

# General Election 2024: Will you pledge to #Act4Age?



Age NI is calling on all candidates and political parties in this general election to Act4Age on the issues that matter to older people. 78.5% of over 65s voted in the last General Election, 12% higher than the average across all age groups. Our rapidly ageing population presents many opportunities and challenges for society and older people's voices matter.

Age NI believes everybody should be

able to enjoy dignified, secure and fulfilling later life. We have based our election priorities on the findings from our Lived Experience surveys published since the last general election, alongside engagements with community Age Sector Networks and the Age NI Consultative Forum. Please take the time to read about older people's **4 priority issues** and pledge to support the **4 actions** in the Act4Age campaign.

## 4 Priority Issues

### 1. Enough income to meet the cost of living and not be at risk of poverty.



Pensioner poverty remains high in Northern Ireland and food bank use by pensioner households has increased by an alarming 194% since the last general election. Urgent action is needed to alleviate poverty such as measures to improve the uptake of benefits and tackle the high cost of energy, the most common financial concern for older people across the UK.

The prevention of poverty in later life requires a commitment to protect the pension triple lock.

Across the UK there should be consistent access to government initiatives supporting people aged 50+ in the workplace.

Age NI welcomes recent legal developments to prevent financial scams which should be fully implemented across the UK. This includes the accountability mechanism within the Online Safety Bill requiring tech firms and telecom service providers to compensate victims for fraud that originates on their platforms.

### 2. Health and social care services that support us to age well.



Older people have told us they want equal access to healthcare, supported by strategies to promote healthy ageing and investment in vital services like General Practice and community-based services. In Age NI's Lived Experience survey 2023, 38% of respondents said that they had not been able to book a GP appointment when required.

A strategy is needed to tackle waiting lists,

recognising that Northern Ireland has the highest rate of patients on waiting lists in the UK.

Older people need a UK government that is committed to radical reform of, and meaningful investment in, the social care system across the UK. The rights of family carers should also be prioritised, including the provision of paid carer's leave and an increase in carer's allowance.



### 3. Age-friendly communities with transport that helps us stay connected.

UK government should support the development of age-friendly communities and environments, including investment in the community and voluntary sector. This recognises their vital role delivering local services and empowering older people to participate fully in society. There should be consistent leadership across the UK to prevent and tackle loneliness, addressing the fact that Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK with no strategy in place.

Public and community transport services play a vital role in helping older people maintain their independence, well-being and quality of life.

As well as the protection of Northern Ireland's concessionary fares scheme for older people, we need sufficient UK government investment to support an accessible, joined up, effective transport system, particularly in rural areas.



### 4. Stronger measures to protect our rights and prevent age discrimination.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK and Ireland that has no law prohibiting age discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services. Age NI is calling on the UK government to champion a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons to address gaps in the current human rights framework and ensure all older people can live with dignity and respect.

Structural barriers faced by older people must also be addressed, such as protecting access to essential goods for consumers who rely on cash. The Financial Services and Markets Act 2023 should be amended to protect physical banking services as well as access to cash. A UK Digital Inclusion Strategy should be developed alongside protecting offline ways of accessing public services to ensure older people are not disadvantaged through digital transformation.

## 4 Actions in the #Act4Age Pledge:

### If elected, will you support the following actions in Westminster?

1. Keep the pension triple lock in place and maximise and improve access to benefit entitlement.
2. Support measures that will improve health and social care services for our ageing population.
3. Make sure Northern Ireland gets enough funding to deliver the public services we need.
4. Support new laws to protect people from scams, prohibit discrimination and protect access to physical banking services.

We are calling on election candidates and political parties to show their commitment by signing the Act4Age pledge on our website:

[ageni.org/act4age](https://ageni.org/act4age) and by sharing your pledge on social media using **#Act4Age**.