

issue 10 • january 2012

# aspire

age  
sector  
platform

speaking from experience

## Pensioners Parliament arrives in Stormont



Also inside this edition...

Meet the Commissioner  
for Older People

How are you coping  
with rising food prices?

2012 NI Pensioners  
Parliament

Member Spotlight:  
ALLY Foyle

## Message from the Chair

## Stormont debate

Happy New Year and welcome to the tenth issue of *aspire!*



This year marks the second year of the NI Pensioners Parliament, which you can find out about on page 7.

We're very excited to hear what issues are important to you, and if they have changed at all from 2011.

Inside this edition we have an interview with Claire Keatinge, the new Commissioner for Older People, a report from our trip to Westminster in October and details of a unique event held in Stormont in November. In addition, we have an article on food prices from the Consumer Council and a report from our Education sub-committee.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Age North Down and Ards as a new member group to Age Sector Platform. We look forward to working with you in the year to come!

Last year was a busy one for us, and 2012 is sure to be no different. I hope you enjoy reading this edition!

Patricia Donald

On Friday 25 November 2011, older people from across Northern Ireland became parliamentarians as they tabled motions and passionately debated the issues of concern to them and their peers with Ministers from the NI Executive. The event, held in the Senate Chamber at Parliament Buildings, was chaired by the Speaker of the NI Assembly, William Hay MLA and saw over seventy older people from across Northern Ireland experience the reality of an Assembly debate.

The older people present; no strangers to Parliamentary business having taken part in the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament earlier in the year, presented three motions to Ministers present. The three motions; all passed at the Pensioners Parliament in June 2011; covered fuel poverty, fear of crime and health and social care – areas which are the responsibility of the NI Executive. After each motion was tabled, Members of the Pensioners Parliament received an official response from local Ministers on the three issues.

Michael Monaghan, Chair of the NI Pensioners Parliament Committee, said: "We are delighted that the Speaker invited Members of the Pensioners Parliament here today so that the voices of older people from across the province could be heard loud and clear by Executive Ministers. The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament was a truly democratic process, with older people from every county in Northern Ireland voting on the issues of concern for them. This follow-on debate today was a fantastic example of how our Assembly can engage with members of the public, and we hope that the Ministers who were present take seriously the issues raised."



Cover Photo:

Members of the 2011 Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament take part in a Stormont Debate in November 2011

Photo: Alan McNeice

“Some of the motions passed at the NI Pensioners Parliament are not within the remit of the NI Assembly, and these motions have already been, and will continue to be, raised with the UK Government and with the private sector where appropriate. Our intention has always been for the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament to deliver real change for older people, and this debate has enabled older people to call for this change right at the heart of government. We will continue to work with Ministers, Government Departments and Assembly members so that older people benefit from the quality of life they need and deserve.”



Speaker of the NI Assembly William Hay MLA and DSD Minister Nelson McCausland MLA with Chair of Age Sector Platform Patricia Donald and ASP members Michael Monaghan and Bill Carson

Speaking about the debate, Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, William Hay MLA, said: “I have made it a priority that Parliament Buildings should be opened up more to the people it represents, and as the seat of democracy in Northern Ireland, I was delighted to host this debate of the Pensioners Parliament here. The agenda featured three of the most important issues to the Pensioners Parliament – health, crime and fuel poverty – which have also been a priority to Members on the floor of the Assembly Chamber so it was a great opportunity for Members and Ministers to hear from older people themselves. It was run in the same way as an Assembly debate with an official report provided by Hansard so the Pensioners Parliament saw just exactly how our system works and how they can influence it.”

**Photos and video footage of the debate can be viewed online at [www.agesectorplatform.org](http://www.agesectorplatform.org)**



*Photos: Alan McNeice Photography*

## Meet the new Commissioner for Older People!

*Claire Keatinge took up her post as the very first Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland on Monday 14 November 2011, and **aspire** is delighted to have been given the opportunity to interview her during her first few weeks in position.*



### **1. Where does your interest in older people's issues come from?**

*More of us are living longer lives – and this increased life expectancy is the really good news of the century. Older people make a very significant contribution to community, faith, family and civic life which is greatly enriched by the full and active participation of people. It's not all good news though, pensioner poverty is on the increase with fuel poverty at an all-time high. Equality legislation does not currently protect older people in terms of goods, facilities and services. And there are an increasing number of older people who experience frailty, ill health and disability for which they need support, care and treatment. There is much to be commended about health and social care, community life and the involvement of people in civic life - but too often people experience inadequate availability and quality of services to support them to live full and dignified lives. My interest is in recognising the contribution of older people to all of our lives, and promoting the rights and interests of older people. My focus is in being part of helping make Northern Ireland an even better place to grow older.*

### **2. What will your role as the Commissioner for Older People involve?**

*The views of older people will be at the heart of all of my work as Commissioner. I will be engaging with older people to ensure that their views are heard across government and decision-makers; that the rights and interests of individual older people are protected; and that when there are matters that affect older people and which require further investigation, that I use my legal powers to do so. It is important to recognise that when older people have problems, particularly with health and social care, that they are supported by the Commissioner for the people to resolve those problems quickly. I will also have the power to develop conciliation services to assist older people to resolve matters without having to undertake legal proceedings.*

### **3. What do you hope to achieve as Commissioner for Older People?**

*That older people feel that their views are clearly heard and understood in all aspects of public and community life – and that their views are taken into account when decisions are being made.*

*That older people see that the government respects and reflects their views and priorities. That individual people have conciliation support to resolve matters that would otherwise become legal challenges. That the wider public better understands and respects the very positive contribution that older people make to all aspects of life in Northern Ireland.*

#### **4. What challenges do you believe you will face in this role?**

*It will be essential that the Commission develops a strategic plan which involves the widest possible range of older people in identifying priorities for work. The Commission will need to focus on bringing about change in the most important issues affecting older people. The most significant challenge will be prioritising the work of the Commission so that older people see real and positive change on matters that are most important to them. The Commission will make every effort to hear from as many older people as possible – and will focus on making sure that we find out what is important to those older people. I will make particular efforts to listen to and understand the experience and views of older people who usually find it hardest to be heard – including those who live in care settings, the isolated, people with dementia and those who experience mental health problems.*

#### **5. What do you feel are the main problems facing older people today?**

*Being treated as though age defines you is something that older people repeatedly tell me they really dislike! “What do you expect at your age?” is a phrase I would like to see vanish from our vocabulary! We are all people – some healthy, some ill, some frail, some hale and hearty – but we all have the right to be treated as individuals with views, values, opinions, and life experience. And we have the right to be taken seriously, recognised for our contribution, and provided with support and care as and when we need it.*

#### **6. In your spare time, what are your interests?**

*There’s nothing I like better than relaxing with friends, walking in the Mourne Mountains, swimming and being at home curled up with a good film on the telly!*

For more information on the Commissioner for Older People’s Office,  
visit [www.copni.org](http://www.copni.org) or telephone 028 9089 0892

## ASP welcomes draft Programme for Government

Age Sector Platform has welcomed the publication of the draft Programme for Government for its positive response to some of the key issues arising from the NI Pensioners Parliament last year.

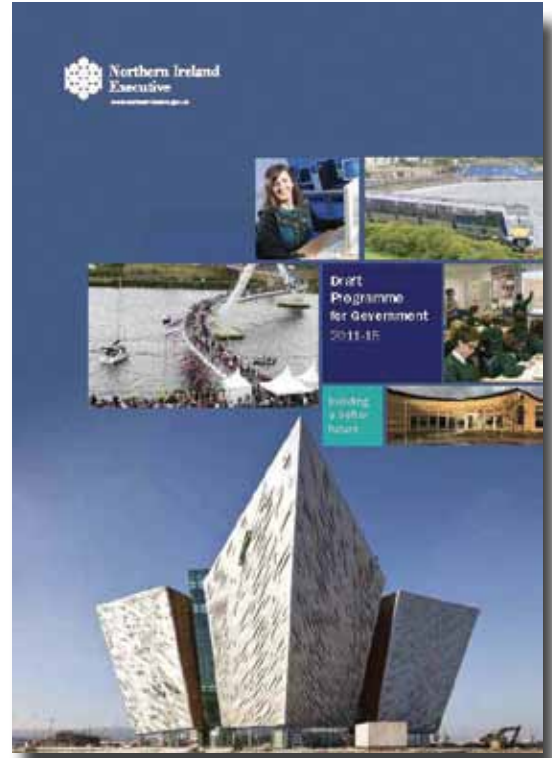
The draft Programme for Government which was announced in November 2011 has committed to extend age discrimination legislation to the provision the opportunities, goods and services and has also pledged to tackle crime against older people and to reduce fear of crime amongst older people.

Patricia Donald, Chair of Age Sector Platform, said: “Age discrimination and crimes against older people were discussed prominently during the NI Pensioners Parliament held early last year. They are issues which older people have told us are important to them and require strong action. We are pleased that the NI Executive has taken onboard the voices of older people here.”

“In reality, age discrimination in the areas of goods, facilities and services allows for discrimination in the provision of services such as health care and social services to older people. It can also allow insurance providers to discriminate against older drivers and travellers. Legislation to outlaw this type of discrimination can only be a positive thing for the older people of Northern Ireland, who have long awaited this legislation.”

“Crime against older people is an issue which has taken centre stage recently with a number of widely condemned attacks against older people being reported. Age Sector Platform welcomes the NI Executive’s commitment to tackle these types of crimes. We know from our survey of over 1,200 older people last year that two out of three older people are fearful of being a victim of crime. Taking this into account, we are pleased that the Programme for Government has also committed to addressing fear of crime amongst older people in the coming years.”

Turn to page 15 to find out more about the consultation on the NI Executive’s draft Programme for Government



## The 2012 NI Pensioners Parliament

The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament was launched in 2011 and allows older people from across Northern Ireland to have their say on the issues that matter to them. Organised by Age Sector Platform, 2012 will mark the second year of the Parliament.

Local parliaments will take place during February and March 2012 and will ensure that older people's views from every county in Northern Ireland are represented.



<b>Belfast</b>	Wednesday 22 February 2012
<b>Craigavon</b>	Wednesday 29 February 2012
<b>Antrim</b>	Tuesday 6 March 2012
<b>Enniskillen</b>	Thursday 8 March 2012
<b>Newtownards</b>	Wednesday 14 March 2012
<b>Coleraine</b>	Wednesday 21 March 2012
<b>Cookstown</b>	Thursday 29 March 2012



All venues are centrally located in each town/city and each event will take place between 10am and 3.30pm (lunch will be provided). Delegates from each local parliament will be selected to attend the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament in Belfast on Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23 May 2012. This two-day regional parliament will decide on the priority issues for older people across the province.

If you would like to attend your local parliament, please contact Age Sector Platform by phoning 028 9031 2089 or emailing [info@agesectorplatform.org](mailto:info@agesectorplatform.org). As spaces are limited, booking in advance is essential. The deadline for RSVP is two weeks prior to the date of your local parliament.

**Don't forget...** Please fill in the NI Pensioners Parliament questionnaire. The results will form the basis of the discussion at each local parliament and will determine what issues are taken to the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament in May 2012. The questionnaire is short and simple to complete and will take no more than 5 minutes. Hard copies of the questionnaire are available from Age Sector Platform by telephoning 028 9031 2089 or emailing [info@agesectorplatform.org](mailto:info@agesectorplatform.org). The questionnaire can also be accessed online by visiting [www.pensionersparliament.org](http://www.pensionersparliament.org).

## ‘Fight the Winter Fuel Cut’ campaign

Since the last edition of *aspire*, Age Sector Platform’s campaign against the cut to the Winter Fuel Payment has grown in strength. At the time of printing, almost 18,000 signatures have now been registered in support of the motion to reverse the decision made by the Coalition Government last year.

Much has happened since early October including a visit to Westminster by Age Sector Platform members, a meeting with Pensions Minister Steve Webb MP, a cross-party meeting with Northern Ireland MPs, an opposition day debate tabled by the DUP in the House of Commons and the NI Executive’s announcement of a £100 fuel payment for those in receipt of pension credit.

In late October 2011, a group of ASP members travelled to Westminster. They met with Pensions Minister Steve Webb MP and handed over the ‘Fight the Winter Fuel Cut’ petition, which had 15,000 signatures at that point. Following this, the group met with several Northern Ireland MPs to discuss the campaign, and other Westminster controlled matters such as pension reform.



ASP members Margaret Galloway, Michael Monaghan and Nixon Armstrong hand over the petition to Steve Webb MP

Nixon Armstrong from Age Sector Platform commented: “During our meeting with the Pensions Minister, we emphasised the strength of feeling on this issue by the people of Northern Ireland. We also spoke of the unique challenges facing older people across the province in relation to heating their homes – such as the reliance on home heating oil, the lack of support from energy companies here and therefore the higher levels of fuel poverty.”

On Tuesday 22 November 2011, an opposition-day motion was tabled by the DUP calling on the UK Government to review its decision to cut the Winter Fuel Payment this year by £50 for those aged between 60 and 79, and by £100 for those aged 80 and over.

The debate was introduced by Nigel Dodds MP, who spoke passionately about the topic, describing it as a matter of “life and death”. He told MPs: “Fuel poverty and the effects of cold winter weather on the elderly are a lethal combination.”



A number of Northern Ireland MPs spoke during the debate in support of the motion, including William McCrea MP, David Simpson MP, Ian Paisley Jnr MP, Jim Shannon MP, Jeffrey Donaldson MP, Gregory Campbell MP, Mark Durkan MP and Lady Sylvia Hermon MP. Age Sector Platform, its members and the 'Fight the Winter Fuel Cut' campaign were mentioned several times during the debate. The debate culminated in a vote and the motion was defeated by 280 votes to 205, a majority of 75. Although the motion was defeated, 205 MPs supported the motion which Age Sector Platform believes is a strong basis to build on the 'Fight the Winter Fuel Cut' campaign.

By now, all those over the age of 60 should have received their 2011/2012 Winter Fuel Payment, and therefore the UK Government has not chosen to reverse its decision. However, the campaign does not stop here. Age Sector Platform will continue to campaign to have this payment increased in future years, to help older people keep warm.



ASP members meet with NI MPs at Westminster

Age Sector Platform is encouraging anyone who hasn't signed up to the campaign to show their support by contacting them on 028 9031 2089 or signing the online petition at [www.fightfuelcut.org](http://www.fightfuelcut.org).

## Did you know...?

Following ASP's 'Fight the Winter Fuel Cut' campaign, the NI Executive announced a £100 payment for those on pension credit in December 2011. Funded under the Social Protection Fund, the initiative will support older people and other groups such as cancer sufferers and individuals receiving a number of income based benefits, through a one-off Executive funded fuel allowance payment.

Age Sector Platform has welcomed the announcement but warns that the Westminster Government must not be 'let off the hook' following its decision to cut the Winter Fuel Payment last year.

For more information on the announced payments go to page 14.

## Life-long learning

*A report from William Devlin - representative of the U3A (University of the Third Age) region on Age Sector Platform and Chair of Age Sector Platform's Education Sub-Committee.*



Age Sector Platform's Education Sub-Committee (ESC) identified two main issues of concern to seniors; namely the disappearance of concessionary fees in FE/HE Colleges and the rationalisation of library services resulting in the closure of some libraries.

### Concessionary Fees

The problem resulted from a Directive on Equality from the European Commission. The Commission did not intend this result but the interpretation of the wording has led to the almost elimination of concessionary fees on the basis of age. The committee heard that the FE/HE colleges were more than willing to reintroduce concessionary fees but their hands were tied. Classes in yoga, painting, holiday spanish and the like are full fee courses and many courses are termed accredited courses and include an examination fee. Most seniors do not want to sit examinations.

### Libraries Rationalisation

The ESC was assured that it was policy to restrict closures to a minimum and where these were located measures taken to provide mobile libraries. The ESC felt that a more joined up partnership between libraries and the FE/HE sector would be beneficial. This is now being put in train.

### SLAC Card

The ESC has proposed the creation of a Senior Learning Account Card (SLAC), which would allow a senior one hundred hours (100) tuition in any one academic year at a concession rate in any of the recognised educational institutions funded by the taxpayer. The ESC is aware that in the current economic climate such a suggestion may be met with opposition. Nevertheless, given the contribution to health and other considerations, the Committee feels that this initiative would pay for itself in the longer term.

# Thinner wallets – smaller baskets?

*How are Northern Ireland consumers coping with rising food prices?*

According to the 2011 NI Pensioners Parliament survey, food prices was one of the top concerns for older people in Northern Ireland (with over half of all survey respondents selecting it as a major concern for them)<sup>1</sup>. In the five years between August 2006 and August 2011, food prices have increased by 31 per cent<sup>2</sup> and last year 84 per cent of shoppers said food prices were a worry<sup>3</sup>.

Supermarkets say they're helping customers cut the cost of their shopping but are their special offers really that special? Are the multi-buy discounts and price promotions suitable for your needs? Do price displays always make it possible to work out if you're getting the best deal?

The Consumer Council wants to find out how higher food costs are affecting Northern Ireland consumers. Are people buying less and doing without or buying the same and making cutbacks elsewhere?

Can you help out with this research? Food Shopping Diaries have been produced and the Consumer Council is asking people to record their food and grocery shopping experiences for one week i.e. how expensive / non-expensive it was, any frustrations they encountered and any money saving tips they may have. To request a Food Shopping Diary please contact:

Philippa McKeown,  
 The Consumer Council  
 116 Holywood Road  
 Belfast, BT4 1NY  
 Telephone: 028 9067 2488  
 Email: [pmckeown@consumercouncil.org.uk](mailto:pmckeown@consumercouncil.org.uk)



Two consumer panels will also be organised by the Consumer Council in partnership with Age Sector Platform to explore these issues further.

<sup>1</sup> 51.5 per cent - Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament survey 2011 (1,211 respondents)

<sup>2</sup> CPI (Consumer Prices Index)

<sup>3</sup> Which?

# Member Spotlight

## ALLY Foyle

ALLY Foyle is a network of older people's groups in the Derry City Council District; it was established in 2004. Membership of the network includes approximately 65 different groups, made up of active ageing clubs, day care centres, residential and sheltered housing and organisations providing services to older people. These clubs and groups are all independently managed and ALLY Foyle co-ordinates and liaises between the members. ALLY Foyle is led by a voluntary management committee who are each involved in different older people's organisations.

ALLY Foyle's vision is of people enjoying an active and healthy lifestyle in their later years. Active ageing provides men and women with the means of keeping active – physically, mentally and socially throughout their later years. ALLY Foyle's mission is to foster improvements to health, well-being and quality of life among people in their later years in the Foyle area by promoting programmes and activities through a vibrant network.



ALLY Foyle members get involved in flower arranging and dancing

The main aims of the organisation include:

### Networking

Assist 50+ groups and all older people with the provision of programmes by sending out tutors and facilitators to groups. Organise, assist and create networking opportunities in the form of meetings, social events, training courses and consultations.

### Promoting active ageing initiatives

Raise awareness among the older people's sector of the positive social, physical and mental benefits of joining 50+ groups. ALLY Foyle sends out regular emails and newsletters to groups to identify individual needs and provides information on suitable resources.

# Member Spotlight

## Involvement and Participation

Provide representation to age agencies and policy makers of the needs and experiences of older people which address inequalities in the sector. Interface with Council Departments, Statutory bodies and ensure that older people's views are considered within decision making processes that affect their lives.

ALLY Foyle is about reaching out to older people in the community, particularly those who are isolated and disadvantaged. The network encourages older people to take part in activity programmes to enhance their mental health and well-being through participation. The planning and delivery of social, recreational and physical programmes is a key part of the network's mission, and this is achieved by engaging community facilitators to share knowledge, training and expertise, involving older people at all stages of planning and delivery of these programmes to improve their self-confidence.



ALLY Foyle members take part in an art class

ALLY Foyle is passionate about getting older people to reconnect with their communities and the network has worked hard to build long-term relationships with team leaders, tutors, facilitators and especially the older community who enjoy being part of the network.

Summary of types of programmes offered to older people:

- Tai Chi
- Armchair aerobics
- Beauty therapy
- Computers
- Bowling
- Card making
- Local history talks
- Music
- Boccia
- Line dancing
- Flower arranging
- Cookery demonstrations
- Dancing
- Reminiscence sessions

For more information on ALLY Foyle please contact 028 7126 5098 or email [info@allyfoyle.com](mailto:info@allyfoyle.com).

[www.allyfoyle.com](http://www.allyfoyle.com)

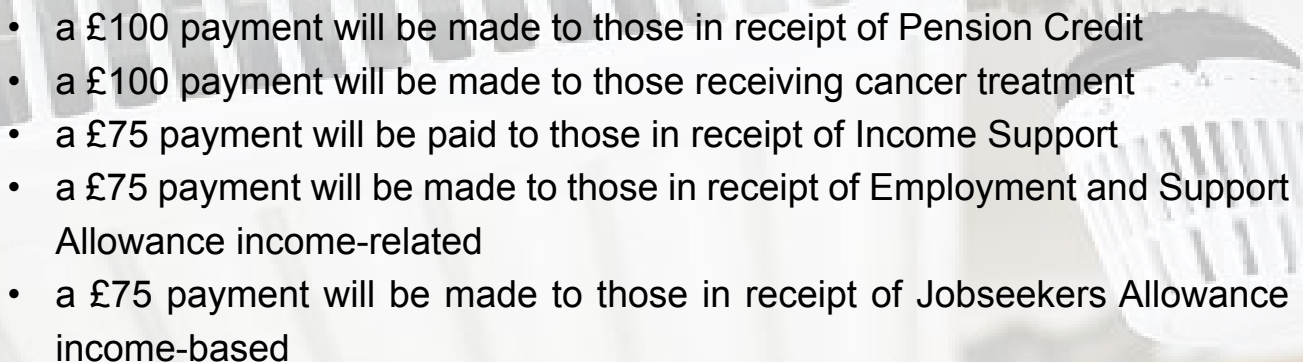
Many thanks to Angelina Cooper, ALLY Foyle Co-ordinator,  
for writing this article

## One-off fuel payment to be made

More than 250,000 people in Northern Ireland will benefit from a one-off fuel allowance payment this winter. The payment will support older people, cancer sufferers and individuals receiving a number of income-based benefits. There is no application process – payments will be automatically issued to those who are eligible.

### How the payment is allocated

This payment, which is not the same as the Winter Fuel Payment, is towards household fuel costs and is expected to total around £23million. The money will be allocated on the following basis:

- 
- a £100 payment will be made to those in receipt of Pension Credit
  - a £100 payment will be made to those receiving cancer treatment
  - a £75 payment will be paid to those in receipt of Income Support
  - a £75 payment will be made to those in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance income-related
  - a £75 payment will be made to those in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance income-based

To be eligible for the payment, you must meet the above criteria between the dates of Monday 12 December and Sunday 18 December 2011. The exact payment date has yet to be confirmed but it is expected that all payments will be made mid to late February 2012. If you are eligible for the payment, you will receive a notification letter at that time confirming your payment.

You will be paid in the same way you receive your benefit. For example, if you normally receive your payment directly into your bank or Post Office Card account then that is how your payment will be made. If you receive your benefit by cheque then you will receive a cheque through the post.

This is a one-off payment and there is no right of appeal. The payment will not affect any other benefits you may be receiving. For benefits advice, please phone 0800 232 1271.

## Age limit for jury service

Justice Minister David Ford is seeking the public's views on whether the upper age limit for jury service should be amended or abolished. At present the upper age limit for jury service is 70 years old. A consultation exercise commenced on Monday 21 November 2011 for approx 12 weeks to determine views on whether to raise or abolish this age limit.

Hard copies of the consultation document, and alternative formats, can be made available by telephoning 028 9041 2379.



To download the consultation document visit [www.dojni.gov.uk/public-consultations](http://www.dojni.gov.uk/public-consultations).

The deadline for responses is Friday 10 February 2012.

## Programme for Government 2011-2015

On Thursday 17 November 2011, the First Minister and deputy First Minister published the draft Programme for Government 2011-2015 for consultation. The Programme for Government highlights the key goals and actions the Executive will take to drive forward the priority areas. The Executive is now seeking your views on the draft document, which can be downloaded by visiting [www.northernireland.gov.uk/work-of-the-executive](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/work-of-the-executive). For a hard copy of the document, phone 028 9052 0584.

Consultation events are also being held across Northern Ireland. Register your attendance at an event near you by emailing [pfg@ofmdfmni.gov.uk](mailto:pfg@ofmdfmni.gov.uk) or phoning 028 9052 3194.

Monday 16 January 2012	1.30-3.30 pm	Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency
Monday 23 January 2012	1.00-3.00 pm	Millennium Forum, Derry/Londonderry
Monday 30 January 2012	7.30-9.30 pm	Malone House, Belfast
Monday 6 February 2012	1.30-3.30 pm	NSMC Joint Secretariat Headquarters
Monday 13 February 2012	7.30-9.30 pm	The Clinton Centre, Enniskillen
Monday 20 February 2012	1.00-3.00 pm	Ballymena Business Centre

The consultation period ends on Wednesday 22 February 2012.

## Getting old...

“You know you are getting old when the candles cost more than the cake!”  
(Bob Hope)

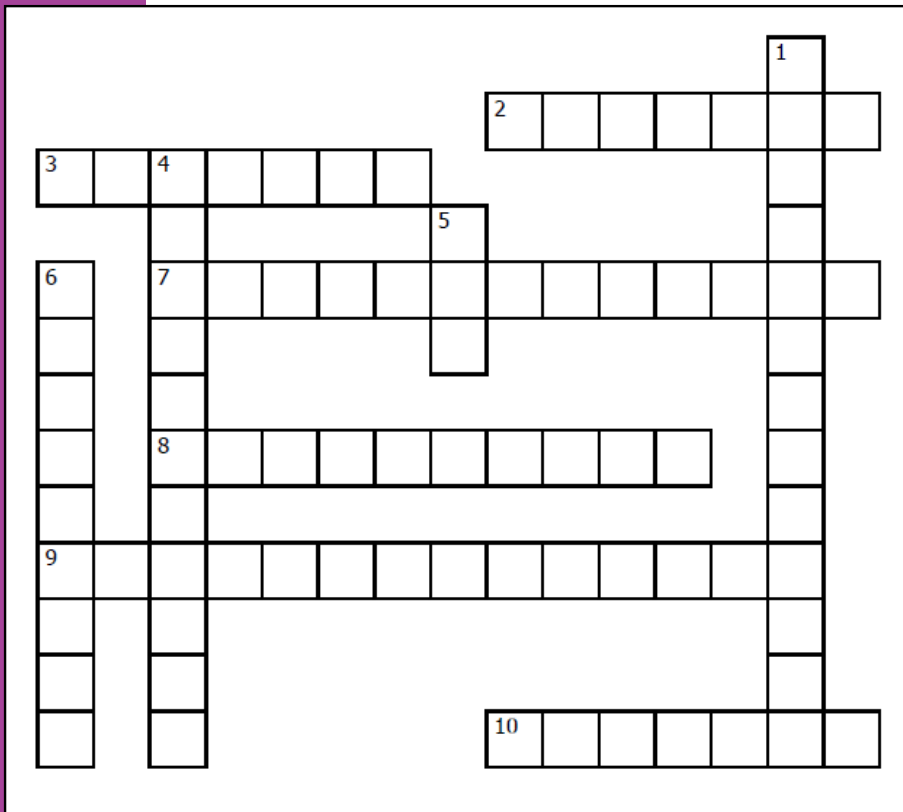
“Youth is a disease from which we all recover.” (Dorothy Fulheim)

“The problem with beauty is that it’s like being born rich and getting poorer!”  
(Joan Collins)

“It is sad to grow old but nice to ripen!” (Brigitte Bardot)

“Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.” (Mark Twain)

## Crossword



### ACROSS

2. Month that ASP members travelled to Westminster
3. Name of official report that records Assembly debates
7. Chair of ASP Education Sub-committee
8. Speaker of NI Assembly
9. New Commissioner for Older People
10. Current upper age limit for jury service in NI

### DOWN

1. £100 payment announced for older people in receipt of what benefit?
4. Town that County Down Parliament will be held
5. Month that 2012 two-day parliament will take place
6. Council district that ALLY Foyle works in

ANSWERS AT  
BOTTOM OF  
PAGE 17



# Definitions!

**ADULT:**

A person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle.

**BEAUTY PARLOUR:**

A place where women curl up and dye.

**CHICKENS:**

The only animals you eat before they are born and after they are dead.

**COMMITTEE:**

A body that keeps minutes and wastes hours.

**DUST:**

Mud with the juice squeezed out.

**EGOTIST:**

Someone who is usually me-deep in conversation.

**HANDKERCHIEF:**

Cold storage.

**INFLATION:**

Cutting money in half without damaging the paper.

**MOSQUITO:**

An insect that makes you like flies better.

**RAISIN:**

A grape with a sunburn.

**SECRET:**

Something you tell to one person at a time.

**TOOTHACHE:**

The pain that drives you to extraction.

**TOMORROW:**

One of the greatest labour saving devices of today.

**YAWN:**

An honest opinion openly expressed.

**WRINKLES:**

Something other people have, similar to my character lines.



Crossword Answers  
 ACROSS: 2. October 3. Hansard 7. WilliamDevlin 8. WilliamHay 9. ClaireKeatinge 10. Seventy  
 DOWN: 1. PensionCredit 4. Newtownards 5. May 6. DerryCity

# Tell us what you think makes a good doctor

The General Medical Council has recently launched a major consultation on Good Medical Practice, its core guidance, which every doctor in Northern Ireland has to follow.

Patients expect doctors to practise safely. But what makes a good doctor changes over time. To make sure Good Medical Practice is still relevant and reflects current expectations of medical practice, the GMC will be listening to patients tell us what they think makes a good doctor.

In the new guidance, doctors are asked to take a lead role in making sure a patient's safety, comfort and dignity are always maintained. Doctors must take action and help with basic care, particularly for vulnerable and older people, who need help to eat, drink or wash.

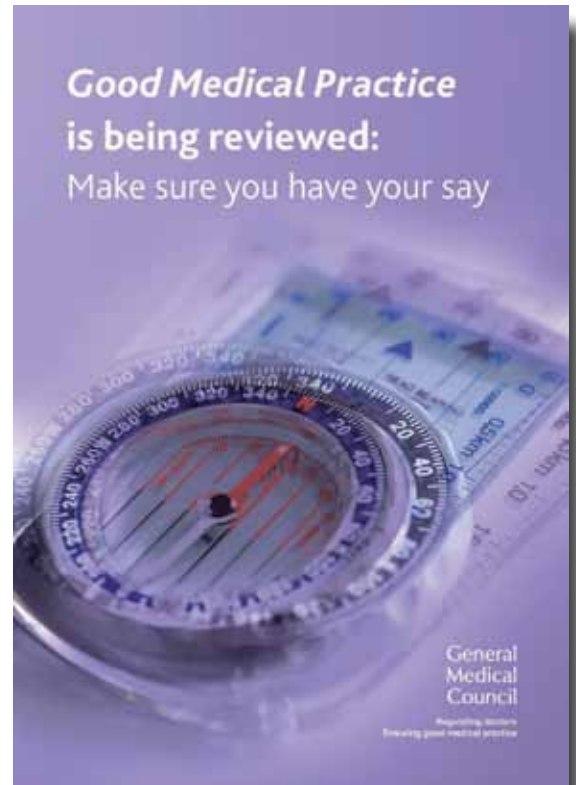
The GMC is suggesting through the consultation that doctors should have greater influence over all areas of a patient's care. So that patients' good care carries on between hospitals or clinics and in their homes.

The consultation asks doctors and patients to answer a number of questions, including about the importance of good communication and openness, and if doctors should avoid treating themselves and those close to them.

In response to feedback from doctors and patients, the new edition of Good Medical Practice is much shorter than before.

Your views on the changes made will help the GMC shape Good Medical Practice for the future. To take part in the consultations and for more information, please visit [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org).

The consultation closes on Friday 10 February 2012 and the GMC will publish the new guidance in autumn 2012.



General  
Medical  
Council

# Join our research panel!

Age Sector Platform's new research panel gives you the chance to voice your opinion whilst assisting the Platform at the same time. The panel is open to anyone - members and non-members alike - and will reward you with incentives for taking part.

To join the research panel, you must:

- Live in Northern Ireland
- Be aged 50 or over; and
- Have an interest in expressing your views on issues of relevance to older people!

At the end of each year, members of the research panel will receive a reward for their efforts with three categories of rewards:

## **Gold members**

(those who have completed all applicable surveys)

- Will receive a £30 shopping voucher
- Will be entered into a draw for £500

## **Silver members**

(those who have completed 75% or more of all applicable surveys)

- Will receive a £20 shopping voucher

## **Bronze members**

(those who have completed 50% or more of all applicable surveys)

- Will receive a £10 shopping voucher

Panel members will also benefit from incentives throughout the year for attending focus groups.

So why not sign up now? For more information about joining the research panel, contact the Age Sector Platform office on 028 9031 2089 or email [info@agesectorplatform.org](mailto:info@agesectorplatform.org).

# Age Sector Platform Members

ABC Seniors Network  
Age NI  
Age North Down and Ards (Agenda)  
ALLY Foyle  
Amicus Retired Members  
AT&GWU Retired Members Association  
Belfast East Seniors Forum  
Carers NI  
Castlereagh Lifestyle Forum  
Chinese Welfare Association  
Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA)  
Communications Workers Union (NI Regional Retired Members)  
Engage with Age  
GMB Retired Members  
Greater Shankill Senior Citizens' Forum  
ICTU Retired Workers Committee (NI)  
Indian Community Centre 50+ Club  
NASUWT Retired Members Association  
National Federation of Occupational Pensioners  
National Pensioners Convention (NI)  
Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens' Consortium  
Newtownabbey Senior Citizens' Forum  
NIPSA Retired Members Association  
North Belfast Senior Citizens' Forum  
Older Women's Network NI  
Public Commercial Services Union (Associate and Retired Members)  
South Belfast Lifestyle Forum  
South West Age Partnership  
UNISON Retired Members  
University of the Third Age (NI)  
West Belfast 50+ Forum

If you have any feedback or would like to request additional copies of this newsletter, please get in touch.



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