

FOI Publication Scheme

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Updated October 2020

1) **Introduction**

This publication scheme is a guide to the information routinely published by The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) It gives a description of the classes or types of information that are routinely available from COPNI.

How do I get information?

A wide range of the information can be found on our website at <http://www.copni.org>. Where information is not on the website or if you cannot access the website, COPNI will arrange either to have the material sent to you, or for you to visit COPNI's offices, if that is easier.

In most cases immediate access can be provided via email but in cases where the information is being sent out to you by post, this will be undertaken within 5 working days of receipt of your request. Should you seek a visit to our offices, or should this be required due to the nature of the information, you will be contacted within 5 working days to arrange a mutually convenient appointment.

COPNI can also make information available in a range of alternative formats where practical.

Information held by COPNI, which is not provided under this Scheme, can be requested in writing and its provision will be considered in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, within 20 working days of the request.

How much will the information cost?

COPNI's aim is to make as much information as possible, freely available and readily accessible. There may be a charge for photocopying, postage, and packing of hard copies, particularly where large volumes of material are involved. Where this is the case, costs will be kept to a minimum and you will be advised in advance of the material being sent. Payment will be requested in advance of the material being provided.

Anyone seeking information that cannot be found on the website should contact COPNI at:

The Commissioner for Older People
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP
Tel: 028 90 890892

Or simply email COPNI at info@copni.org

Feedback

We have published this scheme to fulfill our obligations under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and also to ensure that you, the public, are more aware of the type of information which is available from COPNI.

The purpose of the Act is to promote greater openness by public authorities. It is important therefore that the scheme meets your needs. Our aim is therefore to make the information easy for you to find and use. We welcome suggestions for additional information that you feel should be included or how we can make the information easier to obtain. We would also welcome suggestions as to how the publications themselves could be improved.

Any questions, comments, suggestions, complaints or more information about this scheme should be sent in writing to COPNI's Information Officer:

Data Protection Officer
The Commissioner for Older People NI
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

Tel: 028 90 890892
Email: info@copni.org

2) **Your right to information**

In most cases you will be able to obtain the information you seek simply by consulting COPNI's website or contacting us (see contact details above).

In the event that you do need to seek to obtain information from us under the Freedom of Information Act, here is what you should do:

- Make your request in writing or email
- The request should contain:
 - details about the specific information you are seeking.
 - details about who you are and how you can be contacted. In the event of complex requests or potentially sensitive information a telephone number at which you can be contacted would be helpful.
 - how you would like to receive the information, e.g. as a copy, summary or by physically inspecting the record. Please identify any accessibility requirements you may have and if you need to receive the information in an alternative format, eg, large print, tape, Braille, etc.

Make your request to our Information Officer (details above).

Our response

COPNI will respond to your request promptly and, in any event, within 20 working days.

3) **Making a complaint**

Overall responsibility for the operation of COPNI's policies and procedures with regard to the provision of information under Freedom of Information, Data Protection and access to Government legislation is held by COPNI's Chief Executive.

If you have a complaint about COPNI's information policies or the operation of this Publication Scheme, please write to or email:

The Chief Executive
The Commissioner for Older People NI
Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

Telephone 028 90 890892
Email: info@copni.org

4) Further information about your rights

Further information about Freedom of Information and Data Protection can be obtained from:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Information Line: 01625 545745
Website: www.ico.gov.uk

Or locally

The Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland
3rd Floor
14 Cromac Place,
Belfast
BT7 2JB

Telephone: 028 9027 8757 / 0303 123 1114
Email: ni@ico.org.uk

5) Classes of information

This section of the publication scheme lists the classes of information that COPNI produces both internally and externally. The classification is based on the guidance contained in the Information Commissioners model publication scheme for Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs).

The information includes material which has been conventionally published in hard copy, material that is available on the website or, on request, in paper copy, and information which we use internally, for example, employment policies and information used for corporate governance.

COPNI has an ongoing programme to place much of the information on its website and much of it already is. Any of the information, whether on the website or not, can be made readily available to the public.

Our information has been classified under the following headings:

- Who we are and what we do
- What We Spend and How We Spend It

- What are COPNI's Priorities and How are We Doing
- How COPNI Makes Decisions
- Policies and Procedures
- Lists and Registers
- The Services we offer

6) **Who we are and what we do**

Our role and remit

COPNI is an executive non departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for Communities. COPNI was established during November 2011 under the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The legislation can be accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nia/2011/1/contents>

COPNI will speak with a strong voice on the issues that concern older people and about the challenges they face in leading dignified fulfilled lives. COPNI will strive to recognise the positive contribution older people make to our society, whether in public, family, employment, volunteering, community and faith lives.

COPNI will be an authoritative and independent champion for older people who will look to safeguard and promote their interests.

COPNI's senior management team consists of a Commissioner, the Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Policy Advice. COPNI has an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee consisting of three members who provide independent assurance and objective review of COPNI's financial systems, financial information and internal control mechanisms.

What we spend and how we spend it.

Financial Information

The general framework within which we manage our financial arrangements is set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum which was agreed with DfC, our original Sponsoring department.

Details of COPNI's finances are contained in our yearly Annual Report and Financial Statements which is published on the website. The Annual Report contains a full Remuneration Report which sets out details of payments and allowances to Commissioners and senior staff.

COPNI's financial system can report on expenditure by individual objective, which may allow the identification of specific projects or events. Specific requests may be made through our Data Protection Officer.

Although not civil servants, Commission staff are graded and paid on the basis of Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) rates at a fixed point. Staff have equivalent general terms and conditions and have access to NICS pension arrangements. Staff allowances, such as payment for travel and subsistence are also based on NICS arrangements. NICS pay scales and subsistence rates are available on the DoF website.

Corporate and Business Plans

COPNI's Corporate and annual Business Plans can be found on the website. COPNI's performance against key targets is reported each year in the Annual Report. The Annual Report and Accounts can be found on the website.

7) How COPNI Makes Decisions

Senior Management Meetings

COPNI's senior management team meets each month to review performance against the business plan objectives and report on key performance indicators. Minutes of each meeting are approved by the Commissioner.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Minutes

Approved minutes are published on the website following the meeting at which they are approved. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meets quarterly in March, June, September and December. A meeting to approve the Annual Report and Accounts is held in October.

8) Policies and Procedures

COPNI has a series of policies and procedures for the conduct of COPNI business and for the provision of services. The following information is available on request from COPNI's Information Officer.

Employment Policies and Procedures

- Policies and procedures concerning the recruitment, selection and development of staff including job descriptions and personnel specifications used for recruitment purposes;
- Policies and procedures giving effect to COPNI's commitment to equality of opportunity - Equal Opportunities Policy, Harassment Policy, Career break policy, Job-share procedures, Flexible Working Policy;
- Learning and development policies;

- Policies for regulating the conduct of staff and dealing with their concerns - grievance policy, disciplinary policy, Code of Conduct,
- Policies for the protection of COPNI staff and others - Health and Safety Policy, evacuation procedure, Managing Absence policy.

This information will not include information about particular members of staff and other individuals.

Other information and guidance on staff terms and conditions of employment can be found in the NICS Staff Handbook which is available from the DoF website.

Records management and personal data policies

COPNI's website includes the Freedom of Information Policy and the Data Protection policy which detail the procedures for responding to requests made under the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

COPNI has a records management policy and this is available on request.

9) Lists and Registers

Asset registers and information on the asset register

COPNI's only capital assets are its IT equipment and furniture and fittings. Information on its assets are reported each year in the notes to its Financial Statements, contained in the Annual Report which is available on COPNI's website.

Disclosure logs, including the register of gifts and hospitality, any register of interest kept and other lists required by law

COPNI maintains Registers of Member and Senior Staff Interests and a Gifts and Hospitality Register, which are inspected annually by the NIAO and available for public inspection upon request.

10) The services we offer.

The Commissioner has regulatory responsibilities which include both duties and general powers.

Commissioner's duties include:

1. To promote awareness of the interests of older people in Northern Ireland.
2. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of the law as it affects the interests of older people.
3. To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided to older people by "relevant authorities".
4. To promote the provision of opportunities for and the elimination of discrimination against older people.
5. To encourage best practice in the treatment of older people.
6. To promote positive attitudes towards older people and encourage participation by older people in public life.

7. To advise the Assembly, the Secretary of State and a relevant authority on matters concerning the interests of older people.
8. To take reasonable steps to communicate with older people.

Commissioner's general powers include;

1. Make arrangements for research or educational activities concerning the interests of older people.
2. Issue guidance on best practice in relation to any matter concerning the interests of older people.
3. Conduct investigations for the purpose of any of his functions.
4. Compile and publish information concerning the interests of older people.
5. Provide advice or information on any matter concerning the interests of older people.

The Commissioner uses these legal powers and duties to celebrate ageing and increased life expectancy; to find out what matters to older people; to make recommendations to Government for changes to the law or practice regarding the interests of older people; to challenge discrimination against older people; and, to promote positive attitudes towards older people.

Responding to consultations relating to issues of interest and importance to older people Public bodies issue a wide range of policy and services documentation for consultation every year. Where these policies have a particular impact on older people, COPNI develops a response that safeguards and promotes their interests.

Respond to the individual needs of older people

COPNI's office provides information, support and assistance for older people. Staff are trained to answer queries and support older people by:

- Putting them in touch with organisations best placed to assist them to obtain the support they need.
- Providing information about services in their locality.
- Assisting them where they have been experiencing difficulties with a public service body or provider.
- Supporting them to make a formal complaint and then monitoring how this is handled.
- In certain circumstances providing direct assistance.

At all times, care is exercised to ensure that there is no duplication when work has already been carried out by, or should be transferred to, an alternative or more appropriate body or organisation. When appropriate, the Commissioner may partner with another public body to ensure that concerns are fully addressed.

Publications

All published reports from COPNI are available from COPNI's website. Hardcopies are available on request to the Information Officer (details above).

Media releases

All news releases made by the Commissioner are available from COPNI's website.