



Commissioner for **Older People**  
for Northern Ireland

31 January 2014

Maurice Meehan  
Public Health Agency  
Ormeau Avenue Unit  
18 Ormeau Avenue  
Belfast  
BT2 8HS

Dear Mr Meehan

**RE: Regional Plan for Volunteering in Health and Social Care 2014-2017  
Consultation**

The office for the Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the proposals for a Regional Plan for Volunteering in Health and Social Care.

The recognition of the contribution of older people in volunteering opportunities by the strategy is encouraging. Volunteering plays a large part in the lives of many older people with 66% volunteering in some capacity in 2012. It is essential to recognise the positive contribution of older people to society and the importance that volunteering has for older people. Many older people feel that being a volunteer allows them to help other people and feel useful and valued allowing them to become active citizens. Alternatively, it may also be the case that volunteers are supporting older people through a service and therefore volunteering also has an impact on older people in this way.

It is recognised that the Transforming Your Care plan will bring more opportunities for volunteers with an increased focus on services for people at home and it is understood that improvements to volunteering in Health and Social Care would help to facilitate this.

The improvements relating to volunteers in the strategy, regardless of age, are appreciated as they will impact positively on older people both as volunteers or recipients of volunteering schemes. I would like to wish the Public Health Agency and Volunteer Now good luck in seeking to improve the recruitment, retention and management of volunteers. However, there is an important omission of quality indicators relating to the loss of volunteers, dealing with problems/issues with volunteers and ending a period of volunteering if a service cannot be sustained. Some improvements to this area should be considered for the benefit of all volunteers in

Health and Social Care. In addition, it would be important to respect the dignity of older people being 'retired' from voluntary roles and emphasise their positive contribution.

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 on 028 90 890 894 or email [emer.boyle@copni.org](mailto:emer.boyle@copni.org).

Yours sincerely

*Evelyn Hoy*

**Chief Executive  
Office of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland**