



Commissioner for Older People  
for Northern Ireland

# Consultation on the Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021

Summary of consultation response from the  
Commissioner for Older People  
for Northern Ireland

July 2016

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland's role is to safeguard and protect the interests of older people, defined by the Commissioner's establishing legislation as people aged 60 and over. The Commissioner is surprised to note that this draft Framework contains no reference to older people and is seeking to change this by requesting the addition of a further new outcome, along with relevant associated indicators and measures.

There are powerful imperatives for older people to be given appropriate place in the draft Programme for Government (PfG) document, with the demographics of Northern Ireland forecast to change further during the timespan of this PfG. Given that the latest NISRA Population Projections forecast the older population will increase from 396,000 to 445,000 during 2016-2021 (an increase of over 10%)<sup>1</sup>, the Commissioner is surprised there is no direct reference to older people across this entire consultation document – in neither outcomes, indicators or measures.

Furthermore the framework makes no reference to the Active Ageing Strategy (AAS), despite it overlapping with the term of the PfG and also being a “cross-cutting” Strategy of the NI Executive. By contrast, the document contains 20 mentions of ‘young people’, and the 14<sup>th</sup> outcome is exclusively focused on younger people – ‘We give our children and young people the best start in life’, with 6 commitments under ‘The Role of the Executive’ and 20 supporting Indicators.

The Commissioner also perceives that there are opportunities for a clear reference to Age Goods Facilities and Services legislation in this PfG framework. Such legislation would prevent older people being treated less favourably than any other person on the specific ground of age in the provision of goods, facilities and services. This was a commitment made in the last PfG that unfortunately was not delivered for older people. COPNI expects to see the legislation introduced in the next term of this Assembly and Executive, and would welcome positive reference to it as a first step in this PfG document.

### **The Outcomes Based Accountability Approach**

The Commissioner appreciates the potential for a genuine cross cutting approach across government departments that this OBA approach could have, if implemented successfully. However the Commissioner has more questions about the operation of the approach, including:

- What happens if or when there is not ‘progress’ towards desired Outcomes?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp20.htm>

- There will be three ‘pathway’ projects set up to trial the new process – will the preliminary results/findings of these trials be available before the next stage of the consultation process?<sup>2</sup>
- Will there be any cross cutting programmes to establish a leadership culture to support Outcomes Based Accountability, and to bring together leaders of different stakeholder groups? <sup>3</sup>
- Will there be coordinated learning opportunities and champions for the approach within Government, an approach that has been used elsewhere? <sup>4</sup>

### Proposed New Outcome

**COPNI would urge the NI Executive to make the following addition to the draft PfG:-**

*“We respect, value and protect our older people.”*

#### **Suggested: ‘The Role of The Executive’**

‘We will make a contribution by’:

- Supporting and promoting better health among older people.
- Promoting positive attitudes towards older people.
- Supporting safe, secure environments for older people to live in.
- Promoting opportunities for older people to be economically and socially involved, and not isolated.
- Promoting opportunities for older people to increase their income security and supporting them from falling into poverty.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Data Controller / Owner</b>
Percentage who reported their general health as good over the last twelve months (by age)	DHSSPS, Health Survey NI
Disability Free Life Expectancy, Healthy Life Expectancy (at 65)	DHSSPS, Public Health Information and Research Branch

<sup>2</sup> [http://scopeni.nicva.org/article/programme-for-government-the-next-steps?utm\\_source=ScopeNI&utm\\_campaign=563aae3ee6-](http://scopeni.nicva.org/article/programme-for-government-the-next-steps?utm_source=ScopeNI&utm_campaign=563aae3ee6-)

ScopeNI\_3\_July\_2016&utm\_medium=email&utm\_term=0\_ebfedef341-563aae3ee6-323144549

<sup>3</sup> Erica Wimbush, ‘Implementing an Outcomes Approach to Public Management and Accountability in the UK – Are We Learning the Lessons?’

<sup>4</sup> Improvement and Development Agency, ‘Improving Service Delivery – Introducing Outcomes-Based Accountability’.

Percentage achieving Chief Medical Officer's recommendations for physical activity, by age	DHSSPS, Health Survey NI
Do you have any long-term health problems, illness, disability or infirmity?	NICOLA Project
Percentage of respondents experiencing mobility difficulties	DHSSPS, Health Survey NI
How often do you have contact with any of your children/other relatives/close friends	NICOLA Project
Percentage of respondents involved in groups, clubs and organisations	NICOLA Project
Percentage of respondents with caring responsibilities	DHSSPS, Health Survey NI
How often do respondents feel lonely	NICOLA Project
In Employment - Receive the recognition I deserve for my work	NICOLA Project
Relative low income percentages for population groups (after housing costs)	Households Below Average Income Report – Department of the Communities
Percentage of those in fuel poverty, by age	NIHE, House Condition Survey
Percentage living in decent homes, by age	NIHE, House Condition Survey
Percentages at risk of becoming a victim of any household or personal crimes	DOJ, NI Crime Survey
Percentage of respondents worried about becoming a victim of crime	DOJ, NI Crime Survey
How often do you find you have too little money to spend on what you feel you and your household's needs are?	NICOLA Project
Employment Rates of older people (by age)	NI Labour Force Survey
Essential Skills enrolments and qualifications (by age)	Department for the Economy – published annually
Enrolments at higher and further education institutions	Department for the Economy – published annually

## Outcomes and Indicators

COPNI has identified specific problems with the set of Indicators outlined in the draft PfG document. In many cases, the problem is not the specific area the Indicator tracks, but that Indicators are skewed towards specific other age groups, leaving older people out. To make monitoring of certain outcomes less relevant to older people would restrict the effectiveness of the whole PfG, at a time when our older population will be increasing at a faster rate than other age groups. How then will the Executive or other interested organisations, such as COPNI, be able to effectively monitor the ongoing implementation of the PfG and the outcomes for older people.

Additionally, in past discussions with OFMDFM as part of the development process of the Active Ageing Strategy through the Ageing Strategy Advisory Group, the Commissioner was clearly advised that there was no available resources to develop the new data to support the type of indicators which would have usefully supported the emerging strategy. Therefore, COPNI is concerned that the same issue will apply to the indicators referenced for the PfG which also require the development of new data. COPNI would welcome confirmation that resources will be made available to do this.

Incomplete educational or employment Indicators (which only refer to 16-64's) will also impede the effective monitoring of Outcome 1, 5 and 6, and 12, whilst insufficient detail for Indicators of Transport and Internet usage (they are absolute numbers) will obstruct proper monitoring of Outcome 6 and 13. When faced with data that does not separate out older people or take account of the majority of the older population, COPNI, and all other groups with an interest in our older population, will be unable to effectively monitor if outcomes for older people are improving and to offer appropriate advice to Government.

There are places (such as within Outcome 3 and 9) where AGFS legislation could be included, and COPNI hopes that there is a commitment to introduce such legislation in the emerging Action Plans. COPNI also believes that the indicators cited to support Outcome 4, 'We enjoy long, healthy, active lives', should be rebalanced to include specific data pertinent to older people in addition to those proposed.

## Conclusion

The Commissioner is disappointed that an appropriate level of consideration of older people's interests is not articulated in the PfG document, either at the highest level (i.e. in both outcomes and context) or at the supporting level (some Indicators not including older people at all). This is especially disappointing as the Commissioner believes that older people would benefit from an approach which provides a framework for cross cutting initiatives across the many departments and areas of Executive activity that are important to older people. The Commissioner believes that the inclusion of the proposed new Outcome would help to rebalance the Programme, and provide a framework for this activity, without affecting other parts of this framework.