

# WAVE News

March 2021



## Help during Covid

With so much going on within the Victims and Survivors sector WAVE has decided to produce this News Sheet to keep you up to date with Developments. The past year has been one of the most difficult in living memory. WAVE are acutely aware of the impact on mental health of Covid 19. It's for this reason that we have adapted our services to meet your needs during this time of crisis. WAVE are still open for business, no matter if it's online therapy, one to one support, advocacy or help with welfare, WAVE are here for you. Currently, we have introduced a new online project **Virtual Online Community (VOC)** to help keep you informed, entertained and engaged during lockdown or if you are self-isolating.

## VOC Launched

The VOC (Virtual Online Community) launched with a Virtual Games Night attended by WAVE members from all across Northern Ireland right before Christmas. Since then, Heather and Joe have been hosting online events to entertain and connect members throughout the WAVE community.



Joe is no stranger to WAVE as anyone who has participated in one of his drum circle workshops can testify. He is known for his humour and wit and has even tried his hand at stand-up comedy on occasion. His rubber chicken and alter ego "Tony D'Gorgeous" have already found their way into game nights. When Joe is on the call, you can expect good craic and a fair amount of slugging to be in store.

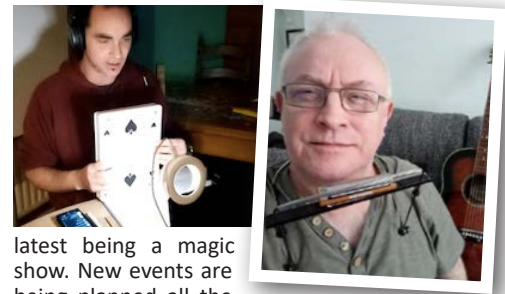
Heather was a new addition to the WAVE staff team following her internship from Trinity

College Dublin. She moved to Belfast from Seattle Washington but has sadly had to return home due to complications with her visa. Heather's legacy to WAVE is the VOC that she



has helped establish with Joe. WAVE would like to take this opportunity to wish her every success as she settles back into life in the US.

The show must go on (as they say) and Joe is loving getting to know the members of WAVE and creating varied programs which he hopes will lighten peoples' spirits during this time of COVID-lockdown. Laughs, learning, and some good company are his plan to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness. Events take place two to three times a week and include everything from group guitar lessons, travel themed dinners, movie club, book club, craft and cooking workshops, and the very popular online singer/song writer concerts every other Wednesday night. A monthly calendar of events can be obtained from all of the centres as well as postings on WAVE's social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). Kids events are planned once a month with the



latest being a magic show. New events are being planned all the time. So, if you feel like a bit of craic and you want to beat the COVID blues, drop Joe a line at [j.loughlin@wavetrauma.org](mailto:j.loughlin@wavetrauma.org)

## COMING UP!



For one night only

**SUMMER FLY**  
(AKA JOE, KAREN AND OJ)

Wednesday 31st March @ 7.30

See Facebook for Details







# Update on the Injured Pension



For anyone following developments on the Injured Pension you will know that Injured Pension campaigner Jennifer McNern had to take the Northern Ireland Executive Office to court to get them to implement the pension legislation that was passed into law on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

Jennifer won her case with the judge 'Justice McAlinden' dismissing the argument for the defence as 'arrant nonsense', effectively forcing the Executive to nominate a department to progress the pension.

Roll on 5 months and quite a bit of progress has been made. The Department of Justice has been nominated and WAVE would like to say thank you to Justice Minister Naomi Long and her departmental officials led by David Lennox for the work done to date. DOJ have assured the WAVE Injured Group that the pension will be ready for March of this year.

Whilst this is welcome news for many hundreds of permanently injured people, WAVE remains concerned that there has been no political agreement with regard to how the scheme will be funded to make payments.

This is an untenable situation which cannot be allowed to continue. WAVE have called on all parties, the First and deputy First Minister, Justice Minister, Finance Minister and Secretary of State to get around the table and sort it out. Having spent over two million pound to create the scheme and make it fit for purpose, for it not to be delivered due to this funding standoff is akin to being given a new car straight from the showroom but no money for petrol to run it.

Whilst the standoff remains a concern, WAVE would like to remind the permanently injured that the pension will be delivered as it's the law and it cannot be denied.



## Who is the Pension For?

There has been some uncertainty around who the Injured Pension is for. This hasn't been helped by various media outlets referring to it as 'The Victims Payment Scheme', which would suggest that the only qualifying criteria needed is to be 'a victim'. This has raised expectations that the pension is for everyone affected by the 'Troubles', which isn't actually the case.

The correct title, albeit a bit of a mouthful, is 'Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme'. It is only for those victims and survivors of the Troubles who were **injured** in a 'Troubles' related incident, **through no fault of their own**, and where the injuries inflicted have been **permanent**.

Details on defining and refining these criteria are still being worked out but as a rule of thumb will come down to two essential criteria;

1. A person claiming the pension will have to have been present at the scene of the atrocity or to have been present in the immediate aftermath.
2. The injuries of the person claiming the pension must be permanent, defined within the regulations as '...where, following appropriate clinical management of adequate duration, an injury has reached a steady or stable state at maximum medical improvement.

If you feel that you fit this criteria then WAVE would encourage you to begin the process of gathering evidence. WAVE are currently recruiting two additional welfare workers to help individuals who fit the criteria with this process, so check out your local WAVE Centre for details.

**Please note, there is no need to employ the services of a solicitor to make an application to the scheme.** WAVE, VSS and other NGO's will have dedicated staff to help with this. Employing legal services will end up costing you money which will be deducted from any award that you might receive.



# WELFARE BENEFITS NEWS

## A change in circumstances could move you to Universal Credit

Since 2019 those receiving a Severe Disability Premium (SDP) as part of their means tested benefit were protected from having to move to Universal Credit even if they experienced a significant change in their circumstances. Many clients of WAVE benefited from this protection. However, new regulations mean that from 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021 this protection has been removed. All benefit claimants in receipt of means tested benefits or tax credits who experience a significant change in their circumstances including those with an SDP will have to move to Universal Credit.

### What is a significant change in circumstances?

If a claimant in receipt of a mean tested benefit (or tax credits) experiences a change that would normally end their existing benefit award or experiences a change that would require a new benefit claim - they will have to claim Universal Credit.

Examples would include:

- if a couple separate;
- a claimant moves out of work due to ill health or
- move from claiming sickness to working
- if they are responsible for a child for the first time.

Although the government will pay these claimants an extra UC 'transitional element' many will remain significantly worse off. If you anticipate a significant change in your circumstances, please seek advice from our Welfare Advice Team so that you are fully informed before making any decisions.

## Personal Independence Payments - extension to the duration of awards

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic most PIP claimants will receive a letter advising them that their PIP award end date has been extended by 9 months. The PIP Department will contact you by letter before the award ends. Depending on the type of award you receive, the Department will invite you to make a new telephone claim for PIP or ask you to complete a renewal form. It is important that claimants respond to correspondence from PIP quickly as it may take some months to process a new claim.

## Payment of the Covid-19 Heating Payment (£200)

will be made during week commencing 25 January 2021 if you are a resident of NI and receive any of the following benefits during the qualifying week from Monday 30 November to Sunday 6 December 2020 (inclusive):

state pension credit, the higher rate of attendance allowance, the highest rate care component or higher rate mobility component (or both) of Disability Living Allowance, or the enhanced rate of the daily living component or enhanced rate mobility component of Personal Independence Payment.

**How will it be paid?** It will be paid automatically into the same account you receive the qualifying benefit payments. You will only receive one payment, even if you receive more than one of the benefits above. If you have not received a payment by 15 February 2021 please contact the relevant benefit office or Tel 028 7939 6124 For more information visit.

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-and-benefits>

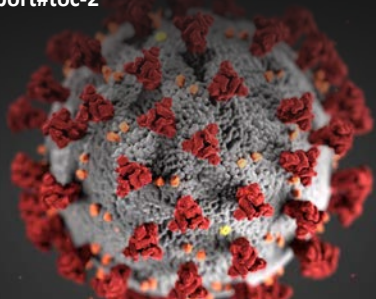


## COVID-19: Financial support if you have a positive diagnosis or you are in self-isolation.

This non-repayable Discretionary Support self-isolation grant may be available to you if you are on a low income and are experiencing financial difficulties as a result of being told to self isolate. The grant will include a specific amount for any children in your household and may be made for periods of more than 14 days.

For more information see

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/extra-financial-support#toc-2>



## Towards Inclusion

WAVE are pleased to announce the start of a new project called Towards Inclusion. TI is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and will commence in the coming weeks.

Committee Member Liam Hamill said, 'it's great

that the Lottery are funding this, it's exactly what we need, getting everyone out and about around

Northern Ireland and trying our hands at new things'. The project will run for 5 years and includes the supply of a Mini Bus.

WAVE would like to thank the National Lottery, Department of Foreign Affairs, David Cross Foundation and Limestone Trust for help with the bus.



The aim of the project is to get people out of their homes and mixing with others. The project design was the result of a number of conversations between those that attend the weekly drop-in and WAVE Co-ordinator Alan McBride.



# Legacy update Jan 2021

WAVE has been working hard to ensure that the needs of victims and survivors are given voice and heard at government level, in the continuing fight for truth, justice and acknowledgement. In March 2020, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis issued a statement signifying a change in direction for the government's legacy plans. Announced on the cusp of a national lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this statement attracted criticism for its poor timing, lack of consultation with stakeholders and unilateral departure from the proposals set out in the Stormont House Agreement. WAVE was quick to respond and condemn this new approach in the strongest terms possible.

In April 2020 the NI Affairs Committee at Westminster opened an inquiry - Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's past: The UK Government's New Proposals. WAVE made a submission in June 2020, highlighting the failings of the government's new approach and the subsequent serious implications for victims and survivors and reconciliation. WAVE was invited to give oral evidence to the NI Affairs Committee in July 2020, and offered a robust, balanced and victims centred response to the committee.

WAVE maintains that any programme to address the legacy of the past must adhere to the following:

It is crucial that any new legacy institution is independent, free from any political influence or interference, in order to command the trust and confidence it requires. There must be clear processes of accountability and an appropriate degree of transparency and public scrutiny. Critically it must be victim centred with all staff fully trauma informed, underpinned by a strong code of ethical behaviour and adequate support services available for those engaging.

The families of the bereaved need acknowledgement. Many cases have never been subject to a thorough and effective investigation, leaving families bereft of any sense that their loved one mattered. It is absolutely imperative that families have access

to a fully article 2 compliant investigation. In the absence of this, the trauma and injustice of the past will continue to transfer to the next generation. WAVE recommends Operation Kenova as a model of good practice in this regard.

Legacy investigations must be fully compliant with article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. We believe that the government's proposal to conduct a swift desk top review of cases and then move to close them in order to prevent any further prosecutions is morally wrong and symbolises a de facto amnesty. There is no legal precedent for such a measure, which would undoubtedly be met with legal challenges.

To build meaningful reconciliation, the legacy of the past needs to be fully addressed, especially for those who are bereaved. Anything less will be damaging for individuals, families and communities, and could serve to advance violent campaigns from dissident and loyalist paramilitary groups emboldened by a failure to address the past.

WAVE met with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to voice our concerns and represent the interests of our members and the broader community of victims and survivors.

We will continue to campaign for truth, justice and acknowledgement, and highlight the plight of those who suffer the enduring failures by the legacy vacuum.

WAVE Submission to NIAC: <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/5947/html/>  
WAVE Oral Evidence Session (Video & Transcript):

Video: <https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/fb29da88-1a82-4973-8f26-09384d4e9f6>

Transcript: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/623/html/>

NIAC Interim Report: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/3186/documents/29458/default/>

Government Response: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/4320/documents/43831/default/>



## WAVE Continuing to campaign for the bereaved

WAVE continues to campaign for those who lost loved ones during the 'Troubles'. An 'Options Paper' has been produced by Advocacy Workers Cathy Curran and Wendy Stewart, and a new Campaign Group assembled. Once COVID restrictions are lifted the group will get down to the serious business of lobbying politicians to support the drive to put in place a financial package for parents, spouses and children of those who were murdered. Similar to the Injured Campaign, the bereaved see progress on this matter as a form of 'recognition' and 'acknowledgment' of the harm that was caused. Many of those bereaved received nothing when their love ones lives were taken, so it is hoped the campaign will right this historic wrong. Check out the WAVE Website and social media outlets for updates on the campaign, or contact Alan McBride at the Belfast Centre.

## Counselling

WAVE recognise these have been very difficult times for many people. Throughout the pandemic we have continued to deliver counselling services via Zoom and Telephone. You can access these counselling services through your outreach worker or calling your local WAVE office. We had been able to deliver some face to face counselling after the summer until Christmas however currently face to face services have not been able to resume. However we are hopeful face to face counselling will resume in the coming months.

## Update your details

The services of WAVE will always be available to anyone impacted by the 'Troubles'. It doesn't matter if it has been some time since you were in touch, if you feel that you still need help, then please give your local centre a call. The WAVE door is always open for you and it's ok to remain on the database. If your details have changed please give us a call to update, or if you would like your name removed, that's ok too, just let us know.

## Contact Us



**ARMAGH** 15 Abbey Street, Armagh, BT61 7DX  
☎ 028 3751 1599, ✉ [adminarmagh@wavetrauma.org](mailto:adminarmagh@wavetrauma.org)

**BALLYMONEY** 13 Castlecroft, Main Street, Ballymoney, BT53 6TD  
☎ 028 2766 9900, ✉ [adminballymoney@wavetrauma.org](mailto:adminballymoney@wavetrauma.org)

**BELFAST** 5 Chichester Park South, Belfast, BT15 5DW  
☎ 028 9077 9922, ✉ [adminhq@wavetrauma.org](mailto:adminhq@wavetrauma.org)

**DERRY LONDONDERRY** 25-30 The Diamond, Derry Londonderry, BT48 6HP  
☎ 028 7126 6655, ✉ [adminerry@wavetrauma.org](mailto:adminerry@wavetrauma.org)

**OMAGH** 18 Holmview Avenue, Omagh, BT79 0AQ  
☎ 028 8225 2522, ✉ [adminomagh@wavetrauma.org](mailto:adminomagh@wavetrauma.org)

*With thanks to VSS for their sponsorship*

**VSS** VICTIMS &  
SURVIVORS  
SERVICE