

## Unison Retired Members Forum

# Newsletter

December 2018.

Issue 7.

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Hi Everyone

Welcome to the December edition of our Retired Members Forum Newsletter. The Newsletter this time round is focused on what can only be described as a disaster that was waiting to happen. Yes, we are talking about Dunmurry Manor Care Home for the elderly in which the Commissioner for Older People NI Eddie Lynch began an investigation after receiving complaints from families who had loved ones in care. Indeed it prompted a lot of public reaction after Stephen Nolan highlighted it on his show. As you read into the newsletter you will see and get a sense of the appalling conditions that Older People had to endure in Dunmurry. The Sub Working Group on Health & Education called an emergency meeting in September to discuss the findings from the report and the feedback from the meeting is in the paper. The Chair of the Retired Members Forum was also invited to the meeting and we will hear what he had to say on the matter. Also for the first time we are going to start looking at what is going on in your community and in older people groups across the region which you might be involved in. We would like to hear what you've been involved in eg about groups you might be part off, trips you might have been on, is anti-social behaviour a problem and what's been done about it and your involvement in bridging the gap between the old and the young. The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament held their 2 day event in the Europa Hotel in Belfast and the story is on the inside. As most people will know the Policing Board held a consultation beginning on the 30<sup>th</sup> August to get a view of the public on the future of policing in the region. The abuse of an elderly lady on board a flight from Barcelona to Gatwick caught the attention of the media when a man was seen racially abusing the lady on the plane. Carbon Monoxide was very much on the minds of the Fuel Poverty Coalition when they attended a half day seminar in Belfast to hear members of Gas Safe Charity give a really good account of the problems that people face on a daily bases. Unison held a conference in memory of Jonathan Swallow.

## Unison expresses concerns over Dunmurry Manor Care Home on the back of the Commissioner for Older People's report.



On June 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 The Commissioner for Older People NI Eddie Lynch launched his report Home Truth's into Dunmurry Manor Care Home for people with Dementia. The findings into the care delivered by Runwood found that there were a number of failings ranging from staff shortages, lack of standards to mismanagement of medicines to name a few. The relevant authorities such as the trusts, RQIA, Police and the owners of the home Runwood all came in for heavy criticism over their handling of the continuing complaints by relatives which they received in relation to the care their loved ones received.



On the day the report was launched John-Patrick Clayton from Unison responded right away by taking part in BBC's Talkback Program. He highlighted the serious concerns it raised in relation to regulation of care homes and the difficulties that members of this union had in raising concerns. A piece was done for the Belfast Telegraph condemning the threats made against current staff who are members of this union and have called on Runwood Homes and the police to take action. Unison also met with the SE Trust for their response to the Commissioner's report and to discuss how they procure services from the private sector, demanding that they do so in a way that ensures better care for residents and better pay and conditions for workers. Before Dunmurry Manor had broken as a story in June, Unison met with the RQIA in March to discuss their powers and to ask them to agree a protocol with us for sharing information about social care in order that they would have information needed to act where standards are not met. Unison met again in early July to discuss this and Dunmurry Manor and we are awaiting their agreement on a Protocol between UNISON and RQIA. An emergency meeting of the Sub Working Group on Health & Education was arranged back in September on the back of the report to discuss the failings highlighted in the report. Members of the working group invited the Chair of the retired member's forum and will be reporting back today.

## **‘Home Truths’, Commissioner’s Report highlights serious failures at Dunmurry Manor Care Home for Patients with Dementia; relatives say ‘they were not listened too’.**

It is a fact now days that it is recognized by many retired and older people that when you become a certain age you are left on the scrap heap and forgotten about. That cannot be truer than when it comes to our Health & Social Care system. We are all aware that as we get older so we become more reliant on our health service to look after us as we become frail and come up against physical and mental deterioration in our health. Sometimes due to our ill health we may see ourselves being admitted to hospital or a care home and expect nothing but the best care that services can deliver. As older people would say ‘that’s why we pay our taxes’. But it was not to be the case for one care home in Dunmurry in Belfast. Since the launch of the Commissioner for Older People’s report into the care and treatment of clients in Dunmurry Manor Care Home back in June 13th 2018 the media were all over the story right away. Certainly the Stephen Nolan Show brought to the public’s attention the serious allegations coming out of the report and even spoke to family members and the whistleblowers that highlighted the failings within the home.



In many cases there are serious failings within the report that bring into question issues that require major review. How this all began in the first instance was that families who had serious concerns about their loved ones being cared for in the home brought their concerns to the Commissioner after they had exhausted all roads and felt they were not been heard or listened too. The families brought their concerns to the relevant authorities such as the Police, The Trusts and the RQIA but felt they were left with no other road to go down. Safety Representatives and Stewards trained by Unison have always been to the fore in shouting about staff shortages, training and so forth long before this report ever came out and in many cases they were ignored on many occasions. It is very clear in the report that when staff was raising serious concerns they too were ignored by the owners of Runwood Homes. It was also concerning to see that a number of trusts based within the Belfast area didn’t make the time to sit with the families and listen to their grave concerns. Care within the home could not be delivered properly due to staff shortages and the lack of proper training and this had a serious

impact on the delivery of care and morality of the clients. Anyone who has read the report will know that numerous failings by relevant authorities such as the RQIA, The Trusts, The Police and the owners of the home Runwood all let the families down in their duty of care which prompted the investigation in the first instance. It was indeed brave of the Commissioner Eddie Lynch to carry out such a detailed investigation and he is to be commended and congratulated as he has brought to the fore a lot of failings not only within this care home alone but others across the region. It has also highlighted failings within our Health & Social Care System. Since the launch of the report Unison has been on the ball as mentioned at first page and has been in negotiation with the RQIA and the Trusts on behalf of the members.



Standards had also fallen by the wayside in Dunmurry Manor in regards to cleanliness, nursing care, medications, record keeping, duty of care, communication and the list gets endless. It's a fact that Older People in society have worked all their life and have paid their taxes and still pay their taxes to receive the most excellent care that can be administered for the remainder of their lives. But clearly that was not the case in Dunmurry Manor. Indeed the duty of nursing care administered to the clients in the home was deplorable. Clients who were left in their own bodily fluids such as urine and vomit were described by people outside the nursing profession as outrageous. Clients not been fed, fluids not been administered, suffering unnecessarily with bed sores, no pain relief all points to a lack of good nursing care. But even though Management tried to blame staff in the first instance, and the fact that there was a high turnover of staff meant that there was something wrong in the home in the first place.

After the launch of the report the Sub Working Group on Health & Education received copies of the 2 reports from the commissioner to read and study up prior to an emergency meeting of the group. The discussion that took place within the group prompted anger and disgust that older people should be treated in such a way at their time of life. The group have done a report back from the meeting and is been made available at the meeting today.

Currently this union is in deep discussion with the various parties mentioned in the report and as a Retired Members Forum we will be keeping an eye on developments as they happen. The Commissioner is due to report back after September on the progress that the relevant authorities have made since the launch of the report.

## **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: Gas Safe Charity says 'Be Aware Stay Safe'.**

Members of the Fuel Poverty Coalition and other organizations attended a half day seminar workshop in Belfast to listen to members of the Gas Safe Charity talk about the dangers and effects of CO (Carbon Monoxide). Everyone is at risk from this poison gas whether your young or elderly. Carbon Monoxide (CO) is an **odorless, invisible and highly toxic gas** often referred to as the '**Silent Killer**'. Small amounts of CO can poison you. Annually about 30 people die and thousands are affected by CO in the UK. There are 6 main signs and symptoms to look out for especially when visiting someone as follows: **Headaches, Breathlessness, Dizziness, Collapse, Nausea, Loss of consciousness.** There are different engineers out there who will come and carry out different checks on different appliances like your closed fire, gas appliance and boiler and your oil fuel appliance. All councils in the region have a Home Safety Officer who will do a safety inspection in your home and if your age 65yrs+ or vulnerable and you require a CO detector a referral will be made to have one installed. The Fire & Rescue Service will also install detectors for pensioners age 60+ and again if needed they will have one installed in your home. These alarms can be costly to anyone buying them but they can save your life. If you are going to buy one it is advised by the Gas Safe Charity to go for one that meets the BS EN 50291 Standard. Info supplied today.

## **Elderly Lady Suffers Racist Abuse on Flight from Barcelona to Gatwick.**

'What a terrifying ordeal to happen to any elderly person going about their daily business and at the same time dealing with grief.' That was the case for one elderly lady who was on a flight from Barcelona to Stanstead. A disheveled rather soggy-looking white gentleman directed racial abuse at a 77yr old black woman during a Ryan Air flight. She endured quite a severe verbal racist abuse which left the elderly lady very upset. It emerged through the media that the lady Mrs Gayle had been a carer all her life caring for the sick and for this to happen to her while she was grieving the loss of her husband. To deal with the grief the daughter who was along with her had taken her away for a we holiday to help her get over her loss. After going through the abuse Ryan Air staff then proceeded to deal with the situation by moving the elderly lady to another seat instead of moving the abuser and throwing him of the flight altogether. Obviously the staff of the flight didn't know how to deal with the situation which clearly shows that Michael O Leary needs to look at training his staff to deal with such distressing situations. Not only was it distressing for the lady in question but it upset the people on the flight as well. As a retired members forum we need to send a message out there and it's this 'abuse of the elderly cannot be tolerated in any shape or form and in this case needs to be treated as a hate crime.



## **Pensioners Parliament Warns of Grave Consequences Ahead for Services.**

There is just three people in the office of Age Sector Platform now but again they delivered a great 2 day parliament in the Europa Hotel in Belfast. As the office has lost a couple of great workers over the last year like Alison and Eleanor the existing team Eamon, Seamus & Nichola have once again put their backs into making sure that the 2 day Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament went without a hitch. Unison Retired Members Forum would like to thank each and every one of them for the very hard work that they put into making the 2 days an excellent success. As delegates mingled over a cup of coffee/tea it was clear that they were here to listen to and have an input into the issues that was affecting them as pensioners. Services or rather the lack of them was on everyone's mind and what did the future hold for the people of Northern Ireland. After registration had taken place and the people began to settle down and the 2 day event got under way with Ivan Baxter (Chair) welcoming the delegation to the event especially those attending the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament 2018 for the first time.

### **Day 1.**

There was no hesitation by the Chair on the first day in introducing Robin Newton MBE, MLA (Speaker of the NI Assembly) to kick the parliament off and say a few words. As always Robin has been a great supporter of the Pensioners Parliament and made it clear that one day he looked forward to becoming part of the organization. Pointing to the current impasse with no assembly up and running he urged those present to make their voice heard by lobbying their own politicians on issues affecting them such as the health service, our education system, goods, facilities & services which we are entitled too. Cameron Watt from Alpha Housing who sponsored the event spoke about how proud the organization was to be the sponsor of the Pensioners Parliament once again. He went on to highlight that Alpha housing were in the process of looking to build more accommodation for the elderly and older people so they can continue to live their lives in more comfortable surroundings and have a place they can call their own. Eamon Donaghy (CEO) did a presentation on the future of the organization and said that it was vitally important for the organization to continue so that a voice for older people can be heard but said that money was there for the organization to continue for another year. He welcomed those attending the event for the first time and said that this was important for the organization to continue to reach out to all who are interested in making a difference and making their voice heard. A round of applause was heard around the room as Eamon continued to give his presentation on the future of ASP.

Once Eamon had finished his presentation he was up again as the first session of the day got under way. **Session 1: Enabling Parity for Older People in NI through Consumer Protection.** Eamon began by giving an overview of the campaign led by Age Sector Platform for NI to be included in the UK – wide Warm Home Discount Scheme which currently operates in England, Scotland and Wales. Fuel poverty is sited as a devolved matter here in NI and this must be addressed by the NI Assembly. Across the water Scotland and Wales have their own fuel Poverty Strategies and pre-existing energy schemes in place. Kevin Shields from the Utility regulator did a presentation on the way forward and the future of how energy is going to look for the future. A question and answer session followed the presentation and on the panel were Pat Austin (NEA NI) and a representative from the consumer council. After the session was over lunch was served and after lunch the second half of the day got under way with an address from Michael Monaghan (Chair, NIPP). He spoke strongly about the future of the ASP/NIPP and give an excellent overview of the way in which so much has been achieved by the work done by the organization. He pointed to the fact that if the organization is to be sustainable for the future then we as pensioners have got to be seen to putting some money of our own especially if we are going to be looking for funding from other parties or organizations. He highlighted that if 150,000 pensioners donated 5 pound through the standing order form or other means then ASP can be sustainable for up to a year at a time. It would bring in revenue of 750,000 pound per year. That he said would help to benefit the organization. As the day rolled on **Session 2: Isolation and Digital Exclusion** got under way with a number of keynote speakers taking the podium. Loneliness and Isolation has in recent months become a big issue for Older People in the community and has also been impacting on younger people as well. The media highlighted that doctors had become concerned about the issue of loneliness and the impact it was having on peoples lives. Keynote speakers Fiona Murphy (Campaign to end Loneliness) and Collette Leeson (Dept. Finance) both attended the parliament to talk about the work going on to tackle the problem that exists within the community. Both presentations outlined the causes and implications of isolation and digital exclusion amongst older people and on the interventions that seek to address this. An expert panel of people were invited on to the stage for a question and answer session and they joined the people already on the stage. They included Vicki Titterington (Linking Generations NI) and Seamus Ward (Bogside & Brandywell Health Forum). At the end of what was a very good session Eamon ended the first day with closing comments. Afterwards everyone went their separate ways on what was a really great day.

## **Day 2**

As Eamon began settling everyone down on the second day it was quite clear in the room that this was the most important part of the Pensioners Parliament that everyone became interested in. As guest speakers arrived to take part in the discussion and presentations. Among the speakers was our own Eddie Lynch (COPNI), Nikki Patterson (South Eastern Health & Social care Trust), Bernadette Mc Grory (Alzheimer's Society)

and Pauline Shepard (Independent Health Care Provider).

**Session 3: Health & Social Care** kicked off with the first keynote speaker of the day Eddie Lynch (Commissioner for Older People NI). As Eddie began delivering his presentation on

**Part 1: Standards in Care Homes** the room went silent. As he threw in a joke to begin with he went on to outline the important role he has to play within the region. He talked about his most recent report 'Home Truths' in which he began an investigation into Dunmurry Manor after receiving complaints into the degrading treatment of clients suffering from Dementia. He also said that not all care homes were bad in that there are care homes out there that deliver excellent care to the community. Again there are those whose standards have fallen over time and these are the ones that require the attention of the inspectorate and indeed the trusts as well. One of the members of the panel Eleanor Hayes (former Exec. Director Nursing, BCH) sent in her apologies as she had another commitment and was unable to attend the parliament. After Eddie's

presentation he was joined on stage by a panel of experts such as Nicki Patterson, Bernadine Mc Grory and Pauline Shepard. The floor was then open to questions from the delegates present and after this was finished **Part 2: Reform of Health & Social Care** began with Dr Michael Mc Bride (CMO) taking the podium. He was here to give the delegates an overview of the future of our Health & Social Care system and how the future of care was changing. After getting everyone's attention he spoke a bit about the long waiting times and lists that exist within the service for various things such as operations and in our A&E Departments. Indeed he pointed to the way in which our GP practices were changing and that we needed to get more GP's trained up if the future of our care is to become a state of excellence. He also pointed out that while there is a need to transform Health & Social Care it needs a minister in place to sign it off. Since the Bengoea Report was introduced back in October 2016 some things have received approval before the breakup of the institutions in 2017 but he said that there was more to be done. The Bengoea report 'Health & Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together' was a 10yr approach to reforming Health & Social Care in NI but very little has been done to implement it. In conclusion he made it clear to the delegates present that they needed to make their voices heard loud and clear if the future of our health service was to make change. A panel of experts was set up and a question and answer session ensued for 1hr before the next session got under way. Lunch was served and a break for all was a welcome relief.

**Session 4: Protecting the Value of the Basic State Pension** was delivered and presented by Michael Monaghan (Chair, NIPP Committee). He was here to deliver his presentation on and give an overview on the way in which the Basic State Pension was going. He carried out an analysis on how the value of the state pension has been eroded since 1979 and outlined the steps that need to be taken to address the problem. He said that in the run up to the 2017 general election the government was considering doing away with the Triple Lock which would have seen the state pensions value be reduced dramatically. He also pointed to the fact that the UK has one of the lowest state pensions in the whole of Europe. After Michael finished a question and answer session



took place. In the final session of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day **Session 5: Addressing Age Discrimination in the Provision of Goods, Facilities and Services**. The keynote speaker in this session was Goretta Horgan from the University of Ulster. The expert panel was made up of a variety of MLA's and an MP from the various parties. Present also on the panel was Dr Michael Wardlow (Equality Commission). Goretta who is a lecturer at the University of Ulster came along to the Parliament to talk about the way in which Age Discrimination is having an effect on us especially as we get older. She pointed to the fact that NI is the only part of the UK that doesn't have legislation to address age discrimination in terms of goods, facilities and services. As she addressed the delegates on the need for this legislation at the parliament she said that it was important that older people had access to all rights just like everyone else. Goretta has been a strong campaigner for these rights to be introduced in NI. She and a colleague of hers provided an evidence brief to the OFMDFM several years ago on the need to change the legislation in respect of age discrimination in goods, facilities and services. After a question and answer session the final few words were left up to Michael Monaghan and Eamon Donaghy and the curtains went down for the 2018 Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament.

## **Conference in memory of Jonathan Swallow a great success.**

For everyone attending the conference in the Hilton Hotel in Belfast Unison and the organisers behind it made it a fitting tribute our dear friend and colleague Jonathan Swallow. If anything he would be looking down proudly on the organisers who put it all together. The conference 'In Place of Fear 70 years of the NHS & Delivering Together' was nothing less than outstanding. Our own Patricia Mc Keown began opening the conference by welcoming everyone to the event. She went on to speak about the great work that Jonathan did for Unison and how he as a manager became determined during the Thatcher era to battle against the cuts and the introduction of privatisation which the iron lady was prepared to bring in thus destroying the workforce. As she was prepared to rule with the iron fist so Jonathan was prepared to fight her all the way. There was something to learn from Jonathan and that was to never give up but to plunge on and fight for the rights of the working class. Dr Michael Mc Bride spoke at the conference and took questions from the floor and did a number of other guest speakers such as Profs.- Mark Gamsu, Graham Watt, Allyson Pollock and Peter Beresford. Victor Murphy was elected to go as delegate on behalf of the Unison Retired Members Forum and will be reporting back today at the meeting. The experts spoke on a number of subjects which centred round Health & Social Care, the inequalities that exist with our services especially the Welfare state. Everyone attending the conference was happy the way it went and commended Unison for the fitting tribute to our friend and colleague Jonathan Swallow.

## Local Policing Review 2018

The Northern Ireland Policing Board launched a Local Policing Review consultation on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2018 which finished up on the 9<sup>th</sup> November. The consultation which was based round a simulator and a questionnaire allowed people to become the Chief Constable for a day and figure out how that person would allocate the budget. The questionnaire was there for those people who had no access to a computer. Overall it was important for people to have their say in the future of policing in their community. Of course becoming the chief constable and having to work out the budget let people see that it wasn't easy making decisions about where the budget should be distributed while the money was not there to allocate it in the first instance.

Over the years policing has been scaled back due to not enough people joining up with the force and the fact that budgets are tight. The policing board also held meetings across the region to get the views of all sides of the community and listen to what needed to be put in place in the fight against crime.

Support for our Neighbourhood Policing Teams has grown over the years and the public has continued to work through partnership by getting involved with Community Safety teams which sees the police, PCSP's and various housing organisations coming together to fight against ASB and crime at a local level. The newsletter is going to keep its finger on the pulse with this story and we will no doubt be looking at this in the New Year.

