



# *Achieving better outcomes for older people*



**Our ambition for the NI Assembly 2016-21**

# About Age NI and the Age Sector

Age NI is the leading charity for older people in Northern Ireland. Our vision is a world where everyone can love later life, and our mission is to help people enjoy a better later life. To achieve this, we had 315,000 direct engagements with older people through:

- ✓ **Advice & Information:** providing advice and information to over 10,000 older people;
- ✓ **Care:** Providing over 500,000 hours of residential, domiciliary and day care to older people alongside bespoke projects;
- ✓ **Policy:** Campaigning and lobbying the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly on issues of importance to older people;
- ✓ **Age Sector Networks:** Supporting the development and capacity of 11 Older People's Networks across Northern Ireland;
- ✓ **Engagement:** Innovating and providing new approaches to ensure that the voice of older people, including lesser heard older people, influence decisions.

The 11 Age Sector Networks supported by Age NI strengthen the voice of older people and provide a range of essential services including befriending, good morning calls, luncheon clubs, advice and support services, physical activity clubs, arts projects, and networking opportunities<sup>1</sup>.

## Rights and older people

Older people have a right to have full enjoyment and protection of their human rights. They have protection of domestic human rights and equality laws, including the Human Rights Act (1998) and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) as well as a body of international human rights conventions and instruments<sup>2</sup>. Explicit references to older people in binding international human rights instruments are, however, scarce and older people are largely invisible in monitoring and reporting processes.

The UN Principles for Older Persons is a declaration rather than a binding international document and governments are encouraged to “incorporate them into their national programmes whenever possible”<sup>3</sup>. The UN Principles sets out 18 principles under the headings: Independence; Participation; Care; Self-fulfilment; Dignity.

Age NI believes that the UN Principles which underpin the Active Ageing Strategy should also meaningfully underpin the new Programme for Government. Implemented effectively, they offer a credible route to ensuring that the Programme for Government can deliver improved outcomes for older people, and us all as we age, over the next 5 years.

# Delivering a better future for us all



One of the biggest challenges facing the Northern Ireland government is how it will prepare and plan for an increasingly ageing population, at a time of significant financial pressures and competing demands for help and support.

We must act now to deliver a better future for us all as we age.

**We are calling on the NI Assembly and the NI Executive to #Act4Age.**



**“ I would like to see all the government agencies working together to give me the support I need to live at home for as long as possible”**

### **Key Facts**

- There are 285,900 people over 65 years living in Northern Ireland<sup>4</sup>.
- The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by 74.4% between 2014 and 2039<sup>5</sup>.
- It is expected that almost one in four of the population will be aged 65 years and over by mid-2039<sup>6</sup>.
- The number of people aged 85 years and older is expected to double between 2014 and 2039, from 34,400 people to 88,600 people<sup>7</sup>.
- 1 in 3 older people feel they have no-one to turn to for help and support<sup>8</sup>.
- Over the next 50 years, Northern Ireland will be almost £25 billion better off because of our ageing population<sup>9</sup>.

### **Outcome for older people**

We want older people, now and in the future, to live a life that is dignified and fulfilled, with government policies and actions focused on protecting and promoting their independence, care, participation and self-fulfilment.

# A co-ordinated joined up response

Living longer is a cause for celebration, as is our vibrant and diverse older population. Lots of older people lead fulfilling lives, actively contributing to the economy and society, supporting their families, neighbours and communities through volunteering, caring for others, providing childcare and working.

For many older people, however, the picture of later life is more stark, with four in ten older people telling us they struggle on their income, four in ten older people who report feeling lonely, and 75% of older people stating they are concerned that they will be affected by spending cuts<sup>10</sup>.

Longer lives represent many opportunities and challenges for our society, for employers and the economy, for our welfare system, housing as well as our health and social care system. Older people want to be part of the solution, helping to shape, co-design, and make the changes that are needed to make Northern Ireland a great place to grow older.

There is a significant programme of work ahead to address the concerns of older people, tackle the outdated, ageist attitudes that persist and ensure that the United Nations Principles for Older Persons underpin the development and delivery of government policy for older people in Northern Ireland.

Age NI is calling on the NI Executive and Assembly to make ageing a cross cutting priority in the Programme for Government, with clear actions and outcomes identified on improving the lives of older people.

## **By 2021 we want to see:**

- Improved health and well being of older people; with older people experiencing good health for longer, feeling less lonely and isolated and more connected to their community
- A clear focus on delivering improved outcomes for older people, with a determined shift to investing in prevention and early intervention, enabling people to live independently, with dignity and security, free from poverty, having choice and control over how they manage their life.
- Older people at the heart of government policy, actively engaged in shaping and monitoring impact, having their voices heard and their rights respected and protected.

## **What needs to happen now:**

- Ageing must be a cross cutting theme in the next Programme for Government
- The Programme for Government must identify clear outcomes on improving the lives of older people
- Older people must be involved in monitoring the impact of the Programme for Government on the issues that affect older people now and in the future.

# Staying well, feeling good



“We should be treated as friends, not robots to be fed and watered, medicated and left sitting all day”

## Key facts

- 69% of people over 75 years have a long standing illness<sup>11</sup>.
- There are 19,000 people living with dementia in Northern Ireland, with the numbers expected to rise to 23,000 people by 2017 and around 60,000 people by 2051<sup>12</sup>.
- People who live in the least deprived areas could expect to live in good health for approximately 13 years longer than people who live in the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland<sup>13</sup>.
- There has been a reported increase in the number of cases of alleged abuse of older people, rising from 1715 in 2011-12 to 3023 in 2013-14<sup>14</sup>.

## Outcome for older people

We want everyone in later life to enjoy better health for longer, to remain as independent as possible and to receive the best quality, personalised care in later life.

# Staying well, feeling good

By 2025 the numbers of older people aged 85 and over will increase by 25,000 or 83%, with women at this age significantly outnumbering men.

Although life expectancy is increasing, healthy life expectancy is not increasing at the same rate. People are spending longer living with conditions that seriously affect their quality of life and current trends in obesity and other lifestyle-related diseases will also increase the need for care, leading to increasing pressure on our health and social care system.

There is a significant amount of work to be done to address concerns about the availability of care to support people in their own home; the quality and standards of care in hospitals and care homes; the lack of clarity around eligibility for social care and the absence of clear guidance on payment for continuing health care outside a hospital setting.

Ensuring that older people are engaged in all decisions made about their care and support is vital, and safeguards, including the provision of advocacy support, should be available to older people, particularly for those who no longer have close family involved or where there are concerns about their capacity to make decisions.

The failure to invest in low level and preventative services, such as domiciliary care, results in an increasingly fragile and unresponsive social care system that is not meeting the needs of older people now and is not sustainable in the longer term<sup>15</sup>.

Age NI believes that social care services, provided through a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations, act as a lynchpin to prevent and address pressures elsewhere in the health and social care system. Innovative work in Cornwall, Living Well, is delivering improved, positive outcomes for a range of stakeholders, including, for the cohort involved 20% improvement in their wellbeing and in the social capital of those older people; a fall of 41% in all acute hospital costs; a fall of 8% in social care costs<sup>16</sup>.

## By 2021 we want to see:

- A clear shift towards prioritising funding for low level, preventative services and care at home
- A new legislative framework for adult social care, based on human rights principles, providing clarity on entitlement and eligibility on access to services and support.
- A single Adult Safeguarding Bill, offering greater legal protection to older people who experience abuse.
- The development and implementation of a fair, sustainable and effective model of funding social care following a public debate on the matter.

## What needs to happen now:

- The development of a regional prevention strategy, focused on promoting the independence, health and wellbeing of older people, reducing inequalities and supporting older people to stay well and feel good.
- Robust and responsive regulation and inspection systems that actively involves older people in the process to ensure that care promotes the dignity and rights of older people.
- The delivery of a quality, integrated health and social care system which recognises the rights, aspirations and diversity of us all and is based on the right to live a full life, with dignity, independence, security and choice.
- Opportunities to test new models which aim to improve the wellbeing of older people, such as Living Well.

# Tackling pensioner poverty



“I am sorry to say I don’t have enough money and so I have to cut back on things like going out and meeting people. I can’t afford any activities and I’m not able to go on a day out”

## Key Facts

- After Housing Costs, around 17% pensioners, 51,000 people, were in absolute poverty in 2013-14<sup>17</sup>.
- After Housing Costs, 17% of pensioner couples living on their own were in relative poverty<sup>18</sup>.
- Pensioners without an occupational/personal pension were over three times more likely to be in relative poverty compared to those with some occupational/personal pension<sup>19</sup>.
- Older pensioners aged 75 years or older had approximately a quarter less income than those under 75 years<sup>20</sup>.
- Households headed by older people were much more likely to be living in fuel poverty than other households in 2011<sup>21</sup>.

## Outcome for older people

We want current and future pensioners to have enough money from state and private sources to live comfortably and to participate fully and with dignity in society.

# Tackling pensioner poverty

Poverty in later life means a miserable existence which can lead to ill health and isolation. The positive news that pensioner poverty has reduced requires more detailed analysis as the poorest pensioners have seen no real improvement in their income. Official statistics show that the overall change in pensioners' weekly income over the past 10 years has been minimal in real terms, and reveal little about the lived experiences of older people in poverty<sup>22</sup>.

Despite older people being entitled to a range of means tested benefits designed to increase their income, many do not claim because they are not aware they are eligible for benefits, have concerns about the process and may be reluctant to ask for help. As indicated in the NI Audit Report on the Uptake of Benefits by Pensioners in 2011, much more needs to be done to reach all pensioners who are entitled to benefits<sup>23</sup>.

Older people can expect to face many significant events in later life which create new financial challenges which they will not necessarily have prepared for, such as bereavement, paying for care, and new needs due to changing health. Nearly one in four (23%) older people tell us that they are struggling to afford essential items such as food, gas and electricity and 50% tell us that, while they can afford these essentials they have no money left for extras<sup>24</sup>. Older people on low incomes have to make difficult choices about how to stretch limited resources. Some forego items or opportunities that most people take for granted. Many fear for their ability to make ends meet and are anxious about the cost of care they need now or in the future.

Almost half (46%) of households experiencing fuel poverty are older households, with older people more likely to occupy dwellings that fail to meet acceptable standards<sup>25</sup>. Health implications of fuel poverty are also more serious for this age cohort, with older people at greater risk of respiratory disease, coronary events and accidental hypothermia<sup>26</sup>.

New rules around eligibility for the State pension are likely to result in women working for longer and, for some women, more anxiety around ensuring they have financial plans in place for their retirement. Finding suitable employment after the age of 50 years can be a challenge with implications for income in later years. With changing circumstances in later life, such as caring responsibilities or health difficulties, it is important that workplaces adopt more flexible work practices and that expert financial advice and guidance is available.

Scams are a major threat to older people's financial security and overall health and well being, with evidence that older people may be especially at risk of becoming a victim at particular times because of personal circumstances, such as isolation, cognitive impairment, bereavement and financial pressures. Older people may also experience financial abuse carried out by someone they know including a relative, neighbour or carer.

## What we want to see by 2021

- Pensioner poverty halved and every older person who is entitled to extra help due to their low income actually receiving it.
- Flexible working practices which support older adults in employment.
- Provision of early advice and guidance around retirement planning.

## What needs to happen now:

- The production of a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy which recognises and addresses the persistent nature of pensioner poverty.
- The introduction of financial "MOTs" and benefit checks as people approach retirement, at the point of retirement and at key transition points.
- The establishment of statutory targets for older households under the Affordable Warmth Scheme.
- The introduction of targeted measures to help older adults who are seeking to enter, return or remain in work through training and increased opportunities as well as tackling discrimination and ageist attitudes.
- A co-ordinated approach to tackling scams, fraud and financial abuse experienced by older people.
- Continued prioritisation of the Benefit Uptake programme and the proactive targeting of older people on claiming benefits they are entitled to.

# Equal and engaged citizens



“We are not the future, so I feel we are not listened to”

## Key facts:

- 50% of older people agreed that people make negative assumptions about them because of their age<sup>27</sup>.
- 60% of older people are aware of instances where older people have been treated with less dignity and respect when accessing services because of their age<sup>28</sup>.
- Older patients are less likely to be referred for surgical intervention for cancer, heart disease and stroke<sup>29</sup>.
- Up to 50% of older people in residential care have clinically severe depression, yet only 10%-15% receive any active treatment<sup>30</sup>.
- Older people often pay higher premiums or may not be able to access cover at all for car or travel insurance<sup>31</sup>.

## Outcome for older people

We want a world where older people are valued as equal citizens and are active participants in society, respected for their experience and the contribution they make to their family and community.

# Equal and engaged citizens

Older people contribute to the economy each year through work, caring and volunteering but face barriers including outdated and ageist perceptions of older age, poor transport links, particularly in rural areas, and digital exclusions which prevent many from having a fulfilling, independent later life.

Older people in Northern Ireland experience ageism, inequality, discrimination and breaches of their human rights in a number of ways. This includes not being given adequate opportunity to participate in decisions about their life; inequality of access to a range of services including health and social care services, financial services, facilities for transport and travel, or retail services; abuse and neglect.

Age NI has campaigned for over 13 years to secure the extension of age discrimination legislation to goods, facilities and services and believe that this is vital to obtaining effective protection and promotion of the rights of older people in Northern Ireland. In contrast, age discrimination legislation is already in place in GB and the Republic of Ireland. Older people are increasingly concerned and frustrated with the lack of progress made on extending age discrimination legislation to goods, facilities and services.

The publication of the Active Ageing Strategy in January 2016, while welcome, is only the first step in delivering positive outcomes for all older people, including older people with multiple identities based on ethnicity, gender, community background, sexual orientation, or disability. The 11 Age Sector Networks supported by Age NI are connected to over 2000 older peoples' groups, reaching out to older people across Northern Ireland, providing much needed, local, community based services and networking opportunities.

The creation of Age Friendly communities is a welcome and potentially significant development, as the new Councils consider the importance of the physical and social environment in ensuring "good" places to age with safe and easy access to services, cultural and leisure facilities, transport and shopping; increasing opportunities for older people to be involved and connect to each other and their local community.

## **What we want to see by 2021**

- Older people's rights being upheld and a broader recognition of the diversity of older people and their contribution to society.
- The voice of older people and the age sector meaningfully impacts on the implementation of the Active Ageing Strategy.
- Commitment to resource and co-ordinate the development of Northern Ireland as an Age Friendly region.
- Older people are protected from discrimination in the area of goods, facilities and services.

## **What needs to happen now:**

- The introduction of legislation extending age discrimination to goods, facilities and services.
- The publication of a robust, fully funded Active Ageing action plan, with ambitious targets, effective monitoring and accountability arrangements, and the collection of baseline data.
- An Age Discrimination Review of all aspects of health and social care.
- Active involvement of older people and the age sector in the development of Age Friendly Communities across Northern Ireland.

# References

- 1 For information on Age Sector Networks: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/about-us/our-work/support-local-groups/>
- 2 International obligations to older persons are implicit in most core human rights treaties including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 3 See <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OlderPersons.aspx>
- 4 A profile of older people in Northern Ireland. Annual update OFMDFM (2015)
- 5 2014-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland NISRA STATISTICAL BULLETIN (2015)
- 6 ibid
- 7 OFMDFM op cit
- 8 See <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland/latest-news/archive/one-in-three-older-people-in-northern-ireland-feel-they-have-no-one-to-turn-to-for-help-and-support/> Age NI website
- 9 Appreciating Age: Valuing the positive contributions made by older people in Northern Ireland COPNI (2014)
- 10 Agenda for later life. Age NI (2015)
- 11 OFMDFM op cit
- 12 Improving dementia services in Northern Ireland DHSSPS (2011)
- 13 Annual Report 2013-14 Chief Medical Officer DHSSPS
- 14 Protecting our older people. A call for adult safeguarding legislation COPNI (2014)
- 15 Preventative services promote independence, prevent or delay the deterioration of well being resulting from ageing, illness or disability. For evaluation of Partnerships for older peoples' projects See <http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/rs053.pdf>
- 16 For information on Living Well, Cornwall see <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/health-and-wellbeing-board/living-well-pioneer-for-cornwall-and-the-isles-of-scilly/>
- 17 NI Poverty Bulletin DSD (2015)
- 18 OFMDFM op cit
- 19 ibid
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- 22 Pensioner Income Series op cit
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- 27 Research carried out by Millward Brown on behalf of Age NI. 2014 Quoted in Age NI op cit
- 28 ibid
- 29 Ageism and age discrimination in secondary health care in the United Kingdom. Centre for Policy on Ageing, 2009. p. 26 Quoted in Age NI op cit
- 30 Ageism and age discrimination in mental health care in the United Kingdom. Centre for Policy on Ageing. 2009. p. 39 – 41 Quoted in Age NI op cit
- 31 Ageism and age discrimination in primary and community health care in the UK. Centre for Policy on Ageing. 2009. p. 59-64; Quoted in Age NI op cit