

[View this email in your browser](#)



Winter 2024 newsletter



A message from the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland:

Happy New Year and I hope 2024 finds you all healthy and well, hopefully having enjoyed some time with friends and family over the festive period.

I was delighted with the wonderful photographs submitted from so many of you for this year's Christmas card competition which focused on the advantages of growing older. I'm delighted that our friends in Libraries NI have agreed to run an exhibition showcasing some of the entries we received. More details on this are included in this newsletter – do make sure you pop by to enjoy the exhibition if you can!

Over the past number of months, my research and policy team have been working on two reports that I'm excited to share with you very soon. One of the reports examines the current regional care home contract and the extent to which this contract ensures rights protections are afforded to care home residents. There are more than 15,000 older people in Northern Ireland living in care homes and this report seeks to highlight concerns I have about the evictions and transfers of residents for reasons other than a change of care needs. In the coming weeks I will publish my report which will also include recommendations for improvements which I believe are essential to improve the care home experience for all.

Ageism has been a hot topic in the news of late. At the end of last year, I listened closely, with dismay and disappointment, to the evidence which was heard during the COVID Inquiry with UK government officials, which revealed shocking and blatant ageist remarks and attitudes from senior government officials. Ageism, in my view, is one of the most socially accepted forms of prejudice and I'm looking forward to discussing this in greater detail when I publish my report of the findings from our

survey, has provided valuable insight into this important topic and I'll be sharing these findings with you very soon. My hope is that it will raise awareness of the unconscious ageist attitudes that we may have in relation to older people and promote awareness of the many positive contributions older people make in Northern Ireland.

In speaking about the UK Covid 19 Public Inquiry, many of you will be aware of my participation as a Core Participant for module 2c on decision making and political governance. I have assisted the Inquiry in this module, and in module 3 which is considering healthcare in Northern Ireland, by submitting any evidence and information held by my office.

Module 2c is listed for public hearing in April of this year and I will continue to support the inquiry in the relevant upcoming modules to ensure that older people here are represented and their experiences are heard. The Covid 19 Forum for Northern Ireland will be holding two public information events in February and details of how to attend are in this newsletter - please do attend and share your experiences.

I have enjoyed so many visits to older peoples' groups across Northern Ireland over the last few months, so please keep those invitations coming. It is always so rewarding to meet so many of you in person and hear about the work you are involved in your area and of course keep you updated in person on the ongoing work of my office as well as answer any questions you may have.

I know that the winter months can bring many challenges for some older people, so please do remember that help and support is available. My legal and advocacy team is always on hand to provide you with information and advice and connect you with services that can help and support you. You can call my team on 028 9089 0892 or if you prefer,

Until next time,
Eddie

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Lynch'.

Launch of 'advantAGE' photo exhibition



The Commissioner has launched COPNI's first ever photography exhibition which celebrates the third age.

The exhibition is made up of entries received from COPNI's annual Christmas photography competition, where individuals were asked to capture in a picture, what they perceived to be the advantages of ageing.

The photographs on display celebrate the rich and diverse lives of older people living in Northern Ireland and highlight each individual's experiences and reflections of ageing.

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, Eddie Lynch said:

“In November we invited older people to submit photograph's that reflect the advantages of getting older. What we received was a beautiful mix of views and experiences all perfectly capturing the positive side of ageing. I felt they should be made available to the public as collectively they demonstrate the

Libraries NI Chief Executive, Jim O'Hagan said:

“We are delighted to support the work of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland through this exhibition which provides positive insight into people’s experiences of ageing. Across the network of libraries, we connect with older people regularly who are continuing to learn and to support others and this exhibition helps to emphasise their important role in local communities.”

The exhibition will be on display in Holywood Library, from 15 to 29 January 2024 during normal library opening hours. For more information, visit <https://www.librariesni.org.uk/libraries/countdown/hollywood-library/>





Entrants of COPNI photography competition viewing their images on display at launch of 'advantAGE' exhibition in Holywood library.

Covid-19 Inquiry: Public events being held in Northern Ireland in February

Every Story Matters is your opportunity to help the UK Covid-19 Inquiry understand your experience of the pandemic.

While we can't change the past, by sharing your experience with the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, you can help to give an understanding and assess what happened to you during the pandemic. This will assist the development of recommendations that could help future generations to come.

The Covid 19 Inquiry will be holding two public events in Northern Ireland in February in **Enniskillen** and **Derry/Londonderry**.

The Derry/Londonderry public meeting will be held on **Monday 5 February at The Millennium Forum Theatre and Conference Centre, 3 Newmarket Street, BT48 6EB from 10am to 4pm.**

Both events are free to attend and no prior registration is required. For more information, visit <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/every-story-matters-events/>



Covid affected our community.
Our story can affect the Inquiry.

Share your experience of the pandemic to inform the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.

Every Story Matters

Think 'Pharmacy First' this winter

provided at your local pharmacy to help us stay well over the winter months and ease demands on other parts of the health service.

The Pharmacy First service covers a range of conditions including diarrhoea, head lice, mouth ulcers and thrush.

It also provides emergency advice and treatment for uncomplicated Urinary Tract Infections (UTI) for women aged 16 to 64 years without having to wait for a GP appointment.

Also in another Pharmacy First initiative, 42 community pharmacies across Northern Ireland are this winter providing a Sore Throat service, involving advice, testing for infection and treatment if necessary.

No appointment is necessary with Pharmacy First - consultations are confidential and provided in a private area of the pharmacy where your symptoms will be assessed. Tests may be offered where appropriate.

More information about the Pharmacy First service can be found on the HSC NI website: <https://online.hscni.net/our-work/pharmacy-and-medicines-management/community-pharmacy-services/pharmacy-first/>

First for help with everyday health conditions

SAVE TIME AND AVOID WAITING TO SEE A GP



For **FREE** confidential advice and treatment ask your pharmacist **FIRST**

- ✓ Acne
- ✓ Athlete's foot
- ✓ Diarrhoea
- ✓ Ear Wax
- ✓ Groin area infection
- ✓ Haemorrhoids
- ✓ Head lice
- ✓ Mouth Ulcers
- ✓ Oral Thrush
- ✓ Scabies
- ✓ Threadworms
- ✓ Vaginal Thrush
- ✓ Verrucae

Reconnect with your local library



For some people, it may be many years since they visited a library and yet libraries today are very different from the past. Books are only the beginning.

There are 96 public libraries across Northern Ireland and in many communities the library is close to the main street or public transport services. The library network helps to reach and support rural neighborhoods and those people who may feel isolated as for many the local library is a meeting place to engage with local staff and other people from the community through social events such as Tea and Newspapers, Reading Groups and Knit and Natter.

Library members enjoy free access to computers and Wi-Fi. Whether you're a beginner or looking to enhance your digital skills, library staff are there to assist you every step of the way. From basic IT classes to sessions on avoiding scams

At the heart of every library is a love for reading. Reading is essential for keeping your mind active. There is growing evidence of the benefits of reading for people struggling with stress, depression and lack of concentration whilst further work is ongoing showing that keeping up reading, in later life could delay the onset of dementia (Read more below)*. You'll find a wide range of reading material available for free borrowing, both in the library and online.

To find your local library simply visit Libraries NI [website](#) or call enquiries telephone number 0345 450 4580 (Monday – Friday 9:15am – 4:45pm).

* [Keeping the brain active may help prevent dementia, study suggests - Alzheimer's Research UK \(alzheimersresearchuk.org\)](#)

Words of wisdom with...Alf McCreary



We kick start 2024 with a wonderful 'Words of Wisdom' from renowned author and award winning, Belfast Telegraph journalist Alf McCreary.

Words of Wisdom celebrates older people and their contribution to society by getting their take on life, lessons learned and advice they would give to their younger self and others today.

[Read the full interview](#)



Commissioner
for **Survivors**
of Institutional
Childhood Abuse

Support offered to victims and survivors of institutional child abuse

If you experienced or witnessed abuse as a child under 18 while living in a residential institution in Northern Ireland between 1922 and 1995, you may be eligible for support services and /or financial compensation.

Fiona Ryan, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA), says: “I want to reach out to victims and survivors who may be living here or elsewhere, who may be unaware or unsure of their entitlements. My colleagues and I are here to help with advice and information.

“If you were a child (under 18 years) and were living in a residential institution (such as, a state or religious care home, training school or borstal etc), in Northern

you may be eligible for support services offered by the Victims and Survivors Service and financial redress compensation through the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Board.”

Victims and survivors, their family members and professionals acting on behalf of victims and survivors can contact the Commissioner’s office directly for further information or advice at: info@cosica-ni.org or call **028 90 544 985**. Further information at www.cosica-ni.org



Commissioners meets with local Loneliness Network

The Commissioner's kicked off his 2024 engagements in January, meeting with members from Antrim and Newtownabbey Loneliness



A message from The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland during cold weather spell:

“With snow and icy conditions affecting many parts of Northern Ireland, please make sure to check in on your



ScamwiseNI partnership

In the last 13 months the PSNI received more than 5,000 reports of fraud, with more than £20million pounds lost to fraudsters. Be scam aware by taking three steps:

around loneliness and isolation. The Network was established in 2019 working together with Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and has members from the statutory, community and voluntary sector. Their aim is to raise greater awareness of loneliness, encourage championing of tackling loneliness in the Borough, sharing good practice and initiating actions which address loneliness and its causes.

ensure they are prepared for this weather. Cold weather like this can have a huge impact on older people's health and wellbeing, so let's all play our part, it can really make a difference."

"There is lots of advice and support available online and if you don't know where to turn, **you can call my advocacy team on 028 90890 892**"

Stop - Before you transfer money or disclose any personal details to anyone you do not know.

Check - Check and verify who you are communicating with using a trusted source. If you are in any doubt do not transfer any money or goods.

Report - If you have been a victim of a scam, report it to police on online at [Report | PSNI](#) or call on 101. Or, report to your bank immediately and online to [Action Fraud](#) or call 0300 123 2040.

You can also forward scam texts to **7726**.

Subscribe

Past Issues

Translate ▼

RSS

Connect with us



Facebook Twitter Website Instagram Email

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland · Equality House · 7-9 Shaftesbury Square · Belfast, Northern Ireland BT2 7DP · United Kingdom

