

March 2016



### Message from Chair Tom Berney

Changes in Council budgets mean that the City of Edinburgh Council will no longer be providing administrative support for SOPA. We are grateful for their past support and are glad that Glenda Watt is willing to continue to serve as our co-ordinator. Change always brings some strains, but with our committee's agreement we are now well on the way to establishing new arrangements. It is fortunate in a way that this coincides with the Scottish Government's period of "purdah" in the run up to the General election, so we are not missing out too much in terms of representations. However life goes on and we are taking part in

Holyrood conferences on Telecare and on Funeral Poverty. The recent Westminster budget debacle has led to more indications that older people's benefits might be threatened. Therefore we will be actively trying to improve our contacts in Westminster and with other older people's groups across the UK. More news next time

### SOPA Committee

During the year April 2015 to April 2016 most committee members have played active roles in representing SOPA at the chalk face - campaign trail meetings, disability, ethnic and LGBTI group meetings, Holyrood Magazine event on 'Age and Isolation', Cross-party Groups in the Parliamentary Committee Rooms, as well as high profile events such as, SOPA's Scottish Parliamentary reception in September, SOPA 2015 Annual Assembly, 'Living Well in Later Life' Conference by the NHS Joint Improvement Team, Westminster Reception for SOPA and the N.Ireland Pensioners' Parliament group in London and The Herald Society Awards Ceremony. In addition, Tom Berney and others have given interviews for press, radio and TV and provided copy for journalists.



Also, a [new short video](#) has been made to show at the Telehealthcare event on 31st March. In it Neil Primrose talks about the immense peace of mind for his family of the various electronic aids in his grandmother's house, allowing her to remain safely in her own home.

### Profile of new members

Go to the [Committee page](#) for full listing and web links to organisations.



Jimmy Miller, North Ayrshire Elderly Forum, has been immersed in issues of social justice for most of his life. Since he returned to Scotland at the end of his career he has worked tirelessly for the older community in North Ayrshire. He believes pensioners will only be able to achieve fairness by banding together. He states: "I have found SOPA to be potentially a very good engine for the voice of older people. I hope it emerges as a truly representative voice lobbying MSPs from all parties to listen and act on our concerns." He calls on all pensioner groups across Scotland to come together and back SOPA in what it is trying to achieve.



**Eileen Wallace**, Older People's Reference Group, Stirling. Eileen is involved in many local organisations that tackle social care, health and transport which are the group's top priorities. They have access to housing and social care officers within Stirling Council who keep them informed and listen to their feedback. "Housing strategy needs more input from older people themselves", said Eileen. "We also need more information and arranged a visit recently to the Iris Murdoch Centre to learn the latest developments in managing dementia."



**Rob Snodgrass** represents a relatively new group called 'Grey Matters' initially set up to meet the social needs of older Helensburgh people. Rob, a recent widower, and 5 others started the ball rolling and now there are over 200 members, The focus has broadened to being more-action oriented, to influence councillors and policy makers about the needs of the local older population. Rob has recently been asked to represent groups from Kintyre and Oban. "Members are both rural and town dwellers and come from all socio-economic and political backgrounds. I find there is a strong belief that the way forward is to help each other and rebuild the community spirit."

## SOPA Annual Report 2015



All of the work completed in the last year is documented in the 11 page summary Annual Report which is available on the website at

<http://www.scotopa.org.uk/annualreports.asp>

It includes information about the 20 campaign visits, the concerns raised at these meetings and reports of the events itemised above, involving the SOPA Committee in one way or another. It also summarises the action points at the Assembly on the final page.



### "Get up and move."

That's the take-home message from an 8-year study in the USA which looked at the lifestyles of around 3,000 people aged 50 to 79. Participants wore activity trackers, called accelerometers, for seven days. For these same people, the agency then tracked mortality for

the next 8 years. The least active people were five times more likely to die during that period than the most active. However, even adding just 10 minutes per day of light activity could make a difference. Read article at Science Daily - <http://bit.ly/1THScAo>



**Financial Abuse of Older People - Speakers** - Lesley Carcary, Director, [Action on Elder Abuse Scotland](#). AEA Scotland has recently published two new booklets in partnership with Age Scotland. [Click here](#) for link to booklets. A conference on 'Financial Abuse and Harm Towards Older People' will be held on 13th June at Queen Margaret University.

**Benefits and role of families** - Sociology Professor Lynn Jamieson, Co-Director, [Centre for Research on Families and Relationships](#), University of Edinburgh talked about the real life experiences of her research across the lifespan.

**Stirling Care Village** – Morag Farquhar, Programme Director, Forth Valley. The group heard about Plans being developed to create an [innovative care village](#) on the Stirling Community Hospital site to transform the way services are delivered through bringing a wide range of health, social care, training and GP services together on the one site.



## Award for **MAKING IT HAPPEN FALKIRK**

Age Scotland presented the Jess Barrow Award for Campaigning and Influencing (sponsored by [McCarthy & Stone](#)) to **Making it Happen Falkirk**.

A number of their activities greatly impressed the judges, including the start of a University of the Third Age (U3A) with over 130 members in the first year and around 20 subject groups. Secondly, the group negotiated with First Bus, to alter certain routes to enable people to access important local services in Dennyloanhead & Bonnybridge. Thirdly, it persuaded the Grangemouth supermarket Asda to finance a pilot project for Dial-A-Journey to take people to and from an Asda lunch club. Fourthly, the group presented a report to Falkirk Council - 'Comfort Break Schemes' - on the likely impact of planned closure of public conveniences, with recommendations that the council have agreed to implement.

'Making It Happen Falkirk' has demonstrated the positive outcomes possible from campaigning on issues which impact especially not only on the lives of older people, but also on people of all ages in their area. And this has been achieved in a very short time since their humble beginnings. SOPA is delighted to have their representative Sandra McGregor on the its Committee.



SOPA Coordinator Glenda Watt,  
**New**

email: [glenda@scotopa.org.uk](mailto:glenda@scotopa.org.uk), w: [www.scotopa.org.uk](http://www.scotopa.org.uk)

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