

# MEMBERS HANDBOOK



A guide for members of the  
West Lothian 50+ Network



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Registered SCIO  
SC051335

# WELCOME

## TO THE WEST LOTHIAN 50+ NETWORK



You have joined a membership organisation which has been running since 1994. It all started when a group of about 30 older West Lothian residents travelled together to the European Parliament in Strasbourg during the European Year of the Older Person. They gelled as a group and decided to continue meeting. From this small beginning the organisation has grown, but its ethos remains the same: that it is run by the members themselves. This ensures that its activities remain pertinent to the wants and needs of its members.

As an organisation grows, it naturally evolves with the times, but at its heart are a number of traditions and guidelines that have helped to inform the group's success. We hope in this booklet to outline some of these guidelines that we hope will help new members to settle in quickly and enjoy the benefits of the Network to the full.

# MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

To join the West Lothian 50+ Network, there are only two requirements:

- You must be over 50 years of age;
- You must be resident in West Lothian.

You will be asked to complete a membership application form and pay an annual membership fee.

The membership fee is agreed by the committee each year and is due annually on 1st April. The aim is to keep the membership fee as low as possible in order to make the Network as inclusive as possible. Members are issued with a membership card.



# Our Mission

To facilitate a wide range of activities for older people with the aim of keeping active in mind and body whilst providing opportunities to meet new people and combat loneliness and social isolation.

## Our Motto

Make the rest of your life the best of your life.

## Our Constitution

A copy of the Constitution of the West Lothian 50+ Network SCIO can be found in the Resources section of our website.

## A Registered Charity

West Lothian 50+ Network (SCIO) is a registered Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC051335, and is regulated by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).



## OUR MEMBERS HUB

Much of the Network's activity is based at our Members' Hub on Bathgate's main shopping precinct at 14 George St, Bathgate.

The Network has leased these high street premises since the end of 2021 to provide a visible presence for the Network whilst giving members a dedicated space tailored for their needs.

The Hub is both our administrative base and a space for meetings and group activities. As well as a dedicated office to support services to members, there is a well-equipped kitchen to provide refreshments for meetings. The meeting space is equipped with large TV screens and up to date audio visual equipment. Hearing induction loops have been installed in both reception and the groups area. The meeting space is accessible for wheelchairs; the toilets are at the top of a short flight of 6 steps but can be accessed with the use of a stair lift or from the car park at the back door.

The large open space includes an area to the rear for group activity, and a reception space to the front or the entire space can be used to accommodate larger meetings with capacity of 60.



## HUB OPENING HOURS

Our opening hours when you can contact the member support team are Monday-Friday, from 10am to 2pm.

Members are welcome to drop into the reception area at any time during our weekday opening hours, where they can help themselves to tea or coffee, or seek help with scanning, photocopying and printing to support group activities or other assistance from our member support team.

Group activities may also take place outwith these hours, in which case keys are entrusted to group leaders whose groups meet in the Hub.

If you are entrusted with a key, it is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the locking up procedure to ensure that our building is always properly secured.

Group activities and other Network events also take place at a number of other locations throughout West Lothian.





## BOOKS, CDS, DVDS, JIGSAWS AND GREETING CARDS

Members are welcome to drop off at the Hub any books, CDs, DVDs and Jigsaws that they no longer require. These are displayed on our shelves for members to take, with a small suggested donation. Members may also take a jigsaw by bringing in one to swap.

Members of our Craft group produce beautiful hand-made greetings cards (Birthday, Get Well, Sympathy, Anniversary etc.) for sale to members. These are priced as labelled and the proceeds contribute to Network funds.

The Craft group also support the Network by providing us with greetings cards to send to members on appropriate occasions. They also produce the many hand-made Christmas cards that we send out to our members.

The Network has been supported by a local photographer who has allowed us to use some of his images of local scenes to create a set of birthday cards. Members will receive one of these cards in their birthday month.

## COMMUNICATING WITH OUR MEMBERS

The Network uses a number of ways of communicating with its members and we aim to use the method that suits you best.

We keep a record all members' postal address and telephone number, as well as email address if you have one.

You are asked to make us aware of any change in your contact information, to ensure that you receive all important information regarding membership matters, receipts and constitutional notifications.

When participating in Network outings and holidays we request that you carry one of our In Case of Emergency cards.

Information about Members is kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679).

## HOW DO I FIND OUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE NETWORK?

**Our Website:** The Network's website provides an overview of our activities, including group descriptions, minutes of meetings, and key contact information.

**Our Facebook page:** Here we share details of upcoming events, trips, holidays, members' activities, funding awards and information that we feel may be useful to you. We are always pleased to share information about your group's activities on this page.

**Minutes of Meetings:** We circulate the minutes of our monthly members' meetings to all our members. Those with an email address will receive them in this way which is the most cost-effective way of communicating with our members. If not, you will receive them by post. Minutes of the Board of Trustees meetings can be read in the Hub.

**Email:** Important ad hoc information will be circulated to members by email.



## MANAGEMENT, STAFF AND VOLUNTEER ROLES

The Network is overseen by a Board of volunteer trustees elected from the membership. The trustees give the Network strategic direction and ensure that the funds are properly managed. There are four Office Bearers: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. In addition, individual trustees hold responsibility for areas such as Trips and Holidays, Marketing and Communication, Premises, Speakers and Events.

The trustees are elected annually in accordance with our Constitution at the Annual General Meeting. It is expected that each trustee takes on an active role, and must therefore bring an appropriate skill set. Every member has the opportunity to vote at the election of trustees.

Our Members' Hub/administrative centre is run by two part-time member support staff. We also employ a part-time charity manager and a part-time volunteers and groups co-ordinator whose role is to help us grow the Network.

The many special interest/ activity groups are each run by a volunteer who is a member of the Network, with the exception of certain taught classes for which a specialist instructor is required (such as Yoga or Pilates). Any member with a special interest or skill is encouraged to speak with staff at the Hub to explore the possibility of leading a new group.



## **ACTIVITY AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS**

The number of activity and special interest groups offered by the Network continues to grow, thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of its members, who give their time freely, drawing on their extensive skills, experience and interests.

The opportunity to join a specific group through which you can pursue a particular interest is one of the main reasons for joining the Network, so we'll try to cover your questions about joining groups.

## **HOW MANY GROUPS CAN I JOIN?**

With a couple of exceptions, there is no limit to the amount of groups you can join. The only restrictions will be the number of hours in the week and your own energy levels!

Some groups, however, can only have limited numbers due to a variety of reasons, such as limited venue space. In this case you may be put on a waiting list.

Walking groups are a special case: there are multiple walking groups however these groups are very popular. To give all our members the opportunity to join a walking group, members may only join one 50+ Network walking group.

## **HOW DO I JOIN A NETWORK GROUP?**

If you wish to join a Network group please register your interest with the Hub who will contact the group leader on your behalf. You can obtain an up-to-date list of groups from the Hub or from our website on the Groups section.

## **ARE GROUPS FREE TO ATTEND?**

Most groups are free to attend, however where we employ a professional tutor there may be a small charge (such as language classes or certain sports). In lunch clubs and coffee groups you will pay for the refreshments you consume.

Some groups agree amongst themselves on an amount to pay into a “kitty” for materials etc, such as the craft group or jewellery group.

Outings attract a charge for transport, and any entrance or refreshment charges and these will be made clear at the outset.

## **GROUP ATTENDANCE**

When joining a group, it is expected that members will attend regularly. It is understood however that illness, holidays, and other commitments occasionally get in the way of regular attendance, and it is helpful if members notify their group leader(s) if they are unable to attend. Our group leaders are volunteers without whom the Network would not exist. They put considerable time and effort into the running of groups, and this is greatly appreciated.

Group leaders are requested to submit an attendance sheet to the Hub every time the group meets because participation statistics provide important information for many of our funders. The registers also highlight groups that may benefit from more promotion or that are no longer of interest to the Network membership.

If you no longer wish to be part of a group for whatever reason, please contact the Hub or the group leader and free up spaces for other members, thereby reducing waiting lists.

## **NETWORK EVENTS**

A number of events are well-established in the Network's calendar. These include dinners, socials and musical evenings. Our annual craft fair and coffee morning is an important fund raiser for the Network, as is our annual Thrift Shop. We look forward each year to our Christmas Party, Network Choir Carol Concert and Daffodil Tea.

## **MONTHLY MEMBERS' MEETING**

We have a monthly members' meeting on the third Saturday of the month, the format of which usually includes a guest speaker, an update on new activities and Network business, and the chance to socialize with other members and trustees. You will find more information about these on the Events section of our facebook page.

A raffle is usually held at our Members Meetings with the proceeds going to support the Network. We are always grateful to members for small donations of gifts throughout the year that are suitable for raffle prizes.

Tea, coffee and biscuits are available during an interval in the meeting.

## **MONTHLY OUTINGS BY COACH**

The Network organises a monthly outing by coach, usually on the last weekend of most months.

These will be announced at the monthly Members' Meetings, and will appear in the minutes of meetings which are emailed or posted. They will also be on our Facebook page in the Events section.

Usually, we will visit destinations within a maximum 2-hour drive from the departure point at Bathgate Rail Station. Destinations are frequently suggested by members so please let us know if you have any ideas of places you would like to visit.

## **BOOKING AND PAYING FOR COACH TRIPS**

We aim to keep the cost of the trips affordable to the majority, and we will be transparent about the price you will pay for entrance fees etc, which will be charged at cost. Our day trips often have more than one price point - eg just coach or coach and entrance to an attraction - to broaden the appeal / affordability.

Booking of trips will normally begin on the second Wednesday after the Members' Meeting. This gives everyone a fair chance to find out about the trips as some can be very popular and get booked up quickly. You can book by coming into the Hub in person or by phone. Trips must be paid for at the time of booking. Card payments are accepted.

An Information Sheet will be available for each trip detailing all timings and costs. Members are requested to be punctual for all departure times as delayed departure times can seriously impact on the itinerary of a trip. Members must not leave the trip at any point without advising the leader.

If there are still places on the coach by the 20th of the month of the trip, we will open bookings to friends and family of members. We do not take children under the age of 16 on our trips.

If you need a carer or family member to support you on a trip, these can be included when you book your own trip. They will pay the same cost as members for the trip.

The coaches we use have space in the luggage compartment for a wheelchair, however we can't guarantee the accessibility of all of the venues we visit as many include old sites and stately homes which may not have been adapted or allow coach parking nearby. We will do our best to include pertinent information relating to accessibility in the information trip for each trip.

## **COACH TRIPS REFUND POLICY**

To maintain a competitive price for our coach trips, the Network's policy is that there is no refund of the cost of the coach if you are unable to make it, unless there is someone on the waiting list to take the place.



This is because we have to decide well in advance whether to firm up the coach reservation for any particular trip and we do this based on actual bookings, ensuring that we at least “break even”.

Any additional costs for entrance fees etc can usually be refunded unless payment has already been made in advance.

This policy helps us to keep our outings competitively priced for everyone.

## **NETWORK HOLIDAYS**

The Network aims to organise two group holidays a year. As these are organised well in advance, there is usually the opportunity to pay a small deposit to book your place, with the balance due approximately one month before departure.

These will be announced at the monthly Members’ Meetings, will appear in the minutes of meetings which are emailed or posted, and will also be on our Facebook page in the Events section.

As with coach trips, bookings will normally begin on the second Wednesday after the Members' Meeting at which the holiday is announced. This gives everyone a fair chance to find out about the holidays as some can be very popular and get booked up quickly.

You can book by coming into the Hub in person or by phone.

## HOW CAN I MAKE A PAYMENT TO THE HUB?

We can take cash payments at the Hub, by card at the Hub or over the phone, or by direct transfer to our bank account. If you are making a payment to our account, please leave a clear reference as to who has made the payment and what it is for so that we can match up your payment with your booking.

Our bank details are:

Bank of Scotland, Bathgate Branch – Sort Code 80-22-60, Account No 24654562

## COIN JAR AND CHARITABLE GIVING

Each year, at our Annual General Meeting (AGM), we vote for a local charity that the Network will support each year through our Coin Jar. Some members drop their loose change into the jar as they come into the Hub, others keep a jar at home and bring in a larger amount from time to time.

The guest speakers at our monthly Members' Meetings often represent a local charity – in the past we have had speakers from the RNLI, Blood Bikes, Guide Dogs, Polar Academy, Food Bank, School Bank - and in cases like this it is customary for a collection to be taken at the meeting to support the charity concerned.

In the recent past our members have come together to raise funds for Ukraine through a mass walking event, and have responded by collecting and shipping warm clothing and blankets to the areas affected by the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

Whilst the Network itself is supported financially by external trusts and other outside bodies, we nonetheless aim to build connections and to give back to our local community where this is possible.

## WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A MEMBER OF THE NETWORK?

It is important to remember that as a member you have responsibilities, as well as rights!

Most people join the Network looking for companionship and new friends. Many will be new to the area or making a new start following a recent major life change. It can be daunting to join a new group, and we hope that new members are made to feel welcome. We were all new at one time.

The Network's motto is to "Make the rest of your life the best of your life". We therefore ask that everyone conducts themselves with a positive, welcoming, friendly and responsible demeanour towards other members and staff.

Please support your Network and other members by being collaborative and working with us to find solutions to improve the way the Network operates.

Please use the Network's facilities and its resources in a responsible manner and be considerate of other members and staff. Members are requested to be polite and respectful to staff who will do their best to support you and respond to your requests.

Members are requested to act on reasonable requests and instructions of group leaders and trustees.

## SAFEGUARDING

The Network has a designated safeguarding officer, although safeguarding is actually everyone's responsibility. We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity. Everyone deserves to be safe. Safeguarding involves people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect.

Could you make a difference by acting as a safeguarding contact for other members? Training will be provided for anyone who would like to get involved in this way. Volunteers will learn about the different types of harm and abuse; discover how to spot the signs; how to record any concerns you may have; and how to report your concerns to the Network's Safeguarding Officer. If you would like to volunteer or find out more, please contact the Hub.



## VOLUNTEER REGISTER

The Network is built on volunteering, and this is most visible in our volunteer trustees and group leaders. We always need volunteers to help set up and run meetings and events, and there are lots of other ways that members could get involved as a volunteer if they would like to. Please discuss this with a member of staff who can include you on our Register of Volunteers.

## HOW CAN I BRING FORWARD IDEAS, PLANS OR CONCERNS THAT I MAY HAVE?

Everyone has valuable thoughts to share, and our Network, and its ways of working, can always be improved.

- You can bring matters forward for discussion at trustee meetings, and you can speak to any one of the trustees or staff at the Hub. If you belong to an activity group, you can also speak to your group leader.
- There is a Suggestion Box in the reception area of the Hub.
- Every 2 years we conduct an anonymous Members' Survey to gain feedback on the activities that are provided by the Network. Every member has the opportunity to respond, either by completing the survey online or by completing a paper copy. Results of these surveys are made available to members, as well as to organisations that provide the Network with funding.
- If you would like to address any correspondence directly to the Board of Trustees, please email [Secretary@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk](mailto:Secretary@westlothian50plusnetwork.co.uk) or hand your letter into the Hub addressed to the Secretary.



## **MEMBERSHIP PROFILE**

The Network and all its activities, with one exception, is open to men and women aged over 50. Our statistics show that the male:female split is approximately 20:80.

It is for this reason that we try to encourage more men to join by having a group for men only, whilst still encouraging wider participation.

Equally, whilst the Network is open to members who live across all towns and villages in West Lothian, traditionally approximately 50% of them reside in Bathgate. This is historic, and we are gradually making inroads into increasing membership from the wider geographic area by holding more activities in other areas.

The age range of our members is also regularly monitored and we have members ranging from 50 upwards, with some members in their 90s. However the greater majority of our members are in their 60s and 70s.

## **CONNECTIONS WITH LIKE-MINDED ORGANISATIONS**

The Network aims to be well-connected in our local community as well nationally in Scotland, especially with organisations which support older people and which work towards similar goals to our own.

Amongst other affiliations, the Network is a member of Age Scotland, the West Lothian Volunteer Network, and the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian.

We support West Lothian Council's Older People's Forum and are in contact with West Lothian Council's Older People's Champion who advocates on behalf of older people in the area.

## HOW IS THE WEST LOTHIAN 50+ NETWORK FUNDED?

We raise funds to run the Network's activities, to operate our members' Hub and to pay our part time staff from membership fees and from fundraising events. In addition, we employ the services of a professional fundraiser who helps to secure funding from external sources such as charitable trusts.

## WHERE CAN I FIND A COPY OF THE NETWORK'S ANNUAL ACCOUNTS?

Members are entitled to request a copy of the latest accounts. Please put a note into the Hub. They are also available on the OSCR website where they are lodged in line with OSCR's regulations.

## LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

West Lothian 50+ Network does not assess its members' fitness for participation in any of its various activities. The decision about your fitness to undertake any activity lies within yourself, together with any medical advice you wish to take. It is your own responsibility to ensure your personal safety and that of your belongings.





## CONTACT US

Members can contact the Hub by phone, email or facebook Messenger at any time although responses can only be made during our advertised office hours.



01506-635510



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