

*These notes refer to the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (c.1) which received Royal Assent on 25 January 2011*

# Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

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## **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

### **BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES**

3. Research shows that older people represent an ever-growing percentage of our population, both here as well as in neighbouring jurisdictions. Current estimates suggest that by 2041, 42% of our population will be 50 or over; persons of pensionable age will represent 25% of the population and those aged 75 and over will double to at least 14% of the population.
4. Given these estimates and the fact that we now have a greater awareness of issues related to older age, the Executive committed in the Programme for Government [2008-2011] (PfG) to providing a '**strong independent voice**' for older people.
5. Following the PfG commitment and in order to hear views from older people and their representative groups as to how best to make this happen, in 2007 the First Minister and the deputy First Minister asked an independent external consultancy firm to look at the case for, and the potential roles and responsibilities of, an independent Commissioner for Older People ("the Commissioner"). In May 2008, the final feasibility report, "*Examining The Case For a Commissioner For Older People*" was produced. That report concluded that there was both strong support and a need for a Commissioner for Older People. The Report recommended that legislation be introduced to enable a Commissioner to be appointed with a range of functions, powers and duties.
6. Ultimately the intended outcomes of the policy are:
  - a society in which older people's voices are heard and respected and their interests and rights are safeguarded and promoted;
  - the promotion of positive attitudes towards older people and their participation in public life;
  - a co-ordinated and holistic approach to matters affecting the lives of older people across all government departments and other public bodies known in the Act as relevant authorities;

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- the active participation of older people on matters affecting their interests; and
- more effective ways for older people to obtain help if their interests have been adversely affected.