

Abbeyfield Charity Celebrates 60 Years of Supporting Older People



Abbeyfield Housing Association celebrated **60 years of providing housing and support** for older people at a special ceremony recently (18 October 2016) at Long Gallery, Stormont. Baroness Brenda Dean, Abbeyfield's President, was the guest speaker at the event.

Abbeyfield provides a range of **high quality accommodation and services** to older people throughout Northern Ireland, from purpose built apartments, right through to sheltered bungalows and flats, supported sheltered houses and residential care.

The charity's central ethos is that older people should be enabled to **retain links within the local community** and that overcoming loneliness and isolation can make a huge difference to an older person's well being.



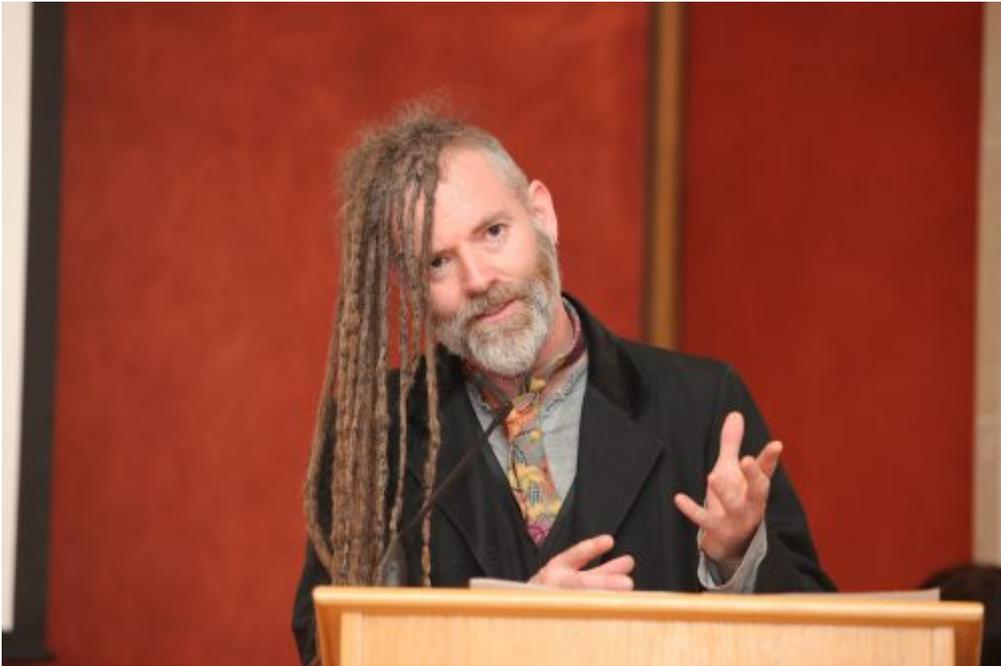
Professor Bob Stout, Abbeyfield Northern Ireland Chairman discusses: “Abbeyfield was founded on the principle that older people have an **important place** in the community. The first Abbeyfield house was established in 1956 by Richard Carr-Gomm who recognised that many older people live alone and feel isolated in their own communities.

“He wanted to provide them with a **safe and secure home** where they could find friendship and support. The original guiding principles, that older people are an **important part of the community** and that loneliness must be alleviated, are just as relevant today as they were 60 years ago.”

Professor Stout continues: “Abbeyfield’s supported sheltered house offers a **family style of living** that provides older people with support but still allows them to be independent. Freshly cooked meals are eaten together, a better option than microwaved meals eaten on your own, which is the reality for many of our older population. **Community involvement** and the contribution made by volunteers enhance the quality of life of residents.”



A ‘Young Poet’ competition also formed part of the charity’s 60th anniversary celebrations. Local budding young poets, aged between 8 and 18, were asked to write a poem about older people. Accomplished songwriter and performer [Duke Special](#) judged the competition entries and read out the overall winning poem by Cathal Brolly at the Long Gallery event. Cathal (age 16) is a pupil at Jordanstown School for children with hearing and visual impairment.



A special **afternoon tea event** at Belfast City Hall for Abbeyfield's volunteers from across Northern Ireland also took place to acknowledge and thank them for the **exceptional contribution** they have made to society.

There are two Abbeyfield societies in Northern Ireland. Both are charities and operate with the same guiding principles that:

Older people have an important role to play amongst their families, friends and in their community;

Overcoming loneliness and insecurity can make all the difference to an older person's well-being and quality of life; and

Local people have an essential part to play in helping older people in their community.



[Abbeyfield Belfast Society](#) operates **seven supported sheltered houses** in South and East Belfast. [Abbeyfield & Wesley Housing Association](#) manages 19 supported, sheltered houses in Ballycastle, Ballyclare, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Banbridge, Bangor, Carrickfergus, Donaghadee, Downpatrick, Greenisland, Hollywood, Lurgan, Merville, Newtownards and Portstewart.

In addition the charity also runs a **residential and dementia** care home in East Belfast and three sheltered schemes in Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey and Belfast.

For further information click [here](#)