**Head of Policy and Engagement**

The Policy and Engagement team drives engagement with older people, and as a result, social change to achieve our vision and mission.

This team combines the following functions:

* policy analysis and campaigns
* age sector development
* engagement activity (which includes Consultative Forum and Peer Facilitators).

**Policy**

Our policy and campaigns function aims to influence public policy in order that it better meets the needs of older people now, and us all as we age. The focus for our policy function is government departments and key public bodies generally, and more specifically, The Executive Office (TEO) as a result of their role in equality legislation (in terms of access to Goods, Facilities and Services) as well as their oversight role of Programme for Government; Department of Health (DoH) as a result of their role in Adult Care and Support; Department for Communities (DfC) who hold the responsibility for ageing policy and a host of delivery responsibilities (benefits; housing etc.).

In developing our policy position work, the Consultative Forum and Age Sector Networks are invaluable assets in terms of understanding important issues in the lives of older people, in shaping the organisation’s policy positions and in terms of becoming involved in Age NI campaigns in partnership with us.

**Age Sector Networks**

Age NI supports the development and capacity of Age Sector Networks across Northern Ireland, bringing Networks together to focus on key areas such as the promotion and development of Age Friendly, sustainability, leadership etc, underpinned by community development principles. The age sector is essential in providing services and activities at a local level, in influencing key players, including HSC Trusts and Councils, to prioritise actions of importance to older people, through Community Planning, for example, and in strengthening the voice of older people in their area.

**Engagement**

Our engagement function comprises two distinct strands: Consultative Forum and Peer Facilitators.

The Consultative Forum is comprised of a maximum of 50 individuals who are not there in any representative capacity. One of the Forum, usually the Chair, sits on Age NI Board of Trustees. The Forum has been involved in supporting our work in a number of ways, including shaping our organisational strategy and fundraising campaigns; fronting awareness campaigns as well as acting as a sounding board for other organisations wishing to engage with older people. Forum members often involve themselves in other ways as well, for example volunteering as Peer Facilitators, fundraising volunteers, information ambassadors and research participants.

Peer Facilitators are another mechanism through which Age NI ensures that the voice of older people can be heard, in a direct and meaningful way, providing innovative approaches to ensure that the voice of older people, including lesser heard older people, influence decisions.