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Scottish Older People's Assembly Newsletter



A voice for older
people in Scotland

August 2018
Milestones and Achievements
since 2013

Welcome to SOPA's newsletter keeping you up-to-date. Feel free to forward to any other interested party.



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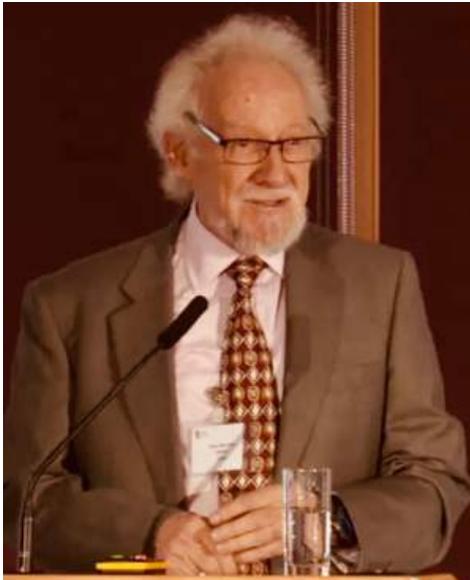


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Message from Chair Tom Berney



This newsletter is a little bit different. It is my last as Chair of SOPA, so we thought we could include a brief recap of the many activities and issues we engaged in over my five years term of office. This is not just nostalgia. It is a reminder that despite changes in Ministers and unexpected administrative and financial pressures the struggle to improve the condition of the older people of Scotland has continued. We believe SOPA is a significant force for good in ameliorating policies affecting older people and in challenging the stereotypical attitudes towards us portrayed in the media.

SOPA is essentially a collaborative organisation. We have progressed issues with MPs, MSPs, Councillors, the Northern Irish Pensioners' Parliament, Active Wales, the Scottish Youth Parliament, innumerable local organisers and, of course, the twenty-five member organisations of our Planning Group. I have found it both rewarding and enlightening to work with them and with our indefatigable co-ordinator Glenda Watt. Most gratifying for me, though, was the opportunity to meet so many older people in their own towns and hear their concerns. It reminds us that while we have achieved a lot there is still much to be done. I hope in reading this newsletter you will appreciate our efforts and pledge your support for us in the future.

It has been a privilege. Thank you to everyone I've met and best wishes to my vastly experienced successor as Chair - Diana Findley.

Tom Berney

About Us

The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a collaborative of over 25 partners and people across Scotland who have opportunities to directly communicate with and influence decision makers on policies and services impacting on older people.

We promote human rights and the interests of older people.

We encourage older people from all communities to speak up and value themselves and others as contributing citizens.

Since we were established in 2009 we have heard from thousands of older people about their concerns and experiences of life in Scotland to influence legislation, policies and services applying to them.

Since 2013



Funds from Scottish Government, Big Lottery and sponsors have;

- brought together around 3000 people
- delivered 75 local meetings to gather views the length and breadth of Scotland
- held 5 Annual Assemblies 4 Parliamentary Receptions, including one at Westminster
- communicated via our films, website, social media newsletters to people in Scotland and world-wide
- recruited research support from an independent researcher, University of Strathclyde's School of Psychological Sciences and Health, and the No 1 Befriending Agency, Glasgow. Their research formed a statistical base for discussions and question and answer sessions which not only helped our conference participants to focus on key aspects of policies, but also gave academic researchers a useful insight into the present concerns of Scotland's older population.

Matters of concern

- With help from our partners we have facilitated discussions on important matters of concern, including pensions, human rights, employment, consumer issues, community empowerment, transport, housing, the environment, health and social care.
- Older people's experience of services is dependent on changing Government financial priorities and the use of policies and funds by the local authorities and Joint Integrated Boards.
- We have found the above to fall short of policy expectations in health and social care, housing, pensions, transport and information, especially for people who live in the rural areas where services are diminishing and loneliness and isolation increasing.
- Concerns raised by SOPA over the years have been heard by Government and mitigating actions have followed relating to end of life, support for carers, improved policy standards for health and social care, better information about death, dying and funeral arrangements and improved care and treatment for trauma, strokes and cancers. However, it also seems that increasing numbers of older people are being financially exploited by family and others.

Our contributions

We have participated in Scottish Government Policy meetings, national and international conferences, academic conferences and seminars with Heriot Watt University, Poppy Scotland Unforgotten Forces, Soroptomists International, Trading Standards Scotland, Competition and Markets Authority, and the Children's and Scottish Youth Parliaments to demonstrate the benefits and importance of generations working together.

Key Milestones



2013: The Assembly was held in Edinburgh International Conference Centre on a December day of fierce storms. The extreme weather prevented Minister Shona Robison, the SOPA chair, host Gary Robertson and many others from attending. However, the Assembly went ahead with around 80 people. Two SOPA films were shown – 'Productive Citizenship' and 'Grandparents as Kinship Carers'. The previous vote of no confidence in the Care Inspectorate in maintaining quality standards in health and social care standards was

discussed, as were concerns about poor implementation of the Liverpool Care Pathway and the value of local SOPA meetings.

The quotations below in the earlier years reflect key concerns which produced positive outcomes or better results in subsequent years.

2013 feedback:

[Absence of MSPs](#) - "We were disappointed not to have been addressed by representatives of the Scottish Parliament and have had the opportunity to ask questions direct." (See response in 2015.)

[Press coverage](#): "SOPA should increase its influence in policy-making and implementation, and find a way to gain better press coverage and show how the lack of

support can have a ripple-down effect - on the grandchildren of kinship carers, for example - to the detriment of an equal society."



2014: Assembly in the Scottish Parliament

This was the year of independence referendum. Many local SOPA meetings culminated in the Assembly being held in the Debating Chamber of the Scottish Parliament hosted by the Presiding Officer. Workshops held in 6 Committee Rooms raising a host of concerns and campaign actions. In response the SOPA Campaign Trail got on the road in November.

2014 feedback:

Independence referendum - "Although this is the year of the independence referendum, I hope SOPA will continue to promote the interests of older people no matter what political challenges we face."

Sense of community - "It is good to see a range of older people and groups coming together to ask questions, have a say and get involved."



2015: Assembly hosted by Christian Allard MSP in the Members Room of the Scottish Parliament and 20 more local meetings were attended around Scotland.

Work began with the Scottish Government's Health Care Improvement 'Living Well in Later Life' campaign.

SOPA became the secretariat for the Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing and attended the Equal Opportunities Committee concerning calls for evidence on loneliness and isolation.

SOPA was shortlisted in the finals of the 'Herald Society' awards.

SOPA held its first evening reception in the Scottish

Parliament with MSP Christine Grahame sponsoring the event.

Similar issues to those identified in Scotland were raised at the Westminster reception with the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament.

Christian Allard's motion - The MSP lodged a positive statement supported by 33 other MSPs which noted amongst other things that the Assembly brought together many organisations, facilitating collaboration across a broad network of shared issues. He also recognised its efforts in tackling inequalities of age and social justice.

2016:



SOPA became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (a SCIO) in April 2016. The trustees are members and, together with others, form the Planning Group. Since 2016 SOPA has granted 13 new applications for group membership and increased its overall reach to around 40,000 Scottish older people.



The Assembly was held in the Debating Chamber with Jeane Freeman MSP Minister for Social Security giving the keynote speech.

"These are not easy times", she stated. "SOPA and others have told us of the pressures and challenges the older population faces. It is important that parliament continues its work to find a way to make the most impact.



"Soon we will start our recruitment drive for 2000 volunteers of all ages to join our Experience Panels - people to work with us to design, build and test our new social security system, making sure that we really do have the principles of dignity and respect threaded through

everything we do and every decision we make."

Chair of the Commission on Parliamentary Reform John McCormick described the Commission's remit to consider ways in which the Parliament has the right checks and balances in place and increases its engagement with wider society. He invited people to attend open meetings or complete an online survey.

Workshops : (Top Picture) SOPA members Alan Spinks and Diana Findley reporting back from their workshops.

Delegates Communication Skills - "The topics made me aware of the amount of information available for older people." "People are confident enough to ask awkward questions while being open to others' points of view". "Older people are great speakers which gives a strong feeling of confidence going forward."

2017/18

As part of the Scottish Government's programme to promote equality and cohesion, SOPA was awarded £20k during 2017/18. This was a significant reduction of over 64%, resulting in a drastic change in working arrangements. Nevertheless our work has continued and includes contributions to Lord Bracadale's Review on Hate Crime, the review of funeral poverty, social security benefits in Scotland, Scotland's strategy on isolation and loneliness, the Scottish Government's review of its housing strategy for older people and its Older People's Strategic Action Forum. SOPA also met its remit to deliver the annual Assembly in April 2018 and organised a Parliamentary Reception in June and local meetings in Dundee, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dingwall and Nairn.

The 2018 Assembly in the Members Room

Jeane Freeman OBE MSP, Minister for Social Security, Clare Adamson MSP Assembly host, and Tom Berney Chair, Scottish Older People's Assembly.

Ms Freeman congratulated SOPA for organising another excellent gathering. She spoke of Scotland's growing ageing population and the opportunities and challenges the Scottish Government and individuals face, in terms of communities, policy and service provision, work, health and care.



Interactive discussion on Human Rights - Benefits, Barriers and Breaches: Tom Berney and Sandra Wilson from Scottish Older People's Assembly and Mark Stewart, Scottish Youth Parliament, together with Ben, Elisha and Mackenzie, members of the Children's Parliament, Fife to highlight 2018 as the Year of Young People.



The rights of older and younger people living in Scotland must be upheld, respected and taken into account by decision-makers and service providers. However, not everyone understands their rights and may not feel empowered to defend them or the rights of others. The Assembly's interactive discussion, with views presented by members of SOPA, Children's Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament, contributed to this significant on-going dialogue in the context of celebrating 2018 as the Year of Young People.

For full report see <http://www.scotopa.org.uk/2018assembly.asp>

"I liked the presentation on sight loss and how it might be prevented."

"Absolutely terrific event - it ran like clockwork and the feedback on the day was excellent."

Recommendations

Based on what we have heard, read our recommendations below for the priority themes of 2018/19. There will be further discussion on these during the coming months. Get involved!

- Oral health and use of high cost telephone numbers (new topics for SOPA)
- Inclusiveness, tackling injustice, discrimination and abuse. Although Governments have policies for the above, the situation for older people appears to be worsening
- Platforms for people to have their views heard and acted upon at a local and national level
- Showcase good work that is making a real difference at grassroots and is embedded in the local community
- Better understanding, cooperation and respect between generations
- Opportunities for people to express themselves through new avenues, such as video clips online.

Further details of the activities are at www.scotopa.org.uk

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Scottish Older People's Assembly (SCO46520)

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