

 **Irish Elderly Advice Network**
Winter Newsletter 2012

London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB
0207 428 0471, www.irishelders.org.uk, Registered Charity No: 1115711
Company Reg No: 5642515

Message from Alice Kennedy, Chair of Trustees

Hello everyone and welcome to our Winter Newsletter. This has been an extremely busy and exciting year for the Irish Elderly Advice Network and we hope, in this newsletter, to give you a taste of what we have been doing and plans for the upcoming year.

Our main work as ever has been in helping elderly Irish people to 'combat poverty, isolation and distress'. The members of staff here have given thousands of pieces of advice over the last year, over the phone, in our office and at our growing outreach services across London. Our welfare rights and outreach work has grown over the last year and we have helped hundreds of elderly Irish people with benefits, pensions, and other welfare needs.

Our Good Neighbour Scheme has grown and we are very fortunate to have on board some excellent volunteer Good Neighbours, including for the first time a number of younger Irish people.

Our intergenerational work has continued also in our cultural projects, having worked with younger Irish musicians from across London as part of our cultural concerts. We would particularly like to thank the young musicians from London Irish music school Feith an Cheoil (www.feithancheoil.co.uk).

2013 is the 20th anniversary of the Irish Elderly Advice Network and we are looking forward to an exciting year of events, including expanding our cultural work and celebrating the vibrant role played by elderly Irish people. These include 'The Octogenarian Lectures' - a series of lectures by Irish men and women in their 80s on issues of Irish cultural, social or historic interest.

In this 20th year we would like to thank and pay tribute to two women, Margaret Byrne and Bridie McGowan, who founded the Irish Elderly Advice Network and who continue to play a vital role as active members of our Board of Trustees.

And finally, we would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas!

Important - Changes to Benefits payments which may affect older people

You may be aware that the current government has undertaken huge reforms to the welfare and benefits system. Although most of these reforms do not – at present – seem to affect people over the age of 65, those of you who are younger than 65 may be affected. Below we have outlined some of the key changes that may affect people in this age group.

It is very important to note that you should be written to about any changes that will affect you. Please do not worry about these changes until you have received a letter. If you have any concerns about what you need to do once you have been written to **please contact us for advice and help.**

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will be abolished and replaced by the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for all *new* claims.

This change will take place from April 2013 in some parts of the UK (not London) and from June 2013 throughout the entire of the UK. This will apply to everyone from the age of 16 to 65.

If you are older than 65 there are currently no plans to remove the DLA.

Unfortunately, there is no automatic right to receive PIP if you are receiving DLA. You will have to be reassessed (even if you have previously been given DLA 'indefinitely'.)

Everyone who is receiving DLA will be written to between October 2013 and March 2016 and will be invited to make a claim for PIP. You do not need to take any action until you receive this letter as you should keep receiving your DLA payments. **When you do receive a letter, please contact us for advice and help.**

Universal Credit will be introduced and will replace the following benefits:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance

- Income Support
- Child Tax Credits
- Working Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit.

How will Universal Credit affect Pension Credit?

Under the existing system, people over the qualifying age for Pension Credit can also receive Housing Benefit and Tax Credits but from around a year after the launch of Universal Credit, they will no longer be able to apply for these benefits.

At this point, Pension Credit will be changed to include:

- A new element called Housing Credit, for pensioners who are eligible for support with rent
- An additional amount for dependent children in the Guarantee Credit element.
- Where one member of a couple is over the qualifying age for Pension Credit, but their partner is below the qualifying age for claiming Pension Credit, benefit support will be available through Universal Credit and not Pension Credit. **Existing 'mixed age' couples who are already receiving Pension Credit when this change is introduced will be protected.**

Irish Pensioners Forum – East London Region

Dates for Your Diary - Durning Hall Community Centre, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, London, E7 9AB

Every Thursday, 10.30am to 1pm, Irish Elderly Advice Network Outreach Advice Service (Drop in, no appointment needed)

First Thursday of each month, 1pm to 3.30pm, Irish Pensioners Forum of East London Cultural Event. All welcome. Entry £2.

Since its foundation this year the forum has hosted a monthly cultural event with singing, dancing, refreshments, an 'Evening of Irish Culture, Music and Song', a very well attended AGM, the election of an Executive Committee, all of whom are older Irish people living in and around East London, and regular meetings of the committee to organise future events. This work has been supported by the Irish Government's Emigrant Support Programme and the Ireland Fund of Great Britain, and for this we are extremely grateful.



Some of the attendees of launch of the Irish Pensioners Forum, East London, 2012

We have been overwhelmed by the great response to the Irish Pensioners Forum in East London. None of this could have happened without the excellent and dedicated work of the Executive Committee in East London. It has been a true pleasure to work with this group of people, all of whom are volunteers and all of whom are elderly Irish people themselves.

The Irish Elderly Advice Network has run a welfare and advice service in Durning Hall Community Centre, Forest Gate, for a number of years, and it was from this work that we realised there was a great need and want for a broader cultural and social outlet for older Irish people. It was clear that there remained considerable poverty and isolation in this part of London and that this was in part due to the historic lack of provision of services for older Irish people in east London.



Sally Mulready and Jane Connolly (Irish Embassy's Emigrant Support Programme) speaking at the first meeting of the Irish Pensioners Forum, East London

Winter Fuel Payment – keep warm this winter!

If you were born on or before 5 July 1951, you could get between **£100 and £300 tax-free to help pay your heating bills** this winter. Most payments are made automatically between November and December. You should get your money by Christmas.

You should get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you get the State Pension or another social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Benefit). If you qualify but don't receive one of the above you'll need to make a claim. If you would like help to make a claim, please contact us on 0207 428 0471.

What exactly you should get

How much you get depends on your circumstances during the 'qualifying week' (17 to 23 September 2012.)

Circumstance	Born on or before 5 July 1951	Aged 80 or over in the qualifying week
You qualify and live alone (or none of the people you live with qualify)	£200	£300
You qualify and get one of the benefits listed**	£200	£300
You live with someone under 80 who also qualifies	£100	£200

Circumstance	Born on or before 5 July 1951	Aged 80 or over in the qualifying week
You live with someone 80 or over who also qualifies	£100	£150
You qualify and live with your partner or civil partner and they get one of the benefits listed**	Nil***	Nil***
You qualify but live in a care home and don't get one of the benefits listed**	£100	£150

** Benefits: Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

*** Your partner getting the benefit will get the Winter Fuel Payment on your behalf

NB: This information comes from the Government's gov.uk website.

Joint Meeting between Irish Elderly Advice Network and UCATT, the construction workers' trade union: Thursday 10th January, 7pm (for 7.30pm start) to 9pm, 'The Library', London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9BX.



You are very welcome to attend a public meeting on this issue and we are delighted that **UCATT's General Secretary, Steve Murphy**, will be addressing the meeting and answering questions. You will also have the opportunity to join UCATT on the night. Refreshments will be served.

Tel 0207 428 0471 for more information. *This meeting is open to all; Irish and non-Irish, older people and younger people, those working in construction, family members and retired members and workers.*

Background to meeting: In the last year, we have been contacted by a number of people over the age of 55, working in the construction industries, who have advised us of poor treatment by their employers. We have been told again and again about long term employees being 'strung along' by their employer with the promise of work, but where no work has been given.

This situation has for some people gone on for many weeks or even months, all the while the employee has been given **no work, no pay and no redundancy**. This is not right and we are now working with UCATT to make sure people know their rights. (If you are 'self employed' your rights are different.) **Come along to find out more about your rights.**

Focus on Shingles – A Personal Account by Sally Mulready

In May this year I came down with very painful Shingles. At first I didn't recognise what was causing the pain in my back and in my arm. Fortunately in the most unusual of circumstances, I had just arrived in Sweden and was staying in my friend Marie-Louise's house in Stockholm. Marie-Louise is a doctor and immediately recognised the symptoms; she advised me that I needed immediate anti-viral treatment. However, as I'd had the pain for 3 days without recognising what was causing it, I had lost valuable time in getting treatment. At 8pm Marie-Louise drove me to Stockholm City Centre and got an Anti-Viral medication for me. I started the course immediately, but alas, as I was so late starting the

treatment the shingles and the pain became worse, it lasted with me right through the summer and I only started to get better in late August, after spending 2 weeks in Cork.

The reason I am writing this personal account is to alert all our readers to be more vigilant than I was and to seek advice from your GP if you experience any sudden pain that is could possibly be shingles. Don't be hesitant about going to your GP, it's better to be safe than suffer the pain associated with shingles. On a more cheerful note, after 3 months, I am fit and well again and back at work! I am grateful to the board of trustees and to my colleagues at work for all their support, especially to my Chair, Alice Kennedy, who was very supportive to me.

Information on Shingles

Shingles is an infection of a nerve and the area of skin supplied by the nerve. It is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. For reasons that are not clear, the virus may begin to multiply again. It can occur at any age, but it is most common in people over the age of 50.

The virus usually affects one nerve on one side of the body. The most commonly involved nerves are those supplying the skin on the chest or abdomen. The upper face (including an eye) is also a common site. The usual symptoms are pain and a rash.

The **pain** is a localised band of pain. You may have a constant dull, burning, or gnawing pain. In addition, or instead, you may have sharp and stabbing pains that come and go. The affected area of skin is usually tender. The **rash** typically appears 2-3 days after the pain begins. The rash looks like chickenpox, but only appears on the band of skin supplied by the affected nerve.

More information is available at: www.shinglessupport.org (Tel: 0845 123 2305)



The Gathering 2013 and trips to Ireland

www.thegatheringireland.com

Would you like to be part of the Gathering in Ireland in 2013?

As part of *The Gathering* 2013, we are planning two trips to Dublin for any older Irish people who would like to come. The trip is aimed at older Irish people from rural Ireland who haven't had the chance to see Dublin's great places of historic interest. Free private transport will be available throughout the tour

Date of these trips: May 13 – 17 and June 24th – 29th.

We will visit:

- Áras an Uachtaráin Phoenix Park
- A tour of the Dail and the Seanad
- A tour of Kilmainham Jail
- A tour of the Abbey Theatre, including a play.
- A visit to the Mansion house to see the Lord Mayor of Dublin
- A tour of Glasnevin Cemetery, where the men of 1916, Daniel O'Connell, Yeats, O'Casey and many other famous Irish men and women are buried.
- A trip to Croke Park and a tour of Croke Park history museum
- A trip to Trinity College to see the Book of Kells
- A trip to Dun Laoghaire Pier as guests of the Harbour Port Authority
- An evening with the Comhaltas (Irish Music) in Monkstown, County Dublin
- There will be time to shop in Grafton Street and walk to the GPO in O'Connell Street.

If you would like to come on the trip, please let us know as soon as possible. You do not have to pay any deposits, as each person will be responsible for booking their own fares.

We will be staying in Cassidy's hotel, €62 per night (single) or €74 for a double room (including breakfast). We will let you know the other

costs for various visits and tours as soon as the bookings are confirmed.

We will be taking just 25 people and bookings for the May trip to Dublin will be on a first come first served basis. Older Irish people from the Lunch Club at the Irish Centre will have first call.

We made this trip in 2010 and it was very successful, everyone enjoyed it immensely. Contact Sally Mulready, Irish Elderly Advice for more details (0207 4280471).

The Octogenarian Lectures

From the Spring of 2013 we will be hosting The Octogenarian Lectures, a series of lectures by Irish men and women in their 80s on issues of Irish cultural, social or historic interest.

These will run throughout 2013, as part of the commemoration of the founding of the Irish Elderly Advice Network and the important contribution made to Irish cultural, social and emigrant life by older Irish people.

We are very pleased to announce the first speaker, Andy Higgins from Dublin, who will speak on the poetry, music and songs of great Irish songwriter and poet Thomas Moore (28 May 1779 – 25 February 1852), now best remembered for the lyrics of The Minstrel Boy and The Last Rose of Summer. The dates, venue and more details about the events will be sent out in our next newsletter in early 2013 and will be available on our website www.irisheldersadvice.org.uk.

If you are aged 80 or over and would be interested in giving a talk on something of Irish cultural, social or historic interest, please do get in touch with Sally on 0207 428 0471.

Get help from the Irish Elderly Advice Network

Contact our office: Mon to Fri, 10am to 4.30pm, 0207 428 0471, by email to irishelders@btconnect.com or drop in. We are happy to take drop-in appointments but we do get quite busy so it is better to make an appointment if possible.

Kilburn Outreach Advice: Wednesdays, 10am to 1pm, Mazenod Community Hall, Quex Road, Kilburn, London, NW6 4PS. This is a drop-in service so you do not need to make an appointment. This is accessible to all.

East London Outreach Advice : Thursday, 10.30am to 1pm, Durning Hall, Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, London, E7 9AB. Durning Hall is two minutes walk from Forest Gate railway station. This is a drop-in service so you do not need to make an appointment. This is accessible to all.

Home Visits: If you cannot travel or are housebound 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.

Good Neighbour Scheme: If you (or a family member or friend) is an elderly Irish person who is isolated and housebound and would like to have a regular visit from another Irish person we may be able to help.

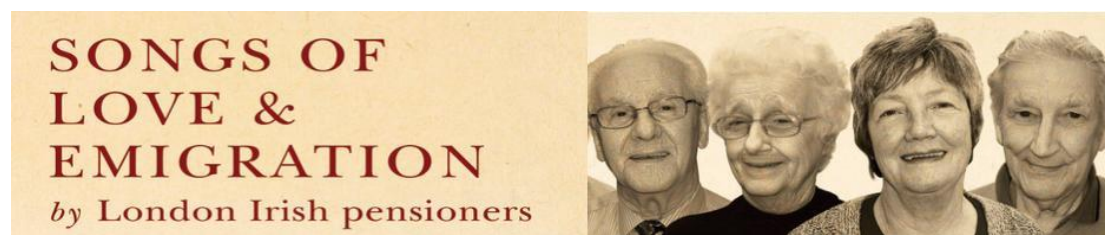
We have been running our Good Neighbour Scheme for over ten years and have had really lovely feedback during this time about how enjoyable the visits are for people being visited and for those doing the visiting. Call 0207 428 0471 for more information.

Danny Daly, one of the younger Good Neighbours, explains why he got involved with the scheme.

"Having parents from Cork who emigrated to London in the late 50s/early 60s, I have always recognised the debt that my generation owes to those who came over and built better lives for their children from that time. The Good Neighbour scheme offers a great opportunity for people like me to do something tangible from a befriending viewpoint.

I look forward to making my fortnightly visits. I have had such enjoyable conversations ranging from the state of Ireland post-Celtic Tiger, discussing the latest GAA matches, to more local domestic issues affecting to more local domestic issues in London."

Songs of Love and Emigration by London Irish Pensioners - an Ideal Christmas Present!



‘The contributors each have a story to tell, but – perhaps even more important than their individual stories – collectively they represent the thousands of older Irish people who left their homeland to come to England.’

Songs of Love and Emigration aims to keep alive the songs of love and emigration of an older Irish generation. To buy the double CD, please send a cheque for £10 made payable to: The London Irish Pensioners Choir. Or send £10 in cash with a cover note asking for a CD. Please send to The London Irish Pensioners Choir, Irish Elderly Advice Network, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB. Please include your name, address and telephone number.

Join the London Irish Pensioners Choir

If you would like to join the choir, they meet regularly on a Monday at the London Irish Centre. Please call 0207 428 0471 and speak to Sally or Alice. New members are always welcome!

We are very grateful for donations (however big or small!) to help fund the cost of our charity’s work. If you would like a donation please make a cheque payable to ‘Irish Elderly Advice Network’ and send to Irish Elderly Advice Network, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Sq., London, NW1 9XB. Please include a cover note with your name, address and telephone number so we know where the donation is from. Thank you.

We are as ever extremely grateful to our funders for their ongoing support.

