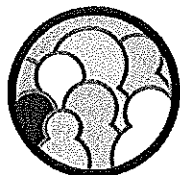


29/12/09



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O4O : Older People for Older People
www.O4Os.eu



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Friday, 11 December 2009

**Response To the Consultation for Older People in Northern Ireland.
By O4O – Older People for Older People www.O4Os.eu**

O4O – is a time-bound practice and policy led trans-national initiative grounded in the United National Principles for Older Persons. It is aimed at exploring opportunities for older people to initiate and develop sustainable activities that can feed into the social and economic capital of rural areas and in so doing develop the capacity of individuals, groups and networks of older people. The Northern Ireland component of the project has policy development as a principle aim with reconciliation and good community relations as a value based to inform best practice with and for older people.

This response has been shaped by our work in partnership with Age Concern/Help the Aged NI and is further influenced by their research and the policy position of the Age Sector Platform¹. The primary research which informed its recommendations was based from discussions held in a series of workshops and dialogue with older people involved in the O4O project in mid Ulster and the border areas.

¹ Fitzpatrick, B (2008) The Possible Remit and powers of the Independent Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland
Spotlight Report (2008) Spotlight on Older People in Northern Ireland
Savage D., Veale A. (2009) One Voice: Shaping our Ageing Society in Northern Ireland Belfast: Age Concern, Help the Aged Northern Ireland

The response is presented from the premise that there is an unquestionable need for a champion for older people in Northern Ireland whose effective powers will prioritise older people's issues with equal commitment to diverse needs and particular with particular cognisance of the needs and rights of

- Older people in rural areas. It recognises that the concept of rural-proofing as it used in Government parlance, is not adequately nuanced or developed to address all those concerns of older people in rural areas.
- Older People for whom the impact of the Conflict has left a direct and unwelcome legacy of ill-health, isolation, access to good and services poor community relations.

Contributors to this response considered that there is a need for any Commissioner role to make the connection between how local policy is shaped and formed in terms of older people in an ageing demography, alongside how it is formed in other parts of Europe. An explicit link between an EU policy framework and the role of the Commissioner is essential to ensure that innovative family and ageing policies are developed and that in turn will help support community development initiatives with older people at their heart.