COPNI Commissioner for **Older People** for Northern Ireland

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RE: PfG Wellbeing Framework Dashboard – User Survey

Dear Sir / Madam

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this feedback exercise. As the aim of the consultation is to make sure the dashboard is clear and easy to use, we have initially included comments on the user interface. We have also included feedback in the context of an ageing population, which is central to COPNI's calls for an outcome specific to older people in the Programme for Government.

<u>User Interface:</u>

Overall, the user interface is easy to navigate, and visual presentation is effective for non-technical users. There are a few small points that, dependent on required effort, may be worth implementing to improve user experience.

- To view a list of all measures, an analyst must load the page, load to expand all domains and then load individual measures in the same tab to view a specific visual. If the analyst wants to find a different measure using this list view, they then must repeat this process. It would be useful to analysts searching multiple metrics if they were able to right click measures to open the visual in a new tab. This would save time reloading the whole dashboard when drilling down to view all metrics. While a small point, this could improve user experience and support more rapid analysis.

- For organisations that focus on specific areas of society, like the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland, it would be useful if the analyst could filter to show all measures that include specific cross tabular analysis, e.g., age, gender, race, etc. This would streamline the review process for researchers and ensure

they have oversight of all metrics that offer relevant insight into their area of interest.

- While the graphs are well presented and easy for an analyst to interpret, there may be value in greater interactivity in the visuals. Using the "Cultural Identity" measure and the "age" crosstab as an example, the X axis currently shows the "Year" variable. If the analyst could easily swap the legend variable and the X axis variable, this might support interpretation of the data, although this is a minor point.

<u>Age-specific considerations:</u>

Every year, the median age of the population is increasing, and this will only accelerate in the coming decades. This will have significant impacts on all aspects of our society, and if data on older people living in Northern Ireland is unavailable, the capacity to make informed decisions with regard to policy and service design will be significantly hampered.

In the Wellbeing Framework dashboard, analysis by age is available for the:

- **Equal Society domain:** cultural identity, income deprivation, income inequality, and respect metrics;
- **Healthier Lives domain:** active travel – walking or cycling, mental health, and sports and physical activity metrics;
- **Brighter futures domain:** arts and cultural activities, life satisfaction, and self-efficacy metrics;
- **Stronger economy domain:** economic inactivity, and employment rate metrics;
- **Safe communities domain:** crime prevalence rate, and safe town and city centres metrics;
- **Caring society domain:** loneliness, and volunteering metrics;
- **Better homes domain:** availability of suitable homes, homelessness, housing cost as a proportion of household income, and housing stress metrics;
- **Living peacefully domain:** community relations, shared community, and trust in media metrics.

COPNI's initial concern with regards to how demographic information is presented in the dashboard relates to how age is classified. For several of the metrics, anyone over

the age of 65 are grouped in one homogenous group. There should be further distinction in this analysis to offer a better representation of wellbeing across Northern Ireland's older population. For example, some studies have classified older people between the ages of 65 and 74 years as youngest-old, those between ages 75 and 84 years as middle-old, and those aged over 85 years as oldest-old. If it is the case that sample sizes across older age groups are too small, further efforts to collect data with older people must be made.

Notably, the economic inactivity and employment rate metrics only goes to 64. As outlined in COPNI's At the centre of government planning report, the labour market is decreasing in size, partially due to an ageing population. COPNI highlights the importance of encouraging and promoting working beyond retirements if an older person is willing. As such, analysis of data beyond the age of 64 should be included if available.

COPNI published the At the Centre of Government Planning report in June 2024. We have also offered a response to the Executive Office in October 2024 outlining key concerns with regards to the draft Programme for Government. Each document includes an overview of the more important issues facing older people in our society. If COPNI's advice to government is taken on board, it would be expected that appropriate changes would be reflected in the corresponding Wellbeing dashboard. For an indicative view of what statistics are relevant to older people, COPNI recommends reviewing the Older Person's Information Hub from the Republic of Ireland's Central Statistics Office. COPNI believes that improved data sources relating to an older population are key to addressing issues that will emerge with demographic change.

Many thanks

Conor Tinnelly

Policy and Research Unit

Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland