

REVIEW OF COPNI

Name	
Organisation	Mid Ulster District Council

We would ask you to please complete this in Word, save your document and email back to us.

(Please type your response in boxes below, each box will expand to accommodate your answer)

1. Form and function

- a) Have you interacted with COPNI and how does the Commissioner relate to the work of your organisation?

To date the Age Friendly Co-ordinator has had no direct links working with the COPNI. The work of the Commissioner and COPNI is to further engage with older people to hear what matters most to them, inform policy makers and government, representing older people in the media and providing an advocacy for older people.

These key areas very much relate to the work of Mid Ulster District Council including the Age Friendly agenda. Through the MUDC Community Plan outcomes have been identified including: We are better enabled to live longer healthier and more active lives and we care more for those most vulnerable and in need.

The Age Friendly Co-ordinator has signposted individuals to services and promoted the services offered by the COPNI and Commissioner.

b) What is unique about the role and functions of COPNI?

The Commissioner and his team work on a number of different areas in order to safeguard and promote the interests of older people.

The Commissioner for Older People provides assistance to individual older people who need advocacy or legal support including where an older person is having problems dealing with a public authority the Commissioner can advocate on their behalf.

The Commissioner can provide advice to the Government on a range of issues to ensure that the interests of older people are promoted and safeguarded when policy or legislative changes are being considered.

The Commissioner regularly speaks on television, radio and print media, championing the interests of older people and commenting on a wide range of issues including: Championing the rights of older people to the services, support, respect and equality that they deserve and the need for service providers and Government to be accountable for the decisions they make in planning and delivering services and support for older people.

“The State of Ageing 2022” a review of public data by the Centre for Ageing Better, further highlights the unique role of the Older People’s Commissioners in Northern Ireland by strengthening the call for an Older Peoples Commissioner in England, in line with NI and Wales.

- c) Have you identified potential overlaps between COPNI and other agencies concerned with older people's rights?

There are various agencies, organisations including the community and voluntary sector throughout Northern Ireland locally and regionally that are concerned with older people's rights and provide support to address their needs. This has been further highlighted during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Mid Ulster District Council (MUDC) are concerned with older people's rights and provide support to address their needs. Through the MUDC Community Plan outcomes have been identified including: We are better enabled to live longer healthier and more active lives and we care more for those most vulnerable and in need. The Health And Wellbeing Thematic Subgroup has identified an "Ageing Well" initiative as one of its outcomes within the Health And Wellbeing Theme of the Mid Ulster Community Plan. The Aging Well Initiative which seeks to ensure that all areas of life include provision for older people from accessing our leisure services, to basic service requirements to shopping. Mid Ulster council with support from Public Health Agency have appointed an Age Friendly Co-ordinator who is taking on the role of developing the initiative. All 11 council areas have signed up to become Age Friendly.

Locally within Mid Ulster, The Mid Ulster Agewell partnership works together to support and provide assistance to older people in the community through their Good morning call and the home maintenance service. Furthermore they engage with a wide range of Agencies to support referrals and pathways to other support services and programmes for older people throughout Mid Ulster. Mid Ulster Seniors Network involves community, statutory and voluntary partners, working together to improve later life for people across the Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt areas. Mid Ulster Seniors Network work to strengthen the voice of older people and support them to influence decisions on local policy and services. They are supported by Age NI to share information, learning and progress on key issues to bring about positive change to services, policy and practice. Other networks include Mid Ulster Disability Forum and Mid Ulster Loneliness Network.

There are opportunities for COPNI to continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders and other agencies to address rights of older people to grow old.

2. Control and Governance

The Commissioner role has Corporation Sole status (there is no Board) and is supported by an office which is an NDPB, sponsored by the Department for Communities, DfC.

- a) How suitable is the current Delivery Body status (i.e. NDPB and Corporation Sole) for the effective delivery of the statutory functions of the Commissioner's role?

To date the Age Friendly Co-ordinator has had no direct links working with the COPNI. However the role of the COPNI should be supported by working in partnership with other organisations and agencies concerned with older people's rights.

- b) Are there other potential options which could enhance the delivery of COPNI's statutory functions?

Each of the eleven local government authorities have now established Age Friendly within their organisations, it may be an opportunity for the Regional Age Friendly Network NI to expand their membership and include representation from COPNI to help strengthen the partnership and delivery of COPNI regionally.

Many of the outcomes of the MUDC community plan reflect the outcomes in the Programme for Government. Community planning structures could be another option for COPNI to become involved in to help promote and action the needs and interests of older people.

- c) The Commissioner is appointed by The Executive Office while the sponsor Department for COPNI is the DfC. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these arrangements?

To date the Age Friendly Co-ordinator has had no direct links working with the COPNI.

However the role of the COPNI should be supported by working in partnership with other organisations and agencies concerned with older people's rights.

As there are 2 organisations involved it is important there are clear lines of communications between both organisations at all times and roles and responsibilities of both organisations are clearly defined.

3. Legislation

COPNI acts as an independent voice and champion for older people in line with the legal powers and duties defined by the 2011 Act with a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the interests of older people in Northern Ireland. Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of this legislation or the legal powers and duties afforded to COPNI by the 2011 Act?

This is an important piece of statutory legislation which allows for an independent voice and champion for older people which is appropriate for COPNI. The 2011 Act could be reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects and is appropriate, relevant and consistent with the strategic any new Age friendly policy/legislation for example Active Ageing strategy, PHA Making Life Better, A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health.

4. Value for money

- a) How should the Commissioner's office be assessed as providing value for money?

The Commissioner's office should continue to have governance arrangements in place with governance documents including financial reports available for all to access.

- b) Has the office for the Commissioner for Older People made best use of available resources?

To date the Age Friendly Co-ordinator has had no direct links working with the COPNI but the Age Friendly co-ordinator has availed of useful information through the COPNI website and has been able to signpost service users.

5. Accessibility

- a) Are there groups of older people who may find it more difficult to access the Commissioner?

Some older people may find it more difficult to access the Commissioner:

- Section 75 groups
- Victims of abuse
- Rural
- Housebound
- People living in residential care
- People ageing without children
- Those who are not connected to the internet

- b) What could be done to promote and raise awareness of COPNI?

There are a variety of ways that can promote and raise awareness of COPNI including Newspapers, radio, tv, social media, internet, community notices and community navigator roles are all important in supporting effective communication.

Raise awareness of advice available. Getting information out needs to be not just digital but non-digital, newsletters, booklets, leaflets – older people also prefer face to face meetings as they are so scared of scams. Being able to access information that is essential to older people on transport, housing, community activities, community support, residential care, financial advice at critical time in their life or going through change.

Contact with local councils to request invitation to council meetings to present on the work of the COPNI to promote and raise awareness.

There are opportunities for COPNI to continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders and other agencies to address rights of older people to grow old. Co-design, collaboration, working together to ensure resources needed for an ageing population.

6. Efficiency and Effectiveness

- a) Could you describe the most positive aspects of your organisation's engagement with COPNI? Also what were the more negative aspects of that engagement?

To date the Age Friendly Co-ordinator has had no direct links working with the COPNI. The Age Friendly co-ordinator has availed of useful information through the COPNI website and has been able to signpost service users.

- b) Has the work of the Commissioner focussed on the most important issues for older people? And are there other issues which could have been given more priority?

The work of the commissioner has focused a vast range of issues for older people including; supporting our ageing population by promoting positive ageing and ending age discrimination, better health and social care and tackling financial abuse and scams and protecting older victims of crime.

However after recent engagement and consultation with older people in the Mid Ulster area from April-June 2022 as well as the issues noted above other issues are coming to the forefront including:

- Rising living costs have potential impacts on physical and mental wellness. Financial constraints impact on isolation, no internet connection and loneliness.
- Lower standards of Health and Social Care. Accessing GP services getting worse, long waiting lists for hospital appointments and age discrimination still exists. People are worried about getting Dr and Hospital Appointments as health worsens. Lack of face-to-face interaction with GPs is poor especially for those with hearing problems.
- Getting information out needs to be not just digital but non-digital, newsletters, booklets, leaflets – older people also prefer face to face meetings as they are so scared of scams. Being able to access information that is essential to older people on transport, housing, community activities, community support, financial advice at critical time in their life or going through change.
- Facilities and outdoors places need to consider needs of older people: toilets and seats in public spaces such as parks and shopping areas.
- Older people are looking for structured activities across the district specific to their diverse needs and would like to see consistent activities that are run by organisations who are supported with funding. There is a high difference of support and services across each Council area.

- c) The Office of the Commissioner for Older People has been in existence since 2011. Please (if possible) indicate how would you rate the performance of COPNI during that time against the

outcomes listed (see over) and please use the comments section to explain your score and provide examples. The comments box will expand to accommodate your answer.

Due to indirect links with the COPNI the Age Friendly co-ordinator is unable to score and provide examples but has provided comments against some of the outcomes that may be considered.

If you would be content for your comments to be attributed to your organisation in our Report to DfC, please delete as appropriate Yes/No

COPNI - Outcomes Framework

COPNI Role	Proposed Outcomes	Performance Rate 1 - 10	Comments (type below, each box will expand to accommodate your answer)
Advise Support Advise and support older people directly on their needs, rights and access to services Advise government and all its agencies on policies, legislation, on services provided for OP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older people are better able engage in civic society to their full potential 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age Friendly Planning needs to be priority, needs reviewed by older people and adopt a “Nothing about us without us” attitude. New ways of engagement addressed with older people through networks and forums. Age Friendly Promotion with older people having a higher profile, increased press releases, partnership working, networking, information sharing and promoting the benefits of positive ageing.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older people are better informed of their Rights 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The design of policy, legislation, and services for older people are better informed 		
Investigate Challenge Government actions for improvement and correction of OP service provision when they fall short	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The performance of public/private sectors with respect to provision of older peoples services is investigated and challenged 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing the needs of older people will always be a work in progress, continually evolving taking into consideration changing circumstances. Older people have been highly visible because of the pandemic and perhaps received higher attention than normal. Sustaining this visibility and attention by all partners is necessary to provide older peoples services as communities seek to become even more Age Friendly for future generations.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortfalls in service provision for older people are identified and changes recommended 		
Advocate, Represent Review, monitor public and private sector provision for OP and ensure it is in their best interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older people are better legally represented and protected 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Older people need to become a major focus for policy makers, media commentators and community action. Need growth of equality and diversity legislation and policies. There is a need to promote and support intersectional, intergenerational approaches to policy development, planning and provision across each and every sector and department. More consultations and engagement opportunities to value older people’s contribution.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy, legislation and services for older people are improved 		

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We need a cross-departmental and partnership approaches to plan for better later life.
--	--	--	--