



CSPA NI
Harkin House
54-56 Wellington Park
Belfast, BT9 6DP

1st Nov 2024

The First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA and
The Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly MLA
The Executive Office
Stormont Castle
Stormont Estate
Belfast BT4 3TT

Dear First Minister and Deputy First Minister,

DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT (DfG)

On behalf of the 4,000 strong Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance Northern Ireland Branch (CSPA NI) we welcome the opportunity to respond to your draft PfG issued for comment.

The CSPA NI are a campaigning organisation recognised by Government as speaking on behalf of Civil Service Pensioners.

We are disappointed that there is hardly a mention of Pensioners or Older People throughout the Draft PfG. We recognise that there is much to be done in terms of employment opportunities for Citizens, creating excellent Schools and Hospitals, and building a first rate economy but we would politely point out that there are enormous opportunities to harness the skills and attributes of Older People for the benefit of society as a whole and regrettably they seem to have been missed.

We do of course recognise that an increasingly ageing population needs specific Government attention to manage issues such as the need for more both Primary and Secondary Health Care Provision. There will also be a need to ensure that there is sufficient Hospital Beds and Accommodation in both Residential and Nursing Homes. There is also the critical need to ensure support is provided and available for those many Older People who wish to have care provided in their own homes and not in Residential or Nursing Homes.

Many Older People still desire to have some opportunities to work, some for the essential financial benefit whilst others for companionship etc. Older People have so much experience and skills to offer, they must not be written off.

As a campaigning organisation we would, in addition to those general points mentioned above, want to repeat some key demands from our members.

These are -

1. Age Discrimination Legislation

For many years we, alongside other groups in the Pensioner Movement in Northern Ireland, have campaigned for Age Discrimination Legislation to be brought in in relation to the provision of Goods and Services. It is completely unacceptable that discrimination in this area is enshrined for almost all other groups in society except Older People. This is not allowed in England, Scotland, Wales or the Republic of Ireland. How much longer can this position be allowed to continue?

2. Warm Home Discount Scheme

As far back as 2012 Age Sector Platform and ourselves were campaigning for this to be brought into Northern Ireland as it was in England, Scotland and Wales. At that time people were able to receive £130, subsequently increased to £150 in 2016. What was unique was this Money came from the Energy Companies and not the Tax Payer.

There have been numerous representations made to Westminster and Devolved Ministers without success.

It is a scandal that the scheme applies in every other part of the UK except Northern Ireland. Pensioners here have lost out, over the past 14 years by over £2,000. Think what help that would have been for many Pensioners struggling to keep warm.

3. Winter Fuel Allowance

We are strongly critical of the Government's decision to remove entitlement to the Winter Fuel Payment from nearly 8 million Pensioners in the UK and over 300,000 in Northern Ireland. Whilst we are grateful that the Leaders of all 7 Political Parties with representation in the NI Assembly have condemned the UK Government's actions, we want to see what concrete support the Executive can develop to assist Pensioners in this area.

4. Health and Social Care

As highlighted earlier the PfG needs to develop a longer term strategy for the provision for Health and Social Care for those Older People who wish to receive it in their own home and for those who do require to enter into either Residential or Nursing Home settings.

As Social Care is a devolved matter it is crucial that the Executive pays urgent attention to this matter which has been ignored for year. The Dilmott Commission's



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Report set out one model. What is clear is that the current situation is unsustainable.

We look forward to these points being added to and subsequently addressed in an expanded PfG in due course.

Yours Sincerely,

Tony McMullan
Secretary
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