



BRITISH GERIATRICS SOCIETY

For better health in old age

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Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales

Ms Paula Bradley, Assembly Member
Chairperson, Health Committee
Northern Ireland Assembly

28 September 2016

Dear Ms Bradley

Celebrating United Nations Day of Older Persons, 1 October 2016

We are delighted that the United Nations are recognising the incredibly important contributions that older people make to our world, while raising awareness of the issues of ageing, by designating 1 October as the International Day of Older Persons.

The British Geriatrics Society (BGS) would like to use this day to celebrate the success of the NHS and its founding vision, and the work of all who are involved in providing care for older people, which means that older people are living longer than ever before.

BGS is the professional body of specialists in the healthcare of older people in the United Kingdom. Our membership is drawn from doctors practising geriatric medicine including consultants, doctors in training and general practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals, researchers and scientists with a particular interest in the care of older people and the promotion of better health in old age. BGS has 3,500 members who work across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Our mission is to improve the health care of older people.

At the same time as celebrating, we are acutely aware of the need to address the new challenges that success brings, and which our members are addressing on a daily basis in their work with people living with frailty, dementia, complex needs and multiple long-term conditions. We therefore bring to your attention the steps we believe Government must take if we are to continue to meet the health needs of older people in Northern Ireland.

- 1. Health promotion activity should be fully embedded in primary care, secondary care, social care and health education.** This approach will deliver benefits for the individual, their wider family circle and to society by reducing chronic disease. BGS calls on the Northern Ireland Assembly to prioritise obesity, alcohol, smoking prevention programmes. Mental health is linked with physical health and wellbeing. BGS supports the Northern Ireland Assembly's delivery of the Bamford vision for mental health and learning disability.

- 2 **Investment in healthcare and social support for older people** through sufficient funding to the NHS for achieving the goals of the Five Year Forward view, and to local authorities to enable them to meet their social care obligations, including those to older people.
- 3 **Building greater capacity in intermediate care.** BGS calls on the Northern Ireland Assembly to increase its investment in building the capacity of those services which provide a link between home and acute hospital for older people who need rehabilitation, re-ablement, or sub-acute treatment. We believe the development of and investment in intermediate care services is fundamental to reducing the number of delayed transfers from hospital to home.
- 4 **National strategic direction on older people living with frailty, dementia, complex needs and multiple long-term conditions.** We call for access to comprehensive geriatric assessment, personalised care plans for treatment and long-term follow-up for all older people with frailty, dementia, complex and multiple long-term conditions. These can only be provided consistently and effectively through ensuring that staffing is at a level which is adequate for delivery of that care and follow-up.
- 5 **Support staff across all care sectors to develop competencies in the management of older patients.** Requiring the regulatory and advisory bodies to incorporate competencies in the management of older people into their curricula, guidance, professional and quality standards is a key component in improving quality of healthcare for older people which requires further development.
- 6 **Measurement of care to focus on what matters most to older people and their families.** We call for a national set of indicators and outcomes to strengthen the measurement of older people's experience of care pathways, access to care and care outcomes and to ensure that what matters most to older people and their families is fully measured and improvements can be tracked over time.


We are aware of the full programme of work that the Northern Ireland Assembly's Health Committee is engaged in. If there is anything that we can do to support that, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely



Professor David Oliver
President, British Geriatric Society



Dr April Heaney
Chair, BGS Northern Ireland Council