



OLDER PEOPLE'S ADVOCATE NEWSLETTER

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Advice NI - Our Work in the Age Sector



Advice NI is a membership organisation providing leadership, representation and support for independent advice organisations to facilitate the delivery of high quality advice services— Advice NI have been kind enough to provide some details of what services they offer to older people. We have over 70 member organisations operating throughout Northern Ireland and providing information and advocacy services to over 100,000 people each year, dealing with over 227,000 enquiries on matters such as social security, housing, debt, consumer and employment issues. We are also involved in a variety of work related specifically to older people.

Accredited Training in Age Issues:

Advice NI has developed the Advantage training courses in partnership with Age NI and Access to Benefits. The courses were developed to improve the quality and quantity of advice provision to older people regarding their rights and entitlements in Northern Ireland. They are aimed at those who work in an advisory capacity with older people and other groups working on age sector issues. The courses currently cover 6 topic areas including Age Awareness, Benefits, State Pension, Health, Community Care, and Housing. All courses are accredited with OCNNI at level 3. We are currently recruiting participants for the next run of the courses due to begin in September. For further information contact Emma Murphy at emma@adviceni.net.

Older Persons' Rights Website:

Advice NI is creating a website focusing on older persons' rights which will be an essential tool for anybody who works with or cares for older people. Indeed, the website will exist as a vital rights reference for older people themselves. The project brings together a wealth of expertise in the Age Sector including Access to Benefits, Age NI, Age Sector Platform, CARDI, Engage with Age and Belfast City Council. To track the progress of the project until it goes live in Spring 2011, please visit <http://www.bloggingiii.com> or contact Ciarán Arthurs at ciaran@adviceni.net.

Older People's Policy Issues:

Advice NI is involved in addressing policy issues relating to older people, which includes responding to policy papers and following up policy issues. We lobby government and engage with key organisations such as Pension Services, TV Licensing and the SSA. We are also actively involved in various groups working on older people's issues, such as the Healthy Ageing Consortium and Partnership for Pensioners.

Other Projects:

Advice NI is involved in a range of projects which, while not specific to older people, address older people's issues or offer services of which older people can avail. This includes Debt Action NI (a free debt advice service – www.debtaction-ni.net), Save for Christmas, DARD project, NIE benefit uptake campaign, NVQ's and wiseradviser training. For further information about our work visit our website at www.adviceni.net or contact us on 028 90 645 919.

BRAIN BUS

The Older People's Advocate were invited to the launch of this fantastic new initiative to help those suffering from dementia. Denise the OPA Office Manager went along on the day to see the great things the Bus had to offer.




The Fold Brain Bus which is believed to be the first of its kind in Europe, is bringing to Northern Ireland leading edge adaptive technology from a company called 'It's Never 2 Late' (IN2L) from Colorado, USA. The technology enables people with dementia to engage in cognitive and physical activities on a one-to-one or small group basis with the aim of increasing levels of mental, physical and social stimulation, so critical to all of us as an aid to healthy ageing. The launch of the Brain Bus on 11 May at the City Hall was presided over by Fiona Phillips, former presenter of GMTV and Health Minister Michael McGimpsey. Mr McGimpsey commended Fold for developing the project calling it "A very positive step forward in the continued development of dementia services in Northern Ireland".

The technology on board the bus allows for the creation of personalised activity programmes based on the individual interests and background of the person using the technology. It endeavours to create a relaxing and enjoyable experience that stimulates thought processes, encourages memory recall and validates the feelings of each individual.

Although Fold have only been working with residents for a short time it has gathered plenty of anecdotal evidence which would suggest that people with dementia do benefit from the interaction offered via this technology Fold believes that the Brain Bus and the technology on board has the potential to make a real difference, longer-term, for people with dementia, their carers and their families.

For example, a simulator programme allows participants to ride a bicycle, fly a plane or drive a car. Two men who live at Millbrook Court (one of Fold's schemes in Bangor) and who served in the RAF are now back in the cock pit of a plane using skills thought to be forgotten, and reminiscing about the adventures they had as RAF pilots. Games centering on history, travel, music and entertainment encourage the sharing of meaningful experiences and life stories. In addition the technology allows for the recording of the time it takes for a person to identify for example words or colours or to put together a jigsaw and this is important in creating an understanding of a person's ability to recall information.





Fold has reported how after only a few sessions one participant now approaches staff to ask when will she be going on the Bus again? Her conversation and mood has improved and there appears to be a marked improvement in her hand-eye coordination and it has also been discovered that even after a few days between sessions she still remembers some of the tasks set previously.

In the short term the Brain Bus will be engaged in a pilot study in conjunction with Stirling University which will measure the benefits of these new technology-based activities, and contribute to the body of research on developing best practice. The research is to discover how the technology can improve sleep patterns through regular exercise, reduce anxiety levels, depression, agitation, and in fact bring the benefits to a person with dementia that anyone would get from engaging in regular physical activity and mental stimulation.

In the longer term it is the hope that the Brain Bus will be available to people with dementia throughout NI, including people living in residential & nursing homes, sheltered housing schemes, day centres, community groups, to families – in fact, wherever it is needed.

I really enjoyed my visit to the Brain Bus— *DENISE*

For further information about the Brain Bus contact Leslie Kelling on 07540 705177 or go to the website at www.brainbus.co.uk

Alpha Housing AGM

As Older People's Advocate I have recently attended a number of Housing Associations AGM's including the first AGM of Alpha Housing which is the new organisation created by the integration of Abode and Presbyterian Housing Associations. It was a very interesting evening and as always I really enjoyed meeting both residents and staff of the association.

It was a pleasure to meet all those who were celebrating special birthdays and a special delight to congratulate the Rev and Mrs McCullough (pictured opposite) on their 65th wedding anniversary.



Mood matters in later years.

This is an issue affecting more and more older people and I asked aware to provide some details on what they do to help those in need.

Depression is an illness that occurs when our 'normal' feelings of sadness continue for a long period of time and result in feelings of being unable to cope. Depression is not a normal part of later life, but can occur. Like any other illness, it needs to be diagnosed and treated promptly. Older people can develop depression because

of a variety of triggers. Commonly, this can range from poor health, mobility problems, bereavement or a loss of financial stability. While these problems can result in more people being more prone to depression in later life, it shouldn't be considered normal or inevitable.

The Mood Matters course has been introduced to help encourage people to have a more positive outlook on life and stop negative thoughts before they have the chance to develop and have a bad effect on our mental health. The hour long course can be tailored to help older people or those who look after older people. With one in four people in Northern Ireland experiencing depression at one stage or another throughout their life, Mood Matters is a brilliant tool in helping people recover from depression.

The Mood Matters course for older people has been funded by the Change in Mind organisation in North and West Belfast and is offering older people in the community the opportunity to partake in one of ten of the sessions. The scheme was first piloted in 2009 and has been delivered to a variety of organisations including NI Chest, Heart and Stroke in Enniskillen, Highfield Senior Citizens Club Belfast, Active Living in Later Years in Londonderry and Ballinascreen Community Group at Fold, Draperstown.

Participants will be introduced to the one hour session with a game of bingo to help learn the signs and symptoms of depression. The programme has also been created to help people make a distinction between the signs of depression and those of dementia. The programme aims to educate people on the prevalence of depression, the signs and symptoms of it, the importance of talking to someone, places to go for help and support and the importance of self-help and care of others.

The programme has received excellent feedback with users coming away with a better knowledge of depression and its signs and symptoms. The useful information and clear method of presentation has resulted in its popularity.

For more info or to book a course call Andrea Kerns on 028 9032 1734 or visit www.aware-ni.org.

