



## **Call for an Older People's Commissioner Briefing for Parliamentarians**

### **About Independent Age**

Independent Age is a national older people's charity. We offer free and impartial advice and information, grants for community organisations, and connection services to improve wellbeing and reduce loneliness. In addition, we use the knowledge and understanding gained from our frontline services to highlight the issues experienced by older people who are facing financial insecurity.

### **The case for an Older People's Commissioner**

By 2042 one in four people in England will be aged 65 or over, and our older population is becoming increasingly diverse.

- Since 2012 there has been a slow but steady rise in income poverty among older people with now almost 1 in 5 older people in relative income poverty after housing costs.
- We also know that some groups are significantly more likely to enter poverty past State Pension age like single women, Asian older people, and older renters.
- Increases in life expectancy have slowed since 2010 with the slowdown greatest in more deprived areas of the country, and the number of years people spend in poor health have increased.

Growing older is a privilege, but an ageing population will require innovative policy solutions. The support people in later life will need from institutions like the NHS and welfare systems are critical, but no single government department can respond to these issues alone.

As our older population becomes increasingly diverse, Independent Age believes that older people need an independent voice at the heart of government, championing their interests and amplifying their voices.

**Independent Age is calling for an Older People's Commissioner in Westminster, working alongside the devolved nations, to help make the UK the best place in the world to grow old.**

### **What is an Older People's Commissioner?**

An Older People's Commissioner is independent, sitting at arms-length from government departments and the role is established through legislation.

### **What can a Commissioner do?**

They typically act as a voice and advocate for older people within government; informing and improving the policies and laws that affect older people.

### **How can a Commissioner work?**

- There are models for the creation and role of an OPC in Northern Ireland and Wales. There are also a number of existing commissioners in England and Scotland, for example the Children's Commissioner for England.
- Each commissioner has slightly different powers, accountability, and set up, but they generally share the following objectives:

- 1) to gather information from, and engage with, older people
  - 2) to investigate issues affecting older people
  - 3) to make their findings public and raise awareness of key issues
  - 4) to make recommendations and inform government policymaking
- Commissioner roles are always cross-cutting and require work with departments right across government.

We believe that creating an Older People's Commissioner in Westminster would show people in later life that their concerns and needs are being taken seriously, and it would provide an enduring bastion of older people's interests in government.

For more information, please contact [Public.Affairs@independentage.org](mailto:Public.Affairs@independentage.org)