



Commissioner for Older People  
for Northern Ireland

Victims and Witnesses Branch  
Access to Justice Directorate  
Department of Justice  
Knockview Building, Block 2  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
BT4 3SX

By email: [DOJVictimsWitnesses@justice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:DOJVictimsWitnesses@justice-ni.gov.uk)

09/07/25

**Re: Consultation on Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030**

Dear Sir/Madam

I write on behalf of the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) in response to the Department of Justice's (DoJ) consultation on a new Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy. Since our previous engagement<sup>1</sup>, Siobhan Casey has been appointed as the new Commissioner for Older People. COPNI welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and review the Strategy from the lens of an independent champion for older people.<sup>2</sup>

Northern Ireland's population is ageing, and soon there will be more older people here than children.<sup>3</sup> Whilst a healthy, long-living population is something to celebrate, without proper planning, an ageing society risks overwhelming our public services, including the criminal justice system. An ageing population means more older people may find themselves a victim of or witness to a crime. It also means there may be an increased demand for criminal justice and support services. As such, Northern Ireland's ageing population introduces demands on the justice system to respond to this demographic change by adopting more accessible processes, ensuring better cross-sector collaboration, and providing support that can address the distinct needs of older people.

COPNI has consistently raised concerns that the needs of older victims are not yet fully understood or addressed in the criminal justice system.<sup>4</sup> We therefore welcome the "inclusive approach"<sup>5</sup> being adopted in this new Strategy, recognising that anyone can be a victim of or witness to a crime, regardless of age. COPNI was also pleased to see our research referenced in your Equality Screening document. We hope *Crime and Justice*<sup>6</sup>, as well as our other

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<sup>1</sup> COPNI (2024) '[Response to Call for Views on the new Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025-2030](#)'.

<sup>2</sup> [Commissioner for Older People Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#).

<sup>3</sup> NISRA (2025) '[2022-based Population Projections for Northern Ireland, Tabular 5 Year Age Bands](#)'.

<sup>4</sup> COPNI (2023) '[A Different Crime](#)', Foreword.

<sup>5</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025-2030](#)', page 14.

<sup>6</sup> COPNI (2019) '[Crime and Justice: The Experience of Older People in Northern Ireland](#)'.

criminal justice reports<sup>7 8 9</sup>, can continue to inform and support the delivery of the Strategy, ensuring older people's needs and experiences are heard and considered.

In relation to some of the key elements of the draft Strategy, COPNI offers the following comments.

### **Vision and Mission Statement**

In Northern Ireland, statistically, older people are much less likely to be victims of crime compared to younger age groups. For instance, in 2023/24, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) recorded 4,193 crimes committed against older victims aged 65 plus. In comparison, in the same year, there were 8,205 recorded victims of crime aged between 30 and 39.<sup>10</sup>

However, recorded crime statistics offer only a limited view of crime against older people, as many incidents go unreported. Older victims face a number of barriers that can prevent them from reporting their experiences of crime including "not wanting to be cut off from grandchildren, fear of loss of their home or being placed in a nursing home, fear of repercussions from (alleged) paramilitaries or because of shame and fear of stigma in their communities".<sup>11</sup> Thus, recorded statistics may significantly underestimate the true scale of crime affecting older people.

When crimes are committed against older people, they experience poor crime outcomes rates. In 2023/24, the Police Recorded Sanction Outcomes rate for victims aged 65 plus was 16.7%.<sup>12</sup> Such statistics can contribute to a lack of confidence in the justice system among older people. If older people perceive that reporting crime is unlikely to result in meaningful action, prosecution or resolution, they may be less likely to come forward, report their experiences and receive support. This erosion of trust contributes to a cycle where

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<sup>7</sup> Brown and Gordon (2019) ['Improving Access to Justice for Older Victims of Crime: Older People as Victims of Crime and the Response of the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland'](#).

<sup>8</sup> COPNI (2023) ['A Different Crime'](#).

<sup>9</sup> COPNI (2024) ['Growing Concern: Older Victims of Domestic Abuse in Northern Ireland'](#).

<sup>10</sup> PSNI (2024) ['Annual Trends in Police Recorded Crime 1998/99 to 2023/24, Pivot Table 4: Police Recorded Crime by Victim Gender, Victim Age and Policing District'](#).

<sup>11</sup> Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (2023) ['Vulnerable Older People: An Inspection of the Criminal Justice System's Approach to Vulnerable Older People in Northern Ireland'](#), page 40.

<sup>12</sup> Sanction outcomes include charge/summons, cautions, community resolutions, penalty notices for disorder and offences taken into consideration. PSNI (2024) ['Annual Trends in Police Recorded Crime 1998/99 to 2023/24, Pivot Table 3: Police Recorded Crime, Sanction Outcomes and Population Rates by Victim Gender, Victim Age and Crime Type'](#).

underreporting and poor outcomes reinforce each other, which can deepen older people's sense of vulnerability and marginalisation within the justice process.

COPNI's *A Different Crime* report highlights that "if the low Crime Outcomes rate for older people is attributable to a loss of confidence in the justice system, it falls to justice agencies to address this situation".<sup>13</sup> Restoring confidence requires actions that demonstrate that the criminal justice system values and protects older victims and witnesses. COPNI therefore agrees and supports the Strategy's Vision and Mission Statement:

*Increasing confidence in the justice system by empowering and supporting all victims and witnesses with a trauma informed approach.*

*We will achieve this by providing victims and witnesses, including children, young people and vulnerable users, with tailored support and effective communication, in a transparent, rights compliant way.*<sup>14</sup>

## Pillars

*Pillar 1. Support: All victims and witnesses of crime can access tailored, responsive and specialised support to help recover and rebuild their lives*<sup>15</sup>

Older people are not a homogeneous group. They embody multiple identities relating to age, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality, as well as having differing backgrounds, experiences, health needs, and living situations. This diversity is not always recognised in the design or delivery of criminal justice support services. Often, older people do not see themselves or their needs reflected in services on offer. This can deter many older people from engaging with the criminal justice system and seeking support.

While older people are less likely to be victims of crime in Northern Ireland, those who do find themselves victims have a unique set of characteristics that can encourage vulnerabilities and lessen their ability to cope with the aftermath of a crime. A victim's "pre-offence status" can be a major factor in understanding the impact of a crime on an individual.<sup>16</sup> In the case of older people, they are more likely to experience social isolation

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<sup>13</sup> COPNI (2023) '[A Different Crime](#)', pages 27 and 28.

<sup>14</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)', page 6.

<sup>15</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)', pages 25 - 27.

<sup>16</sup> COPNI (2023) '[A Different Crime](#)', page 9.

and loneliness<sup>17</sup>, live with a disability or long-term health condition<sup>18</sup>, have poorer health<sup>19</sup>, live alone<sup>20</sup>, be widowed<sup>21</sup>, and experience poverty<sup>22</sup>. Older victims who experience such vulnerability before a crime has been committed may suffer more profound and lasting effects from crime.

Older people also often experience high levels of fear or worry about crime.<sup>23</sup> COPNI's *A Different Crime* report highlights that older people are from a "social grouping that is pre-disposed (i.e., pre-offence) to be fearful of crime".<sup>24</sup> This fear can stem from a range of factors including concerns about vulnerability, living alone, reduced confidence in public spaces, or past experiences that have interrupted their sense of safety. Media reporting and community reports can also heighten older people's anxieties.

In this context, COPNI's *A Different Crime*<sup>25</sup> and *Growing Concern*<sup>26</sup> reports recommend a sustained focus on the needs of older victims and witnesses on the part of criminal justice organisations. They must consider "the particular impact of crime among this grouping", be aware of the additional complexities older people face and act accordingly. In doing so, the system will be equipped to provide older people with tailored and effective support that addresses their needs. Without considering the needs of older people, "ameliorative interventions are unlikely to succeed".<sup>27</sup> The key priority areas under this pillar including "providing tailored, trauma informed and specialised support for victims and witnesses"<sup>28</sup>, will go some way in encouraging older victims to feel confident in the criminal justice system,

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<sup>17</sup> 18.7% of those aged 65 to 74 and a further 22.6% of those aged 75+ report high levels of loneliness. NISRA (2023) ['Wellbeing in Northern Ireland, 2022/23'](#), page 5.

<sup>18</sup> Census 2021 results showed that 56.8% of people aged 65+ live with a limiting long-term health problem or disability. Census 2021 (2022) ['Main statistics for Northern Ireland, Statistical bulletin, Health, disability and unpaid care'](#), page 18.

<sup>19</sup> Census 2021 results showed that 17.4% of people aged 65+ have 'bad or very bad general health' compared to 11% of 40- to 64-year-olds, 3.1% of 15- to 39-year-olds. Census 2021 (2022) ['Main statistics for Northern Ireland, Statistical bulletin, Health, disability and unpaid care'](#), page 10.

<sup>20</sup> In 2025, the number of people aged 75+ living alone is projected to be 57,560. By 2040, this figure is projected to increase to 77,924. NISRA (2018) ['Northern Ireland Household Projections \(2016 based\)'](#).

<sup>21</sup> Census 2021 results showed there were 80,802 people aged 65+ who were widowed or a surviving partner from a civil partnership, equating to 24.7% of all those aged 65+. Census 2021 (2023) ['Marital and civil partnership status by broad age bands'](#).

<sup>22</sup> In 2022/23, 12% of pensioners were in relative poverty, and a further 7% were in absolute poverty. NISRA (2024) ['Northern Ireland Poverty and Income Inequality Report, 2022/23'](#).

<sup>23</sup> The 2020/21 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey found that 11% of respondents aged 75 plus had high levels of worry about crime. Similarly, respondents aged 65 plus were more likely to describe the effect of fear of crime on their quality of life as 'moderate' or 'great'. NISRA (2022) ['Findings from the 2020/21 Northern Ireland Safe Community Telephone Survey'](#).

<sup>24</sup> COPNI (2023) ['A Different Crime'](#), page 35.

<sup>25</sup> COPNI (2023) ['A Different Crime'](#).

<sup>26</sup> COPNI (2024) ['Growing Concern: Older Victims of Domestic Abuse in Northern Ireland'](#).

<sup>27</sup> COPNI (2023) ['A Different Crime'](#), page 19.

<sup>28</sup> DoJ (2025) ['Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030'](#), page 26.

in reporting and in receiving suitable support, as well as encouraging older people to feel safer, supported and more connected.

*Pillar 2. Communication and Information: Ensuring information about the justice system is accessible<sup>29</sup>*

Research by Age UK found that 18% of people aged 65 plus in the UK do not use the internet, equating to 2.3 million older people.<sup>30</sup> Factors such as disability or finances can mean some older people are unable to access the internet. For instance, older people are more likely to live with hearing<sup>31</sup> or sight loss<sup>32</sup>, and are also more likely to live on a fixed income.<sup>33</sup> Older people's experiences of digital exclusion place them at risk of missing out on crucial information and services, as well as limiting their access to online resources. As such, accessible information about the justice system is vital for older people. Without same, many will struggle to understand their rights, navigate reporting mechanisms or access the support they are entitled to. Ensuring information is available in a range of formats empowers older people to engage confidently in the justice system. Therefore, COPNI was reassured by many of the key priority areas under this pillar that are aimed at improving access to information. We are hopeful they will support older people in understanding their rights and navigating the justice system with confidence.

*Providing clear, accessible and consistent information for victims and witnesses about the criminal justice process...Providing accessible options for victims and witnesses to report a crime...Ensuring there are accessible mechanisms for victims and witnesses to raise complaints about their experience of the criminal justice system.<sup>34</sup>*

*Pillar 3. Transparency and Participation: Empowering victims and witnesses to understand the process of the criminal justice system and the decisions made which impact upon them<sup>35</sup>*

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<sup>29</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)', pages 27 - 30.

<sup>30</sup> Age UK (2024) '[Briefing: Facts and Figures about Digital Inclusion and Older People](#)', page 5.

<sup>31</sup> Census 2021 results found that 70,695 people aged 65 plus have deafness or partial hearing loss in Northern Ireland. NISRA (2022) '[Main Statistics, Health, Disability and Unpaid Care, Data Tables, MS-D05 Type of long-term condition: Deafness or partial hearing loss by broad age bands](#)'.

<sup>32</sup> Census 2021 results found that 20,274 people aged 65 plus have blindness or partial sight loss in Northern Ireland. NISRA (2022) '[Main Statistics, Health, Disability and Unpaid Care, Data Tables, MS-D06 Type of long-term condition: Blindness or partial sight loss by broad age bands](#)'.

<sup>33</sup> Age NI (2022) '[All-Party Group on Ageing and Older People, Briefing, The Cost of Living Crisis and Older People](#)'.

<sup>34</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)', page 29.

<sup>35</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)', pages 30 - 33.

Recent meetings between COPNI and criminal justice support service organisations highlighted how, often, older people struggle to distinguish between the different criminal justice and support service organisations. This was also highlighted to COPNI by participants of *A Different Crime* project who described “the confusion of many victims regarding organisations’ various roles”.<sup>36</sup> COPNI is reassured that the key priority areas under this pillar will work to ensure older victims and witnesses feel confident in understanding criminal justice processes. Namely:

*Creating a criminal justice system portal to provide easily accessible information for victims and witnesses...Providing information about PSNI and PPS decision making processes and reasons, including information about review processes and alternative prosecutions.*<sup>37</sup>

COPNI’s *A Different Crime* report also found that “an older victim of crime may be subject to the same crime as a younger victim but frequently, she or he, experiences a greater impact from that crime”.<sup>38</sup> Thus measures to “enable victims and witnesses to feel safe when giving evidence”<sup>39</sup> are especially crucial for older people. Screens, live link facilities, giving evidence in private, aids to communication, and video recorded evidence<sup>40</sup>, among other measures, can encourage older people to engage meaningfully and safely with court processes, helping to reduce re-traumatisation and anxiety. COPNI is hopeful such measures will be readily accessible to those who need them and that appropriate steps are taken to raise awareness of their availability.

*Pillar 4. Rights and Confidence in Justice: Ensuring victim and witness entitlements are met, and that public confidence in the justice system improves*<sup>41</sup>

One of the key priority areas under this pillar is the establishment of a new statutory Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses of Crime.<sup>42</sup> As indicated in our response to DoJ’s consultation on Proposals for Inclusion in a Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill<sup>43</sup>, COPNI welcomes the proposal to establish a statutory Commissioner. The new Commissioner will help in ensuring laws, policies and support services are “inclusive and consider the

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<sup>36</sup> COPNI (2023) *‘A Different Crime’*, page 32.

<sup>37</sup> DoJ (2025) *‘Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030’*, page 32.

<sup>38</sup> COPNI (2023) *‘A Different Crime’*, page 13.

<sup>39</sup> DoJ (2025) *‘Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030’*, page 32.

<sup>40</sup> PPS *‘Special Measures’*.

<sup>41</sup> DoJ (2025) *‘Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030’*, pages 33 - 35.

<sup>42</sup> DoJ (2025) *‘Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030’*, page 34.

<sup>43</sup> COPNI (2025) *‘Consultation Response on Proposals for Inclusion in a Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill’*.



experiences of older victims and witnesses”, and “such mechanisms are developed, implemented and effective in practice”.<sup>44</sup> COPNI hopes to see this proposal taken forward promptly.

*Pillar 5. Children and Young People: Ensuring the criminal justice system meets the needs of children and young people who are victims and witnesses*<sup>45</sup>

While we cannot offer much comment under this pillar as it does not directly relate to older people, COPNI recognises the role of many older people in the lives of children and young people. For example, as unpaid carers. 38,863 older people in Northern Ireland provide some level of unpaid care<sup>46</sup>, and we can assume a significant proportion of older people’s care provision relates to the care of children and young people. In such roles, older people may find themselves supporting children through traumatic or difficult experiences, including contact with the criminal justice system. It is therefore important that older people have a clear understanding of how the criminal justice system works and where to turn for help. Ensuring information and guidance is accessible across all ages is vital.

## **Principles**

*Principle 1. Informed by Victims and Witnesses*

COPNI maintains that “in order to address more effectively crime against older people and provide appropriate support to victims, justice agencies must examine the experiences of this cohort of victims”.<sup>47</sup> We are hopeful your plans to engage with and learn from those with direct experience of the criminal justice system will include older people. Older people’s lived experience of crime offers valuable insight that will help justice agencies ensure their services are accessible and responsive to the distinct needs of older victims and witnesses. Meaningful consideration of their perspectives will work to create a criminal justice system for all.

*Principle 2. Partnership*

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<sup>44</sup> COPNI (2025) ‘[Consultation Response on Proposals for Inclusion in a Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill](#)’, page 3.

<sup>45</sup> DoJ (2025) ‘[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)’, pages 35 - 38.

<sup>46</sup> Census 2021 (2021) ‘[Provision of Unpaid Care by Broad Age Bands MS-D17](#)’.

<sup>47</sup> COPNI (2023) ‘[A Different Crime](#)’, page 19.

Partnership and collaborative working within the criminal justice system can deliver benefits for older people. By sharing information and coordinating responses, justice agencies can ensure that they are responsive to the needs of older victims and witnesses and offer tailored support that takes such needs into account. Collaborative approaches to justice also help reduce gaps in service provision, improve access to justice, and ensure older people are treated with dignity throughout processes. COPNI agrees that this Strategy has the potential to be a “framework for partnership, facilitating the development of shared objectives”.<sup>48</sup>

### *Principle 3. Trauma-Informed Practice*

Considering older people can experience acute impacts from crime, trauma-informed practice within the criminal justice system is especially important for older people. This approach recognises the impact of a crime on a person’s behaviour, communication and wellbeing, and ensures that services respond effectively. For older victims and witnesses, a trauma-informed approach can make interactions within the justice system less distressing, allowing for improved engagement, and creating a more effective justice system for older people. COPNI was pleased that embedding trauma-informed practice will be a priority for Victims Champions across the criminal justice system. We are hopeful older people and their needs will continue to be at the forefront of these efforts.

### *Principle 4. Research and National and International Best Practice*

Over the past number of years, COPNI has published four crime reports.<sup>49 50 51 52</sup> Each explore the impact of crime on older people and discuss the barriers many older people face. The reports provide recommendations that, if implemented, would help improve the experiences of older people navigating the criminal justice system. By embedding such evidence-based recommendations, and similar, into practice, justice organisations can ensure their responses are effective to and informed of the realities of ageing. COPNI therefore welcomes the Strategy’s focus on research, evidence and best practice.

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<sup>48</sup> DoJ (2025) ‘[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)’, page 20.

<sup>49</sup> COPNI (2019) ‘[Crime and Justice: The Experience of Older People in Northern Ireland](#)’.

<sup>50</sup> Brown and Gordon (2019) ‘[Improving Access to Justice for Older Victims of Crime: Older People as Victims of Crime and the Response of the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland](#)’.

<sup>51</sup> COPNI (2023) ‘[A Different Crime](#)’.

<sup>52</sup> COPNI (2024) ‘[Growing Concern: Older Victims of Domestic Abuse in Northern Ireland](#)’.



## Themes

*Theme 1. Related Strategies: We want to compliment and ensure alignment with what others are doing and avoid duplication<sup>53</sup>*

COPNI was pleased to see reference made to the forthcoming Adult Protection Bill under this theme. It is vital that this new Strategy is closely aligned with the Bill. The Adult Protection Bill will place a statutory duty on bodies including the PSNI to identify, report and respond to adults at risk of harm. Many older people who are victims of crime may also fall under the category of an adult at risk and in need of protection. Thus, ensuring cohesion will help deliver a more consistent and coordinated response to supporting vulnerable adults. Embedding shared principles such as safeguarding, dignity and person-centred support, will strengthen protections for vulnerable adults, while also supporting frontline staff, such as police officers in fulfilling their duties under both this Strategy and the Bill.

In December 2024, COPNI published *Growing Concern*<sup>54</sup>, a report exploring the scale and nature of domestic abuse against older people in Northern Ireland. The report highlights that older victims of domestic abuse face additional, distinct factors that can reduce their ability to report their experience as a crime and receive appropriate support. During the drafting of the report, the Executive Office published their *Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategic Framework*.<sup>55</sup> Ensuring a joined-up approach between these two Strategies will help to ensure older women in particular, are not excluded from efforts to tackle violence and abuse, and that services are equipped to respond to the needs of all victims.

*Theme 2. Delay within the Criminal Justice System: We want to assist efforts to reduce delay and to help victims and witnesses dealing with delay<sup>56</sup>*

Prolonged delays in the criminal justice system can have a disproportionate impact on older people. COPNI's *Improving Access to Justice for Older Victims of Crime*<sup>57</sup> report explains that delays within the criminal justice system pose a heightened risk for older people. Due to age, "the longer the delays the greater the risk there will be deterioration in mental or

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<sup>53</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)', page 21.

<sup>54</sup> COPNI (2024) '[Growing Concern: Older Victims of Domestic Abuse in Northern Ireland](#)'.

<sup>55</sup> Northern Ireland Executive (2024) '[Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategic Framework 2024 – 2031](#)'.

<sup>56</sup> DoJ (2025) '[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)', page 21.

<sup>57</sup> Brown and Gordon (2019) '[Improving Access to Justice for Older Victims of Crime: Older People as Victims of Crime and the Response of the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland](#)'.

physical health”.<sup>58</sup> The emotional strain of extended delays can also significantly affect an older person’s wellbeing and ability to engage fully with processes. Ensuring that cases involving older victims and witnesses are prioritised, where appropriate, can help safeguard their right to access to justice, and ensure timely and fair outcomes. COPNI acknowledges the detail in the draft Strategy outlining the ongoing workstreams to reduce delays within the justice system.

*Theme 3. Minority Groups and Marginalised Communities: We want to support communities to report crime and make this a system where all victims and witnesses feel safe*<sup>59</sup>

Older people are a diverse group and thus may belong to minority groups and marginalised communities such as ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ+ community, or live with a disability. Such intersecting identities can lead to unique barriers when seeking justice. Recognising this diversity among older victims and witnesses and providing tailored support is key to making an inclusive justice system that is responsive to the needs of older people. COPNI welcomes DoJ’s commitment to “engage more meaningfully with voluntary and community sector groups and representative organisations”.<sup>60</sup> We hope such engagement will serve to ensure older people’s unique voices and needs are heard and considered.

## Delivery Plan

*It is intended that delivery of the strategy will be supported by a series of delivery plans that will set out in detail the SMART actions that we intend to progress to achieve outcomes. These will include clear, measurable targets and progress indicators which will be monitored and reviewed across the span of the strategy.*<sup>61</sup>

Whilst these delivery plans sound promising, to bring about meaningful change for victims and witnesses, the Strategy must be fully implemented, monitored and adequately resourced. Without same, the Strategy’s ambitions will not translate into tangible actions and real improvements for victims and witnesses. Whilst COPNI understands that “future budgets remain uncertain”<sup>62</sup>, the lack of clarity on the resourcing of the Strategy is worrying.

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<sup>58</sup> Brown and Gordon (2019) ‘[Improving Access to Justice for Older Victims of Crime: Older People as Victims of Crime and the Response of the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland](#)’, page 104.

<sup>59</sup> DoJ (2025) ‘[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)’, page 21.

<sup>60</sup> DoJ (2025) ‘[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)’, page 24.

<sup>61</sup> DoJ (2025) ‘[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)’, page 38.

<sup>62</sup> DoJ (2025) ‘[Draft Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy 2025 – 2030](#)’, page 39.



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Key actions will be at risk of being delayed or diluted, undermining progress, particularly concerning for older victims and witnesses who already face significant barriers to accessing justice. A strong commitment to implementation is essential to ensure the Strategy's success.

## **Conclusion**

COPNI maintains that “justice is only served if all victims, including older people, can participate fully within the criminal justice process in order to have their voices heard and their experiences recognised without suffering undue distress”.<sup>63</sup> The new Victims and Witnesses of Crime Strategy presents an opportunity to improve the outcomes and experiences of older people affected by crime. To deliver real change, the Strategy must be fully resourced, supported by clear delivery plans and aligned with wider legislative and policy developments. Older people must not be overlooked in the implementation of the Strategy. Their diverse needs, lived experiences and right to access justice must be central.

COPNI looks forward to seeing the Strategy taken forward. In the interim, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this response, or the new Strategy further should it be necessary or helpful.

Yours sincerely

**Anna Doran**

**Policy Advice and Research Unit**

**Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland**

e. [anna.doran@copni.org](mailto:anna.doran@copni.org)

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<sup>63</sup> Brown and Gordon (2019) '[Improving Access to Justice for Older Victims of Crime: Older People as Victims of Crime and the Response of the Criminal Justice System in Northern Ireland](#)', page 12.