receive one of these benefits and have been asked to attend a review meeting and you would like advice, please contact us.

**Attendance Allowance (AA)** is a benefit for severely disabled people aged 65 or over who need help with personal care or mobility. Attendance Allowance can be awarded indefinitely or for a fixed period. Attendance Allowance is not means-tested and it is tax-free. You don't need to have paid any National Insurance contributions to claim Attendance Allowance. It is based purely on your health.

**Attendance Allowance:** Higher Rate is £73-60, Lower Rate is £49-30

Many people worry that if they get Attendance Allowance it will affect other benefits such as Council Tax or Housing Benefit. This is not the case.

We have helped huge numbers of older people to apply for benefits, particularly Attendance Allowance as this is specifically for older people. If you would like us to help you to apply, please call us on 0207 428 0471.

### **Housing Advice**

Would you like advice and help to secure better housing? Please contact Margaret, our Housing Advisor, if you:

- do not own your own home
- or you are renting accommodation that is no longer suitable as you get older
- are aged 60 and over

Margaret has helped many older people to get housed in nice, comfortable and, very importantly, secure sheltered housing within housing associations. This is an increasingly important part of our work here as we know how vital stable and comfortable housing is as people get older. If you are living in a difficult housing situation please contact Margaret on 0207 428 0471.

## **Returning to live in Ireland with the Safe Home programme**

If you would like to be considered for the Safe Home Programme and you do not own your own home we can assist you make the application. You will want to know what pensions, benefits and other rights you can take with you if you return to Ireland. Safe Home Project provide the very best advice on returning home and they will also meet with you to discuss any proposed move to ensure it really is what you want to do. It is a big step but for many they are very happy to end their days at home.

### **Annual General Meeting of Camden Age UK (Previously Age Concern)**

Sally, our Director, attended a very interesting Annual General Meeting of Age UK Camden recently at their lovely new premises in Tavis House. We met up with leaders and members of many older people's organisations operating in Camden. Sally met the Director of Age UK Camden and has arranged to exchange visits to projects and to share information of mutual benefit to our members.

### **The Old House**

Lonely I wonder through scenes of my childhood,  
It brings back to memory the happy days of yore  
Gone are the old folk, the house stands deserted  
No light from the Window, no welcome at the door.

Here's where the children played games on the heather  
Here's where we sailed our boats on the burn,  
Where are they now , some are dead, some have wondered,  
No more to their homes shall those children return.

Lonely the house now, and lonely the moorland,  
The children are scattered the old folk have gone,  
Why stand I here like a ghost and a shadow,  
Its time I was moving, its time I passed on!

**Andy Higgins a key member of the Choir gave us this song (and many more in his vast collection.) Does anyone know who wrote this song?**



**A memory of times past told to us by Bernard O Malley, aged 81, from  
Co Mayo**

Bernard is an artist and we are very grateful to him for this beautiful painting of a corncrake bird. The original is on display in our office so pop in if you would like to see it.



Talking to Bernard about his memories of times past, he told us the following story which was printed in local newspaper back home in Mayo. He told us about the great use of seaside piers long ago, such as Lecanvey Pier near where Bernard comes from in Co Mayo. He said the Pier was built over 100 years ago and it was a very popular place in the 1930s. There was dancing on a platform at the very end of the pier aided by tilly lamps for lighting and a melodeon and a fiddle for music Bernard recalled that just after the war the British Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, (1945-1951) was staying in the Newport House and came to Lecanvey to swim at the pier. All the local people came to see the British Prime Minister and his daughter swimming in their local pier. There was great excitement, high spirits and good fun.

**Have you any interesting stories or memories, poems, songs of pictures you would like to share with readers? If so contact us using the contacts on the front of this newsletter.**



**Songs of Love and Emigration by London Irish Pensioners**

This beautiful album of 25 classic Irish songs is on sale for £10.

To buy the album, please send a cheque for £10 made payable to:

‘The London Irish Pensioners Choir’

Post or drop in to our office at the Irish Elderly Advice Network, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB.

\*All proceeds go to supporting the work of the choir.\*