Age Concern Derry is unique in that it is the only single issue voluntary organisation in the area which is exclusively focused on supporting older people, with particular emphasis on the lonely and disadvantaged. The organisation is committed to addressing the needs, anxieties, fears, concerns and aspirations of older people from all sections of the community.

Age Concern Derry provides older people with an easily accessible facility that is warm and comfortable. The programmes are concentrated on providing opportunities for older people from all sections of the community to meet and participate in activities in an atmosphere that is conducive to developing mutual understanding and trust. Our services are provided on seven days each week and on three hundred and sixty four days in the year.

Many older people in the city live on low incomes with their activities limited by disability and ill health and as a consequence can become socially isolated. These factors can lead to increased anxiety and depression. Age Concern Derry believes that by dealing with every day issues such as diet, social activity and living conditions many older people can be helped to remain independent and enjoy a good quality of life.

The quality of life can become limited as people grow older, Age Concern Derry works to reverse this trend by offering older people a range of options to help enhance their quality of life. We provide nutritional meals to reduce the possibility of health problems exacerbated by poor diet. Older people are encouraged to interact through social day care day care and have the opportunity to take part in educational, health promoting, and active ageing programmes in addition to access to leisure activities all of which would be considered essential for wellbeing and good health.

We provide training opportunities for older people to learn new skills, to develop new interests and to help them exploit existing talents. We continually challenge negative attitudes to older people. Promote the participation of older people in all facets of community life and encourage a better understanding between the generations.

It is recognised that many people over the age of fifty five living in the community are completely independent and require no support. However what they do need are opportunities to take part in programmes that encourage them to remain active, to attain fitness and pursue hobbies and leisure activities. Age Concern Derry organises a comprehensive programme of activities and competitions that encourage older people to be active and which promote good health and are designed ensure maximum participation by older people.

We aim to recognise the capacity of older people to be creative and ensure that this is reflected in policy development. Research results indicate that purposeful activity in older age is not just some form of minor distraction – it is a significant component of a well balanced and fulfilled life. We will always remain flexible in order to respond with maximum impact to the changing needs of older people.

Stereotypes of older people fall into two broad categories. In traditional societies older people are seen as repositories of experience, insight and wisdom. But in the world of mass education, computer technology and endless change, the over sixties are perceived as out of date, incapable of learning and generally past it. Inevitably both generalisations are distortions of reality. Older people are not a uniform group and for that reason they cannot be pigeonholed. Older people are individuals who differ in health, wealth, character and personality. Who have similar needs to others in the community. Each older person is unique and is entitled to be treated with respect, dignity and to be afforded the right of independence.
Throughout its history Age concern Derry has been to the forefront in promoting reconciliation, pioneering campaigns and providing services that benefit older people, many of whom are disadvantaged, lonely and excluded from a society that too often forgets and neglects them. Out group activities encourage interdependence, to help people have respect for the opinions and aspirations of other which might not necessarily agree with their own, to share the concerns and anxieties of others.

Abuse
We work vigorously to ensure that older people are allowed to live their lives with dignity, feel secure safe and that they are protected from exploitation and physical and mental abuse.

Income and Benefits
For many older people the state pension is their main and indeed only source of income and consequently in accordance with Government’s own figures are living below the poverty line. For 51% of the population of older people state pensions constitute 75% or more of their income (Hansard 10.02.00) therefore the rate set by government for state pensions and other benefits has an enormous impact on the quality of life of older people.

In what some would consider as closely knit communities there can still be older people who are socially isolated, living in poor conditions with their activities limited by disability and ill health. The organisation collaborates and net-works with other organisations and groups in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors who share common aims and objectives with us. This is to help ascertain what services are available to older people in particular areas, how these are accessed and identify gaps in service provision. To share expertise, skills, talents and where practical resources in an effort to ensure that services are effectively targeting identified social need.

NEIGHBOURHOOD REGENERATION
We work robustly to encourage integration and inclusion of the marginalised, isolated, disadvantaged and deprived older people within our area of operation. Our goal is to achieve higher and more meaningful levels of community participation by older people in the development and regeneration of their neighbourhoods.

The word community implies that people have shared purposes and values and in this sense the majority of older people want the opportunity to share in their communities. The contribution of older people should be a crucial part of any community’s social and economic life, their experience, skills and talents should not be ignored and wasted.

DEPRIVATION
Some would allege that only a small minority of older people is not able to make ends meet. This false assumption only serves to reinforce the stigma of poverty and discourages the most needy from claiming the benefits to which they are entitled. Numerous surveys have clearly indicated that the highest incidents of poverty and deprivation actually occur among older people, especially older men.

Of households classed as poor in Northern Ireland 21% are inhabited by older people. Approximately 39% of older people live alone, 48% live with a partner, and 13% live with family. Over 40% suffer from long term illness and disability.

In the Derry City Council area the provision of older people is at a lower level per capita than other areas with similar concentrations of deprivation in Northern Ireland.

By 2036 it is projected that the percentage of people over the age of 65 years in the Northern Ireland population will increase by 24%.

Spring and Summer Programmes.

Age Concern Derry, state that because of all manner of improvements, we can all look forward to a longer later life with great potential for fulfilment. The challenge is to translate this potential into real opportunities. Older people in this area can help achieve this by taking part in some of the exciting activities that Age Concern has planned for its spring and summer sessions.
All activities in the Age Concern Derry centre at Malvern House are provided free of charge and there is always an opportunity for a chat with old or new friends over a cup of tea.

The organisation is always delighted to see new people and welcome new members, so if you’re over sixty why not go along and see what’s on offer and are confident that you will find something that will suit you and you can benefit from the opportunity of meeting old friends or perhaps making new ones. If you feel you might have difficulty getting to Malvern House then there is the possibility that transport could be available.

If you don’t feel energetic enough to participate in the more vigorous activities on offer you can always take part in a relaxing game of cards, or even enjoy a game of chess or draughts, in warm and comfortable surroundings. For the snooker and billiards enthusiasts what better way is there, than to spend a morning or afternoon than by having a game in our snooker room?

Are you an older person who feels that computers ‘are not for you.’ Do you believe that computers are complex and ‘difficult to learn’? Because of these perceptions many older people miss out on the benefits of being able to use the internet etc. Having a basic knowledge of computers and internet skills can open up new horizons. It can also mean increased contact with family and friends at home and abroad, leading to a better quality of life and happiness. Why not come along on Wednesday mornings when our computer courses take place, the learning is informal. Our enthusiastic tutors will welcome you and are keen to help you to develop new skills and in no time you will be using the internet to access information and send e-mail.

The Programme Schedule for the spring and winter months is:
Monday: 1pm to 2pm, Country Dance group: Tuesday 2 pm, Line Dancing: Wednesday: 11.30 am to 1.00pm, Computers Classes: 2pm Tea Dance with live music and refreshments. On one Wednesday in each month, the afternoon tea dance is held in the Guildhall. Thursday: 2.30 pm Tai Chi. Friday: 12 noon Yoga. 2 pm Bowling and New Age Kurling. In addition bingo sessions are held every Monday to Thursday from 1 pm to 2 pm.
Also the luncheon club meets In Malvern House every day Monday to Friday, with lunch served from 11.30 am to 12.45 pm.

VOLUNTEERS
One of the objectives of having an organised volunteer scheme is to help link the activities of the organisation more closely to the community which I exists to serve.
The majority of people who work with Age Concern Derry are volunteers. People of all ages many of them older people, willingly share their time, their skills and talents to help others and devote their energies to make things happen. We are aware of that without the support of our dedicated team of volunteers it would not be extremely difficult for us to provide the range of services and activities that are available in Malvern House. We know that all our volunteers enjoy their work and that they get great personal satisfaction from their efforts on behalf of others.

Should you require further information regarding the activity programme or about volunteering contact, the Senior Co-ordinator at Age Concern Derry, Malvern House, Chapel Road, Londonderry, telephone: 028 7134 7478 or e-mail ageconcern@derrycity connect.org

Age Concern Derry is incorporated in Older People North West, a Charitable company Limited by Guarantee. Registered Office, Malvern House, Chapel Road.