



## Message from the Commissioner

Welcome to the third edition of the COPNI e-briefing.

As we approach the end of my four year term, I am pleased that all of my priorities for action will have been delivered, but implementation of my advice to government, in many cases, is still outstanding. Whilst I have advised government on a range of issues, including [the need for legislation to protect older people from abuse](#), [how to best support an ageing workforce](#) as well as [recommendations on how to improve the culture of care in Northern Ireland](#), it is now the job of our politicians to implement the changes.



The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, Claire Keatinge

If we are to give older people the best chance of living fulfilled and dignified lives, these changes need to happen now; older people do not have time to wait. I have provided the basis, rationale, and in some cases, template for change and so it is now down to government to implement these changes, and demonstrate their commitment to making Northern Ireland a great place to grow older.

## Commissioner welcomes commitment to introduce anti-age discrimination legislation

Protection from discrimination on the grounds of age is a vital part of how our society respects and

supports people, particularly older people. The fact that Northern Ireland does not currently have legislation in place to protect older people leaves them vulnerable to paying more for financial services and to being denied access to services on the grounds of their age.

The announcement by the First and deputy First Ministers confirming that the Programme for Government commitment to introduce anti-age discrimination legislation for everyone over the age of 16 is to be delivered before the Assembly election in 2016 is therefore very welcome news.

Whilst it does not make sense to discriminate against any age group, the Commissioner is delighted that older people in Northern Ireland will soon be protected by the most age-inclusive legislation in terms of Goods, Facilities and Services provision across the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Older people are deserving of the highest level of service provision, and nothing short of protection through the law can ensure that they are not discriminated against on the grounds of age.

## Commissioner: Action needed on abuse against older people

The Commissioner for Older People has written to the new Health Minister to urge him to act on her advice which was published last year, calling for the introduction of legislation to better protect older people from abuse.



The Commissioner's advice was based on a review of legislation and engagement with practitioners in the adult safeguarding field which found that older people in Northern Ireland who may be vulnerable or 'at risk' of abuse are not afforded the same legal protection as their counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales, all of which have dedicated laws in place to protect all older people from abuse.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Department of Justice recently ran a consultation on a draft Adult Safeguarding Policy, which showed broad support for the introduction of legislation, and this has been supported by the NI Assembly in a motion. The

Commissioner is now calling for a commitment from the Minister to legislate on this as soon as possible to ensure that older people are afforded the protection against abuse that they need and deserve.

## Prioritising older people at Westminster

General Election 2015

Promoting the positive contributions of older people

Protection of older people who need care or support

Equality and fair treatment

The Commissioner's office conducted a successful round of political party briefings which highlighted key priorities for government in relation to older people.

The priorities were based around three key themes:

1. Promoting the positive contributions of older people
2. Protection of older people who need care or support
3. Equality and fair treatment

The Commissioner offers her congratulations to all successful candidates and hopes that they will use their role at Westminster to make a positive difference to the lives of older people in Northern Ireland.

For full details of the priorities, please [click here](#).

## Commissioner welcomes crime clearance rate targets

The Commissioner has welcomed the introduction of new targets aimed at bringing more offenders to justice for crimes committed against older people, following their inclusion in the new [Policing Plan 2015-16](#).

The targets, which call for a 2% reduction in the number of domestic burglaries and robberies as well as a 2% improvement in outcome rates for older people, were introduced after persistent campaigning by the Commissioner, whose [analysis of crime clearance rates](#) had found that older victims of crime were much less likely to see the perpetrator being brought to justice.

The Commissioner said that the targets "will not only lead to better outcomes for older victims of crime, but will also serve as a deterrent to would-be offenders by sending a clear message that they will be brought to justice. I will continue to highlight this issue and track trends to ensure that the targets bring real results for older people."

## Commissioner calls on politicians to "be ambitious about better ageing"

The Commissioner hosted a seminar with a leading expert on ageing, Professor Alan Walker, which sought to advise politicians and policy makers on how Northern Ireland can be better prepared for ageing.

Professor Alan Walker, Director of the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme, pointed to a recent House of Lords report which concluded that the UK is "woefully unprepared for the ageing of its population", adding that this pioneering research provides the "evidence required for a fresh approach to this urgent challenge".

The Commissioner challenged politicians to "be ambitious about planning for future population changes", and to use Professor Walker's research to help them to respond positively to the challenges of an ageing population.



Commissioner pictured with (L-R) Kieran McCarthy MLA, Jonathan Bell MLA, Professor Alan Walker, Pam Cameron MLA and Chris Lyttle MLA

## In the Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly has debated the Commissioner's report, [Appreciating Age](#), after an all-party motion was tabled urging support for its findings. The report found that older people in Northern Ireland will make a positive contribution of £24.7 billion to the economy over the next 50 years through volunteering, caring, childcare and paying taxes, after the cost of age-related spending is discounted. The motion was passed with unanimous support across the chamber. The full transcript of the debate can be found [here](#).

The Assembly also supported the need for new legislation to protect older people from abuse, following the publication of the Commissioner's report, [Protecting our Older People: A call for Adult Safeguarding Legislation](#). The motion, tabled by Sinn Fein, was backed by all parties, and the Assembly resolved to support the introduction of new Adult Safeguarding legislation.

## Diary date

16 June 2015

Launch of Prepared to Care? Modernising Adult Social Care in Northern Ireland

Dunmisk Suite, Stormont Hotel

9.00-10.30am (Breakfast served at 8.30am)

Please contact Christy Hunter on 028 90 890 899 or email [christy.hunter@copni.org](mailto:christy.hunter@copni.org) if you wish to attend. Places are on a first come, first served basis.



The Commissioner met with members of the CTNNI - Community Transport Network Northern Ireland (above) to discuss the importance of community transport and the impact of cuts to services on older people.



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Dear reader, we have identified you as one of our key stakeholders and therefore we would like to keep you updated on our work and progress in safeguarding and promoting the interests of older people.

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