

June 2017

Message from Chair Tom Berney



As well as tackling discrimination towards older people another of SOPA's main objectives is to ensure, when policies or services affecting older people are being discussed, there are older people present to comment and try to influence them. To that end the 25 or so organisations, which comprise our governance group, are encouraged to be represented by older people. Each meeting is a collective voice of a wide range of experience from the Highlands, Lowlands and Scottish Borders, and range across their priorities on transport, pensions, education, safety and many more. Our strength derives entirely from the participation of our member organisations. We are pleased that has been recognised in the public and political sphere.

Holyrood Magazine, for example, which organises prestigious conferences, now routinely invites older people from SOPA to participate, when older people's issues are being discussed. Most recently four representatives of our membership organisations formed the panel of their conference on isolation, and effectively recounted the experience of their members. When Archie Noone and I were invited to chair the Holyrood conference on "Supporting an Ageing Workforce" Archie spoke movingly about his personal experience of dementia and also demonstrated that it does not prevent someone from good humouredly chairing a conference.

In the political sphere we have continued to provide the secretariat for the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Ageing and participate in the Scottish Government's Older People's Development Group where we have pursued a range of issues from funeral costs to delays in cataract examinations. We have also been happy to collaborate with other groups like Trading Standards Scotland and Police Scotland in arranging a seminar in the Scottish Parliament on the growing problem of fraud and scams exploiting vulnerable people. We are grateful to Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP who sponsored that seminar and we welcome his suggestion that it should become an annual event. Several of our other activities are reported in this newsletter. If you are not already on our mailing list contact us and we will be happy to include you.

Tom Berney

How SOPA's activities during 2016 and 2017 have made a difference



Meetings

During these 2 years almost 700 people participated in 18 meetings around Scotland. There were also three Parliamentary receptions. While receptions and most meetings were organised by SOPA, other organisations sometimes took the lead, with SOPA involved. The main purpose was to tackle discrimination against people who share protected characteristics* and address multiple discrimination towards older people, so that barriers to participation are reduced. Also the meetings ensured that people were informed of the various concerns uppermost in the minds of the older generation and of the consequent actions taken by the Scottish Government or other public bodies.

The Aberdeen meeting (centre photo): Tanita Addario (Grampian Regional Equality Council), Rob Snodgrass (SOPA), Tom Berney (SOPA), Avril Crossley (SOPA), Donald Bullock (SOPA), Baldeep McGarry (Aberdeen City Council Equalities team) and David Black (Grampian Regional Equality Council).
 Avril Crossley also attended the Midlothian Assembly on 2 May which was part of a follow-up to the meeting on GP Services in Midlothian and inspired by SOPA's first meeting there.

Participant Quotes

Campbeltown: *"I'm glad I came as I've things to think about, now I'm on my own."*

Saltcoats: *"It opened my eyes to the way veterans, and older people in general, are treated, which is totally unacceptable."*

Dumfries: *"I got the impression I was listened to and things will be brought forward."*

***Protected characteristics encapsulated in law** - age: being or becoming a transsexual person: being married or in a civil partnership: being pregnant or on maternity leave: disability: race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin: religion, belief or lack of religion/belief: sex: sexual orientation

Receptions



Christine Grahame MSP (centre picture - right) hosted a reception at Holyrood to celebrate the contribution of older adults to Scotland's democracy in March 2017.

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP hosted a seminar reception on behalf of Trading Standards Scotland and the Scottish Older People's Assembly to highlight the importance of creating safer communities. "This was one of the most enjoyable events I've had the pleasure to host. I think we should make it an annual event. What do you say?!" Alex Cole-Hamilton (June, 2017). See item on Page 5 - 'Protection from Exploitation and Crime'.



Assembly



In November 2017 160 people participated in the SOPA annual Assembly in the Debating Chamber of the Scottish Parliament, where concerns were reported and identified for action. The Assembly Report was presented to the Scottish Government, civil servants and older people's groups. The content was discussed at local meetings up to this month and issues were raised at Scottish Government policy meetings, events in the Scottish Parliament and during Holyrood conferences. These contributed to and influenced new or revised policies concerning older people.

To further raise awareness, regular newsletters, supported by social media activity have been received by stakeholders and a

monthly article by SOPA Chair Tom Berney is published in The National newspaper. See <http://www.scotopa.org.uk/news.asp>

"I congratulate you and your colleagues on what you have accomplished during the past year to advance equality for older people and for arranging such a successful event." Jean Freeman MSP, Minister for Social Security and keynote speaker. Post-Assembly letter to Glenda Watt.

What impressed participants

"Hearing about the progress SOPA has made and the strengthening of older people's voices."

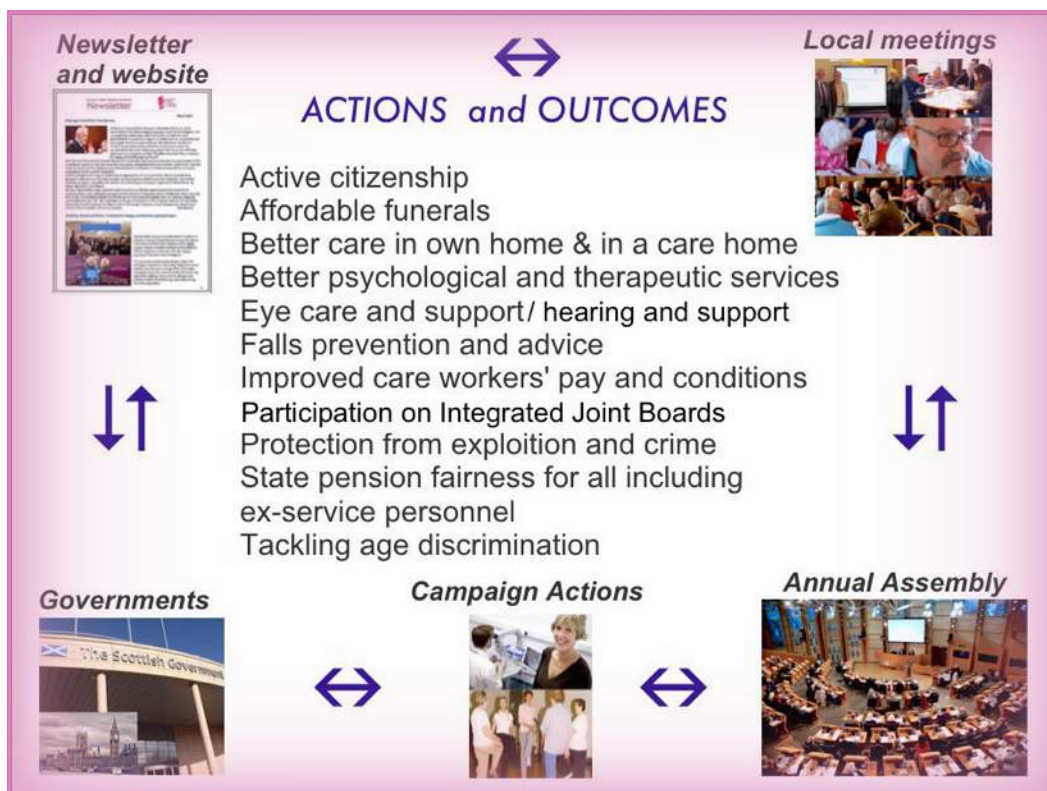
"Scottish Government representative acknowledging their commitment to improvements and the engagement of older people in decision-making and planning processes."

"Meeting participants from diverse communities and organisations, and the breadth of the questions raised. I also liked hearing older people's priorities aired in the parliamentary setting, and with gravitas. I found that quite emotional."

"I am a carer and liked the Assembly very much. It is my first time. I did not know anything like this took place and cannot wait to come again."



Concerns raised during 2016 and resulting actions and outcomes



Active Citizenship

The Community Empowerment Scotland Act came into Scottish Law two years ago with the aim of empowering communities through ownership of land and buildings. It gives authority to local voices in community planning to ensure providers of services work closely with communities to meet local needs.

Better Care in Own Home or in a Care Home

The Scottish Government has reported on work to reform care homes, care at home and self-directed support, with 3 full-time lead officers in place. A feasibility study is also underway to extend Free Personal & Nursing Care to people under 65 with dementia, with findings due to be published in October 2017.

Scotland's new Health and Social Care Standards have human rights at their core. The standards are due for implementation on 1 April 2018 and will apply to the NHS as well as services registered with the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland. They set out in detail five outcomes aimed at improving people's experience of care. Download at: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00520693.pdf>

Better Psychological and Therapeutic Services



In April at the joint meeting of the Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing and the Mental Health Group, Dr John Mitchell, Principal Medical Officer and Psychiatric Adviser, Scottish Government (SG) stated that in 10 years' time Scotland will have changed. Priorities will have shifted and the 'Mental Health Strategy: 2017-2027' will need to change also. This document connects to other SG health strategies including: autism, dementia, recovery, alcohol, keys to life, suicide prevention and palliative care. The SG will host a biannual forum, to allow a broad range of stakeholders to reassess priorities. Dr Mitchell highlighted the premature mortality of people with unresolved mental health issues: someone with a mental illness dies on average 15-20 years earlier than someone (of the same social class) without mental illness. He also explained the fundamental idea in the

Strategy document of parity between physical and mental health; access to early treatment and intervention; a rights-based approach; peoples' involvement in their own care and the need to demonstrate the effectiveness of these approaches - see <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/03/1750>

Eye Care and Support

Professor Carrie MacEwan of Dundee's Ninewells Hospital gave a presentation to the Scottish Government's Older People's Development Group earlier this month. She described common eye conditions, such as diabetic eye disease, age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma. She stated there is a shortage of medical staff to deal with the growing number of patients, especially the long waiting lists for cataract operations but action is underway to improve the situation. Professor Carrie stated new treatments would soon be available.



Falls Prevention and Advice

Scottish Ambulance Services (SAS) can now directly refer individuals to a range of community services which can avoid stressful hospital visits. As this is a new way of working there is a need to change people's expectations so that older people and their families understand what is in their best interests. These alternative services vary across the country and are being developed locally. SAS has developed a computer App listing available resources. The online Falls and Bone Health Community is a group of people with a common interest in the prevention and management of falls and fragility fractures. It shares information with a collection of useful resources. For more information see - <http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/fallsandbonehealth>

Improved Care Workers' Pay and Conditions

The Scottish Government has been working with partnerships and care providers to ensure that all adult social care workers are paid the Living Wage. Where this has still to happen, pay will be backdated to October 2016. The SG and partners have commissioned staff to look at Care at Home to improve appreciation of the issues impacting on people's care at home. It will consider models of care and support – new and innovative provision; workforce – makeup and training requirements able to deliver new models; procurement and commissioning – barriers and opportunities.

Participation in Integrated Joint Boards

At a local level, South Lanarkshire Integrated Board recently invited a representative from its older people's organisation 'Seniors Together' to join the group. Other authorities may consider this practice to ensure the direct involvement of older people on the IJ Boards.

Protection from Exploitation and Crime



Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP hosted a Scottish Parliamentary seminar reception this month on behalf of Trading Standards Scotland and SOPA, to stress the importance of safer communities, protection from scams and information on public services. Presentations were given on the value of the voice and experience of older people, the vulnerability of people with dementia and the role of Trading Standards Scotland and Police Scotland. There was a wide-ranging discussion about the importance of strong effective partnerships to support and protect older people. Police Scotland indicated they are always willing to explore any new opportunities to work with partners. A suitable lead, DCI Ronald Megaughin (Scottish Business Resilience Centre), has been identified within Police Scotland to engage with SOPA and consider this matter further. Exploratory discussions are also underway with Trading Standards Scotland and SOPA to identify ways in which people can keep crime risks in perspective to avoid unnecessary anxiety, and deal more effectively with scams and exploitative people.

State Pension Fairness for all including ex-service personnel

The UK Government's proposal to remove the Triple Lock from the current pension arrangements is no longer an immediate threat. In respect of Armed Forces Veterans, the Scottish Government has stated that from 1st April 2017, veterans' income from War Pensions Scheme payments and Guaranteed Income Payments under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are exempt from social care assessments. This should benefit up to 1,200 veterans through reduced social care charges.

Tackling Age Discrimination

Holyrood Communications has invited SOPA members to contribute to their conferences on older people. The recent one was on 'Supporting an Ageing Workforce' with SOPA Chair Tom Berney and Committee member Archie Noone (Dementia Working Group) co-chairing it effectively. In the afternoon session Archie spoke about dementia and how it affected him. With some support he can still cope well with participation in public life.

In addition to the specified items above, SOPA has continued to contribute to the development of the **Older People's Housing Strategy** and its associated work, due to be delivered during the autumn of 2017. Also at SOPA's strategy meeting on 11th April two civil servants discussed with the Committee possible changes to **National Concessionary Travel**. Later in April three SOPA representatives met for further dialogue with Humza Yusof MSP Minister for Transport and the Islands.

Profile of two new SOPA Committee members from the Retired Police Officers Association for Scotland (RPOAS)

RPOAS has been in existence for 70 years and currently, it has around 6000 members in its 12 branches. Its main purpose is to safeguard the rights of retired members, their widows and dependants, and to promote welfare in later life. See <http://www.rpoas.org.uk/wp/>. Matt Hamilton and Jim McBrierty sit on the National Executive of RPOAS and share representation on the SOPA Committee. SOPA is very fortunate in being able to tap into the professional expertise of these retired police officers.



During his police career Matt's specialisation in drugs included work at New Scotland Yard and within the Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency. Also he was the Operational Commander for the G8 conference in 2005 and other large-scale events before his retirement in 2009. During his career he acquired an Honours Degree in Psychology from the Open University. He is the President of the Retired Police Officers Association in Tayside, and is a volunteer for St John Scotland, Patient Transport.



Jim retired from the police force 3 years ago and is Chair of the Lothian and Borders Branch of RPOAS. His police career ranges from being a Commander for East Edinburgh to a Strategic Policing Advisor for the British Government. Currently, Jim is the Divisional Director of an IT and CCTV software company which he joined in 2015, following a period as Security Consultant to the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. His aim remains always to serve the public and his colleagues to the very best of his ability.

Hearing Loss support in Edinburgh - new developments

by Susan Shippey

Our hearing is integral to keeping us connected with the world around us, and to those we love. Untreated hearing loss can affect our ability to understand speech and can negatively impact our social, emotional and physical well-being. And recent studies have strongly linked it to other health problems, such as cognitive decline, increased risk of dementia, and poorer physical function. Over a lifetime, one in six people in Scotland develop some impairment, and this increases to 70% of over 70s. This can lead to older people not accessing services, not mixing with others, increasing isolation and simply less enjoyment of life. People are often reluctant to address this problem, waiting as long as 10 years to seek help, because of a certain social stigma attached to deafness. People often feel vulnerable and embarrassed. [Read AgeUK article.](#)



SOPA is providing a welcome focus on hearing loss through Committee representation and involvement in the Scottish Government's Older People's Development Group. Work is also at local level with new services being developed in Edinburgh, led by me - the 'See Hear' strategic leader for the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership.

The programme aims to -

- map existing services for people with acquired hearing loss
- assess the needs of hard of hearing Edinburgh people
- work with the third sector, NHS Lothian, City of Edinburgh Council and private sector organisations to develop a new range of services

An early meeting involved the NHS, Council and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, together with contributions from Action on Hearing Loss Scotland, Deaf Action, and Hearing Link. Although there are lots of services, and others in the pipeline, more can be done such as, self-help courses to allow people to make the most of a hearing aid, peer support and professional understanding of the emotional impact of deafness.

If you live in Edinburgh and have a hearing loss we want to connect to you!

Email: susan.shippey@edinburgh.gov.uk to find out more about services or request a questionnaire.

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The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation: Number - SC046520

