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Centre for Ageing Research
and Development in Ireland

Government Structures in Ireland, North and South

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RESOURCE DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the systems of government in Ireland, North and South, by local, regional and national levels. It describes the functions of Dáil Éireann and the Northern Ireland Assembly, departmental roles and an outline of all-Island bodies created under the Belfast Agreement 1998.

This resource aims to give a greater understanding of government structures in order to assist and encourage collaboration and co-operation in the area of ageing research within Ireland, North and South.

Web links have been provided to guide the reader to original texts. Links to the original definition of titles and technical terms have also been added.

SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT OVERVIEW

Republic of Ireland

The legislative branch of the Republic of Ireland government is based on a bicameral legislature, the Oireachtas. This is made up of Dáil Éireann (42 Constituencies) and Seanad Éireann. Dáil Éireann has 166 elected Teachtaí Dála (TD's). There are 60 nominated or elected members of Seanad Éireann. The executive branch is a Cabinet which consists of the Taoiseach and Ministers. There are 15 Government Departments.

In addition to the central government, there are 29 Local Authorities or County Councils, five Borough Councils and five City Councils¹. There are also two Regional Assemblies (Southern & Eastern and Border, Midland West) and eight Regional Authorities².

A network of councillors from the central Ireland/Northern Ireland border area, the Cross-Border Area Network, was established in 1995 to respond to the unique economic and social needs of the central border region.

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Assembly is made up of 108 elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) across 18 constituencies. The Executive is comprised of the First Minister, the Deputy First Minister and 10 Ministers. There are 11 Government Departments including the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

The powers of the Northern Ireland Assembly do not cover “reserved” matters or “excepted” matters. These are policy areas which are the responsibility of the UK government in Westminster and include issues such as tax, immigration and foreign affairs.

Northern Ireland has 18 elected Members of Parliament (MPs) to the House of Commons in Westminster. There is also a Northern Ireland Office which represents Northern Ireland's interests at UK Government level as well as the UK's interests in Northern Ireland.

There are 26 Local Authorities or Councils³ in Northern Ireland. Five of these Councils participate in the Cross-Border Area Network with five Councils from the Republic of Ireland.

¹ www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/LocalGovernmentAdministration.






² These are not regional governments, but consist of elected representatives from the Councils and have limited functions.






³ The Review of Public Administration (RPA) in 2011 will reduce the number of Councils to 11. Other bodies are also being restructured as a result of the RPA.

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN IRELAND, NORTH AND SOUTH



Department	North	South
OFMDFM/ Taoiseach	<p>The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM): www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk</p> <p>The OFMDFM supports the running of the Northern Ireland executive, with a wide range of responsibilities including liaison with the Assembly, the North-South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council and the UK government departments, overseas international relations and overall responsibility for the Programme for Government, promoting and monitoring implementation of equality of opportunity and good relations, tackling poverty and social inclusion, policy for children and young people, victims and survivors, and sustainable development in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>The Department of the Taoiseach: www.taoiseach.gov.ie</p> <p>The Department of the Taoiseach provides Ministers, Government and the Taoiseach with policy advice and information to assist in the co-ordination and development of government policy. It provides administrative support to the Chief Whip and provides the Secretariat to the Government. Other responsibilities include development and co-ordination of policy in relation to economic and social development, supporting the social partnership process, social inclusion, digital inclusion, Northern Ireland affairs, European Union affairs, public sector change, and reform of the Oireachtas.</p>
Agriculture/ Rural Development	<p>Department of Agriculture and Rural Development: www.dardni.gov.uk</p> <p>DARD aims to promote sustainable economic growth and the development of the countryside in Northern Ireland. The responsibilities of the department include food, farming and agri-environment policy, agri-food development, rural payments and inspection, veterinary matters, rural development, forestry, sea fisheries and rivers.</p>	<p>Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs: www.pobail.ie</p> <p>The mission of this department is to lead the sustainable development of a competitive, consumer-focused agri-food sector and to contribute to a vibrant rural economy and society. The responsibilities include food, rural development and rural environment, food safety, animal and plant health as well as animal welfare.</p> <p>Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure: www.dcalni.gov.uk</p> <p>Rural development in the Republic of Ireland is the remit of the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.</p>

Department	North	South
<p>Culture and Arts</p>	<p>Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, www.dcalni.gov.uk</p> <p>DCAL oversees government policy for arts, museums, libraries, sport, inland waterways and inland fisheries, linguistic diversity, public records, and advising on National Lottery distribution.</p>	<p>Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport: www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie</p> <p>The Department supports the growth of a competitive and sustainable tourism industry and attempts to increase access to, and participation in sport, the arts and culture. Its responsibilities include arts and creativity, development of the film industry, national cultural institutions, sport and the sporting infrastructure, and tourism.</p>
<p>Defence, Foreign Affairs</p>	<p>All matters pertaining to defence and international relations are excepted matters and are thus the responsibility of Westminster and not the Northern Ireland Assembly.</p>	<p>Department of Defence: www.defence.ie</p> <p>The Department has responsibility for defence matters, legal, regulatory and litigation and lands policy, delivery of security, emergency and community services by the Defence Forces, overseas operations, international security and peacekeeping, and emergency planning co-ordination and oversight.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs: www.dfa.ie</p> <p>The Department takes the responsibility for promoting the interests of the government in the European Union and the wider world. It oversees foreign policy, international developments, reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and between the North and South of the island, as well as developing Ireland's relationship with Britain.</p>

Department	North	South
<p>Education</p>	<p>Department of Education:  www.deni.gov.uk</p> <p>The Department of Education is responsible for school funding including administration, pre-school, primary, post-primary and special education, youth service, teacher education and salaries, and school planning and provision.</p> <p>Department for Employment and Learning:  www.delni.gov.uk</p> <p>The Department has responsibility for higher education, further education and vocational training as well as employment services, employment law and labour relations, student support and postgraduate awards, and careers advice and guidance.</p>	<p>Department of Education and Skills:  www.education.ie</p> <p>The Department is responsible for school funding including administration, transport, student support grants, adult literacy and community education, vocational education and training programmes for early school leavers, the unemployed, Travellers and post-Leaving Certificate course participants, staffing and financial resources for third-level institutions, and teacher training.</p>
<p>Enterprise and Trade</p>	<p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment:  www.detini.gov.uk</p> <p>The role of the Department is to formulate and deliver economic development policy in terms of Enterprise, Social Economy, Innovation, Energy, Telecoms, and Tourism in Northern Ireland. The Department has responsibility for economic advice and research, research and statistic services, business regulation, health and safety at work, social economy, Invest NI, the NI Tourist Board, and the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation:  www.deti.ie</p> <p>The Department is tasked with creating the favourable conditions for enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation as well as generating quality employment opportunities. It supervises a number of agencies including the Health and Safety Authority and the National Consumer Agency. It is also in charge of labour force development, competitiveness and international affairs, employment rights and industrial relations, science, technology and intellectual property, and corporate services and economic policy, consumers, competition and commerce.</p>

Department	North	South
<p>Environment and Planning</p>	<p>Department of the Environment:  www.doeni.gov.uk</p> <p>The Department of the Environment has responsibility for land use, air and water quality, waste management and the natural and built environments. It promotes sustainable development and efficient local government.</p> <p>Department for Regional Development:  www.drdni.gov.uk</p> <p>The Department for Regional Development has responsibility for regional strategic planning, transportation strategy, ports and public transport, roads and water policy, providing and maintaining roads, water and sewerage services.</p>	<p>Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources:  www.dcenr.gov.ie</p> <p>The Department covers telecommunications, the broadcasting and energy sectors, and regulates, protects and develops natural resources.</p> <p>Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government:  www.environ.ie</p> <p>The Department's responsibilities are for the environment and environmental protection, climate change, conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity, conservation of the built heritage, water resources and the quality of drinking water, sustainable and balanced regional development, housing in sustainable communities, and local government.</p> <p>Department of Transport:  www.transport.ie</p> <p>The Department of Transport has the responsibility for the national roads programme, road safety, public transport and infrastructures, aviation, airport infrastructure, aviation, airport infrastructure, maritime safety and security standards, and ports and shipping policy</p>

Department	North	South
<p>Equality issues</p>	<p>Equality issues are overseen by OFMDFM in Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs: www.pobail.ie</p> <p>In 2010, the responsibility for equality issues, which previously rested with the Department of Justice and Law Reform, was moved to the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.</p>
<p>Finance</p>	<p>Department of Finance and Personnel: www.dfpni.gov.uk</p> <p>The Department is responsible for financial and regulatory matters as well as being in charge of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. These duties relate to personnel, civil service accommodation, legal services, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, Land Registers, the Land and Property Services Agency, central procurement, Civil Law Reform Division, General Register Office and building regulations.</p> <p>Financial services and financial markets are reserved to Westminster. In addition, taxation and currency are excepted matters so are not intended for devolution.</p>	<p>Department of Finance: www.finance.gov.ie</p> <p>The Department of Finance is responsible for the public finances. The most important duty is the collection and expenditure of revenues. The Department has a central role in implementing government policy, particularly the Programme for Government, as well as responsibility for the budget, economy and pensions, personnel and remuneration, and economic planning and development.</p>

Department	North	South
<p>Health</p>	<p>Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety:  www.dhsspsni.gov.uk</p> <p>The DHSS&PS has responsibility for policy and legislation for health providers including hospitals and GPs, as well as more general policy and legislation to improve the health and well-being of people in Northern Ireland. It covers public health, primary care services, community health and personal social services, family practitioner services, community and elderly care, childcare and child protection, family policy, mental health, learning disability, physical and sensory disability, provision of hospital services and clinics, accident and emergency, public safety, ambulance and fire rescue services.</p>	<p>The Department of Health and Children:  www.dohc.ie</p> <p>The Department of Health and Children has the responsibility for formulating and evaluating policies for the health services. It also has a role in the strategic planning of health services, in conjunction with the Health Service Executive, voluntary service providers, government departments and other interested parties. The Department covers acute hospitals and cancer services, primary care, social inclusion, public health, disability and mental health, community care, blood and organ donation, dental, optical and aural services, GP services, alcohol and drug treatments, children’s health, food safety, health insurance, alternative health and the emergency health services. It also has an Office for Older People.</p>
<p>Justice/ Law Reform</p>	<p>The Department of Justice assumed responsibility for justice matters in Northern Ireland in April 2010. It is responsible for policing and justice powers, including criminal law, policing, prosecution, public order, the courts and the prisons service.</p> <p>A number of justice matters remain the responsibility of Westminster, including drug classification, extradition, military justice, immigration and national security.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Law Reform:  www.justice.ie</p> <p>The Department of Justice responsibilities are the protection of life and property, the prevention and detection of crime, maintaining and promoting equality of treatment between people, the provision of services for the buying and selling of property, the management of inward migration to the state, supporting integration and providing a courts service and other forms of investigative tribunals, European Union affairs, Council of Europe, and UN affairs.</p>

Department	North	South
<p>Social</p>	<p>Department for Social Development: www.dsdni.gov.uk</p> <p>DSD has responsibility for housing programmes, urban regeneration, the Social Security Agency, Child Support Agency, support for the voluntary and community sector, charities policy and legislation, the Rent Assessment Office, the Social Fund Commissioner, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board.</p>	<p>Department of Social Protection: www.welfare.ie</p> <p>The Department is responsible for social protection policies, the delivery of statutory and non-statutory schemes and services, social insurance and social assistance schemes including provision for unemployment, illness, maternity, caring, widowhood, retirement and old age.</p>

RELEVANT NORTH/SOUTH BODIES

British Irish Council (BIC): Created under the Agreement reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations in Belfast in 1998, the BIC aims to promote positive, practical relationships among its members including the British and Irish Governments, the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. Social inclusion is currently a priority area of work for the Council.

www3.british-irishcouncil.org

North South Ministerial Council (NSMC): Brings together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government to develop consultation, co-operation and action within the island of Ireland, including through implementation on an all-island and cross-border basis on matters of mutual interest and within the competence of each administration, North and South. The NSMC comprises Ministers of the Northern Ireland Administration and the Irish Government, working together to take forward co-operation between both parts of the island to mutual benefit. There are six implementation bodies: Waterways, Food Safety, Trade and Business, Europe, Language, and Folye, Carlingford and Irish Lights. The six areas of co-operation are: Agriculture, Education, Environment, Health, Tourism, and Transport.

www.northsouthministerialcouncil.org

AGEING ISSUES – WHO DOES WHAT?

This section selects a number of policy areas which are relevant to ageing and older people. It identifies the public bodies responsible and the relevant policy drivers and documents in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The six areas are:

1. Health
2. Long-term care
3. Mental health
4. Older people
5. Pensions
6. Poverty and social inclusion

Northern Ireland

Health

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland has responsibility for improving the health and social well-being of the people of Northern Ireland. The Permanent Secretary of the Department is also Chief Executive of the Health and Social Care system, as well as Principal Accounting Officer for all the Department's responsibilities.

47% of current public expenditure in Northern Ireland is allocated to the DHSS&PS.

The key business groups of DHSS&PS are the Resources and Performance Management Group, the Healthcare Policy Group, the Social Policy Group, the Health Estates Investment Group (HEIG), the Office of the Chief Medical Officer and the Office of Social Services.

There are also five professional groups: medical and allied services, social services inspectorate, nursing and midwifery advisory group, dental services, and pharmaceutical advice and services.

The health system is part of the overall UK healthcare system, which is based on the Beveridge model of universal healthcare coverage paid for through general taxation.

The Department is responsible for Health and Social Care, which covers policy and administration for hospitals, doctors and community health services, as well as Public Health, which is a more general policy responsibility to promote health and well-being.

The *Investing for Health Strategy* (IfH) is the main public policy framework for health in Northern Ireland and was published in 2001. Following the development of the strategy, the health system was re-organised. The Health and Social Care Board replaced the previous four Health and Social Services Boards. It focuses on commissioning, resource management and performance management and improvement.

The new Public Health Agency focuses on improving and protecting health and well-being, working in partnership with stakeholders such as the Health and Social Care Board, local government, other statutory bodies, and the voluntary and community sectors.

The Patient Client Council replaced the previous four Health and Social Services Councils and aims to provide an independent voice for patients, clients and carers and communities on health and social care issues.

Finally, the Business Services Organisation has responsibility for the provision of a range of business support and specialist professional services to the whole of the health and social system.

Long-term care

Long-term care is provided either informally by family and friends, care management at home, or in a residential care home.

Responsibility for assisting people with the cost of nursing home/residential care rests with the five Health and Personal Social Services Trusts. This financial assistance is means-tested. 92.5% of nursing homes are private, with 1.4% being public and 6.1% being run by voluntary organisations.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the independent body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland, and encouraging improvements in the quality of those services. The inspectors visit nursing and residential care homes to examine all aspects of the care provided, to assure the quality of the facilities.

Mental health

Mental health is under the aegis of the DHSS&PS. A strategic goal of the Department is to modernise mental health and disability services. 8.4% of total public health expenditure is spent on mental health in Northern Ireland.

The *Bamford Review of Mental Health* of 2007 and subsequent action plan are the main policy drivers on mental health. The Patient and Client Council in Northern Ireland set up a Bamford Monitoring Group made up of service users, their carers' and groups that represent them. The purpose of the group is to assess whether the reforms being put into place are making a real difference to the people who use the services.

Older people

Older people’s issues fall under the responsibility of the OFMDFM in Northern Ireland. The work is led by two Junior Ministers, who are then jointly accountable to the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

*Ageing in an Inclusive Society*⁴, launched in March 2005, is the main public policy framework for older people in Northern Ireland. It sets out the approach to be taken by Government to promote the inclusion of older people in Northern Ireland.

An Older People’s Advocate for Northern Ireland was established in 2008, to be replaced by a Commissioner for Older People. The office of the Commissioner will be established with a wide range of promotional, advisory, educational, legal and investigatory functions and powers to be deployed in the interests of older people, both generally and individually. The Commissioner will be appointed in early 2011.

Pensions

The Department for Social Development has strategic responsibility for pensions in Northern Ireland.

While pensions are technically transferred matters to the Northern Ireland Assembly, there is parity with the system in Great Britain.

Pensions in Great Britain are administered by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Private pensions are regulated by the Pensions Regulator. 51% of workers in the UK save into a pension scheme.

Poverty and social inclusion

Tackling poverty and promoting social inclusion are the purview of the OFMDFM. There is a dedicated Central Anti-Poverty Unit for this purpose.

20% of pensioners in Northern Ireland live in low-income households, equivalent to some 50,000 people.

Lifetime Opportunities: Government’s Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland was launched in November 2006. Older people are a target group within the strategy, with the goal that they are valued and respected, remain independent, participate as active citizens and enjoy a good quality of life in a safe and shared community.

⁴ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/ageing-strategy.pdf>

Republic of Ireland

Health As in Northern Ireland, the Department of Health and Children has overall responsibility for public health. It is led by the Minister for Health and Children, supported by three junior ministers: the Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, the Minister for Equality, Disability and Mental Health, and the Minister for Older People and Health Promotion.

Healthcare in the Republic of Ireland is based on a mix of public and private health service provision. 30% of the population is entitled to free healthcare through the medical card system, and just over 50% have private health insurance. Health represents 27% of total current public expenditure. €1.74 billion is spent on care for older people.

Responsibility for providing health and personal social services in Ireland rests with the Health Service Executive (HSE). The HSE provides a wide range of services for older people, including in-patient, acute services, step down and convalescent care, day services, rehabilitation, community services, home care and home helps. It is funded through general taxation.

The National Health Strategy, *Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You*, launched in 2001, is the central document on health policy in Ireland.

Long-term care There are a number of HSE-run care centres in the Republic of Ireland as well as private or religious facilities that provide residential care.

The HSE provides a range of services for home care, while also providing information and advice on residential or nursing home care.

It also administers the Nursing Homes Support Scheme, also known as the Fair Deal Scheme, which came into operation in 2009. The “Fair Deal” is a scheme of means-tested financial support for people needing long-term nursing home care. All nursing homes are subject to inspection by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), which is a regulation body similar to the RQIA in Northern Ireland.

Mental health

The Department of Health and Children has a dedicated Office for Disability & Mental Health.

The Mental Health Commission promotes high standards in the delivery of mental health services and ensures that the interests of those involuntarily admitted to Approved Centres are protected.

6% of total public health expenditure is spent on mental health in the Republic of Ireland.

A Vision for Change (2006) is the strategic policy document for Mental Health. There is an independent monitoring group which assesses progress on the implementation of the strategy recommendations.

Older people

The Republic of Ireland does not have an equivalent to the Older People's Advocate, or the forthcoming Commissioner for Older People.

The Minister of State with responsibility for Older People and Health Promotion within the Department of Health and Children is responsible for representing Older people's rights.

A National Positive Ageing Strategy is being developed by the Office for Older People which will set the strategic framework for future policies, programmes and services for older people in Ireland. The consultation phase ended in June 2010.

Pensions

The Department of Social Protection formulates pensions policy and administers the delivery of the state pension scheme.

The Pensions Board, appointed by the Minister of Social Protection, regulates workplace pensions and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts.

The *National Pensions Framework* (2010) sets out government strategy for state and private pensions.

54% of workers in the Republic of Ireland save into a pension scheme.

Poverty and social inclusion

The Office for Social Inclusion is the Government Office in the Republic of Ireland with overall responsibility for developing, co-ordinating and driving Ireland's *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007 - 2016*. It is based in the Department for Social Protection.

One of the central actions in the plan is to provide the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high-quality standard of living. 3.7% of people aged 65 and over live in consistent poverty in the Republic of Ireland⁵.

⁵ Central Statistics Office, Percentage of persons in "consistent poverty" at 60% level using basic life-style deprivation indicators 2005

For further information contact:

Conor Breen, Policy Officer-Research Translation, CARDI, t: +353 (0) 478 6303; e: conor@cardi.ie

CARDI
Forestview
Purdy's Lane
Belfast BT8 7ZX
t: + 44 (0) 28 9069 0066
f: + 44 (0) 28 9064 6604

CARDI
Level 5
Bishops Square
Redmond's Hill, Dublin 2
t: + 353 (0) 1478 6300
f: + 353 (0) 1478 6319

www.cardi.ie
info@cardi.ie

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