

Annual 2021-22 Business Plan V7 - final to DfC

Contents

Background	3
The Commissioner	3
Staff of the Commissioner for Older People	3
Corporate Plan	4
Corporate activity in 2020 and the Global Pandemic	4
New Corporate Plan	4
Vision	5
Purpose	5
Focus	5
Respect, Value and Protect	5
Respect	5
Value	6
Protect	6
International Framework	6
High Level Outcomes	7
Programme for Government 2016-21	8
Business Plan 2021-22	8
Engagement with Older people:	10
2. Responding to individuals	11
3. Responding to public consultations	12
4. Covid 19 Pandemic	13
5. Home Truths	14
6. Planning for your Third Age	15
7. Energy for vulnerable customers	16
8. Loneliness and Isolation of Older People	17
9. Adult Protection Bill	18
10. Care Home Contracts – Human Rights of Older People	19
11. Crime and Older People: Understanding older peoples' vulnerability	20
12. Scamwise Partnership	21
13. Corporate Governance	22
14. Pay Dispute	23
15. Organisation Review	24
Budget and Overview	25

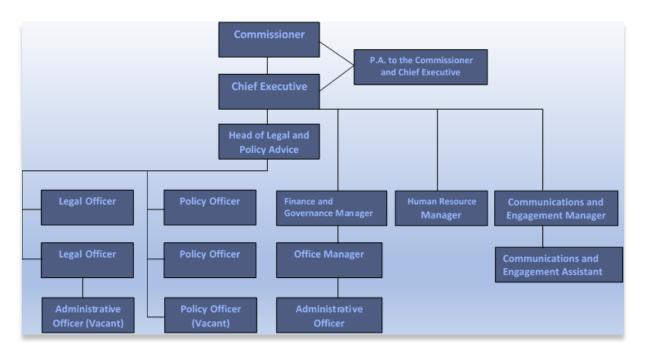
Background

The Office of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI), was established by the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which took effect from January 2011. COPNI is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for Communities (DfC). The principal aim of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) is to safeguard and promote the interests of older people.

The Commissioner

The First Minister and deputy First Minister appoint the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland. The term of office is four years. A Commissioner can serve for two terms by mutual agreement. Mr. Eddie Lynch, who was reappointed to a second term of office in June 2020, currently holds the post of Commissioner.

Staff of the Commissioner for Older People



Corporate Plan

Corporate activity in 2020 and the Global Pandemic

It is impossible to consider the work of the Commissioner in 21/22 without understanding the disproportionate adverse impact of Covid 19 pandemic on older people. Issues mainly affected by Covid 19 are health and social care (care homes, supported living and domiciliary care), consumer matters (for vulnerable consumers of energy, food and other goods and services), mental health impacts of isolation and reintegration (loneliness, isolation, provision of community services), and the provision of vaccines as a matter of priority.

New Corporate Plan

A new Corporate Plan, that was due to be published late in 2020, was deferred due to the Covid 19 pandemic. It was intended that a new Corporate Plan would be published to coincide with the new term of the Commissioner (2020-2024). However, the year 2020/2021 was largely dominated by issues for older people arising from the Covid 19 pandemic crisis. Although the business plan for 20/21 was completed, many of the projects were re-evaluated in scope and scale to permit the management of the emerging risks and business arising from Covid 19 for older people.

In developing a Corporate Plan, the Commissioner always consults and engages directly with older people. It was not possible to do this effectively, or as widely as usual during the pandemic lock downs. A new Corporate Plan incorporating work streams relating to the impacts of Covid 19, will be published in 2021 for the period 2021-2024.

Accordingly the Commissioner extended the Corporate Plan 2016-2020, *Respect, Value and Protect* to June 2021. This plan links directly to the statutory duties and powers of the Commissioner. The COPNI business plan is submitted to the Department for Communities in January each year.

The current Corporate Plan sets out an ambitious programme of work proposed by the Commissioner during his term. These objectives are to:

- Support our Ageing Population by Promoting Positive Ageing and Ending Age Discrimination
- 2. Better Health and Social Care
- Tackle Financial Abuse and Scams and Protecting Older Victims of Crime

As Accounting Officer, the Commissioner is committed to ensuring effective, efficient and economical good practice in corporate governance.

Because of the global pandemic of Covid 19, in common with all other government bodies, COPNI has moved all staff to working from home. This has largely gone well, with minimum impact on productivity. Staff are fully occupied and equipped in their normal duties. The nature of work for some staff has changed, the pace and quantum of work on the legal and communications teams has significantly increased.

At present, enquiries are triaged and casework is continuing, with adjustments to pace and handling, driven by the need for all meetings to be held virtually. There are still many uncertainties as to when the team may regularly attend work in COPNI offices. Nonetheless, the Commissioner and his team are committed to working with and on behalf of older people who need their help.

Brexit and its consequential impacts are another significant change for the total population, and older people could be affected by many of impacts or potential risks emerging from the unique position of Northern Ireland. The Commissioner will be alert to adverse impacts on older people and will promote awareness of the needs of older people to mitigate such risks or impacts. If necessary, this will include formal advice to government and drawing attention to the lived experience of older people dealing with such impacts.

Vision

COPNI's vision is that:

"Northern Ireland is a great place to age."

Purpose

COPNI's purpose is:

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

Focus

COPNI's focus for the Commissioner's term of office will be on the following three themes:

Respect, Value and Protect

Respect

- That our society respects older people, the role they play and the contributions they make to society, community and family life.
- That the Government invests in the health and wellbeing of the current and future generations of older people.
- That future generations of older people will see lower levels of chronic illness and disability, reduced pensioner poverty, better

protection from abuse, improved health and social care services, and equal and fair treatment.

Value

- That older people will be recognised as individuals who have rights, who have made and continue to make a contribution to our society, and who make choices and decisions about their own lives, preferences, activities and opinions.
- That older people will receive equal opportunities and freedom from discrimination on the basis of their age.
- That older people feel that their contribution to society is recognised and valued.

Protect

- That if older people become vulnerable, the support, services, respect and care they need will be available in ways that help them to live dignified and fulfilled lives through to the end of life.
- That adequate protection and support for vulnerable older people is a priority for our society and is made available to them when they need it.

International Framework

COPNI's work is underpinned by the UN Principles for Older Persons (1991), which are;

- Independence
- Care
- Participation
- Self fulfilment, and
- Dignity

High Level Outcomes

The Commissioner's Corporate Plan includes a range of high-level outcomes associated with each priority. The annual business plan in each year of the Corporate Plan period supports, and builds towards, the achievement of these outcomes. The high-level outcomes are;

- A. Older people remain involved in civic and community life and are supported to do so.
- B. Older People in Northern Ireland are able to access the social activities, services and support they need, when they need it.
- C. Older People in Northern Ireland are able to better understand the choice and control over the decisions which impact most on their lives.
- D. 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.
- E. Older People 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.
- F. Older people in Northern Ireland feel safe and secure and are better protected from all forms of abuse.
- G. Older people in Northern Ireland feel safe and secure and are better protected from all forms of crime.

See the budget and overview at the end of the document for linkage to programme activity.

Programme for Government 2016-21

The work of the Commissioner aligns closely to a number of draft Programme for Government outcomes, in particular the following;

- Outcome 4 we enjoy long, healthy, active lives
- Outcome 5 we are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfill their potential
- Outcome 7 we have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other
- Outcome 8 we care for others and we help those in need
- Outcome 11 we connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure

The links between PFG and programme activity are shown in the budget and overview table at the end of this document.

Business Plan 2021-22

With the introduction of an active vaccination programme, it is hoped that 2021/22 will be a year of recovery from the heaviest impacts of the global pandemic on older people and their families. With cautious optimism, the Commissioner hopes to support older people to reintegrate with families, friends and the wider public. However, there may be further outbreaks, and the new "normal" will evolve as time goes on.

There has been a significant increase in both the numbers and complexity of requests for assistance from older people. Analysis of the impacts across all older people issues and services may require changes to the planned projects in this plan, but at the time of drafting, the Commissioner wishes to focus resources as set out below.

Alongside the business plan, and particularly the new corporate plan, the Commissioner is examining the staffing roles and structure to deliver the work of COPNI.

This business plan sets out the activities to be taken forward from April 2021 to March 2022. It identifies the key strands of work to be undertaken and the targets to be met during the course of the year. The purpose of the business plan is to

- implement the Commissioner's priority objectives,
- establish the key performance indicators by which progress will be measured, and
- demonstrate the level of progress required in year towards the delivery or achievement of them.

This plan may change as the new Corporate Plan is developed.

The allocation of resources against each objective in this plan represents a proportion of 100% of the overall budget. This is a high-level plan and is not intended to capture all the operational activities and day-to-day tasks of all staff. COPNI will continue to exercise flexibility around the movement of budget and human resources across the work programme as required. All work will be taken forward with a proportionate project management approach. All expenditure will be made in accordance with internal controls and compliance with the requirements of Managing Public Money NI.

The 2021-2022 Business plan provides details of all the individual high-level projects to be delivered in support of the Corporate Plan objectives. The tables below divide the work into each of the Commissioner's priorities and provide details of the governance activities planned for this year. The plan outlines the following;

- Description of projects and activities
- Aims
- Senior Responsible Officer
- Outputs
- Measurement and KPI's
- Resource Allocation (which includes staff and overhead allocation and programme budget)

Progress against each KPI is monitored and reported to the Senior Management Team and the Commissioner using a RAG status. The definition for each RAG status is set out below. Periodically, such details will be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee for their information. The Commissioner will compile and provide Quarterly Performance reports to the Department for Communities (DfC), as required.

- Red Significant slippages, lack of funding or not to be completed within target
- Amber Delayed but is expected to meet objectives
- Green Progressing as planned or already delivered

The Commissioner has already engaged with officials on the development of the new draft Programme for Government. He will continue to encourage and advise on the importance of ensuring that older peoples' rights and interests are incorporated from the highest level and throughout the new Programme. The Commissioner will continue to seek the introduction of legislation to protect older people from discrimination in the provision of facilities, goods and services (Age GFS). This work is referenced in the policy and engagement strands of work in this plan but may require a more specific approach if the pace of progress on this issue changes.

The Commissioner also anticipates full engagement with MLAs and NI Assembly Committees in pursuit of implementation of his advice to government in a number of areas.

The following tables set out the specific strands of work to be taken forward in 2021/22. A table at pages 25/6 shows the profile of expenditure for each project and the linkage to the Programme for Government, the relevant section of the COPNI Act 2011 and the Commissioner's high-level outcomes.

1. Engagement with Older people:

Due to the pandemic, this engagement will remain virtual, rather than face-to-face. Increased use of social media and virtual visiting/meeting has been relatively successful. It is hoped that in Q3-4, some safe face-to-face meetings may be possible.

- Themed engagement which will relate to the emerging Corporate Plan;
- Attendance at seminars and conferences;
- Visits to Older people (OP) where they live work and socialise;
- Ongoing responses to invitations from OP groups & other stakeholders, and engagement focused on testing or co-producing advice to government based on technical or academic evidence.
- The Commissioner will actively engage with older people though events, fora and discussions to develop the new Corporate Plan.

2. Responding to individuals who contact the Commissioner for assistance.

Management of legal cases advocating for individual older people in compliance with all internal policies and good practice. Alternative dispute resolution or provision of financial support in the preparation and litigation of cases where resolution has not been successful.

This area of work has increased in the number of requests for assistance and particularly in the complexity of the cases. The bulk of cases accepted in 2020-21 were Covid 19-related.

Quantity	Quality	Impact
 Rolling average 80-120 live cases annually, quick enquiries and complex cases. Accept requests for funding in line with policy. Engage with partners and stakeholders (PSNI, DoJ, Office of Care and Protection) - To identify strategic themes emerging from legal cases 	 Management of cases by legal officers in accordance with existing policies Fortnightly conference of case work progress with Head of Legal and Policy Advice and Chief Executive 6-12 week review of quick enquiries and transfer as appropriate to complex cases Monthly reporting of enquiries and caseload management information to SMT meeting 	Providing assistance for older people in need of advocacy to solve a problem or resolve a complaint with a Relevant Authority as determined by the COPNI Act 2011.

3. Responding to public consultations by relevant authorities regarding matters that may impact older people and those who care for them.

To continue to raise issues of relevance and importance to older people to all relevant public authorities through their public consultation exercises.

Focus on tracking the impacts and consequences of Brexit and providing advice to government on issues specifically impacting older people.

Quantity Quality **Impact** All published material Ensure that COPNI is a Ensuring that the key consultee with all signed off at SMT level interests of older relevant public bodies Kev messages people are promoted Ensure the best use of considered and safeguarded when for resources to address publication on website policy or legislative under and social media changes are being issues consultation that are of serious or considered; impactful significant nature, the Continued most on older people Commissioner may development of a body COPNI consultation engage directly with older people on the responses knowledge/expertise are submitted within specific issue, and/or at COPNI that assists published deadlines to issue a media release the Commissioner to drawing attention to the relevant authorities promote awareness of and to the professional the issues and rights of standard Commissioner's/older older people. expected from COPNI peoples' views. To publish the COPNI responses on the website within 2 days of submission to the consulting authority.

4. Covid 19 Pandemic

Support and protection of older people during the Pandemic.

Promoting awareness of the issues arising from the experiences of older people and their requests for assistance. Providing early insights and advice to government

Quality Quantity **Impact** Regular provision Evidence based Ensuring that older of advice to government, advice to government. people are aware of all raising issues of support support available to them. Careful and protection required to consideration of public Challenging myths support and protect older comment that could and misinformation about people. increase fears in older the pandemic testing and Gathering vaccination programmes. people. information and data that Regularly updated Supporting older and refreshed media lines ensures people who come to the for the Commissioner, Commissioner Commissioner fully for is emerging with informed of when called for public assistance their issues. comment. individual difficulties and Attending high level Supporting all challenges. meetings including but not efforts by other bodies that restricted to Emergency address or provide Response Group, services to older people to Nations Committee etc. increase support and Working with protection. authorities partner support families of older people in care homes and support living settings. Scope the future needs of older people bereavement reauirina support post Covid 19.

5. Home Truths

Tracking and influencing implementation of recommendations arising from the Home Truths report on failures of care at Dunmurry Manor Care Home. Tracking, commenting on and influencing the work arising from the CPEA Evidence papers to government and their recommendations.

 Providing ongoing advice to the Minister and Department of Health on the implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations published in Home Truths Promoting awareness of the pace and nature of the changes still required. Pre-publication review of CPEA evidence Evidence based advice (from casework) for ongoing difficulties arising from older peoples' experiences of living in care settings. Further research into specific areas of care home provision Evidence based ongoing advice on the development of an Adult Protection Bill 	Quantity	Quality	Impact
papers to government.	 Providing ongoing advice to the Minister and Department of Health on the implementation of the Commissioner's recommendations published in Home Truths Promoting awareness of the pace and nature of the changes still required. Pre-publication review of CPEA evidence 	 Evidence based advice (from casework) for ongoing difficulties arising from older peoples' experiences of living in care settings. Further research into specific areas of care home provision Evidence based ongoing advice on the development of an Adult 	 Ensuring that older people in care settings are receiving the best available care and

6. Planning for your Third Age

Increase awareness of the issues facing people as they enter their third age (60+); To increase awareness of the impacts of services delivered on line; solutions and challenges;

Produce and publish guidance documents or add value to and support existing resources.

Quantity	Quality	Impact
 Produce guidance documents or add to and support existing resources increasing the public discourse and/or producing a resource for people planning for their Third Age. 	 Provision of information resources to reach as many OP as possible. Fit for purpose, relevant and helpful 	Older people will have improved access to and improved awareness of resources available to help them plan for their third age, improving health and financial choices and outcomes for older people.

7. Energy for vulnerable customers

Review of support services for vulnerable consumers of energy. Ensuring that older people have the right levels of support and protection as consumers of energy.

■ Review and ■ To work with older ■	Promoting awareness
comparison with support services provided across the four countries of the UK and Ireland. Evidence based advice to authorities on improvements to be made to NI consumers.	of the support and services available for older vulnerable consumers

8. Loneliness and Isolation of Older People

Continued engagement in local projects and with academics and experts including political engagement with the Cross Party Assembly Group on Loneliness.

Quantity	Quality	Impact
■ Draft Corporate plan will be reviewed in the light of Covid 19. Matters such as shielding, support services, mental health and wellbeing arising directly from the pandemic will be informed by this ongoing work.	 Contribution to and participation in Institute of Public Health (IPH) North South Loneliness and Ageing Group (NS-LAG) NI circulation and contribution to the International Loneliness and Social Isolation Research Network "Coping with Loneliness, Isolation and Covid 19" - (I-LINK) with International colleagues including the UK, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. 	Ireland Connection with UK

9. Adult Protection Bill

In response to the Home Truths report (and other recent recommendations arising from adult protection issues), the Ministers for Health and Justice have commenced work on an Adult Protection Bill. COPNI has provided pre-legislative advice and will continue to provide expert advice to the Departments and Ministers of Health and Justice.

Quantity	Quality	Impact
 Provide advice on an ongoing basis to the Minister for Health and Minister for Justice in line with pre legislative policy development, drafting and consultation of a Bill and the process of legislation through the Assembly. Engagement with the Bill team and early advice on drafts as they are developed. Provision of specific advice commissioned from Professor John Williams on the Human Rights of older people. Provision of real life examples to test the developing legislative drafting. 	 Advice on draft bill to be carried out with recognised and authoritative legal technical advice COPNI will work with experts in the field and partner organisations to share experience on relevant legislation and best outcomes for OP. 	 This is a key deliverable of the recommendations to government arising from the Home Truths report. An Adult Protection Bill will protect all adults at risk of abuse, but will particularly protect all older people who retain capacity to make their own decisions but who are at risk of harm and abuse.

10. Care Home Contracts – Human Rights of Older People

As a result of the Home Truths investigation into Dunmurry Manor the commissioner recommended changes to the Regional Care Homes contract that would provide better protection of the human rights of the older person in care. This project will provide advice to government on the nature and impacts of the Regional Contract under which older people reside in care homes.

Quantity	Quality	Impact
 Ongoing advice to government until contract review is completed Ongoing casework management on behalf of older people and their families 	 Providing real life examples of the consequences of weaknesses of the current contract and learnings from casework undertaken by the Commissioner's legal team to the officials reforming the Contract. Provision of accurate and evidence based advice to government and recommendations for reforms leading to better protection of older peoples' human rights. 	Evidence based advice to government on the risks of breaches of Human Rights extant in the current policy and Contract.

11. Crime and Older People: Understanding older peoples' vulnerability.

Work with partners in the criminal justice system, and offenders to increase understanding of whether older people are deliberately targeted by offenders due to their age and/or vulnerability.

To provide advice to government and to older people that will strengthen prevention of crime against older people.

Quantity	Quality	Impact
Scoping research themes for commissioned academic support. • Partner engagement with PSNI, Probation Board, DOJ, Youth Justice Agency and offenders	Work will be carried out to a high ethical and operational standard with partners, to understand the factors that increase the vulnerability of older people (or not), to analyse the actions of offenders and assess factors that could strengthen prevention of crime, or the resilience of older victims.	

12. Scamwise Partnership:

COPNI is a founder member of the Scamwise partnership. Working in partnership with PSNI, DOJ, Trading Standards and others COPNI will continue to grow the partnership, enable the sharing of information and raise awareness amongst older people of how to identify and protect themselves from Scams;

Quantity	Quality	Impact
 To attend Scamwise partnership meetings and promote the Scamwise messages; To operate the Scamwise Facebook page on behalf of the partnership. 	 To attend and actively participate in the Scamwise partnership and events across NI; 	 Further building on the success of the Scamwise partnership by increasing public awareness and reducing incidences were older people fall victim to scams; Building strong relationships with key stakeholders to

13. Corporate Governance

The Commissioner (Accounting Officer) will ensure the efficient and effective management of staff and resources to support the achievement of all of the Commissioner's objectives. The Commissioner will ensure that appropriate internal controls and governance systems are in place that include Finance, Human Resources, Planning, Performance Management and Reporting.

Impact Quantity Quality Effective and timely Submit Deliver business plan а costed delivery of all planned outcomes-based targets within the business plan to DfC allocated budget. by 31 Jan Use internal reviews Effective use of budget Develop, monitor and funding and audit within report on project plans allocation recommendations to for specific pieces of maximise the High degree of work efficiency and financial transparency Approve management effectiveness of the probity accounts within 10 support service Effective management working days of the Monitor and report on and reporting of risk end of the month; performance Continuous against Prepare Annual Report key targets and development and Financial objectives improvement in Review and Statements to comply financial management, update with **FREM** systems and policy development and policies to support the and planning timeframes: Highly skilled staff with Prepare, approve and achievement of the submit monthly and corporate objectives excellent internal and quarterly departmental Ensure the highest external relationships reports quality of reporting on on accountability and Equality issues performance and annually Effective management attend Accountability of all Service Level meetings Meet every quarter Agreements for with the Audit and Risk outsourced services Assurance Committee with and contracts Regular review external suppliers of policies services and goods Completed staff skills audit & training plan

14. Pay Dispute

Resolve the ongoing pay dispute with staff relating to the provision of pay progression

15. Organisation Review

Subject to the Commissioner's new Corporate Plan; to review staffing and skills to ensure delivery of the 2020-2024 work and make any necessary changes

Quantity	Quality	Impact
■ To carry out or commission a review of the organisation structure to address changes in the quantity and complexity of work to deliver the 2020-2024 Corporate Plan	 To complete with the utmost transparency and consultation with staff To seek to address recommendations as quickly and completely as possible 	■ Ensure the ongoing fitness for purpose of COPNI to deliver the Commissioner's statutory duties effectively and efficiently

Budget and Overview

	Projected Expenditure 2021-2022								
		Link to PFG Ref page 8	Statutory Authority COPNI Act 2011	Link to High level objectives Ref page 7	£	Total £			
	Salaries					819,394			
	Non-discretionary expenditure					9,215			
	Overheads					163,391			
	Programme Expenditure								
1	Engagement with older people	8	s3 (8) (a) to (d)	A,B,C	153,000				
2	Responding to individuals seeking assistance	8	s3-5	A,B,C	120,000				
3	Responding to public consultations	8	s3	A,B,C	86,000				
4	Covid 19 Pandemic	4,8	s3 (1) and (3	A,B,C	312,000				
5	Home Truths	4,8	s3 (1) and (3)	A,B,C	49,000				
6	Planning for a third age	4	s3	A,B,C	30,000				
7	Energy for vulnerable consumers			A,B,C	26,000				

	Projected Expenditure 2021-2022							
		Link to PFG Ref page 8	Statutory Authority COPNI Act 2011	Link to High level objectives Ref page 7	£	Total £		
8	Loneliness and Isolation of older people	8	s3	A-G	21,000			
9	Adult Protection Bill	4, 8	s3 (2)	A-G	50,000			
10	Care Home Contracts – Human Rights of older people	4, 8	s3 (1) and (3)	D,E,F	31,000			
11	Crime and older people – understanding vulnerability	7, 8	s3 (1) and (3)	C,F,G	42,000			
12	Scamwise Partnership	7, 8	s3 (1) and (3)	C,F,G	20,000			
13	Corporate Governance	7, 8	MSFM		39,000			
14	Progression Pay Dispute	4, 7, 8	MSFM		6,000			
15	Organisational Review	4, 7, 8	MSFM		17,000			
	Total Projected Expenditure (exc. depreciation and capital)					992,000		
	Depreciation					10,000		
	Capital							
	Total Expenditure				1,002,000	1,002,000		