

# Interim report on the **RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland was set the task to:

- Explore aspirations for social care for older people, including the role the health service, communities and individuals need to play.
- Develop useful, realistic recommendations for delivering a sustainable, fit-for-purpose social care system for older people, future-proofed to cope with the needs of the next generations (within the context of finite resources).

The Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland met for 2 weekends in October / November 2018 to learn, discuss and deliberate on these questions.

A list of the resolutions and recommendations passed by the members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland were published on 18 November, immediately after close of the second weekend. This interim report sets out to provide some wider context to these by drawing on the broad themes of the discussions between members over the weekends, particularly the small group-work that identified the topic areas for recommendations.

A full report, containing a more detailed analysis of the content of the discussions and more evidence of why members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland supported key recommendations, will be published in early 2019.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

The Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland agreed 3 high-level resolutions, which reflect the core themes of their discussions throughout the first weekend. These resolutions were intended to provide an over-arching context for the subsequent recommendations made by the members.

### **RESOLUTION on the need for more funding for social care for older people**

- 1) We the members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland recognise that much more dedicated funding is needed to reflect demand and resource the appropriate provision of improved social care for older people. We urge Ministers and decision**

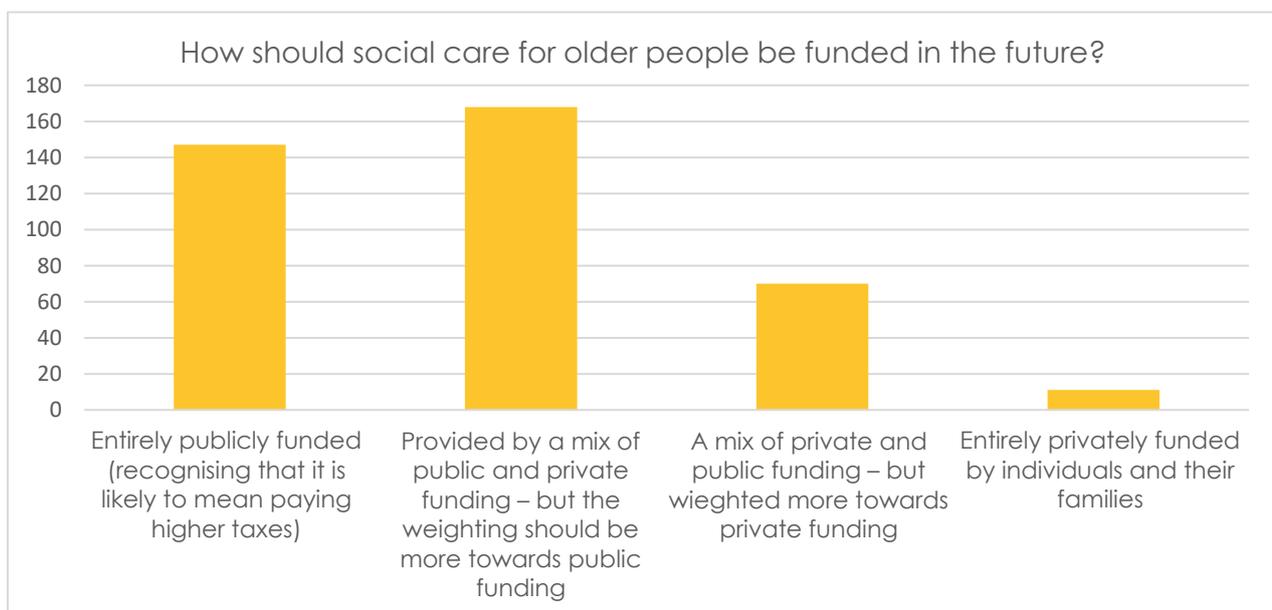
**makers to take decisive and accountable action to address this under-investment and the poor management of resources.**

86% support<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland, in both the presentations made to the members and in their own deliberations, the need for additional resources to meet rising demands was a topic continually returned to. It was also widely acknowledged that this was not simply a challenge facing Northern Ireland but one applicable across the UK, and much of the developed western world. The focus of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland was not to explore how social care for older people should be funded, however there was clear frustration from members that this known issue was not being effectively addressed by government.

This resolution was formulated within the context of continued uncertainty about the re-instatement of Stormont, the ongoing Northern Ireland Affairs Committee inquiry into 'Funding priorities in the 2018-19 Budget: Health' which has a specific focus on what levels of funding are needed to support the effective provision of social care in Northern Ireland, and the recent Select Committee Inquiry into the future funding of adult social care. The call for decisive action made in this resolution was therefore addressed to Ministers (at all levels of government) and others with a potential decision-making role.

A related preferential vote was also taken to give members the chance to record where they thought the additional resources required to deliver social care for older people in the future should come from. The results of this ballot are displayed below.<sup>2</sup> However as this topic had not been the focus of significant deliberation throughout the weekends it should be read as indicative of the members' general positions only.



<sup>1</sup> Several of those who did not support the resolution noted on their ballot paper that the addition of the words 'and the poor management of resources' (a change made to the originally proposed resolution during the process of agreeing wording in the room) added a secondary element to the resolution and made it one they could no longer support.

<sup>2</sup> The graph shows the results of the vote counted using a linear borda count method i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> preference weighted at 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> preference weighted at 2 etc.

## RESOLUTION on the need for transformational change

- 2) We the members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland recognise that the existing service models for delivering social care for older people do not meet the needs and expectations of current and future service users. We call for a comprehensive transformation programme, with public and user engagement at its heart, to design a system fit for purpose.**

97% support

Across the weekends a general consensus emerged that the way social care for older people is delivered in Northern Ireland currently does not meet the needs of many older people at present, and is unlikely to deliver what future generations want in their older age. This was considered to be not simply a result of limited resources, but more importantly that the nature of people's needs (for example medical advances meaning people are living longer, albeit possibly in poorer health) the changing shape of society (e.g. families having fewer children, more women in the workforce, more inter-generational dispersion) and individual expectations and aspirations for how people want to live in their older age, have changed since the delivery models were established.

Given the system already appeared to many to be approaching a point of crisis, based on what they had heard over the first weekend, members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland were of the collective view that there was a need to radically re-think the foundations of the system, rather than 'tinkering around the edges'. This led to the resolution supporting a comprehensive, inclusive transformation process to re-design how social care for older people is offered and understood.

The members however were also quite clear that engagement on this needed to reach beyond existing users of social care services for older people and include the wider public if the results were to be fit-for-purpose for future generations of care users and reflect wider social changes and expectations.

## RESOLUTION on the need for strong leadership

- 3) We the members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland call for strong, cross-party collaborative leadership on social care for older people in Northern Ireland. We call on decision-makers to look beyond their party-political interests and make the decisions needed to deliver transformational change.**

81% support

Throughout the first weekend of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland the members consistently questioned the speakers about why the system seemed to be stagnated, given that there appeared to be a high degree of consensus from experts about the type of changes needed. Through discussion a growing consensus emerged that one of the key obstacles preventing change and modernisation in the social care system was a lack of sustained, long-term leadership.

Whereas fundamentally transforming the way social care for older people is provided in Northern Ireland would require planning for 20-30 years ahead, our current political system tends to support decision making geared towards achieving results within the course of a traditional electoral cycle. This has enabled the implementation of small, but important, incremental changes but is not necessarily conducive to a transformational approach focussed on delivering improved outcomes well into the future.

This recognition led to the resolution calling for strong, cross-party, strategic leadership, willing and able to make difficult (and perhaps unpopular) decisions on social care in the short-term in order to deliver long-term gains. It is underpinned by a sense from members that, if the public were more aware of the crisis in the system and had the information to enable them to understand the need for decisive, if potentially uncomfortable, change, then the public would grant their elected Members the 'permission' to make the decisions needed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland developed and agreed 27 recommendations. (More information about the process of developing and agreeing these recommendations can be found [here](#).)

Recommendations were developed across three themes, selected to focus on the topics and issues prioritised by members at the end of the first weekend:

1. The care needs of individuals – focussing on person-centred social care for older people, able to be responsive to individual circumstances and choices;
2. Social care systems and structures – including how care needs are assessed, commissioned and provided; and
3. Care providers – focusing on what needed to be done to develop the care workforce and support unpaid carers.

The recommendations made by the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland are not directed towards a particular department or institution. Instead they collectively set out the range of measures that the members prioritised as needing to take place in Northern Ireland in order to deliver a sustainable, fit-for-purpose social care system for older people now and in the future.

### RECOMMENDATIONS focussed on delivering more person-centred care

The aspiration that social care for older people should be planned and delivered in a more person-centred way (i.e. in ways that were more responsive to the needs of an individual and enhanced their quality of life) featured heavily in discussions throughout the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland.

A series of values that members believed should underpin a person centred approach to delivering social care for older people were developed, and are presented below in the order they were prioritised by the members:

1. Address a person's holistic needs
2. Be tailored to individuals priorities for their life (outcomes focussed)
3. Preserve the dignity of the individual
4. Offer genuine choice
5. Be 'rights' based
6. Focus on integration into the community
7. Involve family and friends
8. Focus on independence
9. Be respectful
10. Be flexible

These values helped inform the recommendations developed under this theme, as presented below.

- a) To review the assessment process to move towards continuous assessments which are needs based and not resource led. The process of assessment and service allocation should be transparent.**

97% support

The need to tailor assessments and service offers more towards the needs of the individual was seen as vital to ensuring that the delivery of social care was more person centred. A key principle behind this recommendation was that people should have more choice in the type of care package they received, rather than the nature of their package being driven by the availability of a particular model of care delivery, and the flexibility to adapt this as their needs changed.

Although not explicitly mentioned in the recommendations, central to much of the discussion about this was the opportunity that Direct Payments provided as a route to enable greater choice, particularly in relation to creating flexibility in the delivery of personal / domiciliary care. Expanding the range of services that Direct Payments could be used for was seen as a key way of allowing social care to be more user led, as people could choose the types of support they most wanted and which best enhanced their own quality of life.

It was however also recognised that, in order to increase uptake of Direct Payments consideration needs to be given to how individuals and/or their families can be supported to best utilise the flexibility this provides. There was interest in seeing whether similar support models to those used in England could be introduced to help increase uptake in Northern Ireland.

- b) To implement a social care approach which targets early intervention and prevention for those with moderate and low level needs which takes into account individual needs and choices.**

94% support

- c) That the health and social care system should develop a holistic model of care that**

**considers an individual across their life course, with a specific emphasis on tackling poverty & inequality, & educating individuals on healthy choices to help reduce future pressures on the social care system.**

90% support

Early intervention and prevention were seen as very important in 'helping people to help themselves' and allowing scarce resources to be dedicated to those with more critical needs.

Recommendation b) focused on where there may be opportunities to take a more preventative and supportive approach to the way care is provided. Several discussions highlighted that an approach centred on reablement for those with low to moderate care needs could support people to be able to continue doing the things that are important to them, improve their quality of life and support people to live safely, and as independently as possible, in their own homes for longer.

It was argued that these types of approaches would contribute to reducing the demands on the social care system in the short and longer term. Recommendation c) therefore focuses on how an emphasis on education and prevention across the wider health and social care system could help change patterns of future need – particularly if they were targeted towards those most in need now.

**d) To improve the use of technology in social care, including in the assessment process and in people's homes to support independent living.**

92% support

Technology is now an integral part of most people's lives, including many older people. There were a number of suggestions of how simple uses of technology could replace some of the roles carried out by domiciliary care workers including reminders to take medication and of meal times, monitoring ongoing conditions and activity (e.g. through the use of networked 'fit-bit' type sensors) and increasing opportunities to socialise via skype etc. to reduce isolation.

**e) To adopt policy & provision which promotes the integration of older people with the wider community. This should include a range of housing options (including intergenerational sharing), access to transport, and community spaces where older people & others can interact.**

97% support

**f) To ensure policy and provision to facilitate intergenerational skills sharing and support which can be therapeutic (including gardening, arts, music, sport, reading, cookery and the use of support animals).**

93% support

The importance that the members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland placed on older people, including those needing care, remaining part of the community is emphasised in Recommendations e) and f). While there are some larger infrastructure issues included here (for

example the need to think about creating a housing stock that enables multiple generations to live together should they choose) the real focus of these recommendations is on what communities, and the community and voluntary sector, can do.

Recommendation f) particularly is designed to encourage creative thinking from the sector about ways to enhance integration and quality of life for older people who may require support, but may not get what they need from traditional care packages. Initiatives like Dementia Friendly Towns, Transport and Retail were highlighted as ways the community itself could take a lead in ensuring that people were supported to live independently. Members were also inspired by the example shared with them of McAuley Place, which provides an inclusive environment and a wide range of services to people across the community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS focussed on social care systems and structures

Overall members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland were very interested in the systems and structures in place to deliver social care for older people in Northern Ireland. Throughout the first weekend attempting to understand these was the basis of the majority of the questions put to the speakers, particularly in relation to commissioning, contracting and the independent delivery of services within a mixed economy model of provision.

A list of the principles that members felt should be at the heart of an effective and sustainable social care system for older people was developed. These are presented below in the order they were prioritised by the members:

1. Guarantee minimum standards of care
2. Value care staff by improving pay and progression
3. Guarantee equity of access
4. Be accountable to regulators, users and wider society
5. Be integrated and joined up with local services within the community
6. Be affordable for all
7. Value the role of family carers
8. Be efficient and cost-effective
9. Be evidence based
10. Take a systems based approach which is inter-departmental and cross-sectoral

The weighting participants gave to these principles, alongside the information they had received from the speakers, helped inform the recommendations presented below.

- g) To improve regulation to ensure a consistent provision and quality of care, to a minimum standard, across all providers.**

96% support

**h) To adopt an Older Persons' Charter<sup>3</sup> committing to rights, purposes, roles and entitlements underpinned by publicly agreed values and principles.**

90% support

Guaranteed minimum standards of care was a theme that members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland did not feel was sufficiently covered by existing planning and regulatory structures. Almost all participants agreed there was a need for further regulation to protect vulnerable older people and ensure that they were provided with quality care.

A popular suggestion was the need for a Charter to establish shared baseline expectations and standards between society and service providers. The idea was that this Charter should be based on publically agreed values and principles, developed through a process of engagement with service providers, advocacy groups and the wider public of all ages (although potentially informed by an assessment of the 'asks' and 'demands' of advocacy groups already working within the sector).

**i) To ensure equitable access to comparable social care provision across all areas of Northern Ireland for older people.**

97% support

**j) To ring-fence a percentage of the regional rate to be used in a transparent and accountable way for social care.**

79% support

Recommendations i) and j) are a direct response to the perceived 'post-code lottery' in relation how social care for older people is provided in different parts of Northern Ireland. Of all of the recommendations made by the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland, recommendation i) which called for the assurance of 'equitable access to comparable social care provision across all areas', received the highest overall level of support - with 76% of members 'strongly agreeing' with the recommendation.

While the recommendations made under the previous theme that call for flexibility and individual / local responsiveness may seem to be at odds with this, the essence of recommendation j) could be seen to counter that problem. While calling for ring-fenced spending this recommendation demands transparency and accountability, ideally in a responsive way, rather than a fixed model of service delivery.

**k) That the health & social care system should be streamlined to eliminate duplication (fewer organisations) and ensure collaboration.**

93% support

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<sup>3</sup> Outside of the context of the discussions within the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland, which was already focussed on social care, this would perhaps be better named as a Charter for Social Care for Older People

**l) That users should be able to access an integrated range of services, including housing and transport.**

92% support

Members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland were generally surprised by the number of providers operating across Northern Ireland, with many concluding that this must necessarily lead to duplication and inefficiencies. There were also concerns raised about the number of Trusts (as noted above) and suggestions made that streamlining these would lead to a more efficient and consistent care offering to older people.

In the discussions considerable emphasis was given to the need for collaboration and a cross-sectoral approach: on the basis that social care for older people shouldn't be looked at in isolation but rather considered alongside a range of other public service sectors. The recommendation above therefore is suggesting a 'one-stop-shop' where older people can access services across a range of sectors in a co-ordinated way.

**m) To establish new, and strengthen existing mechanisms, to ensure that the voice and influence of users and the wider public is at the heart of the design and reviews of services.**

99% support

**n) To present the public with clear information on social care need and initiate public engagement about funding models.**

96% support

**o) To provide more accessible information about Health and Social Care Trusts, including lines of accountability, duties and authority, and membership of each Trust's Board.**

89% support

Over the two weekends of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland the members repeatedly reflected on how much they had learnt about the social care system and how little the wider public generally understood about the current crisis in social care and the need to adapt the system in order to meet future demands.

Recommendations m) - o) reflect the members' growing awareness that there needs to be greater public understanding of the challenges facing the system, and more transparency about its delivery, in order to enable an informed on-going public 'conversation' about the situation. This would not only be able to inform and enable decision makers about public preferences and priorities but would also allow people to plan for their own / their family's future needs.

Recommendation m) however specifically recognises that, while there are a number of mechanisms already established to bring the voices of older people, social care users, their carers and civil society organisations advocating on their behalf into policy discussions, it is also important to involve the wider (younger) public in these discussions. This is because social care for older people is something that will have a direct impact on the majority of the population at

some point in their lives and future planning must also respond to changing social expectations and circumstances.

**p) To address the need for high quality data (including on unmet needs) to ensure policy decisions are consistently based on evidence.**

92% support

Several speakers at the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland gave the members figures relating to projected needs and demands on the social care system, but there was little consistency between them. At various points it was also suggested that there was a current lack of data relating to 'hidden needs' within the older population: i.e. those whose care needs were being informally met by family and friends, those who had opted out of existing service packages as they did not meet their needs and/or those who were simply just not in contact with the system. Further, it was made clear to members that different approaches to interpreting existing data and population projections could lead to differing conclusions about future demands on social care services.

This, combined with a sense that things were just continuing to be done the way they always had been, rather than responding to changing patterns of demand is at the root of this recommendation.

**q) That there needs to be a rebalancing of funding between health & social care to ensure greater prioritisation of social care services.**

77% support

**r) That there should be a separate Minister with responsibility for social care within the current department.**

56% support

**s) That a social care commission should be established with a remit to: 1) collect analyse & share information. 2) consult with users, workers, voluntary sector organisations, academics & providers. 3) Make recommendations to the Department and have sufficient power to hold the Department to account.**

55% support

To many members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland the integrated system of health and social care provision in place in Northern Ireland, while designed to support more streamlined service provision, placed social care in a secondary position. Members were therefore keen to see greater parity of attention given to the priorities of each service area.

While the specific ideas to deliver this that are presented in recommendations r) and s) received comparably limited support, they do reflect the wider feeling from members that greater leadership and authority is needed, either from an individual or a group, to advocate for the better resourcing and delivery of social care.

## RECOMMENDATIONS focussed on developing the care workforce and supporting unpaid carers

There was broad consensus from the members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland that, central to getting social care provision for older people 'right', was the need for a valued, trained and professionalised social care workforce. When considering the principles that should underpin an effective and sustainable social care system for older people valuing 'care staff by improving pay and progression' was ranked 2nd highest by the members, and this priority is reflected in a number of their recommendations.

- t) To make caring a more attractive profession by improving working conditions: including the identification of clear career pathways, providing emotional support for staff, paying for travel time & mileage & expenses in addition to salary, ending the use of compulsory zero-hour contracts.**

100% support

- u) To launch a campaign to attract more people into the caring professions and achieve a more diverse workforce.**

96% support

Members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland believed that fundamental changes to working conditions for domiciliary care providers particularly would stop the provision of personal care being considered an 'unskilled' job and help make social care a more attractive employment option. This in turn, they hoped, would help reduce the high staffing turn-over that had been highlighted to them by a number of speakers and help attract a more diverse workforce (including more men and mature workers).

- v) To link pay & progression to skills, experience and qualifications.**

97% support

- w) To commit, within a specific timeframe, to resourcing a well-trained & professional workforce, with annual mandatory training and professional development.**

94% support

- x) To pay all care workers according to public sector pay-bands.**

89% support

Improved pay and opportunities for progression for staff were also identified as key mechanisms for ensuring that older people were provided with high quality care by trained and experienced staff. While the advances made by NISCC in relation to the registration and improved the training of care workers were acknowledged, it was not seen as going far enough yet to secure a sustainable workforce.

Members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland recognised that trying to deliver these changes within an already stretched system might be difficult. However the sense from their

discussions was that, without a commitment to placing a higher value on the role of care staff, the overall system could not be improved in a sustainable way. The five strongly supported recommendations presented above therefore give a clear indication that members felt that any additional resources brought into the system should go towards the improving the pay, conditions and opportunities for training and progression for frontline staff.

**y) To value unpaid carers by assessing their needs and funding and delivering appropriate support & advice to meet financial, psychological & social needs of unpaid carers (including a 24hr advice line).**

96% support

**z.i) To strengthen and enhance the right to access respite care: Unpaid Carers should have access to appropriate and adequate respite services, including information about entitlement.**

99% support

**z.ii) To demonstrate the value society places on unpaid carers by significantly increasing the Carer's Allowance.**

89% support

The important role played by unpaid carers in reducing the demand on the social care system, and being able to providing the type of care the person they care for might choose, featured strongly in discussions throughout the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland. It was however repeatedly noted that, while this is a choice some friends and family members are more than happy to make in relation to a loved one, it is not something that should be expected from families, or relied on as a solution to top-up increasing demand for care in the home during social care assessments.

The economic contribution that unpaid carers make to the social care system (whether formally recognised as a carer or just someone helping out) was also recognised as invaluable to the sustainability of the system. Without the support given to older people by unpaid carers the system would be unable to cope, but the members of the Citizens' Assembly for Northern Ireland strongly agreed that these carers also need to be supported mentally, emotionally and financially in order to sustain their roles. Recommendations y) and z) highlight some of the things that could be done to demonstrate that the role of unpaid carers is valued e.g. raising the carer's allowance from being the lowest benefit offered, providing more information to help carer's know what support is available, extending opportunities for respite care and establishing a 24 hour advice line for carers to seek support.