



Commissioner for Older People  
for Northern Ireland

# **The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland**

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***UKAFA Conference***

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# Older people in Northern Ireland

- ▶ 1.7 million people
- ▶ 340 000 people aged over 60
- ▶ People pensionable age rising by 11% by 2013, and rising by 43% by 2023
- ▶ Older people making significant positive contributions across all aspects family, community, faith and civic life
- ▶ 28% older people live below the poverty line

# About the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

- Established through devolved Northern Ireland Assembly legislation passed in 2011 – “The Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011”
- Followed extensive lobbying and campaigning by older people and organisations that represent them
- Principal aim is to be an independent champion who safeguards and promotes the interests of older people

# Commissioners Legal Duties

- Promote positive attitude towards, and encourage participation by, older people
- Review services and legislation that affect the interests of older people
- Promote an end to discrimination against older people
- Encourage best practice in the treatment of older people
- Advise the Assembly, Secretary of State and relevant authorities on matters concerning the interests of older people

# Commissioners Legal Powers



- Conduct formal and informal investigations
- Issue guidance on best practice
- Carry out research
- Publish information
- Provide advice to government

# **Establishment of the office of Commissioner for Older People**

# Strong political leadership

- ▶ Recognising the contribution, needs and rights of older people led to a Northern Ireland Assembly commitment through its 2007 Programme for Government for a Commissioner, to deliver a ‘...strong, independent voice for older people’ underpinned by UN Principles for Older Persons

# Effective campaigning by older people

- ▶ ‘We Agree’
- ▶ NGO led campaign to secure a Commissioner with ‘sufficient powers and duties to act independently to guarantee that the rights of older people are protected, their interests promoted, and the issues affecting them are given prominence’

# Political Leadership

- ▶ Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland legislation passed December 2010
- ▶ Legislation establishing a Commissioner received seal approval at final stage in Northern Ireland Assembly with universal support from all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA's)



## Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

**Deputy Minister Gerry Kelly told the Assembly this was "a good day for older people" as he moved the final stage of the Commissioner for Older People Bill, on 7 December 2010.**

He said older people were highly regarded by members of the Assembly, "not least because many members are older people themselves and others are headed that way".

The deputy minister paid tribute to the older people who had attended consultation meetings and had travelled to Stormont in bad weather to attend debates.

Mr Kelly said the position of Older People's Commissioner would be unique, and able to address the needs of older people in, "a holistic and strategic manner".

Speaking for the OFMDFM Committee, the legislation was welcomed by Alliance's Stephen Farry.

The DUP's Jimmy Spratt said it was a prime example of how devolution was working. "Local legislation for local people," he said.

All parties expressed approval and the final stage was passed on an oral vote.

# **Corporate Plan: Hope, Confidence, Certainty 2013 - 2015**

## Hope

- Government investment in older people
- To celebrate the great news that more of us live longer healthier lives.

## Confidence




- Recognised as Individuals and for their contribution
- Fair treatment
- Feel safe at home
- Standard of living
- Support when needed

## Certainty

- Protection for vulnerable adults
- Treatment, support, respect and care when needed to live a dignified life



# Strategic Priorities

Theme	DATE
Challenging poor clearance rates relating to crime against older people	01.03.14 
Valuing an Ageing Workforce	27.03.14 
Examining reasons for low uptake of Carers Assessments by older carers	09.06.14 
Review of adult safeguarding legislation	25.06.14
Exploring the positive contributions made by older people	01.10.14
Entitlements to social care for older people	Autumn 2014
Challenging and supporting government on the Active Ageing Strategy	Ongoing
Reviewing domiciliary care standards	2015

# Casework

COPNI responds to older people on a range of issues, including:

- Safeguarding/abuse concerns;
- Quality of care in community and residential/nursing homes;
- General legal complaints and information;
- Concerns about hospital care;
- Carer's concerns - assistance for older carers etc.

# Other Work Programme Commitments

- Calling for implementation of Programme for Government commitment to introduce legislation to prevent discrimination on grounds of age in relation to Goods, Facilities and Services (Age GFS).
- Engagement programme with older people living in residential and nursing accommodation across Northern Ireland.
- Final phase of recruitment of permanent staffing team within COPNI to begin shortly which will complete the full permanent staff team.

**Thank you**