

Forever Young Club hit hard by council cuts

Council funding for The Forever Young Club in Stenhouse has been cut by around 84% meaning that they may have to close at Christmas this year.

Their award last year was £26,120 and it has been reduced for the coming year to £4,200. They just got a letter today confirming the amount.

Their chairperson Mary Murray explained to us that she was ill earlier this year when an application ought to have been made. But, in any case, the club was told ahead of the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board meeting last Friday that they no longer had the requisite number of points for an award the same as last year.

At the meeting the councillors awarded the club just £4,200.

Local SNP councillor Cathy Fullerton told The Edinburgh Reporter : "I am angry at the Tories voting against the coalition and sending this funding round to the EIJB for distribution instead of the Locality Network. This resulted in much less being awarded to Forever Young.

"When I first became aware of the issue, I brought it to my political group's attention, along with some other colleagues whose projects had not made the cut. This brought about £200K being put in the budget. I met with Mary and said I would do everything possible to get them the funding so I am bitterly disappointed that I have not succeeded in securing what they need to continue their work with my constituents in and around Ward 7.

“However we will not give up the fight and would urge your readers to help us keep the Forever Young Club, based in Carrickvale Community Centre, serving the constituents who suffer from loneliness and isolation live a more fulfilling life. If Forever Young were to close, the effect would be devastating on my elderly constituents.”



Forever Young meets at Carrickvale Community Centre and they have around 40 people for lunch and other activities each week.

The club operates out of Carrickvale Community Centre at Saughton Mains. The community group employs two coordinators who look after 40 older people each week, arranging for them to come to the community centre for a while in the middle of the day. While they are there the coordinators and volunteers organise a wide range of activities including art and reminiscence projects. The club is full and running at capacity, so there is an obvious need for their services.



Mary Murray Chair of Forever Young

Mary Murray said : "The Forever Young Club has been going for about 13 or 14 years now. Before that it was a club called Community Contact which dissolved. A crowd of us got together and kept it going on a voluntary basis for several months until we got the funding back. So there was no break in the service at all. It's deemed a lunch club by the council, but it is much more than that. We go and pick them up in a bus around 10 and then everyone goes back home about 2 o'clock. We start off with a cup of tea and a blether. They usually play a game and there's a diverse range of activities like dominoes and bingo. One of our coordinators is qualified to teach art.

"We take 10 people a day Monday to Thursday, so 40 people a week use our service and the club is full."

The people who use the club are elderly, socially isolated and some have dementia. They certainly all looked as though they were having a great time playing Bingo today. I visited the club today to take the photos you see here. It was a very uplifting experience. The people who go to the Forever Young

Club all live locally and they were singing and joking with each other. They clearly get a lot out of the time they spend there, and they have made their own views known by posting some words on the wall in the room where they meet which you can read below.







WHAT THE
FOREVER young
club
means to
US ALL.....

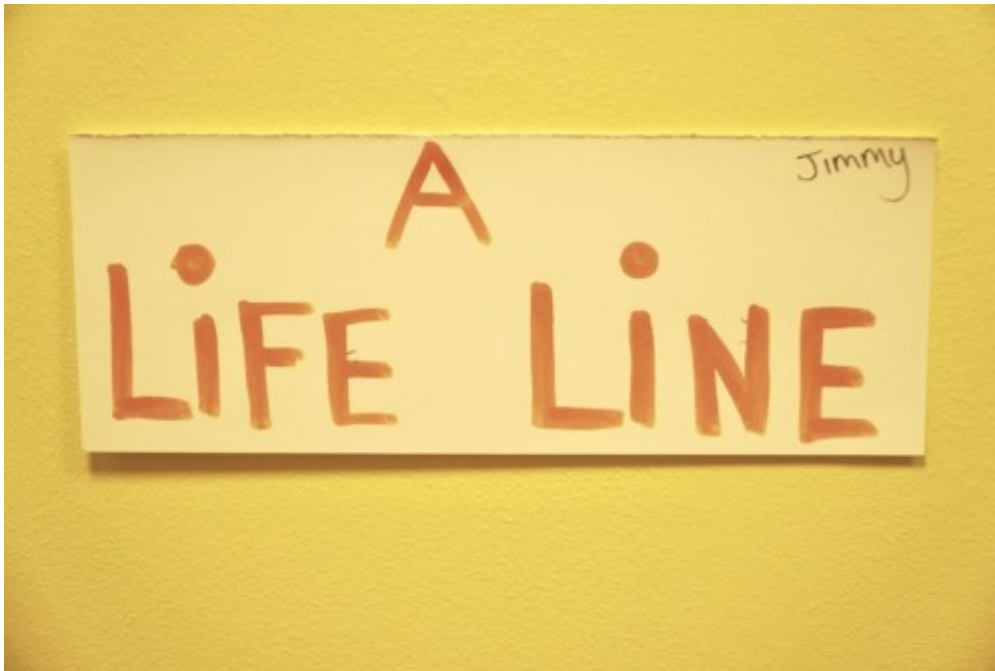
It
inspires me

Jan

Dont Feel
ALONE

Jessie

INTERC



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Mary herself has been waiting for a new hip for 18 months and she missed a meeting of the club board earlier in the year.

She admitted :”I got a phone call to say I was late for funding, and I didn’t even know. I should have known but it is a bit complicated. Until four years ago I applied each year for annual funding and we always got it. Four years ago the council wanted three year funding applications so we did that and we got three year funding until March 2017.

“After the three year period was up I got an email to say they were adding on a year’s to the end of that funding. There was no form needed. Actually I think maybe they didn’t have the form ready to go out. So they are not getting penalised for not producing a form but I am being penalised for not applying in time.

“As soon as I heard I didn’t have the funding I went to see all the local politicians – Christine Jardine MP, Councillor Cathy Fullerton and Gordon Macdonald MSP. I got a letter from the management committee at the centre saying that they want the club to stay and letters from people whose families use the service all supporting us. We also have a petition at the centre which we have yet to hand in to the council.

“Our money will last until after Christmas because we have been very frugal with it, but I have to secure funding by November 2019 as I have to give sufficient notice to our two employees if the funding is not found. Forever Young employs two coordinators who run the club.

“As well as £26,120 of council funding we raise funds with things like tombolas and other fundraisers. But this is about core funding not project funding. All the funders like the National Lottery want you to apply for project funding. With all the noise being made about social isolation and here we are doing something positive – I am really passionate about it!”

Gordon Macdonald MSP said : “The Forever Young Club has provided an incredibly valuable service to my older constituents over the last 13 years through their day club based at the Carrickvale Community Centre.

“The club provides a social space for older adults, who are often in poor health and in some cases feel isolated from the community. They provide a stimulating environment with crafts, games and outings plus their continuing relationship with the

local nursery and primary school.

“However, due to an unfortunate illness, the club did not manage to submit its grant application in time to the council and as a result has lost all funding for the next three years.

“This could be a major blow to those users in the Saughton Mains, Stenhouse and Whitson area if the club can’t continue due to lack of funding and I ask again that the council reconsider the grant application of this fantastic organisation.”

Christine Jardine MP said : “The Forever Young Club is a valuable social resource, often for people who could otherwise become isolated in the community.

“Its extremely distressing that they have not so far managed to find alternative funding to keep this local lifeline going.

“I’ve already written to the council and have been supporting the club in looking for sources of funding.

“I will keep at it and hope that we can find a way of keeping the club going.”

Mary Murray still has some ideas up her sleeve. She said : “One of our ladies won a big prize on the TV programme **This Morning** and so we got her to say good morning to her friends at the Forever Young Club. STV came and filmed the club after that. We might have to ask them for a hand!”

The club is now looking for assistance in raising funds to keep them going. Can you help?

