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Positive Ageing?

**Leading age charity challenges Government's ageing strategy
as not fit for purpose.**

On the occasion of the review of the Government's *Ageing in an Inclusive Society* strategy, Age Concern Help the Aged NI launches a report¹ demonstrating that the strategy is currently not meeting its own objectives and is failing to deliver for older people in Northern Ireland. The charity draws the conclusion that the Government's strategy is not fit for purpose and urges urgent action to address its failings.

By comparing statistics from 2005, when the strategy was launched, with the most recent statistics available today, the charity makes the case that, even with the strategy in place, the situation for older people in Northern Ireland has got worse:

- The number of older people living in **severe poverty has increased**
- The number of older people **receiving home help care has reduced**
- The number of pensioners **living in fuel poverty has increased**
- The number of **excess winter deaths has increased**
- The number of **unfit dwellings occupied by over 60s has increased**
- The number of older people registered for Further Education college courses has **decreased**

Anne O'Reilly, Chief Executive of Age Concern Help the Aged NI said:

‘The lack of progress made by government on improving the lives of older people in Northern Ireland is a great disappointment to us. What is of major concern, however, is that the areas in which progress has been persistently poor are areas of fundamental importance to older people: poverty, fuel poverty, winter deaths and the provision of social care.

‘We believe that, for the Government’s ageing strategy to be effective there is an urgent need for a change in direction. The strategy must shift to become focused on positive ageing and be built on a rights based approach to ageing.

‘Furthermore, the strategy must be matched with measures to support effective implementation such as detailed action plans; sufficient engagement with the age sector to ensure objectives are well informed; and adequate provision of resources to ensure that the strategy is implemented successfully. Of equal importance is ensuring an effective evaluation process is in place to enable the government to measure progress and address areas of concern appropriately.

‘We believe that our report will persuade government of the urgent need to address these concerns; and that on conclusion of the review we will be presented with a revised strategy, supporting action plans and a renewed vigour to make Northern Ireland a great place to age.’

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Notes to Editors

ⁱ *Positive Ageing – is Government’s ageing strategy fit for purpose?* is available for download from www.ageconcernni.org or by contacting the Media Team on 0781 631 774