

Business Plan 2026-27

Background

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) was established by the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which took effect from January 2011. COPNI is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Department for Communities (DfC). The Commissioner is a Corporation Sole.

The principal aim of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) is to safeguard and promote the interests of older people.

The role of the Commissioner is unique in providing a strategic vision and focus on the rights and interests of older people in Northern Ireland. The Commissioner's powers to influence policymaking and service delivery and provide advice to Government relating to older people adds significant value to the public discourse. The scrutiny powers of the COPNI Act on legislation, policy, and practice of public authorities, holds the Government to account on providing adequate protections and services to older people. The Commissioner's remit to address the wider impact on older people, to inform systematic improvements and influence the wider social policy agenda, strengthens the rights and interests of older people, and enables their voice to be heard in public and political debate and discourse.

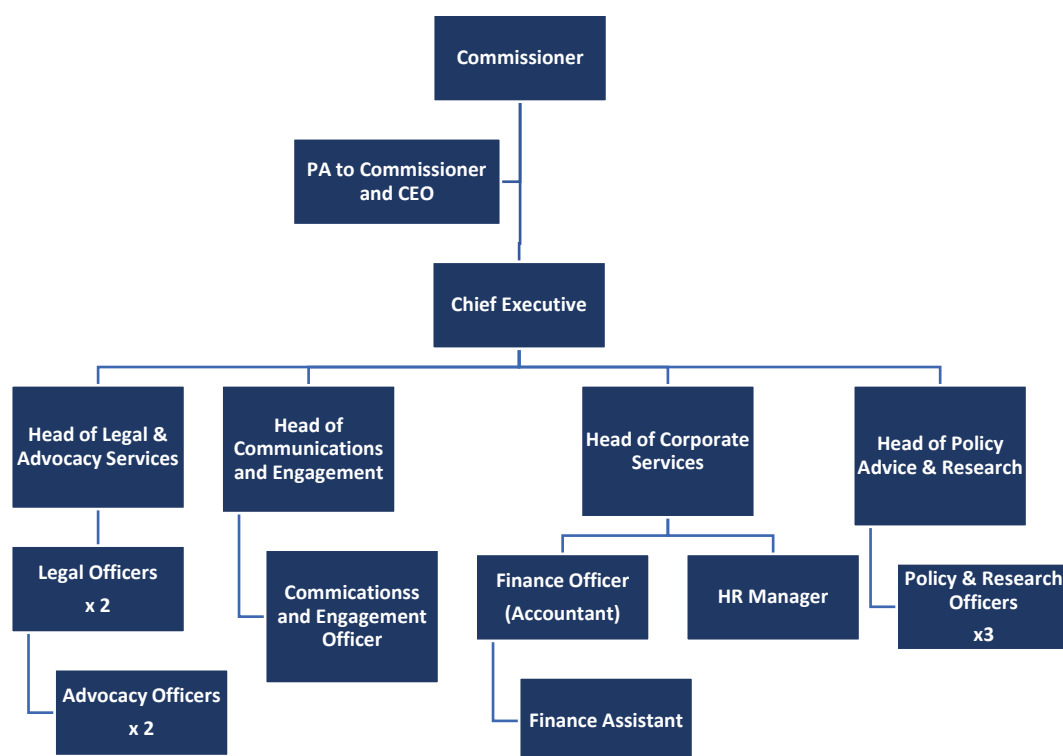
The Commissioner actively engages with older people across Northern Ireland and communicates proactively with older people, defined as everyone over the age of 60. This includes older people in all their diversity of chronological age, community identity, sex and gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and lifestyles. Other key stakeholders include, Ministers and officials of central and local Government, the criminal justice system, and the legislature and the media in all its traditional and modern forms.

The Commissioner, Siobhan Casey

In April 2025, the First Minister and deputy First Minister appointed Siobhan Casey as the Commissioner for Older People. Mrs Casey is the third public appointment to the role of Commissioner. Her term of office is due to come to an end in April 2029.

Staff of the Commissioner for Older People

Organisational Chart



Review of activity in 2025-26

Last year, 2025-26, was marked by a transitional phase for COPNI, during which Siobhan Casey was appointed as the Commissioner for older people in April 2025. A key priority in the first year in office for the new Commissioner was engagement and consultation with older people in respect of their priorities for the next four years, with this dialogue formative in the drafting of the Corporate Plan. As well as the strategic work of establishing priorities for the term ahead, COPNI pressed on with important day-to-day projects which sought to safeguard and protect the interests of older people, with dedicated advocacy services provided to older people and their families, and the publishing of evidence-led reports on significant issues impacting on older people.

Judicial Review

2025-26 saw the former Commissioner, Eddie Lynch's, legal challenge through Judicial Review regarding the Department of Health's Continuing Healthcare policy conclude when the Supreme Court refused COPNI's application to appeal the ruling of the Court of Appeal. For context, this policy determines whether an older person

can receive free health care in a care home setting on the basis of critical health needs. The Judicial Review at the High Court in Belfast initially upheld COPNI's challenge on all grounds in 2023, however, the judgement was appealed by the Department of Health, and the Court of Appeal upheld this appeal. Whilst no longer able to pursue a legal remedy for this issue, COPNI will continue to advocate for older people who require assistance in this area.

Key Publications

Research reports published, provided advice to Government, included:

- ***“Advanced Age-Friendly Practice in Northern Ireland: Supporting Collaboration, Impact and Sustainability of Age Sector Organisations” (July 2025).***
- ***“Freedom, Care and Wellbeing: A review of Deprivation of Liberty safeguards” (August 2025).***
- ***“Beyond Good Intentions: A Review of the Adult Protection Bill as Introduced” (December 2025)***

The reports include recommendations for change that will improve the lives of older people.

A further report is due to be published before the end of the 2025-26 financial year:

- ***“Voices of Concern: The Reality of Health and Social Care for Older People in Northern Ireland” (due February 2026)***

Copies of all reports are available on the COPNI website, www.copni.org

Advocacy and Legal Support

In 2025-26, the Legal and Advocacy team received a consistent volume of enquiries throughout this period and relate to a diverse range of issues, such as the provision of goods and services to older people, access to core healthcare services, dementia care, the availability of rural transport routes, as well as number of enquiries on the subject of Continuing Healthcare, given the ongoing legal process at that time.

Communications and Engagement

To December 2025, COPNI received 35 media bids, with 23 of these bids accepted either through a statement issued, or a broadcast interview carried out. A total of 11 statements/press releases have been issued by COPNI, and COPNI has featured in 96 pieces of media coverage. The Commissioner has undertaken 35 official engagements with circa 2,000 older people, and met over 60 stakeholder organisations to date in 2025-26.

Corporate Plan 2025-2029

The Commissioner's new Corporate Plan 2025-29 has been submitted to the Department for Communities, following extensive engagement with older people across Northern Ireland. The Corporate Plan captures a series of issues of importance

to older people across many sectors, like access to services, health, crime, and others. The plan will utilise the Commissioner's powers to promote awareness of issues, powers to review the policy, practice and services of Government departments, bodies and local Government.

Priorities for 2026-27

In line with the overarching priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, the Commissioner has decided on a number of projects that should be undertaken in this financial year. You will see over the next pages, the issues she has prioritised for 2026-27.

The Commissioner's key priorities in the Corporate Plan are:

1. *Advocate for change to support people to age well.*
2. *Empower older people to have choice and control in their lives.*
3. *Change how we all think, feel and act towards older people and ageing.*

All work will be taken forward with a proportionate project management approach. All expenditure will be made in accordance with internal controls and compliance with the requirements of Managing Public Money NI.

High-Level Outcomes

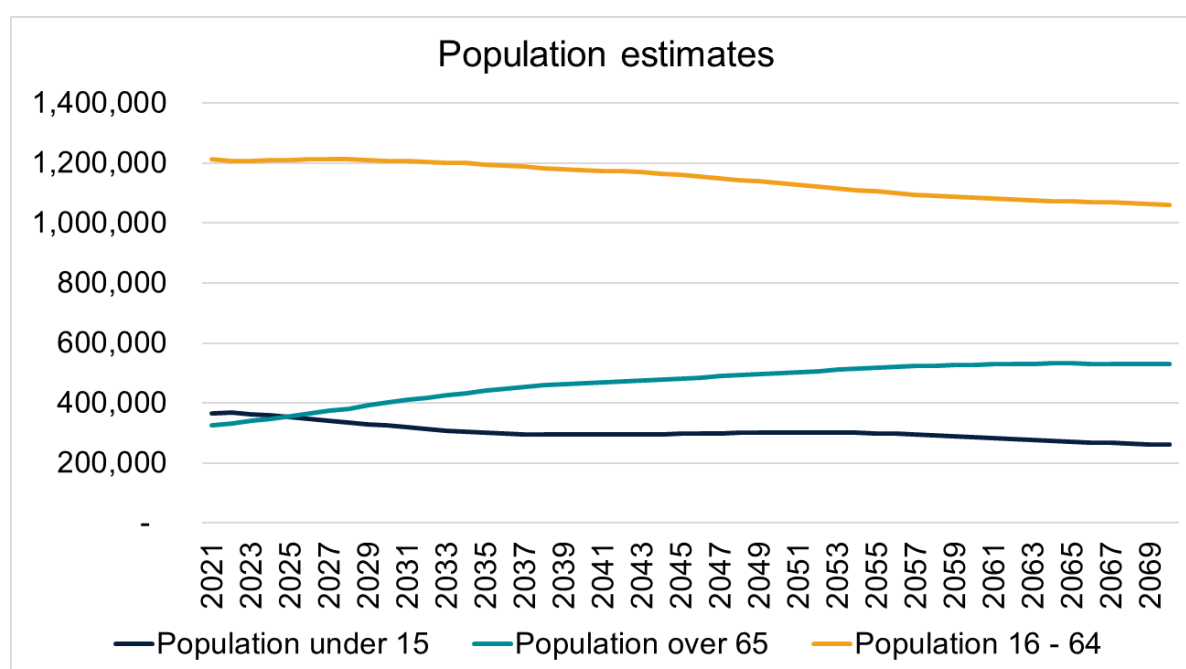
All the work of COPNI is directed towards these high-level outcomes. The business plan focuses on the best use of the Commissioner's powers and duties to deliver outcomes that improve the lives of older people through:

- 1) *Older people can access the information, services and support they need.*
- 2) *Older people feel safe in their homes, communities and relationships.*
- 3) *Older people can make their voices heard and have meaningful choice and control.*
- 4) *Older people are treated fairly, and their contribution is recognised and valued.*
- 5) *COPNI is an efficient and effective organisation that progresses its work in accordance and compliance with all regulations and policies managing the use of public money.*

Preparing for an Ageing Society

All of the work undertaken by the Commissioner is informed by and seeks to address the significant growth and ageing of the population in Northern Ireland. The population of NI increased from 1.7 million in 2001 to over 1.9 million in 2021 (*NISRA, 2021 Census*). The population of people aged 65+ is growing more quickly in comparison to the population under the age of 15 (*NISRA, 2022-based Population Projections*), and this tendency is expected to continue in the coming decades, indicating a demographic shift that poses challenges for public services and for everyone in society.

- **Population growth and ageing trends:** Northern Ireland's population has increased by 13% over the past 20 years, with projections indicating a peak of approximately 1.97 million by the mid-2040s (*NISRA, 2022-based Population Projections*), followed by a decline.
- **Implications of an ageing society:** The ageing population requires a life-course approach to public health, ensuring that individuals can age healthily and maintain independence, reducing the burden on public services and enabling NI to cope with some of the challenges of an older society. Effective engagement with older citizens and key stakeholders is crucial for informed policy-making and service delivery.



Source: Census 2021, ONS 2020-based interim population projections for Northern Ireland

The Challenge for an Ageing Society

While increased life expectancy is a great achievement of public health, and one which we should celebrate, the key challenge for Government, is not only the extension of life expectancy but to ensure those extra years are healthy and disability free for as long as possible. All countries, including Northern Ireland, face major challenges to ensure that their public services, including health and social systems, are ready to make the most of this demographic shift and meet the needs of the population.

To note

The following pages show the plan of work for 2026-27. The plan identifies the key pieces of work to be undertaken and the minimum targets to be met during the year. The full delivery of the plan will be subject to obtaining an adequate budget allocation from DfC, although in the absence of these resources COPNI recognises elements of the work are scalable to some degree, and that the plan will be flexed based on the resources available. All Government funding is expected to be under extreme pressure this year, and COPNI is no different. The Commissioner is committed to finding

innovative ways to carry out the work of engaging directly with older people and staying available to them throughout her term of office. Progress will be reviewed on a quarterly basis throughout the year.

This plan is high level and is not intended to capture all the operational activities and day-to-day tasks of all staff. COPNI will continue to exercise flexibility around the movement of budget and human resources across the work programme as required.

Planned research reports are highlighted in blue. Promotion of these proposed reports are highlighted in yellow.

Advocate for change to support people to age well

High Level Outcome 1: Older people can access the information, services and support they need.

Commissioner Duty: To promote an awareness of matters relating to the interests of older persons and of the need to safeguard those interests & the Commissioner must promote positive attitudes towards older persons and encourage participation by older persons in public life.

Commissioner Duty: To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for older persons by relevant authorities & the Commissioner must encourage best practice in the treatment of older persons.

Reference no.	Objective	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Client-focussed Outcome	Responsible Officer
1.1	Engagement with older people Increase engagement and listen to older people on matters of importance to them.	Devise and implement an engagement strategy which will identify areas of discussion to inform and educate older people on a variety of topics through a range of consultations, events or focus groups. Older people should come away from engagements better informed about their	Number of engagements – target of 40 engagements/events with older people’s groups across all of NI by <i>March 2027</i> . Stakeholder engagement – build/maintain 10 new or strengthened relationships with key stakeholders by <i>March 2027</i> . Number of older people engaged with – target of 1,000 older people engaged	Older people will have a say in decisions that affect them COPNI’s work will focus on the issues that matter the most to older people in Northern Ireland. Older people will have a better understanding of	Head of Communications and Engagement

		rights, keeping safe and scams, and/or the work of our office.	with in person by <i>March 2027</i> . Equal geographical spread – no significant gaps between urban and rural areas.	our work and the role of COPNI. Strengthen stakeholder engagement and encourage open communication.	
1.2	Enhance visibility and engagement with older people through effective use of digital channels.	Diversify communications content and channel management strategy and track engagement across all digital channels on a quarterly basis. Produce regular and consistent content across all channels which seeks to inform, engage and entertain.	Increase in digital followers and engagement by 15% across all digital channels by <i>March 2027</i> . Increase of 10% in unique website visitors compared to previous year by <i>March 2027</i> .	By engaging more effectively, we build trust and credibility with our stakeholders, we also create a large audience of older people who we can get messages out to quickly without relying on the media. Increased engagement allows us to better understand our stakeholders' needs, and gauge public perception and opinion.	Head of Communications and Engagement

1.3	Establish and nurture long term relationships with the media.	Seek to procure a media database that will streamline workflow, enhance reach, and improve media outreach efforts. Draft and implement proactive media relations in relation to our work. Daily media monitoring and proactively following up on articles with a statement/response, where appropriate.	Receipt of a minimum of 40 media bids by March 2027. Minimum of 60% of relevant media bids accepted across 2026-27. 100 pieces of coverage across broadcast, print and online by March 2027. 70% of coverage to have a positive/neutral tone and message alignment across 2026-27.	COPNI is viewed as a reliable spokesperson and reputable voice on older people's issues. Regular, positive media mentions across key platforms increases public perception of COPNI as a body that older people can trust to provide support to them where necessary.	Head of Communications and Engagement
1.4	Effectively signpost to other service providers and statutory bodies, where applicable	Training of Advocacy Officers to ensure knowledge of remit of other Government bodies. Engagement with other bodies that COPNI are commonly signposting to, to increase awareness of services provided.	Record of number of clients signposted to other organisations and noted on ALB Management system. Threshold of 2 complaints per quarter arising from incorrect signposting.	Ensures that older people receive the support that they need from the appropriate statutory body, without undue delay.	Head of Legal and Advocacy Services

		Report annually on which alternative bodies have been signposted to.			
1.5	Undertake a Rights awareness campaign	Create accessible resources outlining older individuals' rights, focusing on issues addressed by the Legal and Advocacy department. Specific user-friendly resource developed for online users. Organise informational sessions in a variety of community, voluntary and public settings to educate older people about their rights.	Develop a resource outlining older people's rights - 1,000 hard copies to be distributed across engagements and events by March 2027. Information to be posted and promoted through the COPNI website and social media channels. Carry out 6 information sessions across Northern Ireland by March 2027, with COPNI's Head of Legal setting out older people's rights and raising awareness of issues they may not be aware of.	Older people will have greater awareness of their rights in a civil society, ensuring they are empowered to in advocating for themselves.	Head of Communication and Engagement Head of Legal and Advocacy
1.6	Tackling Ageism – Promotion of positive attitudes towards older people through internal media resources.	Promote positive attitudes towards older people proactively tackling media narrative of ageism, where it occurs. Proactively and reactively welcome the	Monitoring of media daily, advising of opportunities to react or call out ageism via social media, newsletter, or a statement. (connected to the 60% target of media bids and proactive opportunities)	Promotes a positive attitude towards older people within society, ensuring older people are respected.	Head of Communications and Engagement

		opportunity to collaborate with other organisations where the message of anti-ageism can be amplified.	Completion of Public Consultation responses within deadline.		
1.7	Ensure that stakeholders and older people are aware of the Commissioner's views on consultations by Government.	Publish all relevant consultations on the COPNI website, and other relevant publications.	Publish relevant consultation responses on the <i>website within 2 days of submission</i> to the consulting body. Include a list of consultations responses in the <i>quarterly ezine</i> to older people. Introduction of a stakeholder newsletter. Promote public facing consultation responses across digital channels to include designed graphics. Respond to media bids and coverage of issues under consultation.	Ensures older people can fully digest COPNI's response to consultations, and how COPNI has advocated for their rights on important issues.	Head of Communications and Engagement Head of Legal and Advocacy

1.8	Respond to older people who contact the Commissioner for assistance.	Assist with enquiries for assistance from older people. Intervene directly to seek resolution, first through advocacy with potential escalation to litigation.	Handle a minimum of 250 combined legal enquiries and casework items per year. Process at least 60 legal enquiries or casework items per quarter to support a balanced annual total. Provide a substantive response to 90% of routine legal queries within 10 working days. Respond to 100% of urgent legal matters within 48 hours. Ensure 100% of legal case files involving capacity or safeguarding issues include a clear rationale demonstrating how the older person's best interests were considered and applied, particularly in cases where third-party preferences may be in conflict. Monthly reporting of analysis of enquiries and caseload management	Older people have received assistance / advocacy / legal supporting relation to issues that are impacting on them. Commissioner has gathered information relating to the lived experience of older people and their engagement with public authorities, informing future research.	Head of Legal and Advocacy Services
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			information to minuted SMT meeting. Preparation of briefing papers to SMT on receipt of 3 or more cases of a similar nature within a 3-month period.		
1.9	Process requests for legal funding, where applicable	Assess requests for legal funding support through the acceptance criteria. Bid for required funding through Monitoring Rounds and bids to the Department if required. Where approved, engage with legal counsel to proceed with legal action.	Business case, and subsequent funding approval obtained from DfC ahead of commencement of work. Legal proceedings progressed in line with counsel advice.	Ensures that older people are represented legally where this is appropriate and within the Commissioner's remit.	Head of Legal and Advocacy Services
1.10	Advising Government of the Need to Address the Health Needs of Older People	Conduct a research study that advises government on existing health inequalities experienced by Older	The publication of an evidence-based report providing advice to older people, Government and other stakeholders about existing health inequalities	By emphasising the current health inequalities, brings to the attention of Government the	Head of Research and Policy Advice

		People in Northern Ireland.	experienced by older people in Northern Ireland by March 2027 . Hold a minimum of 4 meetings with relevant stakeholders, by March 2027 , to disseminate findings.	need to ensure Older People are not discriminated against in terms of health provision.	
1.11	Promotion and dissemination of the above report in respect of health inequalities in Northern Ireland.	Design and print of the report. Communications plan in respect of media engagement, stakeholder distribution, press release and digital channels.	Design and print of report completed by March 2027 . Communication plan distributed to Commissioner and COPNI SMT by no later than 2 weeks prior to publications, setting out objectives, key messages and advised communication approach.	Ensures that the evidence-based report is distributed appropriately and reaches relevant audience.	Head of Communications
1.12	Reform of Adult Social Care (ASC)	Meet with Department of Health officials to discuss progress of the Reform of Adult Social Care. Follow-up on research on Regional Care Home Contract by liaison with officials.	Provide guidance on aspects of the reform of adult social care through participation in meetings and consultations. Where needed, provide formal advice to the Minister of Health on aspects of the reform programme.	Improved protection and practice in the care and wellbeing of older residents of care homes.	Head of Research and Policy Advice

			Commissioner to meet the Minister in 2026-27 to discuss progress on ASC reform. Monitor and report on the implementation of recommendations of the Regional Care Home Contract by <i>March 2027</i>.		
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Empower older people to have choice and control in their lives

High Level Outcome 2: Older people feel safe in their homes, communities and relationships.

Commissioner Duty: To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the interests of older persons.

Commissioner Duty: To encourage best practice in the treatment of older persons.

Reference no.	Objective	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Client-focussed Outcome	Responsible Owner
2.1	Advising Government of the Need for Increased Legal Protections for Older People	Conduct a research study assessing Hate Crime against Older People. COPNI will offer recommendations to support the need for Older People to be protected through either Primary or Secondary Legislation.	The publication of an evidence-based report providing advice to older people, Government and other stakeholders about Hate Crime in relation to Older People by <i>January 2027</i>. Hold a minimum of 4 meetings with relevant stakeholders, by <i>March 2027</i>, to disseminate findings.	By emphasising the current gap in legislation, this will increase Government awareness of the need protect Older People's rights.	Head of Research and Policy Advice
2.2	Promotion of above report in respect of the report on Hate	Design and print of the report.	Design and print of report completed by <i>January 2027</i> .	Ensures that the evidence-based report is distributed	Head of Communications

	Crime relating to Older People.	Communications plan in respect of media engagement, stakeholder distribution, press release and digital channels.	Communication plan distributed to Commissioner and COPNI SMT by no later than 2 weeks prior to publications, setting out objectives, key messages and advised communication approach.	appropriately and reaches relevant audiences.	
2.3	Participate in the Scamwise partnership.	Engage in the sharing of information through social media and through the organisation's website to raise awareness amongst older people of how to identify and protect themselves from scams.	Attend and participate in Scamwise Partnership meetings as arranged by PSNI. Brief the Commissioner on the ongoing activity of the Partnership within 1 week of each attendance. Promote the risks of scams to older people in all appropriate communications.	Ensures that older people, who are often the most vulnerable, are supported in identification of scams through provision of helpful information.	Head of Communications and Engagement

Change how we all think, feel and act towards older people and ageing

High Level Outcome 3: Older people can make their voices heard and have meaningful choice and control.

Commissioner Duty: To keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided for older persons by relevant authorities & the Commissioner must encourage best practice in the treatment of older persons.

Commissioner Duty: To promote the provision of opportunities for, and the elimination of discrimination against, older persons.

Reference no.	Objective	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Client-focussed Outcome	Responsible Owner
3.1	Advising Government and the Public of the Housing Needs of Older People	Conduct a research study assessing the landscape for Older Renters in Northern Ireland and barriers to affordable housing. COPNI will offer recommendations to support the need for a more inclusive approach to rental property access for older people.	The publication of a report providing evidence-based advice to Government and other stakeholders about the rental housing market for older people by June 2026. Hold a minimum of 4 meetings with relevant stakeholders, by March 2027, to disseminate findings.	By emphasising the barriers to access for older people within the existing provision, this will increase Government awareness to ensure greater consideration is given to the needs of older renters.	Head of Research and Policy Advice

3.2	Promotion and dissemination of the above report in respect of the Housing Needs for Older People Report.	Design and print of the report. Communications plan in respect of media engagement, stakeholder distribution, press release and digital channels.	Design and print of report completed by June 2026. Communication plan distributed to Commissioner and COPNI SMT by no later than 2 weeks prior to publications, setting out objectives, key messages and advised communication approach.	Ensures that the evidence-based report is distributed appropriately and reaches relevant audiences.	Head of Communications
3.3	Advising Government and the Public of the Changing Needs of an Ageing Population	Two-part project/two reports: i) Planning for an Ageing Population – presentation and discussion of demographics (June 2026); ii) Engagement with TEO on PfG 2027 (2027) Planning for an Ageing Society - Programme for Government 2027 Report – A publication which mirrors the format of	The publication of an evidence-based report providing advice to older people, Government and other stakeholders about the changing needs of an ageing population by November 2026. Hold a minimum of 4 meetings with relevant stakeholders, by March 2027, to disseminate findings.	By emphasising the rapid demographic change in Northern Ireland, this will increase Government awareness of the need to adapt services to meet changing needs of older people.	Head of Research and Policy Advice

		the next Executive Programme for Government			
3.4	Promotion of the above report in respect of the Changing Needs of Older People in Northern Ireland.	Design and print of the report. Communications plan in respect of media engagement, stakeholder distribution, press release and digital channels.	Design and print of report completed by November 2026. Communication plan distributed to Commissioner and COPNI SMT by no later than 2 weeks prior to publications, setting out objectives, key messages and advised communication approach.	Ensures that the evidence-based report is distributed appropriately and reaches relevant audiences.	Head of Communications
3.5	Advising Government of the Need for Increased Rights Protections for Older People	Conduct a research study assessing discrimination against Older People in respect of Goods, Facilities and Services (GFS). COPNI will offer recommendations to support the need for Older People's rights to be respected in respect of GFS.	The publication of an evidence-based report providing advice to older people, Government and other stakeholders about discrimination against older people in respect of Goods, Facilities and Services by September 2026. Hold a minimum of 4 meetings with relevant stakeholders, by March 2027, to disseminate findings.	By emphasising the current gap in legislation, this will increase Government awareness of the need to protect Older People's rights in legislation.	Head of Research and Policy Advice

3.6	Promotion of the above report in respect of discrimination against Older People in relation to Goods, Facilities and Services.	Design and print of the report. Communications plan in respect of media engagement, stakeholder distribution, press release and digital channels.	Design and print of report completed by September 2026 . Communication plan distributed to Commissioner and COPNI SMT by no later than 2 weeks prior to publications, setting out objectives, key messages and advised communication approach.	Ensures that the evidence-based report is distributed appropriately and reaches relevant audience.	Head of Communications
3.7	Adult Protection Bill Provide advice to Government on the introduction of the Adult Protection Bill.	Meet with Department of Health officials on a quarterly basis to consider progress and ensure the contents of the Adult Protection Bill are adequate.	Provide a minimum of two briefings for officials, MLAs and Committees of the Assembly debating the Bill, by March 2027 . Promote awareness of the Bill amongst older people, tracking progress in the Assembly and providing briefings online in lay persons language.	Older people are better protected through stronger safeguarding legislation, practice and awareness.	Head of Research and Policy Advice

High Level Outcome 4: Older people are treated fairly, and their contribution is recognised and valued.

Commissioner Duty: To promote positive attitudes towards older persons and encourage participation by older persons in public life.

Commissioner Duty: To encourage best practice in the treatment of older persons.

Reference no.	Objective	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Client-focussed Outcome	Responsible Owner
4.1	Advising Government of the Need to Support Older Workers	Conduct a research study that advises government that older people are a vital and growing component of our workforce and how government can support these workers. COPNI will offer recommendations to support the need for a Older Workers to be recognised.	The publication of an evidence-based report providing advice to older people, Government and other stakeholders about the need to recognise the contribution made by Older Workers by July 2026. Hold a minimum of 4 meetings with relevant stakeholders, by March 2027, to disseminate findings.	Ensures older people's access to employment is raised with Government, protecting older people's rights.	Head of Research and Policy Advice
4.2	Promotion of the above report and media engagement in respect of the report on Older	Design and print of the report. Communications plan in respect of media	Design and print of report completed by July 2026. Communication plan distributed to Commissioner	Ensures that the evidence-based report is distributed appropriately and	Head of Communications

	Workers in Northern Ireland.	engagement, stakeholder distribution, press release and digital channels.	and COPNI SMT by no later than 2 weeks prior to publications, setting out objectives, key messages and advised communication approach.	reaches relevant audiences.	
4.3	Respond to public consultations from relevant authorities regarding matters that may impact older people and those who care for them.	Ensure that COPNI is a key consultee with all relevant public bodies. Ensure officer resources are allocated to adequately respond to consultations that are most impactful on older people. If the consultation topic is of serious or significant nature, the Commissioner may engage directly with older people on the specific issue, and/or issue a media release drawing attention to the Commissioner's/older peoples' views.	Prioritise and screen out consultation requests or assign to researcher. Complete 95% of submissions within the deadlines set by Departments. 5% tolerance in seeking extensions to deadlines, approved by Policy Manager. Respond to a minimum of 15 consultation responses by March 2027. .	The impact of decisions on older people will be fully considered and communicated extensively in each consultation, ensuring older people's rights are taken fully into account. Other bodies and policy makers will have access to COPNI views by the deadline for responses. Older people will have access to the response to consultations about their rights and interests	Head of Research and Policy Advice

Corporate Governance

High Level Outcome 5: COPNI is an efficient and effective organisation that progresses its work in accordance and compliance of all regulations and policies managing the use of public money.

Commissioner Duty: As the legally designated Accounting Officer, the Commissioner is responsible for implementing a robust governance framework within COPNI, and accountable for expenditure of public money within the confines of Managing Public Money NI guidance and the current Management Statement and Financial Memorandum with the Department for Communities.

Reference no.	Objective	Actions	Key Performance Indicators	Client-focussed Outcome	Responsible Owner
5.1	Delivery of 2026-27 Business Plan	Allocation of organisational resources (financial, human and physical) to align with business objectives. Ensure work towards achievement of agreed plans is being developed across COPNI departments to align with objectives.	<i>Monthly review</i> by COPNI's Senior Management Team (SMT) of progress against targets ahead of the formal Senior Management meeting. <i>Quarterly reporting</i> on achievement of set targets against business objectives to ARAC and DfC Sponsor Branch in ALB Assurance Statement and ALB Corporate Performance Report. 95% of business objectives delivered to target.	Older people will benefit from the timely achievement of COPNI's plan of work, which is focussed on COPNI's legislative remit to safeguard older people and promote their interests.	Head of Corporate Services
5.2	Appropriate governance arrangements in place to ensure	Pursue agreement of new Partnership Agreement with DfC.	Quarterly Performance Reports, including ALB Assurance Statement, ALB Corporate Performance Report, Reporting	COPNI's continued provision of services to	Head of Corporate Services

	scrutiny of performance	Quarterly Reports to DfC Sponsor Branch and ARAC. Monthly internal reporting to COPNI Senior Management Team.	Checklist and Risk Register forwarded to DfC <i>within 10 working days from the end of the quarter.</i> ARAC papers issued to attendees <i>no later than 1 week before the meeting.</i> Papers prepared for Senior Management meetings <i>no later than 3 days before the meeting.</i> Updated Governance Statement in Annual Report and Accounts.	older people are underpinned by a strong governance framework, providing assurance over COPNI's Going Concern status, ensuring older people will continue to be safeguarded and their interests promoted for the foreseeable future.	
5.3	Engagement with internal and external audit	Development of an annual Internal Audit Plan 2026-27, with planning meetings held to agree Terms of Reference for assignments. Management responses to audit reports are provided on a timely basis.	Reporting of audit outcomes, recommendations, and management responses to ARAC and Sponsor Branch in DfC at the next quarterly meeting. Action all recommendations included in NIAO's Report (RTTCWG) <i>within the next financial year.</i>	This annual governance assurance provides assurance over COPNI's operational capability, with a positive outcome year-by-year providing older	Head of Corporate Services

		Reporting of audit outcomes, recommendations, and management responses.	Satisfactory assurance ratings for individual Internal Audit assignments, and overall Satisfactory annual assessment. Internal Audit report outcomes reflected in Annual Report and Accounts. Recommendations in follow-up audit confirmed as being completed by Internal Audit.	people with assurance that they will continue to be safeguarded, and their interests promoted.	
5.4	Continue to develop an effective workforce.	Development of staff development plan resulting from effective Personal Performance Agreement/Personal Development Plan process. Development of an organisational Training Plan to ensure staff avail of role-appropriate training. Provision of mandatory sectoral training.	100% of Personal Performance Agreement to be completed with line managers by no later than July 2026, to set individual objectives for performance for 2026-27. Organisational Training Plan developed and signed off by Chief Executive by August 2026. 100% of staff to maintain mandatory training on LinkS training portal.	Ensures that COPNI staff are equipped with adequate and appropriate training to provide assurance that COPNI can deliver services to older people effectively.	Head of Corporate Services (Input from SMT)

5.5	Transparency of expenditure and budget projections, including pressures.	Monthly submission of Consumption Report to Sponsor Branch in DfC. Monthly submission of cash drawdown requests to Sponsor Branch in DfC. Quarterly budget updates. Submission of Monitoring Round returns and bids to DfC.	Commissioner review and approval of Consumption Report within <i>2 working days of the end of the month</i>. Commissioner review and approval of cash drawdown submission <i>within 2 working days of the end of the month</i>. Submission of Consumption Report and drawdown <i>by DfC deadlines</i>. Communication of financial position to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on a <i>quarterly basis</i>. Submission of Monitoring Round bids by <i>deadline set by Sponsor Branch</i> in DfC.	Ensures that COPNI is provided with adequate budget to deliver services to older people, and where this is not the case, take action to reduce the scope of our activity during the year.	Head of Corporate Services
5.6	By year end operate within allocated Budget, avoiding overspend.	Completion of monthly Management Accounts to assess adequacy of budget. Pressures identified in Management Accounts communicated to	Management Accounts to be completed for review by Commissioner <i>within 2 working days after month end</i>. Draft Financial Statements <i>by April 2026</i>, and final Financial Statements <i>by August 2026</i>.	By managing the annual budget effectively, COPNI provides assurance to older people and DfC that	Head of Corporate Services

		Sponsor Branch in DfC through Consumption Report. Bids for additional funding through Monitoring Rounds/bids.	Obtain an unqualified external audit opinion from NIAO.	COPNI are a going concern, able to provide services to older people for the foreseeable future.	
5.7	Ensure a robust risk management process is in place and followed.	Corporate Risk Strategy and Risk Register in place. Quarterly meetings with SMT to update the Risk Register, including any new and emerging risks. Risk Register included in papers to both ARAC and Sponsor Branch in DfC, ahead of quarterly meetings, and represents a standing item on meeting agendas. Any significant risks identified between reporting cycles are communicated to the	Quarterly meetings with SMT to discuss existing and emerging risks, <i>within 1 week from the end of the quarter.</i> Risk Register shared with DfC in Quarterly Assurance Report <i>within 10 working days from the end of the quarter.</i> Committee papers to be sent to all ARAC attendees no later than <i>1 week in advance of the meeting.</i> Training of ARAC and key staff.	By managing the existing and emerging risks within COPNI, this prevents the likelihood of these becoming issues and ensures management time is focussed on delivering services that protect the rights of older people.	Head of Corporate Services (Input from SMT)

		ARAC and Sponsor Branch in DfC at the earliest opportunity.			
5.8	Prompt Implementation and / or updating of relevant policies, procedures and practice as required.	Policy and Procedures register is maintained. Monitoring of relevant information sources i.e. DoF, DfC, legislative requirements. Policies and Procedures shared with COPNI staff for consultation at drafting stage and relevant Human Resources policies forwarded to NIPSA to ensure input from Trade Union side. S75 Equality Screening completed alongside policies to assess any adverse impact on S75 groups.	<i>Monthly review</i> of the Policies and Procedures register. Responsible owners informed <i>no later than 3 months</i> ahead of revision date of policy of the requirement to review the relevant policy. All policies are shared for consultation with staff and all relevant Human Resources Policies are shared with NIPSA. A S75 Equality Screening completed for all policies.	Ensures COPNI's policies are aligned on a regular basis with NICS policies, and that COPNI has policies in place to support staff	Head of Corporate Services

5.9	Drafting of Annual Business Plan for 2027-28	Schedule of development of Business Plan 2027-28. Submit to Sponsor DfC Branch in DfC.	Business Plan drafted including annual Budget requirements, to align with new high-level outcomes from the new Corporate Plan 2025-29. Business Plan submission to DfC by <i>31 January 2027</i>.	COPNI can plan for the next year of the Commissioner's term, based on further engagement and the Commissioner's own priorities.	Head of Corporate Service (Input from SMT)
5.10	Implement recommendations of the New Decade New Approach (NDNA) review	COPNI will discuss with the Minister the recommendations from the NDNA report, and work with the Department to implement where directed.	Implement any agreed recommendations <i>within deadlines set by the Minister</i> .	COPNI will align the organisation to ensure older people are protected within any possible new structure.	Commissioner and Chief Executive.

Allocated Budget 2026-27

Budget Category	Allocation
	Total £
Salaries*	1,095,000
Overheads**	245,000
IFRS 16 depreciation (Leases)	39,000
Total Projected Expenditure (exc. depreciation and capital)	1,379,000
Depreciation	35,000
Total Expenditure	1,414,000

COPNI's projections for the 2026-27 year are based on a flat-cash budget, based on COPNI's opening allocation for 2025-26.