



December 2021-January 2022

# LUTON IRISH FORUM

WELFARE, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES, EMPLOYMENT SKILLS



*Clockwise from top left: Have we room for dessert? Martin McDermott from the Irish Embassy (right) and Tom Scanlon. Lunch is served! Noelette Hanley and volunteers Marlene Radford, Tom Scanlon, Marion Curtis, Ben McElhinney, Kathleen McElhinney, Keith Whitwell, Pauline Sylvester and Jane Barry. Baby & Toddler group with a very special visitor.*

## A great start to Christmas!

Fun and laughter were the theme at our Christmas social. Members and friends enjoyed live traditional Irish music, dancing tunes, a great spread of food and great company at on 9th December in The Celtic Club, Luton.

Thank you to everyone for ensuring you had a negative a lateral flow test or took one on site, having your temperature taken and wearing face coverings. You are helping to keep us all safe.

Guests included Irish Embassy Representative Mr Martin McDermott, Justice Counsellor, who commented: "I was delighted to have been invited to join the LIF for their Christmas celebration. It gave me the opportunity to see first-hand the excellent work being undertaken by the Forum in the local community, which we are proud to support through Ireland's Emigrant Support Programme. Noelette and her team, alongside Tom and the board of trustees bring a genuine warmth to what is a vital resource for the local Irish community and all of us at the

Embassy look forward to continuing to work with them in the future."

Noelette Hanley, Chief Executive Officer of LIF and event organiser adds: "As one of our members said today, 'The LIF social always feels like the start of Christmas' – and it's exactly the same for me! Thanks a million to all the volunteers who planned, shopped, chopped, cooked, decorated the tables, served tea and everything else! It's so lovely when you see everyone chatting and laughing together."

The event was a real family occasion with two and three generations of some families coming together.

LIF member Eddie Flanagan says: "My daughter came last time and enjoyed it so much that my granddaughter came along too this time! We especially enjoyed the squeezebox and live traditional music. My daughter videoed it and has put it on my phone for me to watch. Great day."

# Meet our new team members...

We welcome three new team members who joined us in November – Fahim Qureshi, Cultural Officer; Skye Gough, Trainee Welfare Advisor; and Adiqa Farooq, Student Placement.

Fahim Qureshi, Cultural Officer, has a wealth of particularly relevant experience in the arts and cultural sector.



Fahim Qureshi, LIF Cultural Officer.

His experience working with local authorities and arts/cultural organisations, both locally and in other parts of the UK, dates back to 1984. Most recently, Arts Development Manager for Luton Borough Council and then the Culture Trust for 18 years. While there Fahim was responsible for producing and

co-ordinating large scale events such as Luton International Carnival, Luton Mela, The Luton Fireworks Spectacular and the St Georges Day festival as well as supporting and resourcing other local community events (such as Luton St Patrick’s Festival).

Since joining the LIF team, he’s picked up the baton for our key events of Luton St Patrick’s Festival and St Brigid’s Day celebrations and says: “Obviously, due to lockdown, in person events haven’t been taking place for two years in the case of St Patrick’s and a year for St Brigid’s, although we’ve had online celebrations – so we’re planning great festivities for 2022!”

Fahim adds: “I am amazed at how busy we are with community activities that take place at the centre, led by volunteers and supported by staff. Also, by the scores of ordinary residents that phone or come in for advice on welfare and other issues. My impression is that Luton Irish Forum certainly punches above its weight in terms of responding to the needs of its users and indeed the wider community!”

## Unwind with a Christmas tree puzzler

Can you complete this tree puzzle? Or guess the jokes? Answers at the bottom of the page.

### CLUES ACROSS

1. A mince ...
3. Santa’s ride
6. A celebration
8. Newborn
9. North Pole crew
13. Word of praise
14. Words on Xmas cards

17. It’s opened on Christmas Day

### CLUES DOWN

1. Alternative word for 17 across



2. Christmas drink (it’s yellow!)
4. A Christmas dinner centrepiece
5. December holiday
7. Christmas warmer
8. Jingle .....
10. Christmas tree
11. Another name for the three wise men
12. What carollers do
15. French Christmas
16. Another word for 3 across

Puzzle by Kim Steele - Puzzles to Print

- A. What do you get if you cross a snowman with a vampire?
- B. Why did Rudolph’s nose have to self-isolate?
- C. What do you call an old snowman?
- D. Why is Christmas dinner vegan this year?
- E. How does Father Christmas wash his hands?
- F. What do snowmen eat for breakfast?
- G. Where does Father Christmas stay when he’s on holiday?

ACROSS 1 Pie. 3 Sleigh. 6 Party. 8 Baby. 9 Elves. 13 Allieua. 14 Greetings. 17 Gift. DOWN 1 Present. 2 Egnog. 4 Ham. 5 Xmas. 7 Yulelog. 8 Bells. 10 Pine. 11 Magi. 12 Sing. 15 Noel. 16 Sled. A Frostbite. B It failed the lateral glow test. C A puddle. D Because Turkey is on the red list and vegetables are green. E With Santa-tizer. F Ice Krispies. G At a ho-ho-ho-tel.

# We're delighted to welcome you!

Skye Gough is Trainee Welfare Service Advisor and joins us via the Kickstart programme that enables young people to have a six-month job placement funded by the Government.

Currently Skye is busy supporting reception staff in dealing with enquiries via phone and email and in person as well as assisting visitors and ad hoc tasks.



*Skye Gough, Trainee Welfare Advisor.*

She says her previous experience as a volunteer with the Scouts for six or seven years is useful in her current role.

"In scouts we helped a variety of people like we do here. I believe this opened my eyes to how helping people and seeing their smiles is a very heart-felt reward," she says.

Describing the work environment and the people around her as "amazing to talk to and help," Skye adds: "Unlike other jobs I've had, I love to come to LIF each day because of my colleagues, members and visitors.

Skye is hoping to gain work experience to help with jobs and university in the future and also to gain social skills for daily life.

"I came to this job through the Kickstart programme for work experience but honestly, I believe when I leave, I will leave with a lot more than just work experience!" she adds.

Adiqa Farooq joins the team as Student Social Worker from the University of Bedfordshire where she is in her second year of a BSc in Social Work.



*Adiqa Farooq, Student Social Worker.*

To date, Adiqa has assisted reception staff and the welfare team in answering phones and also with responding to face-to-face enquiries on a range of issues as well as shadowing experienced staff in welfare appointments.

"My learning at University and life experiences give me understanding of application forms and ideas on how to approach different scenarios," she says.

Adiqa is looking forward to applying her learning and developing her understanding of the very different and difficult situations service users may experience

"I'm also hoping to improve my communication skills when working with service users and hoping to take on welfare cases with the support of the welfare team.

"Working with the staff at LIF and interacting with service users is what I'm enjoying most" says Adiqa.

Adiqa is due to be part of the LIF team until May 2022 before returning to university full time.

**LIF CHRISTMAS CLOSING**  
1:00pm Thursday 23rd December 2021  
to 9:30am Tuesday 4th January 2022  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS EVERYONE!**

# Gentle exercises to help us stay well

Low-impact exercise can improve our health and fitness without harming our joints as well as making us feel better too. So, we plan to start a gentle exercise group in the new year and would like to know how many members are interested in taking part and preferred day.

Please do let us know. Leave a message 01582 817068 or email [activities@lutonirishforum.org](mailto:activities@lutonirishforum.org)



**St Brigid's Day**  
**Afternoon Tea**  
Celebrating Irish women at the movies

Online via Zoom  
Saturday 29th January 2022  
12:00pm - 1:30pm

FREE online event  
Irish Afternoon Tea delivered to your door £11.50 Raffle

Tickets available online via Eventbrite and at Luton Irish Forum



**LUTON ST PATRICK'S FESTIVAL 2022**

SAVE THE DATE!  
12th-17th March 2022  
Parade: Sunday 13th March

LUTON IRISH FORUM  
Luton Rising  
Government of Ireland  
Emigrant Support Programme

## Unwanted bulky items?

Luton Borough Council offers a bulky item collection service for its residents, which is a free service for people in receipt of certain benefits.

Items included in this offer are domestic fridges and freezers (not American style/double doors), sofas, armchairs, dining tables and chairs and garden furniture. Not included is building waste, car parts, carpets, household fixtures and fittings.

Apply online or phone the Council on 01582 510333 to check your eligibility.

## Diary

This programme is subject to change. At time of publication, pre-booking is not required, please get in touch for updates should Covid restrictions change.

Monday to Friday 9:30am-4:30pm  
**Welfare Advice Service and Passport Witnessing – by appointment**  
**New enquiries:** Please phone on a Tuesday 9:30am-12:00pm

Monday to Friday 9:30am-4:30pm  
**Digital Skills and Employment Support**

Tuesdays 10:00am-2:00pm  
**Art Class by Zoom**

Tuesdays 11:30am-1:30pm  
**Tuesday Club** including bingo

Tuesdays 7:00-8:00pm  
**Irish Language Chat – back in 2022!**

Tuesdays 7:00-9:00pm  
**Pipe Band Practice**

Wednesdays 11:00am-1:30pm  
**Wednesday Club** including bingo

Thursdays 10:00-11:30am  
**Tea and Chat**

Fridays 09:30-11:30am  
**Baby and Toddler Group** (term time only)

Fridays 12:00-2:00pm  
**Art Class**

Fridays 2:30-4:30pm  
**Calligraphy Class by Zoom – back in 2022!**

Sundays 11:00am-1:00pm  
**Pipe Band Practice**

Tuesday 11th January 5:00-6:30pm  
**Trustees Meeting**

Saturday 29th January 2021  
**St Brigid's Day Afternoon Tea** 12:00-1:30pm  
Free online event, bookings via Eventbrite  
Afternoon Tea £11.50 per person.

## Luton Irish Forum

Kathleen Connolly House, 102 Hitchin Road, Luton, LU2 0ES T. 01582 720447  
[info@lutonirishforum.org](mailto:info@lutonirishforum.org) [www.lutonirishforum.org](http://www.lutonirishforum.org) F Luton-Irish-Forum T @IrishinLuton  
Charity No. 1113069 Company No. 5651900