

# C|A|R|D|I

Centre for Ageing Research  
and Development in Ireland

## **Stocktake of Ageing Public Policy Initiatives in Ireland, North and South**

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RESOURCE DOCUMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

Ireland, like other European countries, is facing demographic changes that will have a major impact on public policy.

There are currently nearly one million people aged 60 or over living on the island of Ireland. By 2031 it is expected that Northern Ireland's percentage of people aged 60 or over will increase to 28%. It will take until 2041 to reach a similar level in the Republic of Ireland.

The economic, social and political consequences of an ageing population are a challenge for policy makers. Both jurisdictions have begun to address the issue and there is evidence of an increased focus on older people at policy level, as the following initiatives highlight.

This document aims to provide researchers, policy makers and voluntary and community representatives with an overview of ageing policy initiatives in Ireland, North and South, and at EU and International level. It aims to be an easy to navigate guide that will be updated as developments occur. This document is intended as a reference guide only. Further information is available on the websites cited.

**SPECIFIC PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES IN IRELAND, NORTH AND SOUTH**

The main age-related public policy initiatives identified are listed in the table below. While Northern Ireland has a specific strategy for ageing, a national ageing strategy is just under development in the Republic of Ireland. However, the plans for national development and social partnership in the Republic contain many policy initiatives of relevance to older people.

Republic of Ireland	Northern Ireland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme for Government</li> <li>• Ageing strategy</li> <li>• National Development and social partnership</li> <li>• Social inclusion</li> <li>• Pensions</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Disability strategy</li> <li>• Elder abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme for Government</li> <li>• Ageing strategy</li> <li>• Social inclusion</li> <li>• Pensions</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Disability strategy</li> <li>• Elder abuse</li> </ul>

## Public Policy initiatives in the Republic of Ireland

### 1. Programme for Government

*The Programme for Government, 2007-2012*, was launched in June 2007 and contains provisions of relevance to older people and ageing. This five year programme was designed to face the major challenges of:

- Rolling out infrastructure nationwide.
- Combating climate change.
- Delivering a fully modern, patient-centred health service.

However, the delivery of the initial Programme for Government was based on a growth rate of 4.5%. In light of the economic downturn, the Irish Government issued a *Renewed programme for Government* in 2009<sup>1</sup>. The renewed programme sets out the plans for national renewal and economic recovery.

*The Programme for Government (PfG)* provides for the following:

- **Social Partnership:** This reinforces the implementation of the *Towards 2016 Agreement* which sets out the strategic framework for meeting the economic and social challenges that individuals face at different stages of life, including older people.
- **Health:** The Programme refers to personal health checks, primary health care, acute care, accident and emergency, infection control, cancer services, mental health

services and suicide. Maximising independence, nursing homes and palliative care are other issues referred to which have implications for an ageing population.

- **Better Supports for Older People:** This puts the proposals in the context of the *Green Paper on Pensions (a commitment in Towards 2016)*. These include improving income and employment conditions, a new National Positive Ageing Strategy, education and retraining for older people and making it easier for older people to stay in their own homes. The Renewed Programme proposed to implement the “Fair Deal” nursing home support scheme, which it has since done, and support care in the community.
- **North and South Co-operation:** This outlines the need to deepen co-operation on health services for the benefit of both jurisdictions and to maximise the use of valuable facilities and expertise in both jurisdictions. Current projects include:
  - A joint feasibility study that would identify a strategic approach to co-operation on health and well-being.
  - Continued co-operation on accident and emergency services.
  - Examining the implementation of a cross-border out-of-hours GP service.
  - Co-operation on paediatric and congenital cardiac services between the Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast and Our Lady’s Hospital for Sick Children in Dublin.
  - Co-operation on training and planning for major emergencies such as pandemic flu.

<sup>1</sup> For further information see: [http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications\\_2009/Renewed\\_Programme\\_for\\_Government,\\_October\\_2009.pdf](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2009/Renewed_Programme_for_Government,_October_2009.pdf)

## 2. Ageing Strategy

A National Positive Ageing Strategy is currently being developed by the Office for Older People and Health Promotion which will set the strategic framework for future policies, programmes and services for older people in the Republic of Ireland. The preparation of the strategy takes forward the commitment in the *Programme for Government 2007–2012* to better recognise the position of older people in Irish society. Issues relevant to the strategy include older people's participation in society, the way services are organised and are used by older people; income, health and social care; housing, transport, education and employment.

The written consultation phase of the strategy ended in September 2009 and there was a second phase of consultation meetings with older people during the first half of 2010. This was the first time that there has been such a wide-ranging consultation between government and older people in Ireland on issues that affect their lives.

## 3. National development and social partnership

### ***National Development Plan 2007 – 2013: Transforming Ireland – A Better Quality of Life for All***

*The National Development Plan 2007 – 2013* (NDP)<sup>2</sup> was published in 2007 to plan economic and social policy for the next seven years. The priorities and approach set out in the plan are consistent with the ten year social partnership framework agreement, *Towards 2016*. The following priorities set out in the plan are significant in terms of ageing:

- **Social Infrastructure Priority** – Hospital services will concentrate on the demographic pressures of an ageing population and the need for ongoing investment in residential and community care for the elderly. The plan proposed a capital investment of €5 billion in effectiveness, safety and quality of care. In addition to investment in hospital infrastructure (€2.4 billion), 1,000 additional public hospital beds, and a new National Children's Hospital, it envisaged 500 primary care teams and extension of community care services will enable older people to remain at home.
- **Older People Programme** – The plan detailed the investment of €9.7 billion under *The Older People Programme* for living at home programmes (€4.7 billion) and improvements in residential care (EUR 5 billion). Living at home packages were designed to deliver a wide range of services based on existing pilot schemes such as nursing services, home helps, therapists and

<sup>2</sup> [www.ndp.ie/documents/ndp2007-2013/NDP-2007-2013-English.pdf](http://www.ndp.ie/documents/ndp2007-2013/NDP-2007-2013-English.pdf)

respite/day care services to be extended to evenings and weekends.

- **All-Island Co-operation project** – The NDP details the areas of co-operation that have been agreed with the Northern Ireland administration. One such area is social inclusion, where the national strategies for social protection and social inclusion in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland contain common text on combating poverty and social inclusion. Another area is co-operation on both planning and delivery of health services and facilities. The NDP also sets out plans for all-island co-operation in areas such as health promotion, collaboration on research and development, and services in border areas. Other potential areas for further co-operation discussed include addressing regulatory and professional issues; co-operation on the provision of high technology medical care; and a population based approach to health service delivery on the island.

**Other plans and projects of related interest in the National Development Plan include:**

- **PEACE III 2007 – 2013:** The priority of the third phase of the EU Programme for Peace & Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland is promoting reconciliation and social and economic stability in Northern Ireland and the six border counties (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo).
- **INTERREG IV:** The Cross-Border Territorial Co-operation Programme for Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland (2007-2013) Programme (INTERREG), is a European Union supported Structural Funds Programme which aims to strengthen and deepen co-operation, with an emphasis on supporting strategic plans and projects which will maximise the impact of the funds throughout the eligible area. Eligible activities include developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructures, particularly in sectors such as health, culture, tourism and education.
- **International Fund for Ireland:** The objectives are to promote economic and social progress and to encourage dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland. This programme is due to cease at the end of 2010.
- **A New Programme of Investment in North-South Co-Operation:** This outlines proposals for significant investment by the Republic of Ireland Government in North-South projects and initiatives for mutual benefit.
- **New Strategic Projects:** This includes a comprehensive study on health co-operation to be overseen by the responsible departments and agencies, North and South, to maximise the potential for cross-border cancer services.
- **Development Funding:** It is proposed to develop all-island funding in education and skills, energy research, regional development, tourism and poverty, social inclusion and community infrastructure.

### ***Towards 2016: Ten Year Framework Social Partnership Agreement 2006 – 2015<sup>3</sup>***

*Towards 2016* provides a strategy for meeting the economic and social challenges in Ireland. The lifecycle framework, set out in the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) report, *The Developmental Welfare State*, places the individual at the centre of policy development and delivery. This means a focus on the needs of children, young adults, people of working age, older people and disabled people.

#### **The vision and goals on older people are useful in building a public policy agenda on age, including Section 32 which states:**

*“The parties to this agreement share a vision of an Ireland which provides the supports, where necessary, to enable older people to maintain their health and well-being, as well as to live active and full lives, in an independent way in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.*

*To achieve this vision, the Government and social partners will work together over the next ten years towards the following long-term goals for older people in Ireland in the context of increased longevity and greater possibilities and expectations for quality of life of older people:*

- *Every older person would be encouraged and supported to participate to the greatest extent possible in social and civic life;*
- *Every older person would have access to an income which is sufficient to sustain an acceptable standard of living;*

- *Every older person would have adequate support to enable them to remain living independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This will involve access to good quality services in the community, including: health, education, transport, housing and security, and;*
- *Every older person would, in conformity with their needs and conscious of the high level of disability and disabling conditions amongst this group, have access to a spectrum of care services stretching from support for self-care through support for family and informal carers to formal care in the home, the community or in residential settings. Such care services should ensure the person has opportunities for civic and social engagement at community level.”*

The priority actions to deliver the vision are themed around the following title areas:

- Pension/Income Supports
- Long-Term Care Services for Older People
- Housing and Accommodation
- Ensuring Mobility for Older People
- Ensuring Quality Health Services for Older People
- Promoting Education and Employment Opportunities for Older People.

Additional measures that respond to the emerging needs of older people include “Pilot Programmes of Care for Older People/Home Support Packages” and “Community Intervention Teams.”

<sup>3</sup> [www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached\\_files/Pdf%20files/Towards2016PartnershipAgreement.pdf](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/Towards2016PartnershipAgreement.pdf)

#### 4. Social inclusion

The *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* (NAPinclusion)<sup>4</sup>, launched in February 2007 by the Office for Social Inclusion (OSI)<sup>5</sup>, identified a number of high level strategic goals to reduce consistent poverty. Targeted actions are designed to mobilise resources to remove long-standing and serious social deficits. These include:

- Supporting working age people and people with disabilities through activation measures and the provision of services to increase employment and participation.
- Providing the type of supports that enable older people to maintain a comfortable and high-quality standard of living.
- Building viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.

The overall poverty goal as set out in the action plan is to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016, under the revised definition.

The action plan is divided into a number of high-level goals and further targeted actions and interventions. The high-level goals are aimed at:

- Introducing an active case management approach to support those on long-term social welfare into education, training and employment, with an overall aim of reducing by 20% the number of those whose total income is derived from long-term social welfare.
- Maintaining the relative value of the lowest social welfare rate.
- Continuing to increase investment in community care services for older people.
- Maintaining, and if possible enhancing, the value of the State Pension.
- Increasing the employment and participation of people with disabilities.
- Building more houses to meet the needs of some 60,000 new households, the homeless, Travellers, older people and people with disabilities.
- Developing 500 primary care teams to improve access to services in the community, with particular emphasis on meeting the needs of holders of medical cards.

In addition to the high level goals, there are 154 targeted actions and interventions set out in the Plan designed to ensure that an impact is made on poverty. Based on the life cycle approach of *Towards 2016*, commitments to

<sup>4</sup> [www.socialinclusion.ie/documents/NAPinclusionReportPDF.pdf](http://www.socialinclusion.ie/documents/NAPinclusionReportPDF.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> OSI is the Government office, based in the Department of Social and Family Affairs, with overall responsibility for coordinating and driving the government's social inclusion agenda which includes the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016* (NAPinclusion) and the social inclusion elements of the National Social Partnership Agreement *Towards 2016* and the new *National Development Plan 2007-2013*.

older people in the NAPinclusion are linked to two main areas:

- **Community Care:** Community care services are essential to enable older people to maintain their health and wellbeing, in order to live active, full independent lives at home for as long as possible. A commitment is given to continue to increase investment in community care services for older people, including home care packages and enhanced day care services.
- **Income Support:** Income also has a key role to play in alleviating poverty in old age. The goal is to maintain a minimum payment rate of €200 per week, in 2007 terms, for all social welfare pensions over the course of the NAPinclusion and, if possible, having regard to available resources and the Government's commitment in *Towards 2016*, to enhance this provision. The overall pension structures and system to provide income supports for pensioners have been reviewed in the National Framework for Pensions.

Other targets and actions related to age include long-term care, housing and accommodation, education and employment, home support packages, community intervention teams and participation and activation.

### ***Common Text – North/South***

The National Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion in Ireland and the UK contain common text outlining their commitment to working across national boundaries to alleviate social exclusion, poverty and deprivation. This principle provides a useful framework for an all-Ireland approach to age.

The common text commits both jurisdictions to preparing a report on existing North South work and this process will be used to determine where further work is needed. Areas for potential co-operation which could deliver mutual benefits may include:

- The compilation and sharing of information on areas of common interest.
- Specific topics of common interest for research and analysis.
- Areas where joint approaches should be developed.

## 5. Pensions

In October 2007, a Green Paper on Pensions was published outlining the challenges facing the Irish pensions system in the years ahead. These challenges include the sustainability of the system over the longer term in light of an ageing population and the adequacy of contribution levels and benefits. It also examined targets for increasing pensions coverage in the population.

Following a consultation process on the Green Paper, the Government issued the National Pensions Framework<sup>6</sup> in March 2010. This document sets out the key developments for the future of pension provision in the Republic of Ireland. These key developments include:

- The mandatory social welfare coverage in retirement will continue, although the system will be simplified with a move to a total contributions approach. The aim is to maintain a level of 35% of average earnings.
- The State pension age will increase to 66 in 2014, 67 in 2021 and 68 in 2028.
- Employees will be automatically enrolled into a pension scheme with matching employer contributions as well as a state contribution through tax relief.
- The state will also support existing workplace and voluntary provision through tax relief on 33% of contributions.

## 6. Health

The National Health Strategy, *Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You*<sup>7</sup>, launched in 2001, is the central document on health policy in Ireland. It describes a vision of health services in the coming years and describes the actions needed to achieve this. It proposes an integrated approach to meeting the needs of ageing and older people. A number of actions are detailed and focus on better health, fair access and responsive and appropriate care delivery for older people. An action plan for dementia, based on recommendations by the National Council for Ageing and Older People, is also mentioned.

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. The HSE also administers the Nursing Homes Support Scheme, also known as the Fair Deal Scheme, which came into operation on 27 October 2009<sup>8</sup>. The “Fair Deal” is a scheme of means-tested financial support for people needing long-term nursing home care.

Within the HSE, the Older People Expert Advisory Group, set up in November 2006, has several priorities including the development of a “Successful Ageing Code”, examination of societal aspects and population models of care and recommending the development of a National Institute for Ageing Studies.

<sup>6</sup> [www.pensionsgreenpaper.ie/downloads/NationalPensionsFramework.pdf](http://www.pensionsgreenpaper.ie/downloads/NationalPensionsFramework.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [www.dohc.ie/publications/quality\\_and\\_fairness.html](http://www.dohc.ie/publications/quality_and_fairness.html)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.dohc.ie/issues/fair\\_deal/](http://www.dohc.ie/issues/fair_deal/)

## 7. Mental health

*A Vision for Change*<sup>9</sup>, launched in 2006, outlines mental health services for older people and makes recommendations based on the premise that mental health services for older people should be person-centred and promote self-determination. The report details the gaps in information and knowledge in mental health in Ireland.

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is responsible for health information, promoting and implementing quality assurance programmes and overseeing health technology assessment.

Recommendations are made for further research on mental health, including the preparation of a National Mental Health Services Research Strategy. The report recognises the limited funding given to mental health research and argues that the model in the UK, where central government funds are ring-fenced for mental health research, should be adopted by Government.

In February 2008, the HSE published an implementation plan for 2008 and 2009, which outlined its key priorities. These included: catchment area definition and clarification; community-based mental health teams; child and adolescent mental health services; and mental health services for older people.

## 8. Disability Strategy

The National Disability Strategy, launched in 2004, is designed to support the provision of disability specific services to disabled people, and to improve their access to mainstream public services.

Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005 places obligations on six Government departments to prepare plans to set out how they will deliver specific services for disabled people. The departments specified are:

- Health and Children
- Social Affairs and Family
- Transport
- Communications, Marine and Natural Resources
- Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Enterprise, Trade and Employment.
- Each plan includes arrangements for complaints, monitoring and review procedures.

<sup>9</sup> [www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/vision\\_for\\_change.pdf](http://www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/vision_for_change.pdf)

## 9. Elder abuse

In 2002, the Department of Health and Children published a report on the subject of elder abuse, *Protecting Our Future: Report of the Working Group on Elder Abuse*. Following the report, an Elder Abuse National Implementation Group was established to supervise the progress of implementing the policy recommendations. The National Council on Ageing and Older People<sup>10</sup> also reviewed the report in July 2009.

The HSE has a dedicated Elder Abuse Service, with senior case workers in Elder Abuse now working in most Local Health Office Areas. The HSE also funds the National Centre for the Protection of Older People. This is a collaborative research team based in University College Dublin which is currently undertaking a programme of research into elder abuse in Ireland.

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<sup>10</sup> The National Council on Ageing and Older People was established by the Minister for Health in 1997 to act as an advisory body to the Department on all aspects of ageing and the welfare of older people. It was dissolved in September 2009 and its functions were taken over by the Department of Health.

## PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

### 1. Programme for Government

The Programme for Government (PfG)<sup>11</sup> is the overarching policy framework for Northern Ireland and provides useful principles for ageing research and public policy. The vision is to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland with respect for the rule of law and outlines five inter-dependent priorities to achieve this including:

- Grow a dynamic, innovative economy.
- Invest to build our infrastructure.
- Deliver modern, high quality and efficient public services.
- Promote tolerance, inclusion, health and wellbeing.
- Protect and enhance our environment and natural resources.

These priorities are underpinned by two crosscutting themes:

- A better future: fairness, inclusion and equality of opportunity will be watchwords for all policies and programmes.
- Sustainability: building a sustainable future will be a key requirement for our economic, social and environmental policies and programmes.

#### **Public Service Agreements**

There are 23 cross cutting Public Service Agreements (PSA) with key actions to support the priorities, outcomes and targets of the Government. The PSAs cut across

departmental boundaries and many of the issues are interdependent. The PSAs are backed up by Delivery Agreements which set out in more detail how departments intend to deliver the goals and commitments set out in the PSA. They provide the basis on which monitoring and reporting on progress will take place.

There are four public service agreements of particular interest in the context of ageing research.

#### **PSA 7: Making Peoples' Lives Better: Drive a programme across Government to reduce poverty and address inequality and disadvantage**

- Objective 1 refers to Section 16 of *The St Andrews Agreement 2006* on the adoption of a strategy to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need.
- Objective 2 refers to action to promote social inclusion for older people among others.
- Objective 3 refers to speedier access to mental health and learning disability community services and fewer long stay patients in hospitals.

#### **PSA 8: Promoting health and addressing health inequalities**

PSA 8 is intended to promote healthy lifestyles, address the causes of poor health and wellbeing and achieve measurable reductions

<sup>11</sup> [www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk](http://www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk)

in health inequalities and preventable illnesses.

**PSA 16: Investing in the Health and Education Estates: Take forward a programme of investment to provide a modern fit-for-purpose health and education estate in line with best practice and ensuring value for money.**

This PSA focuses on integrated networks of health and care centres and the use of ICT to support better clinical care and treatment.

**PSA 18: Deliver High Quality Health and Social Services: Provide timely and appropriate access to high quality, integrated and cost effective health and social services, to deliver improved outcomes.**

The first three objectives are:

- Objective 1: Promote independent living and a reduction in avoidable admissions to hospital.
- Objective 2: Shorter waiting time for access to specialist drugs, a range of specialist hospital services and elective treatment.
- Objective 3: Improve outcomes and survival rates in key specialisms. Actions and targets mainly refer to cancer, stroke and renal specialisms with corresponding targets for these areas.

## 2. Ageing strategy

*Ageing in an Inclusive Society*<sup>12</sup>, 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. The vision is:

*“To ensure that age related policies and practices create an enabling environment, which offers everyone the opportunity to make informed choices so that they may pursue healthy, active and positive ageing.”*

The six strategic objectives are:

- To ensure that older people have access to financial and economic resources to lift them out of exclusion and isolation.
- To deliver integrated services that improve the health and quality of life of older people.
- To ensure that older people have a decent and secure life in their home and community.
- To ensure that older people have access to services and facilities that meet their needs and priorities.
- To promote equality of opportunity for older people and their full participation in civic life, and challenge ageism wherever it is found.
- To ensure that Government works in a co-ordinated way interdepartmentally and with social partners to deliver effective services for older people.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/ageing-strategy.pdf>

### **Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland**

Following the 2008 appointment of an Older People's Advocate for Northern Ireland<sup>13</sup>, a consultation process was launched on establishing a Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland. The Commissioner for Older People Bill was then introduced to the Assembly in May 2010. 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. Once the Bill has been given Royal Assent, the Commissioner will be appointed in 2011.

### **Palliative care**

In December 2009, a consultation was launched by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSS&PS) on a palliative and end of life care strategy for Northern Ireland. The vision of the strategy is that "is that any person, from diagnosis to the advanced non-curative stage of disease, lives well and dies well irrespective of their condition or care setting". The strategy will have a five-year span and the document sets out 25 recommendations on developing, commissioning and delivering quality palliative and end of life care as well as a "care pathway" for palliative and end of life care.

### **3. Social inclusion**

*Lifetime Opportunities: Government's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland*<sup>14</sup> was launched in November 2006. It takes a life cycle approach and its goals and objectives for older people are defined as follows:

*"Our goal is to ensure older people are valued and respected, remain independent, participate as active citizens and enjoy a good quality of life in a safe and shared community.*

*For those older people who choose to remain or re-enter the labour market, government is committed to tackling age discrimination in order that these people can make this choice. However for some, as economic activity reduces, employment is less relevant as an insulator against poverty. For these older people the emphasis must be on having sufficient income to meet needs, including through increasing awareness and take-up of financial entitlement, particularly for those reliant on benefit income."*

Since 1998, *New Targeting Social Need* (New TSN) has been the Northern Ireland Government's high level policy for combating unemployment and the causes of social exclusion. It is not a separate programme with a dedicated budget, but a policy of skewing resources towards disadvantaged people, groups and areas.

<sup>13</sup> [www.olderpeoplesadvocateni.org](http://www.olderpeoplesadvocateni.org)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/antipovertyandsocialinclusion.pdf>

### ***Common Text – North/South***

As outlined previously, both National Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion in Ireland and the UK contain common text outlining their commitment to working across national boundaries to alleviate social exclusion, poverty and deprivation. Creating a more inclusive society by alleviating social exclusion, poverty and deprivation is a continuing challenge for administrations in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The common text commits the both governments to developing and promoting further North/South consultation, co-operation and common action concerning policies on poverty and social exclusion over the period of this plan. Potential areas suitable for further cross-border co-operation will be identified through consultations in the future.

### **4. Pensions**

Social security and pensions are technically transferred matters to the Northern Ireland Assembly, but have parity with Great Britain. For example, the planned rises in the state pension age will be the same in Northern Ireland as in England, Scotland and Wales. The Department for Work and Pensions sets pensions policy in the UK while delivery of pensions in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Department for Social Development.

Following a comprehensive review of the UK pensions system in 2006, major reforms are being undertaken<sup>15</sup>. The Pensions Act 2007 restored the link between the state pension and earnings. The Act also created the Personal Accounts Delivery Authority which is in the process of delivering a new, low-cost savings vehicle aimed at lower earners, called the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST). The Pensions Act 2008 introduced a duty on employers to automatically enrol all eligible workers into a workplace pension scheme (provided they are not already in such a scheme) and provide a minimum contribution of 3% to their workers' pension. These measures are due to take effect in 2012.

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<sup>15</sup> [www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/pensions-reform](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/pensions-reform)

## 5. Health

The *Investing for Health Strategy* (IfH) is the main public policy framework for health in Northern Ireland and was published in 2001. The aim of IfH is to reduce health inequalities and to improve the health and well-being of all citizens in Northern Ireland. Therefore IfH has the potential to positively impact on the quality of life of older people and provides a useful framework for ageing research in the health area.

The Strategy identifies the following priority areas:

- The principles and values that should guide future action to improve health.
- The cost of poor health to the individual, families and the economy.
- A broad range of economic, social and environmental issues, all of which are recognised as major determinants of health and wellbeing.
- The commitment of the Northern Ireland Executive to ensuring equality of opportunity and tackling social disadvantage.

*A Healthier Future: A 20 Year Vision for Health and Well-being in Northern Ireland*<sup>16</sup> is a regional strategy for health published in 2004. This strategy acknowledges that the causes of poor health and health inequalities are neither acceptable nor sustainable and that health and well-being is the responsibility of everyone. Special emphasis is placed on vulnerable

groups such as carers, older people and disabled people, all of which can provide the impetus for further research on age. *A Healthier Future* takes account of strategies and policies, both emerging and established, such as IfH and seeks to place them within a broad and inclusive framework. *A Healthier Future* does not amend or alter these specific strategies but builds on them by seeking to ensure that they are part of our overall vision for health and social care over the next 20 years.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/healthierfuture-main.pdf>

## 6. Mental health

In October 2002, the DHSSPS initiated an independent review of the law, policy and provision affecting people with mental health needs or a learning disability in Northern Ireland. The *Bamford Review*<sup>17</sup> made recommendations on future policy, strategy, service priorities and legislation to reflect the needs of users and carers. The last of eleven reports was published in August 2006. One report in particular, *Living Fuller Lives: Dementia and Mental Health Issues in Older Age*, is significant for people in the ageing research field. The aim of the report is to provide a vision of what mainstream and specialist health and social care services for older people with dementia and functional mental illnesses should look like. The report acknowledges the need for this report to relate to other reports from the *Bamford Review* such as:

- Adult Mental Health Services
- Learning Disability
- Legislation
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse
- Mental Health Promotion
- Following up on the initial review, the Northern Ireland Executive issued a consultation document called *Delivering The Bamford Vision* in June 2008. It proposed a number of actions across departments to deliver on *The Bamford Vision* and provide the potential for further research into ageing and mental health for older people.

These are:

- An inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability.
- An inter-Departmental Implementation Group of senior officials.
- A Health and Social Care Task Force.
- A Bamford Monitoring Group.
- The enactment of mental health legislation by 2011 and 2014.
- The Regional Health and Social Care Board will have a lead role in commissioning services.
- New service frameworks for mental health and learning disability.
- The commissioning of a workforce planning study to support the implementation of *The Bamford Vision*.

In 2009 the *Bamford Action Plan 2009-2011*<sup>18</sup> was published. This plan presents the Northern Ireland Assembly's response to the recommendations of the Bamford Review. It sets out the Government's commitment to improving mental health and well-being of the population of Northern Ireland and to driving service improvement for those with a mental health need or a learning disability.

### **Dementia services**

In May 2010, the Health Minister launched a public consultation on dementia services in Northern Ireland. The proposed strategy for dementia services looks to address a number of key areas, including prevention, raising awareness and addressing stigma; access to early diagnosis, staged approach to care and support; improving staff awareness and skills; and redesign of services. The consultation will close at the end of August 2010.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.rmhdni.gov.uk/>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford\\_action\\_plan\\_2009-2011.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford_action_plan_2009-2011.pdf)

## 7. Disability strategy

There is no equivalent disability strategy for Northern Ireland which is comparable to the National Disability Strategy in the Republic of Ireland. However, the Disability Unit in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) has the responsibility for developing anti-discrimination policy on disability and preparing legislation under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This Act is a UK-wide piece of legislation which affords rights for disabled people in the areas of employment; access to goods, facilities and services; and buying or renting land or property.

A Promoting Social Inclusion Disability Working Group was established in November 2004 and this group reported to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister at the end of 2009. In addition, there is an Office for Disability Issues in the UK which works with government departments to help them to meet strategic objectives and involve disabled people in departmental work.

## 8. Elder abuse

In Northern Ireland, there is currently no legislation dedicated to the issue of elder abuse, or guidance for social workers on how to deal with the issue. A partnership established by AgeNI and the Alzheimer's Society, Uniting against Elder Abuse, advocates for more awareness of the issue and calls for greater understanding of the issues facing older people who are at risk.

**ADDITIONAL POLICY INITIATIVES IN IRELAND, NORTH AND SOUTH****Free travel in Ireland, North and South for Older People**

Since 1995, Northern Ireland older people (aged 65 and over) have been entitled to free cross border public transport to and from any destination in the Republic of Ireland, for example from Belfast to Dublin by train, free travel is available on any onward journeys also with a Smartpass<sup>19</sup>. By the same arrangement, older people from the Republic of Ireland (aged 66 and over) have been entitled to free cross border travel to and from any initial destination in Northern Ireland and on to further destinations<sup>20</sup>. Each administration pays for the free travel taken by eligible senior citizens within its own jurisdiction.

**Fuel Allowances**

The direct and indirect effects of fuel poverty have been identified by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland through its *All-Ireland Policy Paper on Fuel Poverty and Health*<sup>21</sup> in December 2007. The Paper acknowledges that older people are among groups who are particularly vulnerable to fuel poverty and to suffering its health consequences. Both jurisdictions provide fuel allowances for older people.

In the Republic of Ireland, Fuel Allowance is a payment under the National Fuel Scheme<sup>22</sup> to help with the cost of heating your home. It is paid to people who are dependent on long-term social welfare or Health Service Executive (HSE) payments and are unable to provide for their own heating needs. The scheme operates for 32 weeks from the end of September to mid-April. Only one payment is paid to a household, of €20 per week.

In Northern Ireland, the Winter Fuel Payment<sup>23</sup> is a non-means tested annual payment to help older people with their winter heating bills. The payment is between £125 and £400 depending on circumstances. Older people do not have to be receiving any particular benefit to get a Winter Fuel Payment but must be aged 60 or over in the September before the winter in question. The Winter Fuel Payment qualifying age will increase from 60 to 65 between 2010 and 2020.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.translink.co.uk/seniorcitizenpass.asp>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Publications/SW40/Pages/Appendix3.aspx>

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.publichealth.ie/files/file/FuelPoverty\\_0.pdf](http://www.publichealth.ie/files/file/FuelPoverty_0.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Schemes/FuelAllowance/NationalFuelScheme/Pages/NationalFuelScheme.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/pensions-and-retirement-planning/benefits-3/benefits-in-retirement-1/winterfuel.htm>

## LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS NORTH AND SOUTH

There are a number of laws in both jurisdictions on age discrimination, mainstreaming and positive action measures that merit attention for the ageing research agenda.

### Laws in the Republic of Ireland

The legal status of older people in Ireland is covered by the Constitution<sup>24</sup>, equality legislation, European Union treaties and common law. There is no specific legislation dealing with older people.

#### 1. The Constitution

Article 40 of the Constitution provides that:

*“All citizens shall, as human beings, be held equal before the law. This shall not be held to mean that the State shall not in its enactments have due regard to differences of capacity, physical and moral, and of social function.”*

The Constitution Review Group recommended that this should be amended as follows:

*“All persons shall be held equal before the law. This shall not be taken to mean that the State may not have due regard to relevant differences. No person shall be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly, on any ground such as sex, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, colour, language, culture, religion, political or other opinion, national, social or ethnic origin, membership of the*

*Travelling community, property, birth or other status.”*

Whilst this pre-dated the Amsterdam Treaty<sup>25</sup>, it is still considered relevant as a strong anti-discrimination provision in the Constitution and underpins existing legislation to make a clear statement of the value of equality in Irish society.

#### 2. The Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 / Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004

The Employment Equality Act 1998 and 2004 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004<sup>26</sup> have provisions for direct and indirect discrimination, with a number of exemptions related to age.

These include:

The age provisions in The Employment Equality Act do not apply to people over 65, except for vocational training provisions. Setting different ages for retirement for employees does not constitute discrimination under the Act.

The Equal Status Act does not contain the upper age limit of 65, but there are a number of exceptions such as different treatment in annuities, pensions and insurance matters. Housing authorities and voluntary bodies are able to treat people differently on the grounds of age. The Equal Status Act permits positive action for older people to promote equality of opportunity or to cater for special needs.

<sup>24</sup> [www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached\\_files/Pdf%20files/Constitution%20of%20Ireland.pdf](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/Constitution%20of%20Ireland.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty gives the EU power to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

<sup>26</sup> [www.equality.ie](http://www.equality.ie)

## Laws in Northern Ireland

The legal status of older people in Northern Ireland is covered in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Employment Equality (age) Regulations (NI) 2006.

### 1. Section 75

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 is unique to Northern Ireland. It places a statutory duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

The introduction to the revised Guidance for Implementation of Section 75 (s75) of the Northern Ireland Act states that all public authorities in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine groups (one of which includes age) and to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religions, political opinions or racial group.

A number of elements exist to ensure that the public authority meets its duty such as the development of an equality scheme stating how it proposes to fulfil the duty; consultation as an integral part of the policy making process; and conducting equality impact assessments to determine the extent of differential impact, either positive or negative, on the groups involved. Most relevant to ageing are monitoring and the equality impact assessment (EQIA) process, as they can provide a framework for furthering the ageing research agenda.

## Monitoring

In fulfilling the statutory duty under s75 public authorities must monitor any adverse impact of policies adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. An effective monitoring system will enhance an authority's capacity to fulfil its s75 duties, enabling it to make better decisions about what actions would best improve equality of opportunity. The basic purpose of monitoring is to highlight possible inequalities, investigate the cause and what action needs to be taken to remove any disadvantage. A core element of this is the identification of data requirements and gaps.

## Equality impact assessment

Under the procedure for conducting an EQIA, step two of the recommended seven step process is consideration of available data and research. The approach to be adopted at this stage refers to:

- Collect and analyse existing data.
- Use qualitative or evaluative research.
- Identify gaps.
- If necessary commission new data – both qualitative and quantitative.
- Relevant and reliable up to date information.

## **2. Disability Discrimination Act**

Under Section 49 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, public authorities, when carrying out their functions, must have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage their participation in public life. As incidences of disability rise significantly with age, this is a potential area for further research.

## **3. The Employment Equality (age) Regulations**

The Employment Equality (age) Regulations (NI) 2006 governs discrimination in employment. Unlike other anti-discrimination provisions, these Regulations do not cover goods, facilities and services. The age provision allows employers to restrict employment for older workers where there is an objective justification; to refuse to recruit older workers; and to force older workers to retire at 65.

## INTERNATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

There are a number of international organisations where policy development in the field of ageing has direct or indirect effects on policy in Ireland, North and South.

### 1. United Nations

There have been a number of important developments in the United Nations policy/initiatives in relation to ageing, including *The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* (MIPAA) and *The Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century*. These two initiatives provide important mechanisms for furthering research into ageing. Both the United Kingdom and Irish governments have signed up to them.

#### ***Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing***

*The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* (MIPAA)<sup>27</sup>, adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, is the first international agreement that specifically recognises the potential of older people to contribute to the development of their societies. The MIPAA calls for changes in attitudes, policies and practices at all levels, in all sectors so that the potential of ageing in the twenty first century may be fulfilled. Its aim is:

*“To ensure that persons everywhere are able to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights.”*

Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the recommendations of MIPAA, which identified three priority directions:

- Older Persons and Development.
- Advancing Health and Well-being into Old Age.
- Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments.

MIPAA commits member states to a systematic review of the plan through Regional Implementation Strategies.

#### ***UN Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century***

This *UN Research Agenda on Ageing in the 21st Century*<sup>28</sup> was designed to support the implementation of the MIPAA and identifies priorities for policy related research and data collection. It encourages researchers to pursue studies in policy related areas of ageing where findings have practical and realistic applications. The United Nations Programme on Ageing, together with the International Association of Gerontology, developed the agenda in 2002. It was updated in 2007 and is recognised as an important tool for supporting the implementation and monitoring of policy actions proposed in the MIPAA.

<sup>27</sup> [www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/mipaa.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/mipaa.html)

<sup>28</sup> [www.un.org/ageing/documents/AgeingResearchAgenda-6.pdf](http://www.un.org/ageing/documents/AgeingResearchAgenda-6.pdf)

The *UN Research Agenda on Ageing* identifies the major priority areas for ageing research as:

- Relationships between population ageing and socio-economic development.
- Current practices and options for maintaining material security in old age.
- Changing family structures, intergenerational transfer systems and emergent family and institutional dynamics.
- Determinants of healthy ageing.
- Basic biological mechanisms and age associated diseases.
- Quality of life and ageing in diverse cultural, socio-economic and environmental situations.

### **UN Commission for Social Development**

At the 48th session of the UN Commission for Social Development in 2010, the Secretary General presented a report on *Further implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*<sup>29</sup>. The paper presents the priorities of Member States for the coming years and sets out their views on mechanisms for improving the implementation of the Madrid Plan as well as options for future modalities for the review and appraisal process.

The report reveals interest within the international community in further exploring the human rights dimension of ageing, in order to improve the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action at all levels.

## **2. The World Health Organisation (WHO)**

WHO is the directing and co-ordinating authority for health in the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. WHO has recognised the issue of ageing in its work<sup>30</sup> and has a dedicated section on its website, along with numerous tools and publications, to inform discussion and formulation of action plans that promote healthy and active ageing.

### **Age friendly-cities**

In June 2010, the WHO launched a Global Network of Age-friendly Cities. The age-friendly cities initiative began in 2006 by identifying the key elements of the urban environment that support active and healthy ageing. The Network aims to help cities to create urban environments that allow older people to remain active and healthy participants in society. The initiative is intended to help older people to continue to play an active role in their communities, through paid or volunteering work, transmitting experience and knowledge, and helping families with caring responsibilities. Dundalk in the Republic of Ireland is part of the age-friendly cities initiative.

<sup>29</sup> [www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/2010\\_docs.html](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/2010_docs.html)

<sup>30</sup> [www.who.int/topics/ageing/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/ageing/en/)

### 3. The European Union

There is no overall capability for the European Union to act on ageing issues, but following the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy, a new goal was formulated which stated that economic and social policies should go hand in hand. As a result, an ambitious social agenda was formulated which sets out the social priorities of the European Union. Ageing issues fall under the remit of the Social Protection & Social Inclusion section of the Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities<sup>31</sup>.

As part of this agenda, the EU co-ordinates and encourages member governments to:

- Combat poverty and social exclusion.
- Reform social welfare systems by learning from each other and identifying what policies work best (in the fields of poverty and social exclusion, pensions, health and long-term care).
- Tackle the challenges posed by demographic change and to prepare for the effects of population ageing by focusing upon the emerging opportunities.
- Report regularly with data which is directly comparable across the EU.

The European Commission also funds studies and analyses relating to poverty and social exclusion, pensions, health and long-term care.

On social protection and social inclusion issues, EU countries work together using the open method of co-ordination, which involves setting common objectives and agreeing common indicators in order to measure progress on achieving the objectives. National governments then translate the common objectives into national strategy reports. The Commission produces reports on the social situation in the EU and developments in selected areas. There is also a European Observatory on the social situation, which analyses social and demographic trends to assist the Commission in its duty to report on the social situation. The Observatory consists of three multidisciplinary, international networks monitoring:

- Income distribution and living conditions.
- Demography.
- Health status, health care and long-term care.

<sup>31</sup> [ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=750](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=750)

## For further information contact:

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

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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](http://www.cardi.ie)  
[info@cardi.ie](mailto:info@cardi.ie)

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