

December 2016

Message from Chair Tom Berney



This newsletter is mainly devoted to the 2016 Assembly in the Scottish Parliament. Once again it was heartening to see such a full spectrum of organisations and representatives occupying Scotland's seats of power. Even more so, all the people present were actively involved in trying to protect and promote the wellbeing of their communities. SOPA's objective is to help to ensure that these voices are heard. It emphasises that the hundreds of thousands of Scottish older people should not be seen as passive recipients of services, but as active citizens with a right to influence policies and services. To that end SOPA invited several organisations to report on their activities - ranging from pensions to education and mental health. Thank you to all, not just for your contribution, but also for the work done throughout the year.

It was gratifying that the MSP speakers, Minister Jeane Freeman and Neil Findlay recognised those efforts and promised involvement of older people in the framing of the new Social Security arrangements and fairer Scotland policy proposals. We also have the opportunity to contribute to how public engagement with the Parliament can be improved.

All this is welcome but we know that real problems exist. We are seeing reports of the dire impact of austerity budgets on care services in England, and must be concerned that the implementation of integrated health and social care in Scotland can only be effective if it is properly funded. Older people's access to mental health care is presently unsatisfactory and too many people are still facing hardship with particular insecurity for women over their rising pension age. These and other issues raised at the Assembly will form our agenda for 2017. We will progress them with Westminster and the Scottish Parliament and develop our relationships with our counterparts in other parts of the UK. Wishing you a happy Christmas.

Tom Berney

SOPA 2016 Assembly in the Scottish Parliament 25th November SOPA 2016 Assembly, 25th November



160 delegates attended the Assembly involving 60 different organisations from a wide range of equality groups. The majority were from the Central Belt but Dumfries, Grampian, Orkney and West of Scotland were also represented.



"I enjoyed the short, informative speeches, the background video and the interactive sessions."

"It was an opportunity to network and learn about a wide range of services in Scotland."

"The topics made me aware of the amount of help and information out there for people."

"People were confident enough to ask awkward questions while also being informative."

"A good mix of attendees/associations, well organised, and relevant presentations."

Great speakers! It gives a feeling of confidence for the future.

"I found the day interesting and informative. Perhaps wider participation after lunch, but difficult to achieve with a lecture setting. I enjoyed the event very much."

Morning Speakers

Rt Hon Ken Macintosh MSP, Presiding Officer and Assembly Chair (top right)

Tom Berney, Chair, SOPA - Campaign Issues (centre)

Neil Findlay MSP, Convener, Scottish Parliament Health & Sport Committee (top left)

Jeane Freeman OBE MSP, Minister for Social Security (lower right)

John McCormick, Chair, Commission on Parliamentary Reform (lower left)



Invitations to participate

Following a warm welcome from the Presiding Officer, Neil Findlay MSP described [the strategic plan of the Health and Sport Committee](#) to improve the people's health through the reduction of inequalities by encouraging preventions. The Committee is planning to monitor the progress of integrated joint boards, situations of 'bed-blocking', home support efficacy and staff shortages, including recruiting GPs.



The Minister for Social Security Jeane Freeman invited SOPA, together with other organisations which receive money from the Equality Fund to meet with her in Holyrood to advance older people's rights in February 2017.

"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."

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 [the online survey](#).



Presentations from older people's associations and networks

The speakers presented brief overviews of their organisations' activities over the past year and ways they are engaging with the older population at local level, providing examples of good practice. Go to [SOPA's webpage](#) on the 2016 Assembly, click on the morning webcast image. This takes you direct to the recording. Drag the slider on the viewing window to where this session starts at 1 hour 20 min. Finishes at 1 hr.55min.



Top: Donald Macleod, Highland Senior Citizens Network
Kath Payne, U3A Scotland
John Parkhill, Learning in Later Life Students' Association, Strathclyde University
Below: Rob Snodgrass, Grey Matters, Argyll and Bute
Angela Dias and Helena Scott, Scottish Mental Health Cooperative



Top: Diana Findlay, Scottish Borders Seniors Networking Forum and Age Scotland
Below: Alan Spinks, National Federation of Occupational Pensioners
Eileen Wallace, Stirling Reference Group for Older People
Right: Alison Clyde, Generations Working Together

Themes of delegates' questions to official speakers

Recruitment and retention of EU nurses and care workers after Brexit and failure of implementation of no-split shift policy (EU law).

Care workers' poor terms and conditions

Barring older people from adult mental health services by age capping at 65+

Withdrawing funding from voluntary support organisations providing vital services

Marginalisation of certain groups, such as older people of African origin and war veterans.





Afternoon Session

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP (Top left in the suit) and David Callum (left), Clerk to the Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee, opened with presentations.

Issues raised during the interactive session:

Loneliness is a clear predictor of ill health

Falls are a major cause of hospital admissions for people 65+

Different costs involved for personal alarm systems in different areas
Sports centres exclude many older people living on a state pension because of fees

Worrying cuts in home care services

Recruitment and retention failures of NHS personnel.

"Include representation from public bodies in Health, Police, Education, and Social Care to hear the views of older people."

"Care of older (black) Africans in the community in Scotland should be made specific in new Social Security, to encourage more of us to join SOPA".

"I would like discussion groups or workshops on typical issues e.g. pensions, fuel poverty, minority issues."

"We need discussions on costs and problems of integration of health and social care."



Northern Ireland Connections



SOPA Coordinator Glenda Watt was a speaker at a Belfast event this December run by the Commissioner for Older People, Northern Ireland (COPNI). Glenda was asked to draw on her experience of Scotland's National Outcome Framework, its policies for older people, SOPA's active engagement with policy-makers and politicians, and the hurdles in accessing care in the real world for some people.

Earlier, the Commissioner's office had expressed concern that there was almost no consideration of older people's interests in the NI Draft Programme for Government. Although there was mention of 'Active Ageing', this does not deal implicitly with issues such as poverty, illness and social care, which impact on many older adults' lives. The 100 or so delegates included older people's groups, academics, government officials and politicians.

Profile of two new Committee members

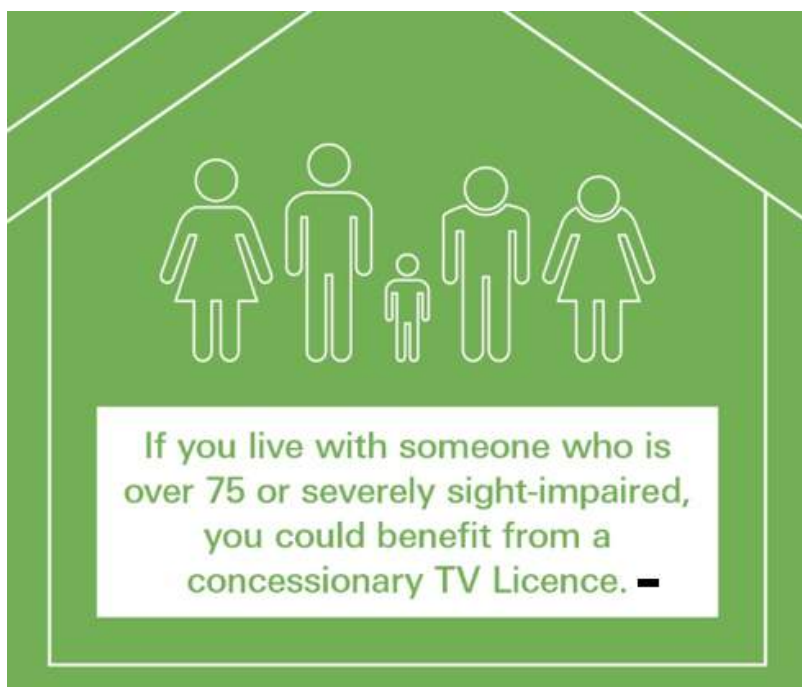


As a Scottish Power employee for 44 years, Donald Bullock played a leadership role, training apprentices and leading by example. Before he retired he was also active in his PTA and School Board around issues of learning and communication. Currently, Donald is Vice Chair of 'Forward at Fifty' which is part of the larger Seniors Together South Lanarkshire group. Seniors Together is [a council project](#), in association with NHS Lanarkshire, aimed at improving the older people's lives in the locality and as a springboard for gauging opinions and views.



Katherine Burrows is a retired accountant and brings business experience in addition to involvement with the [LGBT Age project run by the Edinburgh-based LGBT Health and Wellbeing](#). She is also an elected officer for Transgender Europe (TGEU): campaigning for European transgender and intersex equality. Closer to home she facilitates the Perth transgender group and acts as a consultant on transgender and intersex awareness training to the NHS, Police Scotland, local authorities and charitable organisations. She also is a director of LEAP Sports Scotland (LGBTI sports inclusion), LGBT Youth Scotland and RASAC P&K (Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre, Perth and Kinross).

TV Licence Concessions



Are you, or someone you live with, over 75, severely sight-impaired? You are then eligible for a concessionary TV Licence. Find out how to apply by clicking link - www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

In the Press recently (and posted on our [Facebook page](#))

Loneliness in Scotland : A National Summit



[Summary report of the Summit](#), September 2016, funded by Scottish Government and hosted by Befriending Networks. Report includes links to video interviews and presentations with delegates talking about loneliness. Finally, there are thematic summaries of the workshops with thoughts on how to move forward with addressing loneliness as a public health issue.

What would it take to make an age-friendly city?



[Read Guardian article](#). We are failing our society at all ages and we're failing children, we're failing seniors as they retire", says Steve Nygren, the co-founder and developer of Serenbe, a planned community of 500 (mixed-age) residents on the outskirts of Atlanta, Georgia. "It's not like creating spaces for

seniors is a sacrifice, it's about including seniors into a community for all the things they can bring, and to value their contributions." The UK Network of Age-friendly Cities has 12 members, including Edinburgh and Glasgow. It is working together to share knowledge and advance best practice, policy and public debate across the UK. SOPA is a member of this network. [Go to Age Friendly Cities Website.](#)



On the eve of the Assembly Janice Burns wrote an article '[Key issues for pensioners to be debated at Holyrood](#)' to which Tom Berney contributed comments. Tom has been invited to make a monthly contribution on older people's issues under the heading Here's Tae Us. Look out for these.



Problem of older male prisoners

[Read Herald article.](#) The number of men in jail over 60 in Scotland has risen to 152, compared with 88 in 2011 (up 63 per cent). Kenny MacAskill, former Justice Secretary, has suggested CARE homes in Scotland should be converted into specialist prisons to provide secure accommodation for elderly prisoners.



Free phone line

[Action on Elder Abuse \(AEA\)](#) Scotland has recently launched a free phone line to help vulnerable people deal with harm and abuse. AEA also raises awareness and advocates effective prevention.

Glenda M Watt, Co-ordinator Scottish Older People's Assembly
Office base: Hayweight House, 4th Floor, 23 Lauriston Street, Edinburgh, EH3 9DQ
Tel: 0131 281 0875 Mobile: 077 2991 3474

Email: glenda@scotopa.org.uk:

Website: www.scotopa.org.uk

Follow us on Facebook - www.facebook.com/scotopa

Twitter - <http://twitter.com/scotopa>

