17 April 2014

Rory Muldrew
Economic Inactivity Strategy Branch
5th Floor, Gloucester House
57-63 Chichester Street
Belfast
BT1 4RA

Dear Mr Muldrew,

RE: A Consultation on “Enabling Success” A New Strategic Framework to Tackle
Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland

I am writing to you in relation to the consultation on the Strategic Framework to tackle
economic inactivity in Northern Ireland, Enabling Success, on behalf of the
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI). The role of COPNI is to
promote awareness of issues relating to older people and be an authoritative champion
for them.

Through producing the Working Longer in Northern Ireland: Valuing an Ageing
Workforce report, COPNI conducted extensive engagement with older people and
employers. In the process of undertaking this work our organisation conducted
extensive collaborative research about the kind of policies and practices which need to
be in place in order to make the choice for older people who wish to continue to work
longer a more achievable objective.

A consistent theme throughout our roundtable discussions was that older people feel
that not enough is being done to promote positive language about older people in work.
There is still a real stigma about the weakness of older people in the workplace, fuelled
by a series of myths, which older people perceive on a daily basis, particularly
unemployed older people seeking work. Many roundtable participants expressed
support for pushing for a positive media campaign involving business and older people,
with case studies, and champions for the case of older people in employment here in
Northern Ireland.

Our Valuing an Ageing Workforce report also recommends that the Executive must
invest considerable effort in public information campaigns that show the positive
contribution older people make in employment. This would work alongside a
requirement for employers to increase the level of support and guidance as well as the
Executive working in tandem with business organisations and Trade Unions to deliver
relevant information and support.
The proposals in this strategic framework are of particular interest to COPNI as they echo some of the proposals in *Working Longer in Northern Ireland: Valuing an Ageing Workforce* and the wishes of older people I have consulted with. I have also noted the detail in the strategic framework about age positive practice in recruitment, and would be interested to learn more detail about how these standards can be more broadly applied, and how they would integrate into an Age Positive campaign.

Countries that have better rates of economic activity of older people than Northern Ireland have made use of positive Government campaigns alongside a variety of other measures that help promote the employment of older people. There is more work that can be done in other areas that could improve the economic activity rates of older people. Through engagement and research, COPNI have made a variety of suggestions that would make it an easier choice for older people to work.

I would be enthusiastic that my policy team would be able to meet representatives from the Economic Inactivity team once this response has been submitted and contribute more detail on COPNI’s thoughts about the strategic framework, and further detail on measures that could assist the employment of more older people.

If you would like to discuss any of these points in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact the Commissioner’s Policy Team:

Emer Boyle, Head of Legal and Policy Advice
(028) 90 890 894
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Yours sincerely

Emer Boyle
Head of Legal and Policy Advice

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