



**Consultation Response to the
Draft Programme for Government Framework
2016-21**

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For further information please contact:

Seamus Lynch

028 9031 2089

seamus.lynch@agesectorplatform.org

1.0 Introduction

Age Sector Platform (ASP) represents a strong unified voice for older people in Northern Ireland. It is the charity responsible for the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament (NIPP). Age Sector Platform has a membership of individuals and older people's groups across Northern Ireland, representing approximately 200,000 people.

Launched in 2008, the organisation emerged from the Age Sector Reference Group (ASRG) which was in operation for seven years.

ASP's mission is to be a strong unified voice for older people in Northern Ireland and its vision is a society where older people's voices are heard, respected and acted upon.

ASP engages with older people allowing them to make their voice heard and enables them to advocate on their own behalf. This empowers older people so they can change their lives for the better.

Age Sector Platform welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Northern Ireland Executive's ambitious Programme for Government (PfG) Framework.

We begin this response with commentary on several of the proposed outcomes and we go on to make comment and recommendations around a number of indicators and measurements impacting older people.

ASP is disappointed that there is no reference to older people specifically, despite the changing demographics. The UK population is ageing rapidly and therefore it is essential that our governments are prepared and that the Executive assess the implications of an ageing society holistically. The Executive needs to look at ageing from the point of view of the public and consider what policies may need to change to equip people better to address longer lives.

Longer lives can be a great benefit, but there has been a collective failure to address the implications and without urgent action this great boon could turn into a series of miserable crises.

In relation to our public services, the Executive should set out its analysis of the issues and challenges, and its vision for public services in an ageing society.

The NHS is facing a major increase in demand and cost consequent on ageing and will have to transform to deal with this. Because of this rising demand, without radical changes in the way that health and social care serve the population, needs will remain unmet and cost pressures will rise inexorably.

To meet the needs of the population, and to achieve this shift in services, the health and social care system needs to work well 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

ASP is disappointed there is no mention of the Active Ageing Strategy which was launched earlier this year, despite the strategy's timescale (i.e. to 2021) coinciding with the timing of this Programme for Government.

2.0 Programme for Government Outcomes

Outcome 3: We have a more equal society

ASP welcomes this outcome to create a society in which access to opportunity is open to everyone, whatever their identity but calls for an end to age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

By May 2016, legislation to extend age discrimination legislation to the provision of goods, facilities and services (GFS) should have been passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly. This legislation must effectively tackle age discrimination in important areas like healthcare.

In the 2016-21 Assembly term, older people support the extension of this legislation to protect all ages. Older people also call for this legislation to be reviewed to see how effectively it is being implemented.

Outcome 4: We enjoy long, healthy, active lives

To improve the health of everyone and give them the best opportunity to live longer and healthier lives, the Executive needs to protect the Smartpass for everyone over the age of 60 regardless of income; and retain free prescriptions for everyone over the age of 60 regardless of income.

Social isolation can be tackled through a number of initiatives but free travel allows the older population to have a more active and healthy lifestyle, whilst ensuring it isn't a financial burden. It also means older people are able to spend their money in more places which clearly is of benefit to the local economy. Finally, it provides stability for the public transport system; without the Smartpass, bus and rail services for everyone would suffer.

In Northern Ireland, more than half (52%) of all items prescribed are to patients over the age of 60.¹ Older people typically require more medicines than most to maintain a good quality of life and should not be penalised because of their circumstances. If forced to pay for prescriptions, three out of five (62%) older people would either cut down on other essentials or pick and choose between prescriptions.²

Reducing operation waiting times and ensuring care packages are based on need will go a long way to ensuring older people are living healthier and longer lives.

The Executive needs to ensure that Northern Ireland is included in the Warm Home Discount scheme or any replacement scheme that offers a discount on energy bills for pensioners on low incomes.

¹ BSO Electronic Prescribing & Eligibility System

² Pensioners Parliament Health & Social Care Survey May 2015 -

<https://www.agesectorplatform.org/sites/default/files/Health%20%26%20Social%20Care%20Survey%20SMAL%20280515.pdf>

The Warm Home Discount was launched in 2011 and has helped fuel poor and vulnerable households in England, Scotland and Wales by providing a direct rebate off their electricity bill. For the 2015/16 winter, the discount provided was £140 to pensioners on low incomes. Northern Ireland was not included in this scheme.

Outcome 7: We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other

Despite crimes against older people being rare, we know that fear among older people is high. In 2011, the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament highlighted fear of crime as a top concern for older people in Northern Ireland. Since then, Age Sector Platform and the Department of Justice have been working to reduce fear of crime among older people. As a result, levels of fear have fallen, and this important work continues.

The Executive needs to lead efforts to increase safety for older people and reduce the fear of crime.

A key focus will be to improve conviction rates and enable more severe sentencing for crimes against older people.

ASP welcomes the reference to *“ensuring that mutual understanding is increased and fear and mistrust is reduced among people of different ages, identities and backgrounds”*.

In respect to this outcome we would ask that the Executive include working with older people as well as with justice agencies and colleagues in the community and voluntary sector, educators and others who work with young people, to engage people directly in their roles as parents and active citizens. More support for intergenerational projects should also play a role in reducing fear and mistrust among people of different ages.

Outcome 8: We care for others and we help those in need

How we care for the most vulnerable in our society is indicative of society’s health. Older people are the biggest users of the health service and creating a world class health service can only be in the best interest of our ageing population going forward. More people are living longer, and this should be a cause for celebration. It is also an obvious motive for improving the way health and social care is provided in the years to come.

Older people must be supported to remain independent for as long as possible, with the most vulnerable given extra help to maintain a decent quality of life. Older people entitled to benefits should be paid them automatically; and when changes are made to benefits these must be clearly communicated to those affected in a fair and timely manner.

Outcome 9: We are a shared society that respects diversity

We need to tackle the barriers to opportunity that arise for people as a result of their age. ASP welcomes this outcome to create a society in which access to opportunity is open to everyone, whatever their identity but calls for an end to age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

Older people support the extension of this legislation to protect all ages. Older people also call for this legislation to be reviewed to see how effectively it is being implemented.

Outcome 11: We have high quality public services

This outcome refers to “*ensuring that we evaluate services based on the contribution that they make to increasing people’s wellbeing*”.

The Executive needs to substantially reduce operation waiting times for older people and ensure that domiciliary care packages are determined by clinical need and that realistic timetables are implemented.

Older people have lost confidence in the process of reform within health and social care. As primary users of the health system, older people must be protected from any negative impact caused by changes to policy or practice.

One in three (34%) older people would describe the running of the health service as ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’³. Nine out of 10 (89%) older people think waiting times for non-emergency treatment and care are getting longer.⁴ Three out of four (76%) do not believe time allocated for domiciliary care is adequate.⁵

Outcome 13: We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure

High quality transport infrastructure and high quality public transport is essential for the mobility of older people. It is necessary for accessing commodities, making use of community facilities, and participation in meaningful social, cultural, and physical activities. Mobility also promotes healthy ageing as it relates to the basic human need of physical movement.

Social isolation can be tackled through a number of initiatives but free travel allows the older population to stay connected, have a more active and healthy lifestyle, whilst ensuring it isn’t a financial burden. It also means older people are able to spend their money in more places which clearly is of benefit to the local economy. Finally, it provides stability for the public transport system; without the Smartpass, bus and rail services for everyone would suffer.

Improving transport connections in order to tackle social isolation and provide better access to healthcare (e.g. through better rural transport and improved transport options for health appointments) are key objectives which should be met.

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

Age Sector Platform's Recommended New Outcome:

Age Sector Platform would like to see a specific outcome related to older people, given the significance of our ageing population. This should reflect the role and contribution older people make in our society.

We propose that this should be '*We respect, value and protect our older people*'.

3.0 Programme for Government Indicators & Measures (PfG survey monkey responses)

Indicator 1: Reduce crime

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 1: Reduce Crime	x	
Measured by: Prevalence rate - number of victims of any crime	x	

Comments/evidence: According to the most recent annual PSNI Crime Statistics (2014/15), more than half (55%) of all crimes committed against those aged 65 and over were theft or burglary. When compared to crimes committed against all ages, these same crimes account for just a quarter (25%). It is clear that older people are being targeted by criminals when it comes to burglary/theft, and a more strategic approach must be adopted to reduce the frequency of these crimes.

It is also concerning that over the last five years (2010/11 – 2014/15), violent crime against those aged 65 and over has increased by 81%. For all ages, the increase in violent crime was just 22%. This sort of evidence will cultivate real fear amongst older people; therefore reducing levels of violent crime against older people must be a priority.

Whilst the role of the police and community safety agencies is clearly instrumental in reducing crime; educating older people in how they can better protect themselves from becoming a victim of crime should also form part of any strategy.

Indicator 2: Reduce health inequalities

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 2: Reduce health inequalities	x	
Measured by: Gap between highest and lowest deprivation quintiles in healthy life expectancy at birth	x	

Comments/evidence: The NHS is serving an ageing population, where people are living longer with more complex health conditions. We also face particular challenges in tackling long-standing health inequalities, and improving the health of the population as a whole.

There is clear evidence that delivering as much care as possible at home, or in a homely setting, delivers the best outcomes. The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament (NIPP) has accepted that the home should be the hub of care for older people, with more services provided at home and in the community; however there are concerns among older people about how achievable this is.

In the 2014 Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament Survey, almost half (48%) of older people cited ‘access to health and social care’ as a concern. The provisional findings from this year’s survey show an increase to more than two thirds (69%).

Indicator 3: Increase healthy life expectancy

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 3: Increase healthy life expectancy	x	
Measured by : Healthy life expectancy at birth	x	

Comments/evidence: It is important that healthy life is considered throughout a person’s lifespan, and that all opportunities are taken to improve the life expectancy and quality of life of people as they grow older. Preventative healthcare programmes have an important role in improving the health and wellbeing of people as they grow older, whilst also saving the health service money longer term by preventing the need for costly interventions at a later stage.

The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament (NIPP) calls for ‘increased funding for preventative healthcare programmes to help maintain the quality of life and independence for older people living at home’.

Indicator 4: Reduce preventable deaths

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 4: Reduce preventable deaths	x	
Measured by : Preventable mortality		x

Suggested change: We suggest adding the Excess Winter Mortality rate to this measurement.

Comments/evidence: The Executive needs to ensure that Northern Ireland is included in the Warm Home Discount scheme or any replacement scheme that offers a discount on energy bills for pensioners on low incomes.

The Warm Home Discount was launched in 2011 and has helped fuel poor and vulnerable households in England, Scotland and Wales by providing a direct rebate off their electricity bill. For the 2015/16 winter, the discount provided was £140 to pensioners on low incomes. Northern Ireland was not included in this scheme.

The NI Executive needs to look at a ‘Whole House Solution’ plan to tackle fuel poverty which would include new developments and target fuel poor households on a phased basis.

Since the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament began in 2011, ‘keeping warm in winter’ has been the biggest concern for pensioners.⁶ In that time, there have been over 3,000 extra winter deaths, with nine out of 10 being over the age of 65.⁷ In Northern Ireland, almost three in five (57%) older households (aged 60+) are in fuel poverty.⁸

Indicator 5: Improve the quality of the healthcare experience

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 5: Improve the quality of the healthcare experience	x	
Measured by: % of people who are satisfied with health and social care (based on their recent contact)	x	

Comments/evidence: The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament Health and Social Care Survey (2015) showed that two out of three (64%) older people do not believe quality of care is at the centre of the health & social care service in Northern Ireland. Other statistics from that research include:

- One in three (34%) older people would describe the running of the health & social care system in Northern Ireland as ‘Poor’ or ‘Very Poor’
- Three quarters (75%) of older people do not believe decisions made in relation to health & social care in Northern Ireland are open and transparent
- More than one in three (37%) older people wouldn’t feel safe in an NHS hospital
- Nine out of ten (89%) older people think waiting times for non-emergency treatment and care are getting longer
- Three quarters (77%) of older people think it’s harder to get an appointment with their GP compared to five years’ ago

Indicator 6: Improve mental health

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 5: Improve mental health	x	
Measured by: % of the population with GHQ12 scores greater than or equal to 4 (signifying a possible mental health problem)	x	

Comments/evidence: In 2015, there were 20,966 people with dementia living in Northern Ireland.⁹ The NIPP has called for ‘outpatient clinics to be designed and managed to afford maximum dignity and respect for patients with dementia and that patients are supported and encouraged to speak for themselves as much as possible’.

⁶ Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament reports 2011-2014

⁷ Excess Winter Mortality 2010/11, NISRA

⁸ House Condition Survey 2011, HI Housing Executive

⁹ Alzheimer’s Society - https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=412

The NIPP also supports the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) Dignity Code, which sets out minimum standards for the dignified treatment of older people, whether in hospital or the community.

Social isolation has a big impact on a person’s mental health and can be tackled through a number of initiatives, but free travel allows the older population to have a more active and healthy lifestyle, whilst ensuring it isn’t a financial burden. It also means older people are able to spend their money in more places which clearly is of benefit to the local economy. Finally, it provides stability for the public transport system; without the Smartpass, bus and rail services for everyone would suffer.

In Engage with Age’s ‘Gazing at the Four Walls’ report, it found that “difficulties of getting out and about are a barrier to participation and can lead to social isolation. 55% of those interviewed as part of the report found their health and mobility was a significant factor in restricting or preventing them from getting out and about.”¹⁰

Indicator 8: Improve the supply of suitable housing

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 8: Improve the supply of suitable housing	x	
Measured by: The number of households in housing stress		x

Suggested change: We suggest adding more measures - including % of people living in decent homes (by age) and percentage of those in fuel poverty (by age).

Comments/evidence: Central and local government, housing associations and house builders need urgently to plan how to ensure that the housing needs of the older population are better addressed and to give as much priority to promoting an adequate market and social housing for older people as is given to housing for younger people.

A co-ordinated approach to housing is essential. Hazards in the home and poor accessibility contribute to falls and accidents. The combined cost of hospitalisation and social care for hip fractures (most of which are caused by falls) is approaching £2 billion a year.¹¹

We also recognise the contribution that housing can make to the health and wellbeing of everyone and the particular challenges that arise from an ageing population.

In the 2014 NI Pensioners Parliament Survey, 11% selected ‘suitable housing’ as concern and this has shown an increase where 29% selected ‘suitable housing’ as a concern in 2016 (provisional). Other issues raised by the Parliament have included lack of suitable housing for older people wishing to downsize and concerns among older people about being forced to sell their homes to pay for care.

¹⁰ ‘Gazing at the Four Walls’ report for Engage with Age – Voices of Older People experiencing social isolation in Belfast - <http://engagewithage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Gazing-at-the-4-Walls-Full-Report.pdf>

¹¹ British Orthopaedic Association (2011). The National Hip Fracture Database National Report 2011. http://www.nhfd.co.uk/003/hipfracturer.nsf/NHFDNationalReport2011_Final.pdf

The Executive needs to drastically improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes. To look at a ‘Whole House Solution’ plan to tackle fuel poverty which would include new developments and target fuel poor households on a phased basis. Since the Northern Ireland Pensioners parliament began in 2011, ‘keeping warm in winter’ has been the biggest concern for pensioners.¹² In that time, there have been over 3,000 extra winter deaths, with nine out of 10 being over the age of 65.¹³ In Northern Ireland, almost three in five (57%) older households (aged 60+) are in fuel poverty.¹⁴

Indicator 9: Improve support for adults with care needs

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 9: Improve support for adults with care needs	x	
Measured by: The number of adults receiving personal care at home or self-directed support for personal care, as a % of the total number of adults needing care.		x

Suggested change: This is not just about the number of adults receiving care but about the quality of care. A measure on care satisfaction levels should be included.

Comments/evidence: More care is being delivered in the home and this will increase significantly as the population ages. However, there will also still be a need for care in hospital and in residential and nursing homes. NIPP has called for admissions to be reinstated (both respite and permanent) to statutory residential care homes that can, with the appropriate investment, continue to provide quality care for older people.

The NIPP Health & Social Care Survey revealed that 3 out of 4 older people thought that time allocated for domiciliary care was inadequate.

NIPP has called for steps to be taken to ensure that domiciliary care packages are determined by clinical need and that realistic timetables are implemented. NIPP has also called for statutory bodies to continue to play a meaningful role in the provision of domiciliary care to ensure that the quality of care is of a high standard and meets the individual needs of each recipient. Finally, the NIPP has called for all frontline staff engaged in domiciliary care to be fully trained with the level of training subject to inspection by the appropriate professional body to ensure older people receive good quality care.

¹² Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament reports 2011-2014

¹³ Excess Winter Mortality 2010/11, NISRA

¹⁴ House Condition Survey 2011, HI Housing Executive

Indicator 16: Increase the proportion of people in work

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 16: Increase the proportion of people in work	x	
Measured by: Seasonally adjusted employment rate (16-64)		x

Suggested change: Consideration should be given to the changing State Pension Age over the lifetime of the Programme for Government, as it will reach 66 for both men and women by 2020.

Comments/evidence: The State Pension Age is increasing and many older people find that they need to work longer.

There is a strong economic case for working beyond 65 in Northern Ireland with the number of people aged 16-64 expected to fall by 1.9% from 2013-2037 while the number of people aged over 65 will increase by 75%. Economic output could be 4.4% higher (£2.3bn) in 2037 in a scenario where employment rates for the over 65s continue rising, than if employment rates are stagnant.¹⁵

Indicator 17: Reduce economic inactivity

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 17: Reduce economic inactivity	x	
Measured by: Economic inactivity rate excluding students	x	

Suggested change:

Comments/evidence: Free bus travel allows the older population to have a more active and healthy lifestyle, but ensures it isn't a financial burden. It also means older people are able to spend their money in more places which clearly is of benefit to the local economy. Finally, it provides stability for the public transport system; without the Smartpass, bus and rail services for everyone would suffer.

Older people contribute significantly to the economy in the provision of childcare; with many older people looking after their grandchildren to allow their children to work. In 2014, the Commissioner for Older People reported that "over 60s in Northern Ireland will contribute almost £25 billion to the economy over the next 50 years through volunteering, caring, childcare, replacement parenting and working".¹⁶

¹⁵ COPNI (March 2014) - Working Longer in Northern Ireland: Valuing an Ageing Workforce

¹⁶ COPNI - 'Appreciating AgE' – Valuing the positive contributions made by older people in NI

http://www.copni.org/images/documents/Appreciating_Age_Valuing_the_positive_contributions_made_by_older_people.pdf

Indicator 19: Reduce poverty

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 19: Reduce poverty	x	
Measured by: % of population living in (absolute) poverty (BHC)	x	
Measured by: % of population living in (relative) poverty (BHC)	x	

Comments/evidence: The NIPP has called for the automatic payment of pension credit in Northern Ireland so that all pensioners get what they are entitled to and so many of the most vulnerable in society are able to have a decent quality of life. The automatic payment of pension credit would address many of the barriers pensioners face and has the potential to significantly impact on the issue of poverty and improve the lives of people in later life. There is also a strong economic argument for automatic payments which should not be underestimated. The additional income could afford older people a better quality of life, increase local spending and boost the Northern Ireland economy. An innovative approach to benefit uptake is needed with the ultimate goal being automatic payment of pension credit.

Pensioners in Northern Ireland are more likely than those in Great Britain to be entirely reliant on state support for their income¹⁷, and therefore the introduction of the New State Pension has the potential to have a huge effect on pensioner poverty here. The NIPP opposed the introduction of the New State Pension in 2016, which created a two-tier pensions system whereby existing pensioners remain tied to a system of means-tested benefits. The NIPP calls for action to ensure that all existing pensioners are guaranteed the New State Pension amount, either through automatic payment of pension credit or some other means.

The NIPP Heating Costs Survey 2014 emphasises particularly vulnerable groups when it comes to fuel poverty – the very old, those dependent on oil, and those living in rural areas. The report found that on average, pensioner households spend £1,602 per year on heating costs. Over half of all respondents (51%) said that the cost of heating their home meant they had to cut down on other essentials (e.g. food).¹⁸

The NI Executive needs to ensure that Northern Ireland is included in the Warm Home Discount scheme or any replacement scheme that offers a discount on energy bills for pensioners on low incomes.

The Warm Home Discount was launched in 2011 and has helped fuel poor and vulnerable households in England, Scotland and Wales by providing a direct rebate off their electricity bill. For the 2015/16 winter, the discount provided was £140 to pensioners on low incomes. Northern Ireland was not included in this scheme.

¹⁷ JRF – Monitoring poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland 2012

¹⁸ NIPP Heating Costs Survey (May 2014)

<https://www.agesectorplatform.org/sites/default/files/Heating%20Costs%20Survey%20FOR%20WEB.pdf>

The Executive needs to drastically improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes. To look at a ‘Whole House Solution’ plan to tackle fuel poverty which would include new developments and target fuel poor households on a phased basis.

Since the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament began in 2011, ‘keeping warm in winter’ has been the biggest concern for pensioners.¹⁹ In that time, there have been over 3,000 extra winter deaths, with nine out of 10 being over the age of 65.²⁰ In Northern Ireland, almost three in five (57%) older households (aged 60+) are in fuel poverty.²¹

Indicator 23: Improve transport connections for people, goods and services

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 23: Improve transport connections for people, goods and services	x	
Measured by: Average journey time on key economic corridors	x	

Comments/evidence:

In the 2016 NI Pensioners Parliament Survey (provisional), more than half (51%) of older people selected ‘transport’ as a concern; an increase from 2014, when one in five (20%) selected ‘transport’ as concern.

Despite the importance of journey times on key economic corridors, improving transport connections for older people who would otherwise be socially isolated is as important – not only to those older people, but also to the local economy which is boosted by local spending by the older generation.

Improved transport connections are also vital for the safe and efficient transport of people to and from hospital. There needs to be a more joined up approach between departments when it comes to transport for older people, e.g. transport to hospital / health appointments and rural transport provision.

Indicator 24: Improve internet connectivity

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 24: Improve internet connectivity	x	
Measured by: Proportion of NI premises with access to broadband services in excess of 20Mbps	x	

Comments/evidence: There is a great need for older people to have access to good broadband connections. It is important for older people to stay connected and in an era where social isolation is becoming more and more prevalent, having a good internet connection to allow older people to communicate with family who are not close by is essential for their wellbeing.

¹⁹ Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament reports 2011-2014

²⁰ Excess Winter Mortality 2010/11, NISRA

²¹ House Condition Survey 2011, HI Housing Executive

More and more public service information and transactions are moving online; and with healthcare provision moving in that direction too; it is essential to have good internet connectivity. Older people need to be supported in the development of computer skills as this change happens.

The 2016 NI Pensioners Parliament Survey (provisional) reveals that a third (32%) of older people selected 'new technology' as a concern compared to 16% in 2014.

Indicator 25: Increase the use of public transport and active travel

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 25: Increase the use of public transport and active travel	x	
Measured by: % of all journeys which are made by walking/cycling/public transport	x	

Comments/evidence: To improve the health and wellbeing of everyone and give them the best opportunity to live longer and healthier lives, the Executive needs to protect the Smartpass for everyone over the age of 60 regardless of income.

Free travel helps tackle the issue of social isolation; allowing the older population to have a more active and healthy lifestyle, whilst ensuring it isn't a financial burden. It also means older people are able to spend their money in more places which clearly is of benefit to the local economy. Finally, it provides stability for the public transport system; without the Smartpass, bus and rail services for everyone would suffer.

Indicator 26: Increase respect for each other

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 26: Increase respect for each other	x	
Measured by: A Respect Index	x	

Comments/evidence: The 2016 NI Pensioners Parliament Survey (provisional) reveals that a third (34%) of older people selected 'lack of respect' as a concern, compared to 14% in 2014.

Older people have been left exposed to being victims of age discrimination for too long and Northern Ireland remains the only part of the UK or Ireland where age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services is still legal. This is totally unacceptable and is a clear sign of disrespect for the older generation in Northern Ireland. This legislation needs to be passed urgently.

Respect between generations is an important societal goal and the NIPP calls for more support for intergenerational projects to help achieve this. Societal perception has shifted to a negative place where older people are seen as wealthy, greedy, a drain on government's resources or a burden on society. More must be done to create a society founded on mutual respect.

Indicator 28: Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 28: Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities	x	
Measured by: Self-efficacy (to be developed)	x	

Comments/evidence: The Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament (NIPP) was set up to engage with older people from across Northern Ireland to enable them to have their say on the issues that matter to them and to empower them to bring about positive change to older people’s lives.

The NIPP increases the opportunity for older people to have their voice heard on the issues that matter to them. It connects older people to key decision makers within Government and service providers and increases the confidence of older people to make their voice heard and to uphold their rights.

The Parliament enables older people aged over 60, and especially those over 75, to become actively involved in influencing decisions that affect their lives and ensures that older people remain active and engaged citizens and are not excluded from decision making.

The NIPP feeds back to the Assembly and essentially makes its work easier, bringing to it the issues that are impacting older people across Northern Ireland. The NI Executive should look to support initiatives such as the NIPP to help increase the confidence and capability of older people and communities.

Indicator 38: Increase the effectiveness of the justice system

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 38: Increase the effectiveness of the justice system	x	
Measured by: Proportion of criminal cases processed within guideline time limits	x	

Comments/evidence: Despite crimes against older people being rare, we know that fear among older people is high. In 2011, the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament highlighted fear of crime as a top concern for older people in Northern Ireland. Since then, Age Sector Platform and the Department of Justice have been working to reduce fear of crime among older people. As a result, levels of fear have fallen, and this important work continues.

The Executive needs to lead efforts to increase safety for older people and reduce the fear of crime. This is about confidence building amongst older people. The older you get the more likely you are to lose confidence.

A key focus should be to improve conviction rates and enable more severe sentencing for crimes against older people.

ASP welcomes the reference to “ensuring that mutual understanding is increased and fear and mistrust is reduced among people of different ages, identities and backgrounds”.

In respect to this outcome we would ask that the Executive include working with older people as well as with justice agencies and colleagues in the community and voluntary sector, educators and others who work with young people, to engage people directly in their roles as parents and active citizens.

Indicator 39: Reduce reoffending

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 39: Reduce reoffending	x	
Measured by: Reoffending rate	x	

Comments/evidence: A key focus to reduce reoffending will be to improve conviction rates and enable more severe sentencing for crimes against older people.

Indicator 42: Increase quality of life for people with disabilities

Indicator/Measure	Keep same	Change
Indicator 42: Increase quality of life for people with disabilities	x	
Measured by: Average life satisfaction score of people with disabilities	x	

Comments/evidence: As people age, they often develop health conditions and/or disabilities. Older people should be treated like any other disabled person regardless of their age.

ASP calls for an end to age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services. In the 2016-21 Assembly term, older people support the extension of this legislation to protect all ages. Older people also call for this legislation to be reviewed to see how effectively it is being implemented.

Many older people act as unpaid carers for parents, spouses or children. According to the ‘Understanding Society – The UK Household Longitudinal Study’, one in seven of the ‘oldest old’ now provide some sort of unpaid care to family or friends.

The task of providing care should be fairly shared between individuals, families and the state, but as public funding falls further and further behind the growing demand for care, the concern is that very old people are being expected to fill the gap.

NIPP calls on the NI Executive to recognise the massive contribution of unpaid carers by providing additional support services and also to establish regular audits of this support to identify how it can be continuously improved.

Free travel allows the older population to have a more active and healthy lifestyle, whilst ensuring it isn’t a financial burden. It also means older people are able to spend their money in more places which clearly is of benefit to the local economy.

Finally, it provides stability for the public transport system; without the Smartpass, bus and rail services for everyone would suffer.

In Northern Ireland, more than half (52%) of all items prescribed are to patients over the age of 60.²² Older people typically require more medicines than most to maintain a good quality of life and should not be penalised because of their circumstances. If forced to pay for prescriptions, three out of five (62%) older people would either cut down on other essentials or pick and choose between prescriptions.²³

4.0 New Indicator

Given the significance of our ageing population, Age Sector Platform would suggest adding the following indicator:

'Increase quality of life for older people'

5.0 Conclusion

Age Sector Platform welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. Throughout this submission we proposed a number of key activities that we consider would progress the Programme for Government's desired outcomes. In summary these are:

- Protect the Smartpass and free prescriptions for everyone aged 60+
- Substantially reduce operation waiting times, and ensure care packages are based on need
- Ensure the most vulnerable older people are assisted with their energy bills
- Drastically improve the energy efficiency of new and existing homes
- Improve conviction rates and enable more severe sentencing for crimes against older people
- Ensure legislation effectively tackles age discrimination in goods, facilities and services
- Support the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament

²² BSO Electronic Prescribing & Eligibility System

²³ Pensioners Parliament Health & Social Care Survey May 2015