



#ACT4AGE



age NI
Love later life

What Matters to Older People General Election Priorities 2019

Our ageing population presents many opportunities and challenges for society - for employers, the economy, as well as the welfare, housing, health and social care systems. Age NI is calling on all candidates and political parties in this general election to **#Act4Age19** on the issues that matter to older people. See our priorities below. We are calling on election candidates to show their commitment by signing the **#Act4Age19** pledge here: www.ageni.org/electionpledge

Find out more about Age NI's **#Act4Age19** campaign here: www.ageni.org/act4age19

1 Staying well, feeling good

Why this matters: Although people are living longer, many are spending a significant part of their later life unwell, or living with a disability or long term health condition that affects their quality of life.

Social care services act as a lynchpin, preventing and addressing pressures elsewhere in the system. They help people stay well and live full lives, with dignity, independence, security and choice. Although reform is underway, the pace of change is disappointingly slow.

We want to see:

- Older people receiving high quality social care and support so that they can stay well and remain as independent as possible.
- Investment in and reform of the social care system so that it is sustainable, fair, person-centred and accessible to older people who need care and support.

2 Tackling pensioner poverty

Why this matters: Poverty in later life can mean a miserable existence which leads to ill health and isolation. Older people tell us about their struggles to make ends meet.

It's positive news that the overall level of pensioner poverty has reduced but it masks the fact that the poorest pensioners have seen no real improvement in their incomes.

The government has been raising the State Pension Age (SPA) alongside rising longevity but some people are unable to work up to SPA, while others could work for longer if there was better support and more opportunities. Having access to expert financial advice and guidance is vital as people approach retirement and at key times in later life.

Scams and financial abuse are a major threat to the financial security, health and wellbeing of older people.

We want to see:

- Commitment to tackling pensioner poverty so that every older person receives the financial help they are entitled to.
- Targeted measures to help older adults enter, return to or remain in work, and protection for those who are unable to work up to State Pension Age.



3 Equal and engaged citizens

Why this matters: Older people contribute to the economy through work, volunteering and caring but face barriers to being treated as valued and equal citizens.

These include outdated, ageist perceptions of older age and discrimination accessing health and financial services. They struggle with poor transport links particularly in rural areas and digital exclusion further prevents many from living a fulfilling, independent later life. Unlike their counterparts in the rest of the UK or Ireland, older people in Northern Ireland are not protected from discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services. The creation of Age Friendly communities provide opportunities to develop 'good' places to age, connecting older people to each other and their local community.

We want to see:

- The introduction of legislation extending age discrimination to goods, facilities and services.
- The active involvement of older people and the age sector in the development of Age Friendly communities across Northern Ireland.

4 Tackling loneliness and building connections

Why this matters: Research shows that the effect of loneliness on health is similar to high blood pressure or obesity. Loneliness puts people at higher risk of cognitive decline, dementia, coronary heart disease and stroke. Chronic loneliness is linked to early death and for people living alone without social connections, poses a significant risk to health

People can be lonely at any age but older people are particularly at risk. The transitions that come with later life such as retirement, being a carer or developing care needs themselves can be a particular challenge. Bereavement, changes to living arrangements and an increasing sense of one's mortality are also significant factors. The risk factors can be even more significant for the oldest old.

One in three older people have told us that they "sometimes or always feel lonely" and many older people have told us that they rely on their television for company.

Tackling loneliness requires a joined up approach by all key statutory organisations with service design and delivery remits including health and social care, policing, housing and transport.

We want to see:

- The development, implementation and resourcing of a loneliness strategy for Northern Ireland (as in England, Scotland and Wales) that delivers coordinated action at all levels of Government and across statutory organisations; and supports community based services that address loneliness.
- Government taking back responsibility for funding the BBC TV licence fee for people aged over 75.

Thank you for getting involved in #Act4Age19. To find out more contact:

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