



April-May 2022

LUTON IRISH FORUM

WELFARE, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES, EMPLOYMENT SKILLS

Inspiring potential Future Leaders

As reported briefly in our previous newsletter, three young people – Emily Brown, Oliwia Franczak and Ciara McAree – plus Noelette Hanley, CEO of LIF and Elleesa Rushby, LIF Trustee, recently participated in Future Leaders programme events in Belfast organised by Co-operation Ireland.

Developing and strengthening social and civic connections on an East-West basis across our islands is a commitment of strategic importance for Co-operation Ireland in this post-Brexit world. This commitment was evident at its recent Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders Connect Day at Queen's University Belfast, where the group were warmly welcomed.

Speaking on the partnership with the Luton Irish Forum, Programme Manager of Co-operation Ireland Future Leaders (CIFL) programme, Margaret Lucey, said: "This year we've been focused on developing our relationships across these islands, offering young people from different communities an opportunity to connect, learn and develop leadership skills together. We were delighted to welcome the Luton Irish Forum to Belfast for our Connect Day and look forward to continued partnership with them."

The CIFL Connect Day brought together young leaders from the islands of Ireland and Great Britain. The group enjoyed a keynote speech from Permanent Secretary for the Department of Finance (NI), Professor Neil Gibson, and took part in a series of leadership workshops, focusing on negotiation, conflict resolution, lobbying, effective communication and public speaking skills.

The young people found the trip both interesting and inspiring.

Emily's comments are typical. She says: "I thoroughly enjoyed my trip to Belfast! Not only



Oliwia (left), Ciara (second left), and Emily (second right), at the Future Leaders Connect Day at Queen's University in Belfast.

was it an eye-opening experience learning about the history of Northern Ireland, but I was able to build friendships with other people from a different country and learn about their perspectives on life."

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Summer events start with a Jubilee Party

We were honoured when our volunteers were awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) - now we're celebrating The Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a 1950s themed party on Friday 3rd June, 12:00-3:00pm, with organisation led by our Tea and Chat group.

Party duo The Wilsons Show will be performing live with entertainment from drag artiste Twirley Chassie & DJ Dave Crean. We'll also hear stories from members of when they met The Queen. Make it really special by dressing in 1950s style!

A limited number of tickets are available from Luton Irish Forum at just £5 for adults which includes cheese and wine. Two free under-12s tickets can be requested per adult ticket bought.

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"The Future Leaders conference held on the Friday was the highlight of my trip. It was engaging and informative with the right balance of listening to presentations and a practical element. The activities organised allowed me to build relationships and connect with other communities, whilst also learning a lot about myself. They gave me the opportunity to develop my presentation and communication skills which has helped increase my confidence. These valuable skills I took away will help me in future, whether this be in my career or everyday life.

Emily says "The most important thing I took away from his presentation was the idea that being a leader is not always an individual role. The ability to understand your weaknesses and then have the courage to ask for help and use the people around you is what makes a great leader.

I am very grateful to have been on such an amazing trip and I hope other young people are able to be given this opportunity too!"

* Photo and part of this article and reproduced with thanks from <http://cooperationireland.org/east-west-connections-enhanced-at-future-leaders-connect-day/>

Join the programme!

We are delighted to be able to offer three more young people aged 16 to 18 years old the opportunity to benefit from an online Future Leaders event on 11th May.

The Future Leaders Programme is delivered through a combination of on-line platforms enabling participants to work independently and collaboratively in facilitated workshops. Participants will have the opportunity to meet and work with peers from different backgrounds including partnerships across the island of Ireland, Great Britain, and the United States. It is an accredited programme and will open opportunities to other Further Education Programmes

Topics young people will cover include capacity building, problem solving, developing confidence and leadership skills, engaging authority, social action projects, and personal development.

To find out more or apply to join the programme, email info@lutonirishforum.org NOW!

Smile your way through spring



Can you find the spring-themed words on the right in the letter grid below? Ignore spaces between words, letters in the grid may be used more than once. Find more puzzles of different types at puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com

F	I	E	G	Q	Y	A	Z	Y	G	P	Y	D	G	Y
E	L	D	D	U	P	E	L	U	A	L	A	I	N	T
N	D	O	P	Z	F	F	P	T	R	A	M	O	I	R
G	L	S	W	I	R	O	U	T	D	N	Y	K	H	A
E	L	M	L	E	L	O	R	J	E	T	A	A	S	P
B	B	W	T	L	R	E	R	W	N	S	Y	B	E	E
Q	E	T	E	P	E	S	D	C	H	F	K	V	R	E
N	U	N	S	S	M	B	H	Q	E	S	I	Q	F	L
B	P	I	C	N	I	C	E	V	Q	D	T	T	E	I
S	U	N	S	H	I	N	E	U	X	U	P	A	R	B
E	A	S	T	E	R	R	R	I	L	B	W	D	L	U
S	E	E	B	Y	E	N	O	H	G	B	Z	P	H	J
J	I	E	G	H	A	O	L	T	T	W	X	O	M	T
W	Z	W	V	J	Y	P	M	O	S	S	O	L	B	B
B	T	Z	W	D	Q	F	V	Y	T	U	I	E	P	Q

BLOSSOM
 BLUEBELLS
 BUDS
 BUTTERFLY
 EASTER
 FLOWERS
 GARDEN
 HAYEVER
 HONEY BEES
 JUBILEE PARTY



NEW LIFE
 PICNIC
 PLANTS
 POLLEN
 PUDDLE
 SHOWERS
 SPROUT
 SUNSHINE
 TADPOLE
 TREES



- > What does winter fat turn into? ...Spring rolls.
- > How does a bee brush their hair?
...With a honeycomb.
- > What goes up when the rain comes down?
...Umbrellas.
- > What did the dirt say to the rain?
...If this keeps up my name will be mud.
- > Why is spring a great time to start a gardening business? .. .Because it's the season when you can really rake in the cash.
- > What is in the middle of April and but not at the beginning or end of either? ...The letter R!

Members across the generations come together at Toddler group

Elleesa Rushby, volunteer LIF Trustee and Writer, meets three members.

It was a lively morning last Friday when I visited the LIF Baby and Toddler group. My guide was Arthur, age two who immediately grabbed my hand and gave me a tour of all the colourful toys, activities and healthy snacks. It's easy to see why he was so enthusiastic, especially when everyone launched into a giant parachute game that engaged people of all ages.

I spoke to some of the mums and grannies who attend the LIF Baby and Toddler group.

Tanya, originally from Donegal, came to the UK nine years ago due to her husband's work. The Baby and Toddler group provided somewhere to meet people.

"The kids love it!" said Tanya, whose son Lorcán attends. "We've always been here."

Tanya's eldest child Cohen moved to school last year but had a 'graduation' before leaving, held in the local park due to Covid restrictions. However, because strong friendships were formed at the Baby and Toddler Group, Cohen gets invited to lots of parties even though his friends went to different schools across Luton. Tanya praised the range of opportunities and events at the group, such as a visit from 'Pudsey', St Patrick's crafts, messy painting and even a go on the buttons in 'Garda' (PCSO) Dan's Police car!

Tanya said "You can come here right from when your kids are just born."

It was great to see a group of new mums chatting and feeding their little ones. Just getting out of the house and enjoying some adult company staves off feeling isolated, especially for anyone used to being in a busy workplace.

Maureen McAree, granny to Connor aged two and a half, came to the UK from Mayo in 1975. Her children were born and reared in Luton.

Maureen loves coming to the group with Connor. She gets to meet other grannies while he has a lot of fun. Maureen feels that the volunteers do a wonderful job and really help the children understand values such as sharing.

Celebrating Irish heritage is very important in Maureen's family. All the children support Ireland in the rugby and are decked out in their Ireland shirts. They are also getting an opportunity to take part in Under-6 GAA at Offaly.



Connor, Maureen, Aldona & Tanya.

Aldona, mum to Julia and originally from Poland said that they had both been made very welcome. Julia, age three is awaiting a diagnosis of autism. When she first came to The Baby and Toddler Group, she was reluctant to play with the other children, but she has really blossomed and Aldona was delighted with Julia's huge improvement in her social skills.

"She's happy to play with everyone now," says Aldona.

It's been great also for Aldona to meet other mums. Now that Julia is graduating and moving up to 'big school', Aldona is considering volunteering at The Baby and Toddler Group and exploring a career as a Teaching Assistant.

The Baby and Toddler group has 20 to 27 youngsters regularly at its Friday 9.30-11.30am spot during term-time. Dedicated volunteers Kathleen McElhinney, Loretta McNaughtan, Roisin Scanlon and Mary Winter are always on hand and enjoy watching the children grow and progress and see the adults become friends.

Mary says "I'd just like to communicate the warmth and happiness we get from the community that we help to evolve in the group".

If you care for a child or grandchild under five years old, come and join the Friday fun!



What you said

Thank you everyone who responded in our Luton St Patrick's Festival feedback survey. Congratulations to Emma-Jayne Kearney, the prize draw winner of a £20 Morrisons Voucher.

We are grateful for both your kind words and suggested areas for development of the Festival. Below are just a few of the comments we received. Read more and survey results at www.lutonirishforum.org/St-Patricks

- *Great taste of Ireland!*
- *Lovely Welcoming Family Atmosphere!*
- *Big thank you to all organisers & all volunteers it was lovely to celebrate a bit of Ireland.*
- *Amazing after the pandemic for everyone to be together celebrating this festival.*
- *It was fantastic. I am third generation but my da lives in Ireland I'm proud to have Irish blood.*
- *A wonderful experience. A big thank you to all the volunteers.*
- *It was excellent. Really enjoyable.*

How many?



More than 30,000 people attended the various events making up Luton St Patrick's Festival with Parade Day attracting around three-quarters of these.

Our Facebook posts had a reach in excess of 57,000 and the Festival Guide (printed and online) has reached almost 5,000 to date.

We were especially pleased to have more young people involved this year. The GAA Blitz, a new event for 2022, had a good turnout with some 200 mainly young people taking part. The craft workshop in The Mall a week before the Festival was packed and around 300 locals, again mainly young people, had great fun creating St Patrick's headbands and shamrock decorations.

Diary

This programme is subject to change. Please get in touch to check latest updates.

Monday to Friday 9:30am-4:30pm
Welfare Advice Service and Passport Applications Assistance & Witnessing – by appointment

New welfare enquiries: Please phone on a Tuesday 9:30am-12:00pm

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

Mondays 11:00am-1:00pm
Traveller and Gypsy Women Drop In

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 via Zoom

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

Wednesdays 1:00-2:00pm
Gentle Exercise

Wednesdays 1:30-3:30pm
One-to-one IT Help by appointment

Thursdays 10:00-11:30am
Tea and Chat including occasional speakers

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

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

Fridays 2:30-4:30pm (last Friday of month)
Calligraphy Class by Zoom

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

Friday 3rd June 12:00-3:00pm
Jubilee Party - 1950s theme Tickets £5

Saturday 25th June 2022, 10:30am-12:00pm
Annual General Meeting All Welcome

Luton Irish Forum

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