



Commissioner for **Older People**
for Northern Ireland

Respect, Value and Protect

Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020

Translations and other formats

This document is available in other languages or formats on request. It is also downloadable at www.copni.org



Respect, Value and Protect Corporate Plan 2016 - 2020

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Commissioner's Foreword

This plan is published following extensive engagement with older people from across Northern Ireland and outlines my priorities for next few years.

It is a great honour and privilege to be appointed as the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland. I know from working closely with older people over the past decade, how much value older people place on having a Commissioner who can act as an independent champion of their rights.

During my time with Age Sector Platform and through the NI Pensioners Parliament, I engaged regularly with older people across every part of Northern Ireland and that experience will serve me well for the next few years.

I know there are many challenges that older people face. During my early months in post I was keen to identify the key priorities for my term and focus on where I can have real impact and effect change to better the lives of older people. I met with many organisations who are working with and on behalf of older people across a range of policy areas and I thank all those individuals and groups for their generosity in sharing their knowledge, views and experience on many issues.

I developed a list of proposed priorities by Autumn 2016 and I travelled around Northern Ireland to get feedback on my proposals. I held a series of eight events with a total of approximately 350 older people, their families and carers in a range of locations from Ballymena and Derry/Londonderry to Cookstown, Armagh and Enniskillen. Whilst attending engagements, conferences and group meetings I spoke with and listened to a wide range of older people from many different communities about the things that matter to them. This has helped ensure that my priorities reflect the real issues affecting older people in Northern Ireland.

I believe that we are standing at a crossroads as a society in terms of planning for the major demographic shift that will see the number of older people in Northern Ireland increase by 58% over the next 30 years. Regrettably, I don't see evidence that government is prioritising older peoples' issues to the extent that will be needed if we are to harness the potential of our ageing population instead of continually struggling to cope with the additional demands it can bring.

We know the population projections and the factors that contribute to healthier ageing but we are failing to develop new policies, practice and legislation to ensure Northern Ireland will be a better place to age.

The rights, autonomy and diversity of older people in Northern Ireland must be respected and ageist discrimination must be eliminated from our society. Yet I often see negative stereotyping and disrespectful narrative around our ageing population, with older people not being afforded the respect that they deserve. This was particularly evident in the aftermath of

Brexit when deeply offensive comments about older people could be found online and in the media.

As a democratic society, the views of people of all ages should be equal and I was appalled by suggestions that older people shouldn't be allowed to vote. This lack of respect for older people is further compounded by the discourse that older people are a 'burden' or 'drain' on resources. Not only is this offensive to older people, it is untrue.

This lack of respect comes in spite of the fact that older people make a huge contribution to society. They are the 'glue' helping families with childcare, looking after loved ones, working, volunteering and sharing their wealth of life experiences with others. Often this is not recognised and older people are not valued for the massive difference that they make in the lives of others.

Older people must be able to live contented lives, feeling safe and confident that they are protected from harm. If an older person becomes a victim of crime, is abused or neglected, they must be confident that the appropriate action will be taken. Services that support older people to participate within community life must be in place and suitable health and social care must be available for older people when they need it, regardless of where they live. The number of older people in Northern Ireland did not rise overnight. Pressure within our health service is a direct result of lack of planning and failure to prepare for an ageing population.

The issues included in this plan reflect what older people have told me is important to them. We must strive to ensure older people are respected, valued and protected – it is the least that our older generation deserve.

Supporting older people should not be viewed as a 'generational' issue. A better quality of life for older people will benefit society as a whole in many ways now and also improve the lives of the many generations coming afterwards. There is clearly much progress to be made and I believe that by truly listening to the needs of older people and focusing on how we can harness the potential of our ageing population, Northern Ireland can become a great place to age.



Eddie Lynch

Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

Respect, Value and Protect

Vision

The Commissioner's vision is that "Northern Ireland is a great place to age".

Purpose

The Commissioner's purpose is:

"To be an authoritative and independent champion who safeguards and promotes the interests of older people."

The Commissioner has powers and duties afforded to him through the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to deliver the programme of work outlined in this corporate plan for 2016 - 2020, "Respect, Value and Protect".

Respect

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) will carry out its work with respect for the autonomy, rights and diversity of Northern Ireland's older people. COPNI promotes respect for older people and the elimination of discrimination against them.

As a society we need to respect older peoples'

- Knowledge and experience
- Individual needs and wishes, views and opinions
- Diversity
- Ability to make their own decisions
- Independence
- Ability and desire to remain fully connected to society

Value

COPNI will promote awareness of the many contributions older people make in Northern Ireland to their families, communities and society through their work, volunteering, faith and civic activities.

As a society we need to value older peoples'

- Contribution to society
- Continued economic contribution
- Contributions to family life, through caring roles, childcare, community and faith based volunteering
- Knowledge, skills, experience and opinions

Protect

COPNI will work to protect older people from all forms of abuse and help them to live their third age in safe, secure and compassionate environments.

As a society we need to better protect older people by

- Ensuring the United Nations Principles of Independence, Care, Participation, Self-fulfilment and Dignity are upheld
- Ensuring strong and fit for purpose regulation in care settings
- Introducing a single Adult Safeguarding Bill
- Developing early care and support interventions
- Looking at the needs of older people who are victims of crime and seeking better support for older people when they are victims of crime
- Raising awareness of financial abuse and scams
- Ending age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services

COPNI Priorities For Action 2016-2020: At a glance

The Commissioner will undertake both planned and reactive work throughout his term, some of which are planned projects and some of which will emerge as the term progresses. In addition to the specific planned projects outlined below, the Commissioner will also keep under close review all issues affecting the interests of, or services available to older people.

1. Supporting our ageing population by promoting positive ageing and ending age discrimination

A Programme for Government which prioritises older people

An Active-Ageing Strategy for Northern Ireland that is resourced & implemented

Ending age discrimination for older people in Northern Ireland

Older people are connected to their communities and do not experience loneliness and social isolation

Older people are supported to plan and have conversations about their third age

- Press Government for the introduction of anti age discrimination legislation
- Support community transport for older people, targeting those experiencing loneliness and isolation
- Protect pensions and improve benefit uptake
- Retain the winter fuel allowance
- Protect the Senior Smartpass
- Work with relevant authorities to support older people make plans

2. Better health and social care

Examine circumstances of concern in nursing and residential care of older people

Independently champion improvements for older people in the reforms of health and social care, policy and practice, including dementia care

- Carry out an investigation into reported failures of care in Dunmurry Manor Care Home
- Push for reform of Adult Social Care legislation and policy change to include examining the real cost of care for older people
- Pilot a “Care & Support Visit” to those over 75
- Examine contracts under which older people reside in care homes
- Hold a summit on dementia care and support for carers

3. Tackling financial abuse and scams and protecting older victims of crime

Ensure older people are better protected from all forms of crime, abuse and neglect

Conduct research into the experience of older victims of crime

- Introduction of an Adult Safeguarding Bill for Northern Ireland
- Financial abuse prevalence study
- Scamwise partnership
- Pilot a “First Responder Scheme”
- Work with financial institutions and the Office of Care and Protection

About the Commissioner and his Organisation

Older people in Northern Ireland lobbied government for the establishment of a Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland to be an independent champion for older people, who would safeguard and promote their interests. The government introduced legislation that set out a range of powers and duties for such a Commissioner and the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland was established in November 2011. Eddie Lynch is the second public appointment to the role of Commissioner and took up post in June 2016.

Established in a time of relative austerity the Commissioner's organisation has not been funded to a level envisaged in the original plans for the office. Every business plan developed since 2014 has had to be subsequently revised in light of further and ongoing cuts to the operating budget.

For the purposes of the development and writing of this corporate plan, it has been assumed that the office will continued to be funded to an appropriate level to enable the delivery of both the statutory duties of the Commissioner and to adequately inform the evidence base on which the Commissioner will base his advice and direction to Government / the Secretary of State, during his term of office.

Nevertheless, the COPNI organisation supports the Commissioner in the key duties of his role;-

- Promoting awareness of older people's issues
- Reviewing and advising government on the provision of laws, policies and practice in relation to older peoples' services
- Assisting and advocating for older people directly with public authorities.

Throughout the inaugural term the first Commissioner recruited staff to carry out the functions of the office. At present there are 12 permanent members of staff and 2 agency employees working across a number of functions.

The Commissioner's Team

The Commissioner's office is organised into a number of divisions;-

- Policy and Research
- Communications and Engagement
- Legal Office
- Human Resources
- Finance & Governance (including admin support and casework call handlers).

The policy priorities outlined in this plan and legal casework will be the main focus of the office during the Commissioner's term but like all similar organisations, the Commissioner's office deals with many more day-to-day tasks.

The Commissioner is approached on a regular basis to respond on a wide range of matters affecting older people. At the time of writing these include health and social care cuts, transport, visiting older people's groups and seeing first-hand the positive contributions older people make, crime and justice issues, equality, the ageing workforce, elder abuse, pensions and pensioner poverty and the closure of care homes and community hospitals.

Many older people's organisations ask the Commissioner to speak to their members, provide information about his role and work, or to address issues relating to older people that are currently in the news or are of concern to groups. These are valuable opportunities for the Commissioner to meet with a wide variety of older people from a range of backgrounds.

Informing policy makers and government

The Commissioner provides advice to Government on a range of issues in addition to the key priorities published in this Corporate Plan. The Commissioner responds to consultation papers and materials from public authorities on issues affecting older people ranging from cuts to budgets and continuing health care policy to emerging policy guidance and the strategic priorities of public authorities.

Responsive work is also carried out on a range of issues in addition to the Commissioner's published priorities for action. For the forthcoming term and in addition to the priorities listed under the Commissioner's statutory powers and duties, the Commissioner will remain interested in and advocate in order to:-

- Tackle pensioner poverty;
- Protect pensions and improve benefit uptake; and
- Retain the winter fuel allowance, advocate for extra financial assistance for older people on low incomes to reduce levels of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

The Commissioner's Office

COPNI's Chief Executive oversees the running of the office in accordance with all appropriate and proportionate governance required to meet the exacting standards of the management of public money.

The Commissioner appointed a new Audit and Risk Committee (ARAC) in April 2017 to advise him on governance issues and to provide independent assurance and objective review of the Commissioner's financial systems, information and internal control mechanisms. The Audit and Risk Assurance committee is chaired by Gerard Campbell and comprises Joe Campbell and Dolores O'Reilly.

The Committee meet quarterly and assist the Commissioner in his role as Accounting Officer, to ensure that assets are safeguarded, the risk of illegal or improper acts is reduced and confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial reporting is increased. The term of office for the Chair and committee members is 4 years, with the opportunity to extend for a further 4 year term.

The COPNI Annual Report and Statement of Financial Accounts is published annually and laid before the NI Assembly. Copies of the Annual Report and Statement of Financial Accounts for each year of operation of the inaugural term are published on the Commissioner's website at www.copni.org.

Advocacy and Legal Support for Older People and Mediation of Disputes

Many older people find it difficult to deal with public authorities, to make a complaint, to secure a service or to get their views listened to. Clear, factual information that empowers older people, together with advocacy when assistance is required is essential for older people to be able to exercise their rights, choices and interests.

The assistance that the Commissioner provides helps and empowers the individual older person to get resolution of the issues they face. It also ensures that the Commissioner is aware of many of the real challenges and problems which older people are dealing with and can advise government effectively about the changes they need to prevent the same problems from recurring.

In addition COPNI can intervene in disputes between older people and/or their families and any public authority. Ensuring that the concerns of older people are heard and constructively addressed is of paramount importance. In these situations COPNI can assist both the older person and the public authority in terms of alternative dispute resolution at the earliest possible stages of a dispute.

Policy and Research

Government creates, reviews and renews policy, programmes and services in a constant cycle. Individual older people, like their younger counterparts in the general public could not be expected to monitor and respond to all the proposed changes to government policy. COPNI's research and policy advice team maintain a watching brief across all government activity and respond to selected consultations on behalf of older people. Using in-house expertise, the research and independent evidence contributed by experts and engagement directly with older people, COPNI provides responses to those government consultations that relate directly to older people, or in which they are likely to have an active interest.

The Commissioner for Older People is a key statutory adviser to government on the interests of older people and increasingly COPNI's specific advice is sought, through inclusion on steering and working groups, or directly from government ministers and officials. The Commissioner will prioritise and respond to requests and deliver as much advice to government as possible.

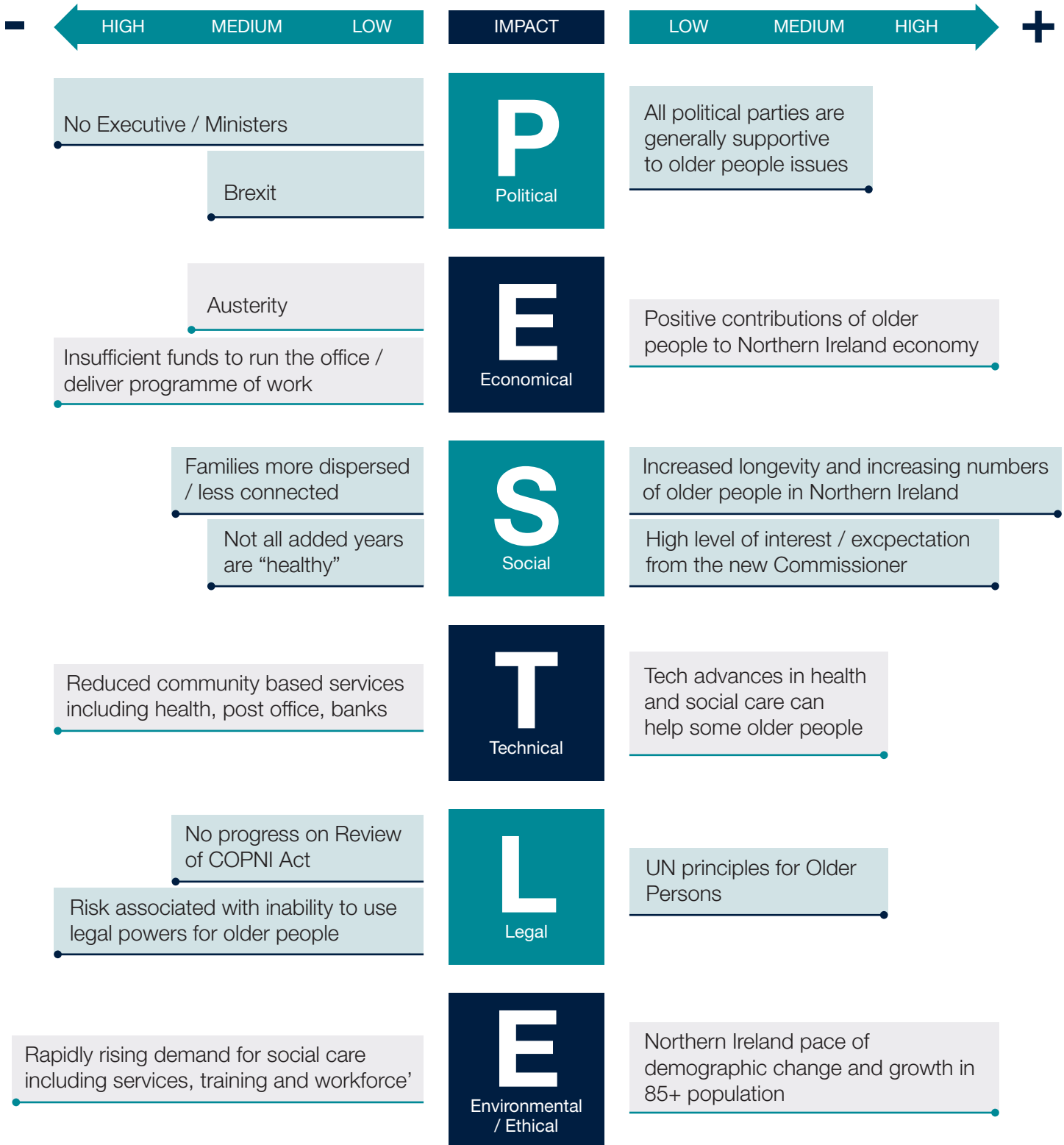
PESTLE Factors and Impact Analysis

At the point of drafting Respect, Value and Protect, COPNI undertook some horizon scanning and considered both the relevant PESTLE factors and their likely medium-term impact on the organisation during the term of the plan. A summary of these are set out opposite:

	Factor	Issues likely to impact on COPNI
1	Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Northern Ireland Executive sitting, no ministers and no committees operating • Brexit – Ongoing uncertainty of Northern Ireland’s status going forward which de-prioritises the much needed focus on older people’s issues • Key role of COPNI is advice to government
2	Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Austerity agenda and the fact that COPNI was only becoming established when the ongoing in-year budget cuts began to be applied • Challenging financial conditions affecting the Commissioner’s ability to deliver the statutory duties set out in the COPNI Act 2011 • New Commissioner with an ambitious corporate plan, unable to have impact / exercise all of his statutory powers and duties
3	Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased longevity and increasing numbers of 85+ year olds in Northern Ireland living with co-morbidities for longer • Modern medicine and health promotion has brought the life expectancy up; however the added years are not always ‘healthy’ added years • Policy of home as hub of care requires a nursing and social care workforce to be available in communities across Northern Ireland • Family unit and relatives are more geographically dispersed and families are less connected
4	Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancements in technology and the digital world represent pros and cons for older people • Access to services and reduction in community based services, post offices and banks
5	Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of COPNI Act • Risk associated with non-use of legal powers on behalf of older people • UN Principles for Older Persons 1991
6	Environmental / Ethical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Ireland demographic change and rate of increase in age 85+ population • Rapidly rising demand for social care – for service, to workforce, to training and health and social care budget

PESTLE Impact Map - Positive & Negative

The infographic below outlines COPNI's analysis of each of the PESTLE factors in terms of their likely impact on COPNI.



Review of Performance

Since COPNI was established in 2011, it has focused on delivering the corporate and business objectives set for the period. A full review of COPNI's overall performance during each of these years, as well as annual accounts, can be found in successive Annual Reports.

These can be accessed using this link:

<https://www.copni.org/about-us/governance>

The inaugural Commissioner, Claire Keatinge, compiled a report of advice to government delivered during her term of office.

This can be accessed here:

<https://www.copni.org/media/1120/the-commissioners-report.pdf>

Estimated Cost of the Corporate Plan

The estimated cost of the fulfilling all aspects of the Corporate Plan over the four years is between £3.5 million and £4 million. This figure may increase or decrease depending on the scope of activities. Funding for the plan is subject to grant in aid approved and supplied by the Department for Communities.

Northern Ireland Today

Our Ageing Population

The scale and pace of the demographic changes we are witnessing in our ageing population is unparalleled in human history. Right across the world, but particularly in developed western societies, people are living longer, healthier lives.

In Northern Ireland, we have 404,000 older people - a fifth of the population. By 2027 this is projected to increase to 518,000 older people by 2027 and within the next 30 years our ageing population will have increased by 58%.

In Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the world, the increased longevity of the population is driven by improved health, lifestyles, and the prevention and treatment of disease.

Society and government is facing a situation where a larger proportion of the population is likely to be economically inactive through retirement, the traditional tax base that supports the funding of government services is reducing, and the need for social care and support by older people is increasing.

The Age of Austerity

The ageing population is occurring at a time where there is ongoing pressures on the public purse.

Over the past few years, concerns have been growing among older people about how the fiscal position is impacting on what they can expect from public services as they age. Too often older people hear negative and often frightening stories in the media about issues that affect them including waiting times for health appointments and operations, crisis situations in our emergency departments, increasing winter fuel deaths and crimes against older people.

It is clear that expenditure will not be increasing at the same rate as the ageing population so the challenge for Government is to see how existing budgets can be spent more effectively. The budget limitations require innovation and fresh thinking to deliver services in a manner that can manage the changing demographics in our society. Older people must be involved in these choices.

Political Uncertainty

At the time of drafting this Corporate Plan, Northern Ireland has no working Executive in place. As an arm's length body of government this affects COPNI in terms of certainty around budget and approval of plans although most of our day-to-day operations can continue.

In addition to the local political situation, the recent vote by the UK to leave the European Union has also increased uncertainty in relation to how this may impact on public finances and especially in the border areas of Northern Ireland.

The Brexit referendum and particularly the social and political discourse arising from the outcome of the vote, highlighted a worrying and increasingly negative narrative about older people and their right to express political opinion. It is important that a stand is taken against those who will try to make complicated political issues simplistic and create divisive battles among generations and that Government works to ensure that during this uncertain time there remains a focus on supporting our older population when they need it.

Priorities for Action

1.1 A Programme for Government which prioritises older people

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against older people.

Older people deserve to have a decent quality of life, to be healthy and happy, to feel safe and warm, to remain connected to society and to feel valued and respected.

Government needs to respond in many ways to ensure the needs of older people are better met. The ageing population is one of the great success stories of modern times. It is vital that the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly make older people's issues a top priority. The Commissioner will work to protect existing policies that enhance the quality of life for older people as well as advocating for new policies that will support our ageing population and improve the quality of life for older people in Northern Ireland.

The Commissioner will do this by seeking high level commitments to older people by Government in a Programme for Government (PfG) which better reflects the needs and interests of older people as a distinct group.

ACTION

The Commissioner will meet with Executive Ministers, opposition party leaders, MLAs and officials to highlight the absence of older people from the PfG and to seek commitment for the inclusion of specific objectives targeted at improving the lives of older people.

OUTCOME

A revised Programme for Government is published for Northern Ireland which better reflects the issues and interests of older people and which the Commissioner can continue to use to hold the government to account.

1.2 An Active Ageing Strategy for Northern Ireland that is resourced and implemented

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against older people.

During the last Assembly term, the Commissioner chaired the Ageing Strategy Advisory Group, which provided advice to the then Office of the First and Deputy First Minister on the development of the Active Ageing Strategy.

The Strategy was published in May 2016 with commitments to twelve first phase actions for which finance is available, and six second phase actions for which finance is still to be secured.

It includes five strategic aims, Independence, Participation, Care, Self-Fulfilment, and Dignity. At the time of publication of this plan it is not yet clear how the Active Ageing Strategy will be either incorporated into a greater Social Strategy, or will stand alone with its implementation monitored separately.

Areas of particular interest for the Commissioner's term include promoting the development of age-friendly environments across all of Northern Ireland's Council areas.

ACTION

The Commissioner will use his statutory powers to influence and advise government to regularly review and ensure that the actions committed to in the Active Ageing Strategy are implemented and the intended outcomes delivered.

OUTCOME

Older people remain involved in civic and community life and are supported to do so.

1.3 Ending Age-Discrimination for older people in Northern Ireland

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against older people.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK or Ireland where older people are not protected in law against discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services. This means that older people can still be lawfully refused important services like medical treatment or financial products on the basis of age.

The Northern Ireland government finally committed to the introduction of legislation to protect older people from discrimination on the basis of their age during the previous Assembly term but time ran out before this legislation could be passed through our local political institutions.

It is completely unacceptable that older people in Northern Ireland are not afforded the same legal protection as their counterparts in England, Wales, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland and therefore it is vital that this legislation is introduced as a matter of urgency so that older people can receive this additional protection.

In addition to pressing government for the introduction of this legislation, the Commissioner will also highlight the positive contribution that older people make to society.

ACTION

The Commissioner will press government and officials for the introduction of legislation which will prevent discrimination against older people in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

OUTCOME

Older people are not discriminated against on the basis of their age.

1.4 Older people are connected to their communities and do not experience loneliness and social isolation

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must promote an awareness of matters relating to the interests of older people and of the need to safeguard those interests.

Older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation or loneliness as a result of losing friends and family, mobility or income. Social isolation and loneliness impact upon individuals' quality of life and well-being, adversely affecting their health. It is important that as a society we value the work of older people's groups and organisations and their important role.

The provision of the 60+ and 65+ Senior Smartpasses means that older people are able to get out to the shops, supporting the local economy, visit family and friends, volunteer in their communities and avoid feelings of isolation and loneliness.

However, many older people find it difficult to get out and about because suitable bus times and routes are not available to them and they rely on community transport services. These services are essential in enabling older people to lead independent and active lives. The Commissioner will;-

- Advocate for improved transport services for older people living in rural communities
- Promote and protect the benefits of the Senior Smartpass for older people
- Advise government and other organisations on the need to improve access to health appointments for older people
- Protect pensions and improve benefit uptake, increasing income security and preventing poverty
- Promote the retention of the Winter Fuel Allowance
- Promote and support groups and organisations that help increase social inclusion of older people
- Welcome and endorse programmes that help older people with digital / IT literacy in order to better connect with family and friends

ACTION

The Commissioner will advocate for services which enable older people to remain connected to society.

OUTCOME

Older people in Northern Ireland are able to access the social activities, services and support they need, when they need it.

1.5 Older people are supported to plan and have conversations about their “third age”

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must promote an awareness of matters relating to the interests of older persons and of the need to safeguard those interests.

Throughout the course of our lives we make many plans, especially during our working years, when we may be juggling the competing priorities of work life and responsibilities at home.

As we age it is even more important to consider planning for our “third age”. Many of the problems and challenges older people experience could be significantly lessened if we as a society, and as individuals, did some more planning about how we will live from retirement to end-of life.

Some people find it difficult to consider their needs as they age and don't want to face tough choices until life events like illness, injury or bereavement force them to. The Commissioner wants to promote a much more positive aspect to this kind of planning. Many services are available to older people and there are a range of choices about many different aspects of life for example;-

- When and how to give up work
- Ensuring you have the best available financial security
- Keeping active in your community
- Where and how you live, and when and how to make transitions
- Health and well being
- Preventing age related conditions and coping with them when they arise
- Ensuring that family know your wishes
- Making legal protections, like powers of attorney, appointeeships for Benefits, wills and advanced directives about your health.

ACTION

The Commissioner will work with relevant public authorities to encourage older people to plan for their third age, from working and pensions to having more difficult conversations about Wills and Powers of Attorney.

OUTCOME

Older people in Northern Ireland are able to better understand the choice and control over the decisions which impact most on their lives.

2.1 Use the Commissioner's Powers of Investigation to examine circumstances of concern in nursing and residential care of older people

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the interests of older people / The Commissioner must keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for older persons by relevant authorities.

In a report published in November 2014, entitled 'Changing the Culture of Care Provision in Northern Ireland', the inaugural Commissioner made 14 recommendations to the then Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety on how standards of care for older people could be improved.

In October 2015, the Commissioner again highlighted to the Health Committee the perceived weaknesses in the system of care and protection for older people in nursing and residential care settings and asked them "what will it take for the required changes to be made in Northern Ireland?"

Following concerns being raised with COPNI about the standard of care provided to residents in a Northern Ireland care home, the Commissioner commenced an investigation into the care, treatment and experience of older people living in the home, since it opened. COPNI will seek and analyse evidence from Relevant Authorities, directly from older people, their families, carers, employees (present and past), and officials working in the Relevant Authorities and the care home owners.

The Commissioner considers that the responses given to the previous Commissioner's statutory advice to be weak, slow in pace and uncoordinated. The investigation will be a time-bound project, the result of which will be formal advice to government and to the Relevant Authorities involved. This will include the publication of any findings or evidence of poor care and treatment of older people, uncovered during the investigation.

ACTION

The Commissioner will complete the investigation and publish recommendations on the current policy, practice and regulation in nursing homes in Northern Ireland. The Commissioner will also review the legislation that underpins the powers and duties of the Regulator with a view to making appropriate advice on change.

OUTCOME

Older people in nursing and residential care in Northern Ireland are protected by robust inspection and enforcement procedures, fit for purpose legislation in a society with zero tolerance of unacceptable standards of care.

2.2 Independently champion improvements for older people in the reforms of health and social care, policy and practice, including dementia care.

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the interests of older people / The Commissioner must keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for older persons by relevant authorities.

Adult Social Care comprises of a range of services including domiciliary care, residential and nursing care, respite for carers, day care, community meals and the provision of aids and adaptations. At this time Health and Social Care faces financial pressures across the UK despite the protection given to health by the UK Treasury. All of the Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland have experienced difficulty in making efficiency cuts, breaking even, maintaining services and avoiding deficits.

Reform in Northern Ireland needs to be underpinned by robustly evidenced analysis setting out the “real” cost of adult social care across a range of settings including residential care, nursing care, domiciliary care, dementia care and older people receiving Continuing Health Care. This analysis should further inform a review of the regional tariff for the different types of care to ensure older people are receiving the best care possible.

The Commissioner also remains very concerned about examples of older people living in care homes who have been threatened with or served notice of termination of contract due to a breakdown in relationships between care home representatives and resident’s relatives. This type of practice cannot continue.

ACTION

The Commissioner will;-

- Continue to push for reform of existing Adult Social Care legislation in Northern Ireland and clarification on policy regarding Continuing Health Care
- Develop a research proposal to determine the “real cost of care”
- Pilot a “Care and Support Visit”, offered to those age 75 and over
- Examine the contractual arrangements for older people living in care home settings
- Work with the relevant authorities to progress the Review of Adult Care and Support
- Hold a Summit on Dementia Care Provision and support for Carers
- Influence the provision of services and the built environment for those living with dementia

OUTCOME

Older people will have confidence that the social care and support they need will be available to them and their rights and dignity are protected at all times.

3.1 Ensure older people are better protected from all forms of abuse and neglect

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the interests of older people.

COPNI has observed a rising trend in certain types of abuse committed against older people through the casework undertaken by the legal team in areas such as financial abuse, family disputes over wills and inheritance and powers of attorney. This abuse is often committed by a “trusted person” and can leave the victim feeling isolated and without anyone they can trust.

Scams and the targeting of older people by rogue traders are on the increase. Often, the impact of these crimes stretches further than the financial loss to the older person, even precipitating a move into residential or nursing care.

Unfortunately abuse against older people is wider than financial abuse, with victims also suffering from physical harm, neglect, emotional and sexual abuse. Northern Ireland remains the only part of the United Kingdom which does not have legislation in place to adequately protect older people.

In order to help protect older people, the Commissioner will;

- Re-iterate the need for an Adult Safeguarding Bill for Northern Ireland
- Work with the Utility Regulator and PSNI to introduce a new scheme to reduce the impact of doorstep crime/rogue traders
- Explore opportunities with the financial sector to improve protections for older people
- Examine the protection offered to older people by those statutory agencies who monitor their financial situation including the Office of Care and Protection and the Department for Communities
- Continue to be an active partner in the Northern Ireland Scamwise Partnership

ACTION

The Commissioner will commission and publish an examination of the prevalence of financial abuse of older people in Northern Ireland.

OUTCOME

Older people in Northern Ireland feel safe and secure and are better protected from all forms of abuse.

3.2 Examine the experience of older victims of crime

COPNI STATUTORY DUTY

The Commissioner must keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the interests of older people.

Whilst statistics show that older people are less likely to be victims of crime, typically crimes committed against older people in Northern Ireland were less likely to result in a conviction and prosecution. The inaugural Commissioner highlighted this to the PSNI and to the Policing Board, resulting in the introduction of targets into the Policing Plan.

However the reality is that whilst incidents of crime against older people are not high, the impact of those crimes is significant. Crimes committed against older people, particularly burglary, tend to be intrusions into what should be a safe space or place. Following on from the first term of office, the Commissioner will seek to understand the experience of an older person when they have become the victim of a crime – from the incident, through reporting and investigation to prosecution.

Protecting older people from the effects of crime is extremely important to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner will;-

- Seek support of academics to undertake primary research on older victims of crime in Northern Ireland
- Work with criminal justice agencies and the voluntary and community sector to better support older people who have been victims of crime
- Work with voluntary organisations, the PSNI and the Department of Justice to pilot the introduction of a “First Responder Scheme” to provide care and support to older victims of crime in the immediate aftermath of a crime.

ACTION

The Commissioner will publish research on the impact of an older person becoming a victim of crime. He will continue to work through partnerships with criminal justice agencies, relevant authorities and voluntary and community sector organisations to better support older people who have been a victim of crime.

OUTCOME

Older people in Northern Ireland feel safe and secure and are better protected from all forms of crime.

Appendix 1:

UN Principles for Older Persons

The United Nations Principles for Older Persons were adopted by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 46/91) on 16 December 1991. Governments were encouraged to incorporate them into their national programmes whenever possible. There are 18 principles, which can be grouped under five themes: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity.

The Principles acknowledge:

- 1.** The tremendous diversity in the situations of older persons, not only between countries but within countries and between individuals;
- 2.** That individuals are reaching an advanced age in greater numbers and in better health than ever before;
- 3.** That scientific research disproves many stereotypes about inevitable and irreversible decline with age;
- 4.** That in a world characterized by an increasing number and proportion of older persons, opportunities must be provided for willing and capable older persons to participate in and contribute to the ongoing activities of society;
- 5.** That the strain on family life in both developed and developing countries requires support for those providing care to frail older persons.

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland is legally obliged to have regard to these Principles and is pleased to do so. They are Principles which should be considered by all organisations and regarded as a framework for their treatment of older people.

Independence

- 1.** Older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care through the provision of income, family and community support and self-help.
- 2.** Older persons should have the opportunity to work or to have access to other income-generating opportunities.
- 3.** Older persons should be able to participate in determining when and at what pace withdrawal from the labour force takes place.
- 4.** Older persons should have access to appropriate educational and training programmes.
- 5.** Older persons should be able to live in environments that are safe and adaptable to personal preferences and changing capacities.
- 6.** Older persons should be able to reside at home for as long as possible.

Participation

1. Older persons should remain integrated in society, participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.
2. Older persons should be able to seek and develop opportunities for service to the community and to serve as volunteers in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities.
3. Older persons should be able to form movements or associations of older persons.

Care

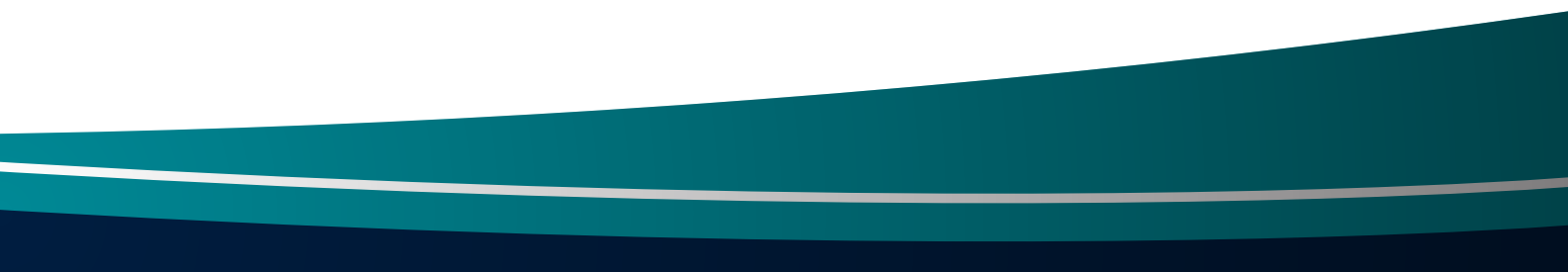
1. Older persons should benefit from family and community care and protection in accordance with each society's system of cultural values.
2. Older persons should have access to health care to help them to maintain or regain the optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well-being and to prevent or delay the onset of illness.
3. Older persons should have access to social and legal services to enhance their autonomy, protection and care.
4. Older persons should be able to utilize appropriate levels of institutional care providing protection, rehabilitation and social and mental stimulation in a humane and secure environment.
5. Older persons should be able to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms when residing in any shelter, care or treatment facility, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy and for the right to make decisions about their care and the quality of their lives.

Self-Fulfillment

1. Older persons should be able to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential.
2. Older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

Dignity

1. Older persons should be able to live in dignity and security and be free of exploitation and physical or mental abuse.
2. Older persons should be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, disability or other status, and be valued independently of their economic contribution.



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