



April 2020 - Special Edition

LUTON IRISH FORUM

Providing social opportunities and welfare advice

These extraordinary times are bringing out the best in people

As we complete Week 5 of lockdown, I am grateful for the opportunity to make contact and update you all regarding activities and core services which continue to be provided by our dedicated staff and volunteers at the Luton Irish Forum

Following the cancellation of our St Patrick's Festival and subsequent restrictions many including myself felt a degree of sadness.

We are experiencing extraordinary and challenging times, particularly if like myself you are obeying medical and government advice by staying at home and socially distancing. This means not being able to socialise with family and friends or having a dance or a game of bingo – the very opposite to what we all want to do!

Thankfully our dedicated staff and volunteers stepped up to the mark and through social media, online chats and virtual meetings have managed to maintain contact and provide assistance when needed. In addition, we had a fantastic response to our call for volunteers for our Shopping Service. Having matched all our members and clients who are currently in need, we have temporarily closed the registration.

The Welfare Team is holding strong, managing their usual caseload and in addition have 47 new cases in the past four weeks. I would like to wish Lucie all the best on her maternity leave.

Befriending continues, by phone only, and members are staying in touch with each other and keeping spirits up too. Our art group meets via video link each week and have posted and hosted paint-a-long sessions.



Tom Scanlon, staying positive and looking to the future.

The Tea and Chat group had so much fun with its first Zoom meeting that it's now a weekly fixture.

We have contributed to the Thank You Luton video for Luton NHS, and Key Workers, and have been spreading the word to other Irish community members, also developing youth activities to assist parents in the education of children not at school.

While I am unable to suggest when this will end and we can get back to normal I am confident that when medical advice permits, thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteer team, Luton Irish Forum and all our clubs will be there welcoming everyone back. In the meantime, should you require any assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please Stay Safe, Stay Indoors, Protect the National Health Service, and we will overcome this virus and return stronger and more united than ever.

Sláinte

Tom

Tom Scanlon, *Chair of Trustees*

Gentle exercises to keep healthy

Now more than ever it's important to stay as healthy as we can. If you're online, there are lots of ideas. Here we're focussing on exercises for those of us who may not be as mobile as we once were and want to keep what mobility and strength we have. The recommended 30 minutes a day activity can be split into shorter time periods throughout the day.

Take extra care when exercising alone in the house. Do not overstretch or risk overbalancing. Keeping a mobile phone within reach can give you confidence. The number of repetitions for each exercise is a suggestion only.

Thanks to Age UK for the first four tips designed for anyone who walks only a little.



Regular standing

If you sit down a lot during the day, try to get up once an hour. If that's not possible, moving your arms and legs for a few minutes will help.

Standing without help

Work towards pushing up from sitting in a chair to a standing position without using a walker or leaning on anything.



Sit on a chair without arm rests, with your arms across your chest. Lean forward. Put your weight on your feet while leaning forward. Stand up by straightening your knees. Sit down again.

Repeat this as many times as you feel able to. Try to do this exercise 3 to 5 times a day. Too easy? Try standing on tiptoes, see below.

Gentle stretches

Try some gentle stretches in bed or a chair every day to keep supple. While sitting or lying, bring your toes towards your shin and then point them toward the floor. Repeat for both feet.

Sitting on a chair, lift your leg up off the seat, keeping your knee bent. Return to starting position and repeat.

Sitting on a chair, pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscle and straighten your knee. Hold for about 5 seconds, if you can, and then slowly relax your leg. Repeat for both legs.

Sitting on a chair with your feet on the floor, bend your knee as much as possible. Repeat for both legs.

Sitting on a stool, let your back drop and get rounded, then use your back muscles to straighten your back and arch it (but not too much!).

Walking between rooms

Walk from one room to another and back if you're steady on your feet, and time how long it takes.



Need more of a challenge?

Arm raises – Stand with feet flat on floor a little apart or sit on a chair (without arms if you can), start with arms by your side. Keeping palms down, raise arms slowly up to and beyond shoulder height until your arms are vertical. Stretch and hold for 3 seconds. Slowly lower arms. Rest for a few seconds. Do 3 times to start with, work up gradually to 10 times twice a day. N.B. It is recommended that people with high blood pressure do not keep their arms up for more than 10 seconds.

If that's a bit too easy, find a couple of household items you can use as weights (suggest no more than 225g/1lb each side to start with) and feel the difference that makes as you lift your arms.

Tiptoes – Stand behind a chair, using for balance only. Slowly raise yourself up on your tiptoes. Hold for 2 seconds, slowly lower back so your feet are flat on floor. Repeat up to 10 times twice a day.

Cont'd on page 4...

Answers to brainteasers on page 4 (no peaking!)

1: A sponge. 2: All of them. 3: Fire. 4: Windows. 5: Ace of diamonds, king of hearts, two of spades. 6: Three. 7: The rope is not tied to anything but the cow, so the cow is free to go to the food. 8: Map. 9: The chance is 0%. The pencil has an odd number of sides, it is impossible that any of them ends up straight on top. 10: Second Place. If you pass the person in second, you take second place, and they become third.

Welcome to our new Treasurer

Welcome to Luke Kitching, our new Treasurer and Trustee who joined our Board of Trustees just before the recent “lockdown”.

Luke works as a Management Accountant for a large pub company and runs a small business with his brothers hiring chair covers for functions. In addition, he is very involved with both St Dymnna GAA where he sits on the committee and is Public Relations Officer and Finbarr Conway Academy of Irish dancing and teaches adult dance classes. If that wasn't enough, Luke also gets involved in fundraising activities for local charities “wherever possible”!

He says he was keen to become a Trustee to use his skills and experience in a new way and to contribute to the local community while developing new capabilities.



*Luke Kitching,
Treasurer & Trustee.*

“Also, I hope to encourage other young people to get involved and help out with committees or sit on a board relating to something they are passionate about,” explains Luke.

“One of the surprising and interesting things I have discovered is the number of members LIF has and the amount of people served in the wider community. It just shows how important an organisation and charity such as the Forum is to a community like Luton.

“It's great to see how the board, staff and so many volunteers have adapted to the Covid-19 or Coronavirus situation, by working and meeting remotely and implementing various measures so as an organisation and a charity we are able to continue to offer our most vital services support to our members and the wider community,” says Luke.

Thank you for the terrific response!

We appealed for additional volunteers to assist with our Shopping Service to help people self-isolating due to Covid-19 who don't have friends or family locally to help – and we were delighted with the brilliant response from so many locals.

Thank you to everyone who came forward. At the moment we have more offers of help than people needing shopping to be done or prescriptions collected, this is great and who knows how things will change in the coming weeks? We are allocating roles to volunteers who live as near as possible to the people needing shopping done so if you haven't been called upon to help yet, we hope you understand.

It's a pleasure to be able to help people – here's what some of you are saying.

“Great service rang from Ireland as my dad lives alone and within hour they had got in touch with him to see if he needed assistance Keep up the great work.”



Fresh fruit, vegetables and more - about to be delivered to a Forum member.

“Thank you so much for our shopping means the world to me.”

“You've done a great job, thank you.”

“I have been told to self-isolate ... I have no family ... all of my friends are in the same boat as me one way or another. Without the Luton Irish Forum it would have been very difficult as I did not get anything from the Gov/NHS till the 16th of April. Your shopping service has been so helpful.”

Can you work out these brainteasers?

Give these a go, then check the answers printed upside down at the bottom of page 2.

1. What is full of holes but can still hold water?
2. In a year, there are 12 months. Seven months have 31 days. How many months have 28 days?
3. Give me food, and I will live; give me water, and I will die. What am I?
4. What's the ancient invention still used today in some parts of the world which allows us to see through walls?
5. There are three playing cards in a row. There is a two to the right of a king. There is a diamond to the left of a spade. There is an ace to the left of a heart. There is a heart to the left of a spade. Identify the three cards.
6. You have a drawer with 10 pairs of black socks and 10 pairs of white socks. How many times do you need to blindly reach inside the drawer and take out a sock, so that you get a matching pair?
7. A cow is tied to a 4 metre long rope. There is food, 20 metres away from the cow. However, the cow manages to go to the food and eat it. How come?
8. I have forests but no trees. I have lakes but no water. I have roads but no cars. What am I?
9. You roll a 5 sided pencil on the table. On one of its sides, is written "HB Pencil", the others are blank. What is the chance that the side with text on it ends up straight on top?
10. You are running in a race. Just before the finishing line, you overtake the person in second place. In what place did you finish?

More at puzzleprime.com & icebreakerideas.com/brain-teasers/ - get in touch if you're not online.

We're here to help

Despite the lockdown, our welfare team have had more enquiries than at the same time last year. In line with current restrictions we are unable to provide our usual face-to-face service but our welfare staff are giving advice and support via the phone, online and post.

If an issue with your benefit entitlement, housing, community care and relating debt or Irish pension crops up that you can't sort yourself, don't sit at home worrying, get in touch with us.

Keeping Healthy

...*Cont'd from page 2*

Arm Curls – Start standing or seated, holding something you can use as weights either down by your sides or in your lap, palms facing up. Keep your elbows tucked in, bend your elbows to lift the weights towards your chest. Hold for two seconds and gradually uncurl your arm back to starting position. Gradually build up to 10 repetitions.

Side Leg Raises – Start by standing behind a chair and holding for balance only. Keeping your back straight, bend your supporting leg slightly, lift the other leg outwards, keeping it straight. Hold for 2 seconds and lower slowly. Gradually build up to 10 repetitions. Repeat on other leg.

Back Leg Raises – Without leaning forward (easy to do, but not as beneficial), slightly bend your standing leg, slowly lift your other leg behind you, keeping that one straight and toes not pointed. For each exercise, complete two sets of at least 10 reps for each leg, alternating legs between sets.

Find more of these exercises online from everydayhealth.com or search NHS for exercises for older people. If you're not online, get in touch and we can post information and even talk you through exercises on the phone.

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