



Appreciating AG£

Valuing the positive contributions made
by older people in Northern Ireland



This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Also available for download at www.copni.org



Appreciating Age
Valuing the positive contributions made
by older people in Northern Ireland

Published by The Commissioner for
Older People for Northern Ireland

October 2014

ISBN: 978-0-9930725-1-2

Contents

1. Commissioner’s Foreword	2
2. Executive Summary	3
3. Northern Ireland: An Ageing Society	6
4. Types of Contributions	9
5. Calculating the Costs and Contributions	12
6. Conclusion	17
7. What others have said	19
8. The people behind the numbers	22
9. Acknowledgements	25



Commissioner's Foreword

Northern Ireland is a better and richer place because more of us are living longer and healthier lives than ever before.

The positive contribution that is made by older people to our public, family, employment, volunteering, community and faith lives deserves much wider recognition and respect. This report, *Appreciating Age*, examines the positive economic and social contribution that older people make to life in Northern Ireland.

Older people work, volunteer, provide care and participate widely in community and family life. Many families, organisations and communities depend on older people for their skills, knowledge and experience; older people provide invaluable care and support to thousands of others who benefit from their assistance; they pay tax and have contributed throughout their lives to their 'old age pension'. And many older people volunteer in every kind of community and charitable organisation, giving their time and skills to help others.

Every aspect of our society is greatly enriched by the active involvement of older people. We are a better society because more of us are living longer.

Yet too often we hear pessimistic voices saying that increased longevity is a burden

on society, creating unaffordable costs. Rather than celebrating older people as an asset to our society, this point of view unfairly and wrongly portrays older people as a drain on our economic and social resources.

In order to set the record straight, I have undertaken an examination of the economic and social contribution that the older people of today and tomorrow will make in Northern Ireland over the next 50 years.

I have also assessed the expected costs of health and welfare that older people will receive and set that against the projected economic value of the taxes paid, volunteering time and informal caring that older people provide. Simply put, the results show that older people put a lot more economic value into society than they take out.

Over the next 50 years, Northern Ireland will be almost £25 billion better off because of our ageing population. It is time for us all to value, respect and appreciate older age. Older people always have, and will continue, to play important roles in every aspect of life.

The evidence in this report will help to challenge negative attitudes towards ageing, and highlight the very positive difference that older people make to our quality of life and our economy.

Let's appreciate age!



Claire Keatinge

Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland



About Claire Keatinge

Claire Keatinge took up her post as the first Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland in November 2011. The key function of the Commissioner is to promote and safeguard the interests of older people. The role is independent of government, and the Commissioner has statutory powers and duties, as outlined in the Commissioner for Older People Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

According to the Act, older people are defined as aged 60 and over, and in exceptional cases, this may also include those aged over 50.

Prior to her appointment as Commissioner, Claire was Director of the Alzheimer's Society, as well as serving as Community Development and Health Director for Age Concern NI.



Executive Summary



2. Executive Summary

Northern Ireland is an ageing society, and people are generally living longer, healthier, more active lives. Statistics show that the number of older people in Northern Ireland is set to increase rapidly in coming decades. This presents opportunities for government and wider society to better value the positive contributions that older people make in a variety of different ways.

However, the many and varied contributions that older people make across our society are often overlooked. The focus is too often centred on negative portrayals of older people as an economic burden and costly to the public purse.

To set the record straight, the Commissioner for Older People has worked with economists, Development Economics, to calculate the total economic contribution made by older people through a range of different, and often hidden, activities. So as to ensure that the value reflects the true economic contributions, costs have been deducted that are older age-related, such as Pension Credit, Winter Fuel Payments and projected health costs,

amongst others, which are detailed later in the report.

Appreciating Age is based on statistics covering a 50 year period. This period of time covers 2012-2062, in line with the most recent release of long term demographic projections for the population by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

How the real economic value was calculated

Appreciating Age identifies two different types of contribution: financial contributions and other contributions.

Financial Contributions are defined as those contributions made by older people which are made through taxation.

These includes tax on income, as well as through indirect payments, such as taxation on spending, including VAT, TV licences, domestic rates, etc.

Other Contributions are voluntary contributions which do not usually have an economic value attached to them, but which significantly contribute to the economy.

Within this category, *Appreciating Age* reviews four

different types of contribution which are as follows:

- Volunteering
- Caring
- Childcare
- Replacement Parenting

The total value which older people are set to contribute over the next 50 years through financial contributions will be £49,865 billion, whilst other contributions will amount to £67,040 billion. This gives a total financial contribution of £116,905 billion.

Costs

Appreciating Age also calculates the total public sector spending that is specific to older people over the period 2012-2062. This value is the product of older age-related spending in Northern Ireland, which has been considered as the following:¹

- Pension Credit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Carers Allowance
- Winter Fuel Payments
- Warm Homes Scheme
- Health Costs
- Community Care Grants
- Housing Benefits
- Rate Relief
- Public Transport
- Funeral Payments

¹ These costs are available to older people (depending on circumstances) although they are not all age-specific and do not all become available at the age of 60 e.g. TV Licences.

Pension costs have not been included as older people have directly contributed to their State Pension throughout their lives via National Insurance contributions.

The projected total older age-related spending over the next fifty years is expected to be £92,196 billion.

Positive Economic Contribution of Older People

When the costs and contributions are set alongside each other over the period between 2012-2062, older people will make a positive contribution to the Northern Ireland economy of **£24.7 billion**.

Older people will make a positive contribution to the Northern Ireland economy of **£24.7 billion**.

It will be those who are 50, 40 or 30 today, who will be making significant contributions during the timeframes which this model has used.

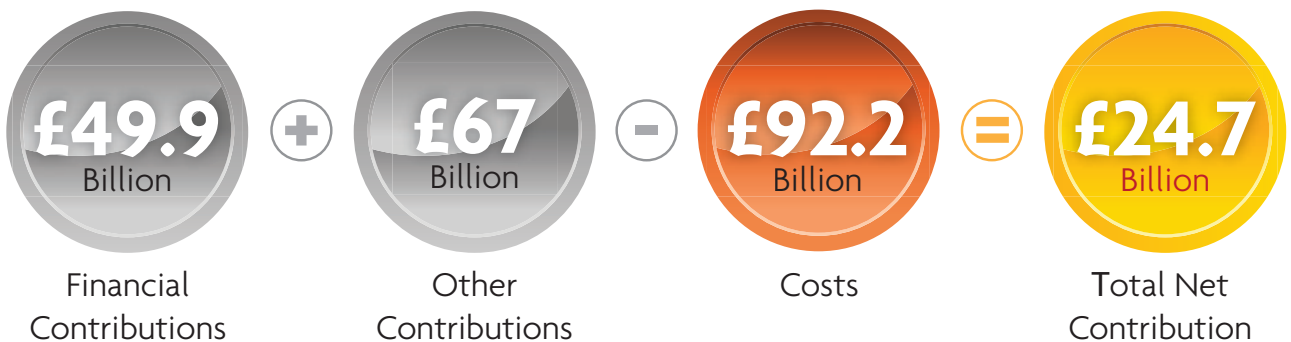
Changing Attitudes

The findings in *Appreciating Age* will help change the public debate about our ageing population and highlight the real value of older people in Northern Ireland.

The 50 year timeframe of this report means that its findings are of relevance to

today's and future generations of older people. It will be those who are 50, 40 or 30 today who will be making significant contributions during the timeframes which this model has used.

This report presents a positive picture of older age and clearly highlights the key roles which older people continue to play, both in the community and within the family, in so many different ways across Northern Ireland.





Northern Ireland: An Ageing Society



3. Northern Ireland: An Ageing Society

Older people in Northern Ireland

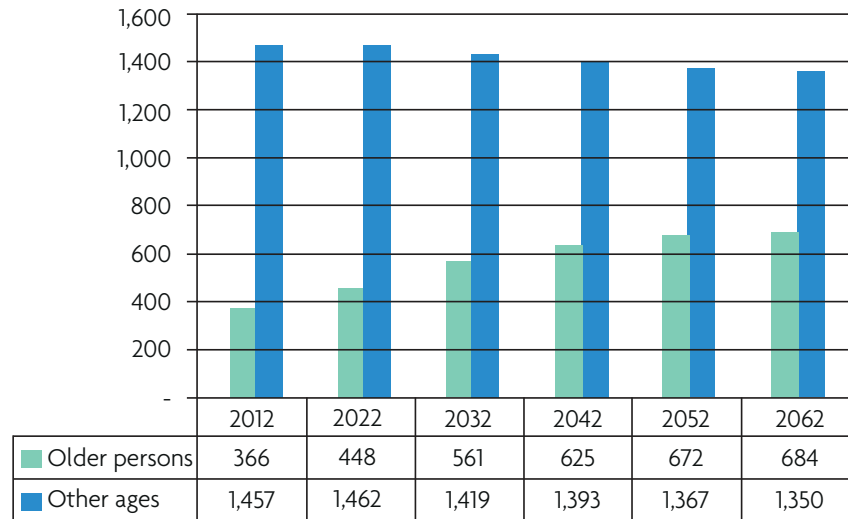
People in Northern Ireland are generally living longer, healthier lives. Life expectancy for men and women has increased by 11 years since 1950, and babies born today have a one in three chance of living to 100 years of age. Therefore, the number of older people in Northern Ireland is set to increase throughout the 50 year timeframe of this report as shown in the graph in Figure 1.

According to these projections, there will be an additional 318,000 older people in Northern Ireland by 2062, which is considerably more than the projected increase in the population as a whole (210,000) over the same period. This means that by 2062, the number of people in Northern Ireland aged 60 and over is projected to increase to 684,000, which will represent 33.6% of the overall population (2.034 million) of Northern Ireland. This represents an increase of 86.9% in the number of older people living in Northern Ireland over the next 50 years.

Positive About Ageing

Beyond the statistics, there is a story to be told about the role that older people play, and will continue to play, and the valuable contributions which

Figure 1: Anticipated Change in Population, 2012-2062 ('000s)



Source: NISRA 2012-based population projections for Northern Ireland

they make to society, both economically and socially.

The diversity amongst older people is striking and often under appreciated. Today's over 60s have seen huge social, political and economic change in society. They have grown up in post-war Northern Ireland and grown older through years of civil unrest. They have witnessed the transition to devolved government and have

experienced more economic independence and individual choice than generations before them.

Despite the increased participation of older people in society, we still often hear that older people are a 'cost' to society, and that the increasing number of older people will be an increasing burden on the public purse in Northern Ireland. While there are some specialised older age-related costs that will inevitably increase due to

Today's over 60s have seen huge social, political and economic change in society.

there being more older people, such a view does not consider the entire reality of the demographic changes that we are experiencing. This viewpoint ignores the immense positive contribution that older people make to society, both in terms of the range of activities and the value of them. By placing an economic value on the contributions made by older people which often go unrecognised, *Appreciating Age* will redress the balance to show that, in fact, older people put much more into society than they take out, both economically and socially.

Working Longer

Older people have had to respond to changes in employment legislation, and their own needs in relation to personal finances, by working longer. Many older people also want to work beyond

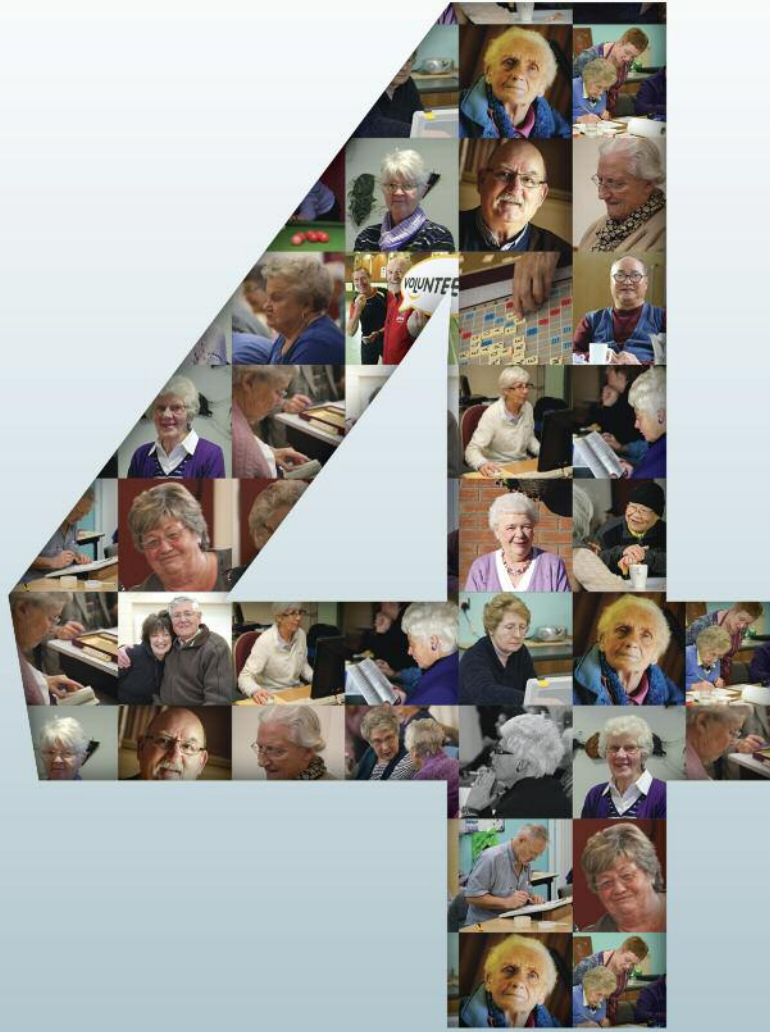
traditional retirement age, and so remain in work for this reason. Although the number of people working past the traditional pension age is relatively low, an earlier report by the Commissioner for Older People² found that this number is increasing, and will continue to increase, as many older people stay in work longer. This is due to an increase in the statutory pension age, which is set to rise to 68 over the next 30 years, and the fact that more people will need or want to stay in employment longer.

The next section of this report will outline the different types of contributions that have been taken into account in calculating the total value which older people contribute in Northern Ireland.



Older people put much more into society than they take out, both economically and socially.

² *Valuing an Ageing Workforce* (2014) Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland
www.copni.org/images/documents/Valuing_an_Ageing_Workforce.pdf



Types of Contributions



4. Types of Contributions

Older people contribute to society in a range of different and varied ways, through their family, social, cultural, faith and work lives. However, in order to get a clearer picture of the real positive economic value that older people bring to society, *Appreciating Age* has used different categories of contributions which are outlined below. The two main categories are:

- Financial Contributions
- Other Contributions

Financial Contributions

Financial contributions made by older people are considered to be payments made towards public revenues, usually through the tax system. There are two distinct classes of taxes through which older people make their contributions. The first is through **direct taxes**, such as PAYE. Additionally, older people also contribute through **indirect taxes**, such as VAT, TV licences, rate relief, etc.

Other Contributions

Other contributions have been defined as contributions which do not directly contribute towards public revenues, but which contribute much value to society. They provide vital

ECONOMIC VALUE:

The total value of financial contributions made by older people in Northern Ireland in 2012 was almost £1.4 billion. Over the next 50 years the total value of financial contributions made by older people is expected to be £49.9 billion.

functions and bring significant social value to communities and families across Northern Ireland, and *Appreciating Age* attaches an economic value to these types of contributions.

Definitions

The contributions in this group are broken down into four broad areas:

- Volunteering
- Care
- Childcare
- Replacement Parenting

Volunteering

Volunteers contribute a huge amount to society through giving their time and skills to communities and organisations alike. The range of different volunteering opportunities enables older people to use their skills and experience to help others in the community.

Volunteering can also take the form of older people playing the role of an “active neighbour,” which can include helping vulnerable neighbours with shopping, attending appointments, or even just calling in to say “hello”.

The two key types of volunteering are defined as follows:³

- **Formal volunteering** is “unpaid voluntary work carried out with or under the auspices of an organisation”.
- **Informal volunteering** is “work carried out outside organisations, often at the neighbourhood level, but outside of one’s immediate family”.

ECONOMIC VALUE:

The total economic value of older people volunteering in 2012 was £815 million, which, over the 50 year period from 2012-2062, will rise to almost £25 billion.

Care

Unpaid older carers play a key role in enabling loved ones, relatives or friends to live dignified lives at home, saving the health service millions of pounds every year.

³ *Making the Connection: Volunteering by the Over 50s in Northern Ireland* (2009) Volunteer Development Agency, pg. 17

It is anticipated that the number of older carers will increase significantly over the timeframe of this report, given that there was an increase of 22,000 older carers⁴ in the 10 years from 2001-2011 and based on NISRA statistics.

ECONOMIC VALUE:

The total economic value that older carers contributed to the Northern Ireland economy in 2012 was £1.02 billion. Over the 50 year lifetime of this report, this will amount to just over £34 billion.

Childcare

Many older people have childcare responsibilities for grandchildren or relatives in their extended families. This can range from occasional babysitting, to regular help with childcare, to being the

ECONOMIC VALUE:

The economic value of the contribution made by older people in Northern Ireland through childcare in 2012 was £89 million, which works out at approximately £2 billion over the period 2012-2062.

sole provider of daily structured care for one or more children.

This enables more economic activity to take place, as families have more disposable income and can save money on childcare.

Replacement Parenting

Replacement parenting is when someone in the family, often a grandparent, assumes parental responsibility for the child when their parent(s) are

unable to provide care for a variety of reasons. This has led to an increasing number of grandparents and older relatives caring full time for younger family members, including grandchildren.

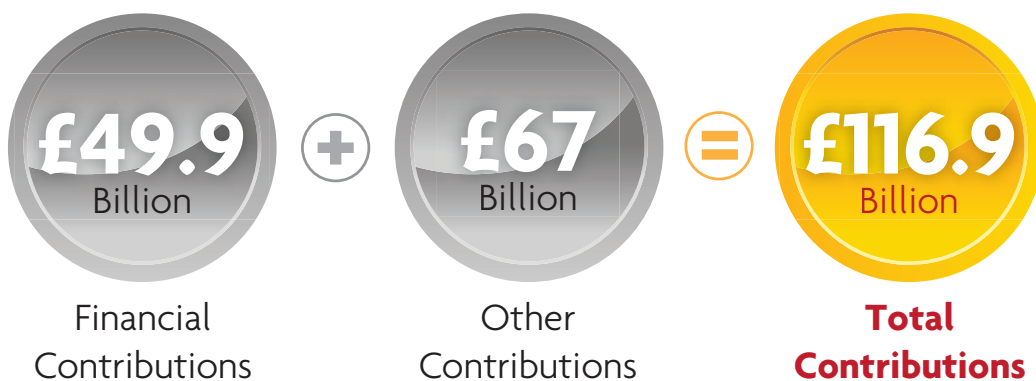
This represents a significant positive contribution to the lives of the children for whom they care, as well as for their family.

ECONOMIC VALUE:

In 2012, the total economic value of replacement parenting was £250 million, which translates to £6 billion over the 50 years from 2012-2062.

Total Economic Value

Over the next 50 years, older people will contribute approximately £116.9 billion to the economy in Northern Ireland.



4 Valuing Carers (2011) University of Leeds and Carers UK, pg. 5



Calculating the Costs and Contributions



5. Calculating the Costs and Contributions

In order to calculate the total figure for the value of the contribution made by older people in Northern Ireland, an economic model was designed to calculate the contributions and costs across a range of activities as identified in the previous section.

The financial model estimates the likely future costs and contributions of Northern Ireland's population aged over 60, based on population projections published by NISRA. The types of public expenditure counted in the calculation of costs for the over 60s include costs associated with health, housing and public transport

costs, as well as social welfare payments that are linked to the recipient's age.

The contributions that are counted in the calculation include income and expenditure, taxes paid by the over 60s, as well as contributions made in terms of volunteering and the provision of caring services to family members and others. The estimates of costs and contributions cover the period 2012-2062, but in order for future costs and contributions to be valued fairly, future financial values have been "discounted back" to current values using the financial discounting

approach. Discounting is a technique used to compare costs and benefits that occur in different time periods, and this model bases the discount rate on that recommended by Her Majesty's Treasury in the Green Book.

Financial Contributions

The table below (Figure 2) shows the different ways which older people will contribute to public revenues over the next 50 years. The total amount of contributions older people are projected to make to public revenues up to 2062 is almost £50 billion in standardised, discounted terms.

Figure 2: Summary of Expected Future Public Revenues attributable to people and older households (£millions), 2012 prices:

Revenue source	2012 revenues	2062 revenues	2012-2062 revenues undiscounted	2012-2062 revenues discounted
PAYE	103	282	10,509	4,249
Employee National Insurance	56	157	5,681	2,279
Employer National Insurance	123	345	12,817	5,165
Tax paid on non-earned income	309	576	24,573	10,370
VAT	507	883	39,330	16,821
Excise duties	119	196	9,000	3,884
Domestic rates	171	333	13,687	5,750
Inheritance tax	41	68	2,724	1,174
TV licences (net)	10	(4)	269	173
Overall revenues	1,438	2,837	118,590	49,865

Many older people continue to work beyond the age of 60, and so continue to make substantial contributions through taxation on income. This is boosted by indirect taxes collected through VAT, excise duties, domestic rates, inheritance tax and TV licences.

The findings also reflect the fact that people will

increasingly stay in work longer due to the current planned gradual increase in pension age to 68.

Other Contributions

The value of other contributions made by older people up to 2062 is projected to be just over **£67 billion**. The table below (Figure 3) shows the other contributions included within this projection:

The value of other contributions made by older people up to 2062 is projected to be just over **£67 billion**.

Figure 3: Summary of Other Financial Contributions (£millions), 2012 prices:

Contribution source	2012 value	2062 value	2012-2062 value discounted	2012-2062 value undiscounted
Volunteering	815	1,129	55,898	24,704
Care	1,018	1,902	81,101	34,225
Childcare	89	84	4,469	2,095
Replacement Parenting	250	240	12,818	6,016
Overall Value of Contributions	2,173	3,355	154,286	67,040

Volunteering: Data on volunteering was obtained from a survey conducted by the Commissioner’s office, as well as from research by *Volunteer Now*. The region-wide survey provided up-to-date estimates of levels of volunteering across Northern Ireland, combined with estimated costs of the value of different types of volunteering activities being undertaken.

Care: Data for the value of unpaid caring is taken from a mix of Census data and studies by Carers UK which put a value on the cost equivalent of unpaid care provided by people aged over 60.

Childcare: Contributions made by the over 60s through childcare were calculated using a study from 2012⁵ which found that on average, grandparents spend 10 hours

every week looking after grandchildren. This estimate excludes the value of additional earnings that are enabled by family members who receive the benefit of childcare services provided by grandparents. This evidence was combined with population projections for both older people and children in Northern Ireland, and the potential future value of unpaid childcare provided by the over 60s.

5 21st Century Grandparenting Report (2011) Optimum Research (commissioned by RIAS)

Replacement Parenting:

The value of replacement parenting was calculated using census data to estimate the number of children living with other family members, with specific data on the number living with grandparents. Research published in 2010 by the Fostering Network revealed the approximate cost of fostering, and this figure was updated using 2012 prices to

come to the value of replacement parenting as provided by older people in Northern Ireland.

Costs

Appreciating Age also considers the older age-related public spending costs in Northern Ireland. This enables a calculation of the true economic value of the contributions made by older people.

Pensions are considered, but not included in the running total of costs, as older people have directly contributed to the State Pension they receive through National Insurance contributions made throughout their working lives. The table below (Figure 4) sets out the costs which have been deducted from the net total in arriving at the economic value of the contribution of older people in Northern Ireland.

Figure 4: Summary of Expected Future Public Expenditures benefiting older households (£millions), 2012 prices

Expenditure	2012 costs	2062 costs	2012-2062 costs undiscounted	2012-2062 costs discounted
Pension Credit	275	147	7,233	3,572
Disability Living Allowance	342	638	27,156	11,469
Attendance Allowance	204	432	17,410	7,204
Carers Allowance	82	278	9,212	3,612
Winter Fuel Payments	61	97	4,143	1,790
Warm Home Scheme	5	9	384	162
Health costs	1,235	4,623	146,844	56,308
Community Care Grants	3	5	219	94
Housing benefits	217	406	17,283	7,299
Rate relief	3	5	218	94
Public transport	17	31	1,317	556
Funeral Payments	1	2	84	36
Overall costs	2,445	6,673	231,503	92,196

The future cost of health expenditure related to older people has been based on projected life expectancy and disability-free life expectancy. Adjustments have been made with regard to health sector inflation, which is expected to experience a faster rise in inflation than is expected in general inflation.

Housing costs, such as housing benefit and rate relief, have been calculated by making projections on the future number of people that may be eligible to receive payments and allowances.

each other, it is clear that older people contribute much more to the economy than is spent on older age-related spending.

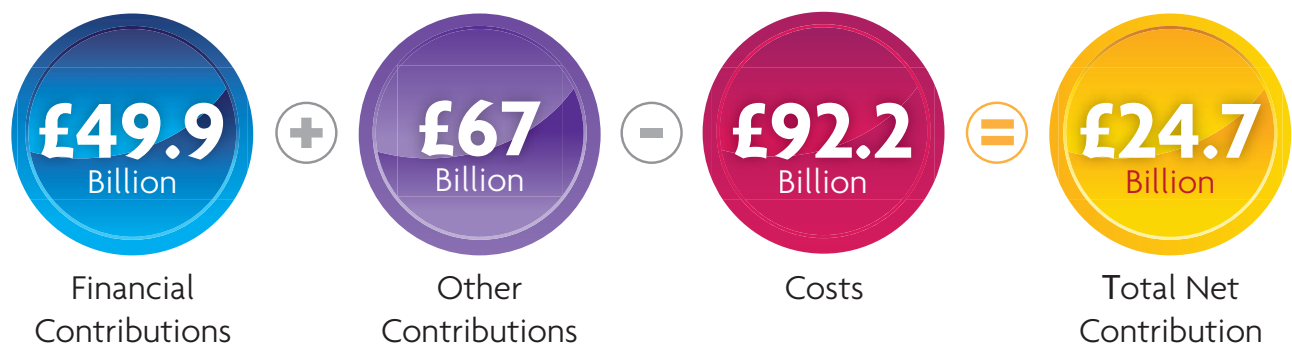
Older people will make a positive contribution to Northern Ireland of £24.7 billion over the next 50 years.

Overall Contributions

When the overall costs and contributions are set alongside

Figure 5: Summary of Costs and Financial Contributions associated with older people (£millions), 2012-2062 (2012 prices):

Source	2012 value	2062 value	2012-2062 value undiscounted	2012-2062 value discounted
Contributions via taxes made by older people	1,438	2,837	118,590	49,865
Value of volunteering and other services provided by older people	2,173	3,356	154,285	67,040
Costs of service provision (excluding pensions)	2,444	6,674	231,503	92,196
Net costs	1,167	(481)	41,372	24,709





Conclusion



6. Conclusion

The population of Northern Ireland is changing, with more people than ever before living longer, healthier lives during which they will continue to work, volunteer, provide care for family, friends and the wider community. Older people make a huge contribution to society, much of which often goes unrecognised.

Appreciating Age clearly evidences the positive economic and social contributions which older people in Northern Ireland make, and sets a challenge to everyone, from policy maker to politician, employers, families and individuals, to put an end to the myth that older people are an economic burden.

For too long we have been told that older people are an unaffordable drain on

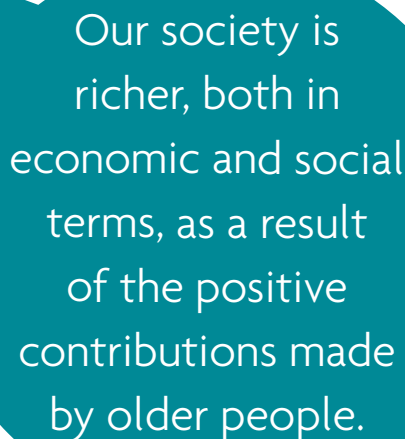
resources, but finally, this report confirms in no uncertain terms that our society is richer, both in economic and social terms, as a result of the positive contributions made by older people.

There is a real opportunity to change the way society perceives older age in using the evidence in *Appreciating Age*. For the first time in Northern Ireland, we have robust economic proof of the contributions made by older people in Northern Ireland. It is up to all of us to rise to the challenge and promote positive attitudes towards ageing.

It is time to reframe the debate, and to ensure that people across Northern Ireland can have hope, confidence and certainty that their role and contribution to society is recognised and appreciated, regardless of age. This will ultimately make Northern Ireland a great place to grow older.



It is up to all of us to rise to the challenge and promote positive attitudes towards ageing.



Our society is richer, both in economic and social terms, as a result of the positive contributions made by older people.



What others have said



7. What others have said

This report, for the first time, attaches an economic value to the positive contribution that older people make across our society. However, whilst the purpose of the report is to provide robust financial calculations as to the economic contribution which older people make, their contributions make a difference across the lives of so many families and communities in Northern Ireland in many different ways. Below are comments from some organisations which represent the different types of contribution that the report considers.



Business in the Community

Older workers are now the fastest growing age group in the labour market. It's a reality that presents major opportunities for employers to harness the benefits of attracting and retaining older staff and poses a serious threat to those who continue to believe that they can rely solely on a young workforce. Companies that invest in understanding this and adapting their practices to reflect this new reality will be the winners in being able to recruit, engage, and retain the very best talent.

Business in the Community Northern Ireland is working with employers to develop strategies that support older workers and get the best from all generations in the workplace.

The time has come to value age diversity in the workforce for business, society and the economy.

Tanya Kennedy

Director, Workplace Campaign,
People Team, Business in the Community



Parenting NI

Parenting NI

The nature of the grandparent's close involvement in the grandchildren's lives can vary from wholly satisfactory to problematic. Sometimes there are tensions due to different styles of discipline, eating habits, or over indulgence. Some grandparents can feel overburdened by the constancy of looking after grandchildren, while others really enjoy the opportunity to be a pivotal influence in their grandchildren's lives and feel that their own lives are enriched by the frequent contact.

What we do know is that many families would lose out both financially and in emotional stability if it were not for the support of grandparents. While grandparents may not see it as a sacrifice, those who have frequent childminding or carer responsibilities may have to forgo their own work plans, and have to arrange their social activities to fit in with the commitments. However, from the perspective of the child, they can gain enormously from having a second nurturing environment where they are given time and opportunity to extend their potential and plenty of opportunities to engage in stimulating activities and interesting conversation with a grandparent who loves them.

Pip Jaffa OBE

Chief Executive, Parenting NI



Volunteer Now

Older volunteers are a very important resource for the community in Northern Ireland, giving their time to support a range of community activities and services such as befriending and mentoring, volunteer driving, walking clubs, youth clubs, local community organisations and arts clubs, sporting and faith based activities, emergency medical services and mountain rescue teams. The list is amazingly diverse. Research also clearly indicates that volunteering enhances the wellbeing of older people, both their physical activity levels and their mental health. Older people in volunteering is truly a 'win win' situation both for the community and the volunteer.

Wendy Osborne OBE

Chief Executive, Volunteer Now



Carers NI

People are aware of the help that many grandparents provide with childcare. What is often overlooked is the huge amount of personal care that older people give to disabled or chronically sick spouses, partners, other family members and friends.

Caring for others can be rewarding and is a key part of an active and engaged community - our community care system would collapse without the input of older carers. However, this unpaid work needs to be valued and supported, otherwise it can come at a real cost to the older carer's own health and wellbeing.

Helen Ferguson

Chief Executive, Carers NI

Northern Ireland



Kinship Care

The role grandparents play in replacement parenting cannot be underestimated. In Northern Ireland alone, between an estimated 8,000 and 10,000 children live with kin, a huge proportion of this being grandparents (around 41% according to 2001 Census Data).

Grandparents are faced with the responsibility of raising their grandchildren due to a variety of reasons including the death of a parent, substance abuse, one or both parents being incarcerated, mental health issues, abandonment, abuse and/or neglect. They often assume the role of parent to keep children safe and out of the public care system.

They often have to deal with torn relationships within the wider family and the loss of friends and a social life as they start to parent again for a second time, and may endure financial hardship, as many are on a fixed income.

Becoming a parent again can be overwhelming for many grandparent kinship carers, but with the right support, children can and do thrive. Research has shown that outcomes for children living with kin are better than for those in other care arrangements. Grandparents who assume the role of parents take on a huge challenge but with the correct support this challenge can be a uniquely rewarding one.

Jacqueline Williamson

Chief Executive, Kinship Care



The people behind the numbers



8. The people behind the numbers

The positive contributions made by older people, both in economic and in social terms, have been outlined in previous chapters. This section provides a flavour of the sort of diverse contributions which older people make across a range of areas in Northern Ireland, and which brings to life the real and positive value of the contributions made by older people.

Raj Puri

Raj is originally from India and has lived in Belfast for the last 30 years.



Raj helped establish Asian and Multicultural over 50s groups in his local area, which involved setting up activities, exchanging new skills and ideas, and learning from each other's cultures. The groups give people a place in which to learn practical skills and important information; for example, helping older people get to grips with technology by helping them enable their television for the digital switchover. Raj has also organised workshops to help inform older people about vital information and services in their area. He believes that establishing these groups has helped to reduce isolation and build community spirit.

Kathleen Megaw

As President of the local Women's Institute group, Kathleen regularly organises events for the local community, such as fashion shows and flower festivals alongside other members. She is also involved in knitting clothes for a range of charities through Volunteer Now, and has encouraged other WI members to join in. Kathleen also volunteers with the talking newspaper, which provides news to those with eyesight problems.



As a grandmother to 11 grandchildren, Kathleen regularly assists with childcare which she really enjoys.

She says that the reason she enjoys volunteering is the pleasure of knowing you have helped someone, as well as the new friends you make along the way.

Margaret Andrews

Margaret started volunteering after retirement and decided to apply some of the skills from her legal training to volunteer for the NSPCC and Victim Support in witness protection. Her voluntary work means she spends four days a week at the Laganside Courts helping both children and adults through the daunting process of giving evidence, often in very serious cases.



Margaret gets great satisfaction from her work, knowing that her presence and support for those having to give evidence provides comfort in a time of stress. She finds working with children particularly rewarding, and takes a great sense of purpose from her work.

Marie Heffron

Diagnosed with Parkinsons Disease over 15 years ago, 88 year old Marie has complex care needs however this has not stopped her from playing a positive and key role in her family life. Marie was formerly an expert seamstress and always had an eye for fashion and detail and she has continued to develop her creativity through participation in her weekly art class in the residential home where she now lives.



Although restricted by her condition due to a tremor in her hand, Marie has not let this prevent her from continuing to make a positive contribution through her arts and crafts which are appreciated and enjoyed by all those who know her.



Mary Scally

Mary began volunteering with a number of community-based activities, but with the arrival of the UK City of Culture in Derry/Londonderry, she jumped at the opportunity to become involved with such an exciting project. After taking part in training and accreditation, Mary was offered the chance to volunteer in a broad range of activities, including sports, concerts and festivals. Through her volunteering, she had the opportunity to do a range of courses such as World Host, Marshalling, First Aid, Child Protection and Sighted Guiding, and has never had so many certificates in her life!

Mary's volunteering stems from the enjoyment of being "part of something," as well as to make sure she gets out of the house, having quite recently retired from the workforce and seeking to ease the transition into retirement.

Nixon Armstrong



Nixon has been employed for over 50 years, having worked for the Civil Service and the Livestock and Meat Commission before switching careers to work for a local funeral director. Nixon believes that his years of experience in dealing with different people have transferred well to a job which requires a lot of empathy, patience and an ability to deal with difficult situations. He finds it hugely rewarding to help people at such a hard time, and believes that working into his later years keeps him active. The hours of the role depend largely on the funeral director's needs and they require flexibility from their staff. Nixon enjoys the flexibility of his job, which permits him to continue in employment without having to work full time hours.

Francis Hughes



Francis retired from the Civil Service in September 1998, and has since assumed childcare duties for two grandchildren who both have Autism. He looks after his grandchildren during school holidays and the summer break which allows the children's parents to work, without incurring high childcare costs which prevent many families from continuing in employment. Francis' involvement in the childcare of his two grandchildren also allows their parents to enjoy a social life together, which is much valued by them given the very full-time and challenging nature of caring for children with Autism.

Francis enjoys the company of his grandchildren, while at the same time appreciating what their parents have to deal with on a permanent basis. He says that whilst the children can be challenging and demanding, they can also be affectionate, funny and great company.

Dr John Johnston



John first became a carer six years ago for his wife Margaret. In the initial period of Margaret's diagnosis, both John and Margaret had to make difficult decisions to ease the pressure on her, such as taking a joint decision that Margaret give up driving and volunteering.

Now Margaret's condition is severely advanced and she can no longer stand or walk. Margaret receives visits from care workers whilst John assists her with her meals and checks on her several times throughout the night.

Whilst Margaret is unable to speak, her laugh and smile reassure John that his wife knows he is there, and both Margaret and John take comfort in the fact that Margaret can remain living in her own home with John's support. Whilst John says it can be hard as he misses the 'chat' between husband and wife, it's extremely rewarding being there to offer reassurance.

9. Acknowledgements

The Commissioner would like to thank the individuals and organisations who took the time to contribute to this report, in particular:

- Development Economics
- Volunteer Now
- Business In The Community
- Carers NI
- Parenting NI
- Kinship Care
- Angela McGowan, Danske Bank
- John Simpson, Economist
- Susan Russam, Gems NI
- All participants at the Commissioner's roundtable discussion
- All those who shared their stories in this report, at its launch and in the accompanying DVD



Commissioner for **Older People**
for Northern Ireland

**Commissioner for Older People
for Northern Ireland**

Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast BT2 7DP

T: 028 90 890 892

E: info@copni.org

www.copni.org

