

March 2017

Message from Chair Tom Berney



It has been a busy start to the year. Following on from our 2016 Assembly we have been progressing issues raised by the delegates and consolidating relationships with the Scottish and Westminster governments. Our policy is to garner as many opinions as possible and promulgate these to a wide audience. We have been involved in Scottish Government policy committees where we provide the Secretariat for the Cross Party Group and in the House of Lords have taken part in a reception on their "Mobility, Mood and Place: Habitats for Happy and Healthy Ageing Project".

We met Jeane Freeman the Scottish Minister for Social Security and were invited to her presentation of the consultation report on the new Social Security powers being devolved to the Scottish Government. We also made an input into the review being conducted by the Commission on Parliamentary Reform on public accessibility of the Scottish Parliament.

SOPA's strength is the range and diversity of organisations on our Committee. We were particularly pleased to welcome our first deaf member representing the Scottish Council for Deafness. We involve members as much as possible with several of us attending the reception organised in Westminster by Mhairi Black MP on 6th March.

We also invited Active Wales and were able to present a collective view of pensioners issues from Scotland, Wales and a solidarity message from the Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament. More recently, four of the Committee provided the introduction to the Holyrood Briefing Event on Tackling Loneliness and Isolation in Later Life. We have been on the go and the visits continue apace. Next we are attending the Scottish Youth Parliament on March 25th in Edinburgh. I hope you enjoy reading more about these events in this newsletter and on our website.

Tom Berney

Mobility, Mood and Place: Habitats for Happy and Healthy Ageing Project



Glenda Watt represented SOPA at the reception in London in January hosted by the House of Lords to mark the end of the 2013-16 phase of the [MMP Project](#). Guests included members of the Advisory Group, academics and Lords. See also [Twitter pictures](#) of host Baroness Greengross.

The project promoted active living in cities. The strategies required to move cities away from motor vehicle dependency to energy efficient lifestyles have great potential. It would create attractive city spaces for walking, reduce chronic disease and promote health and wellbeing, especially among the older population.

Good turnout for the first Cross Party Group Meeting in 2017



The meeting was chaired by Convener Sandra White MSP. The opening speakers discussed the aims of Scotland's National Health and Social Care Standards - Rami Okasha, Executive Director of Strategy and Improvement, Care Inspectorate and Dr Fiona Wardell, Standards and Indicators, Lead Healthcare Improvement Scotland. See respectively websites - <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/10/1545/4> and <http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/evidence.aspx>.

The final speaker Dr Alan J. Gow Associate Professor in Psychology, Heriot-Watt University, discussed the indicative results of his recent Scottish National survey - 'What Keeps You Sharp?' See <https://www.hw.ac.uk/about/news/nationwide-survey-asking-what-keeps-you.htm>

Presentations generated lively discussion from the members present. For more information about this Cross Party Group and minutes of meetings go to <http://www.parliament.scot/msps/older-people-age-and-ageing.aspx> SOPA is the secretariat for this Cross Party Group.

SOPA reception at Westminster



8 members of the SOPA Committee attended a Westminster reception on 6th March hosted by Mhairi Black MP and member of the Pensions Committee. The aim of the meeting was to raise awareness of the anomalies within the pension system, resulting in discrimination against some older people and some ex-service personnel who are not entitled to a forces pension. The point was made forcefully by all delegates that longer lives meant pension concerns were uppermost in many people's minds as they approached older age. What once looked secure is now less certain as the goal posts of retirement age shift. Also, deliberately setting

the agenda as competition between the generations was most unhelpful. As Mhairi Black stated, young people are not only concerned about their own future pensions but the financial situation of their parents and grandparents. There should be no winners and losers - good pensions are win-win for all generations.

“A Good Life in Later Years” Project



“A Good Life in Later Years” needs people in later life to tell the researchers what for them makes for a good quality of life now. The key questions are :

- What is the essence of a good life in later years?
- What do you think is needed to achieve/maintain a good life?
- How might a good life change if there are serious health challenges or if you take on a caring role?

Click [this link](#) for more information and [click here](#) to access an online survey. Choose between a short survey or a longer one that allows you to say a lot more.

This project is hosted by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Stirling in collaboration with Age Scotland, and is funded by the Life Changes Trust.

Profile of new SOPA Committee member



Ian Galloway has been profoundly deaf all his life. In his mid years he began working in the care sector, through involvement with various Deaf Clubs. He joins SOPA as representative for the [Scottish Council on Deafness](#). He also developed his skills as a footballer and represented Team GB winning Gold in New Zealand, where he had the distinction of receiving the accolade of best deaf player in the world. In 2003 he founded Lanarkshire Deaf Club which now has a flourishing membership of over 230. He champions British Sign Language and its importance in the wider community, and promotes a strong focus on families with several events throughout the year. In May 2016 he received a Big Lottery Grant enabling to him to work full time as Project Manager for the Club. The aim is to take British Sign

Language into schools and local businesses and normalise its use.

Class in British Sign Language: During this 6-session class at the Centre for Lifelong Learning, University Strathclyde, practise the basic hand movements and equip yourself with the skills to communicate in everyday situations. Also develop a greater understanding of deaf people’s perspective on the world and the challenges they face. From Thursdays, 20 April, 6-8pm.

See p.45, in the brochure link below

www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/cll/alp/docs/EWP2016.pdf

Phone 0141 548 2116 to book.



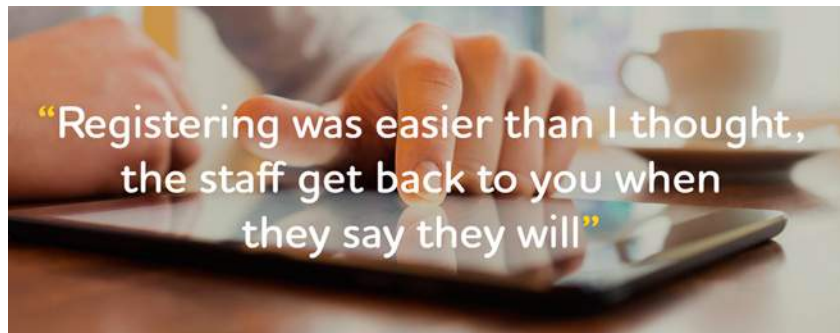


FUTURE PATHWAYS

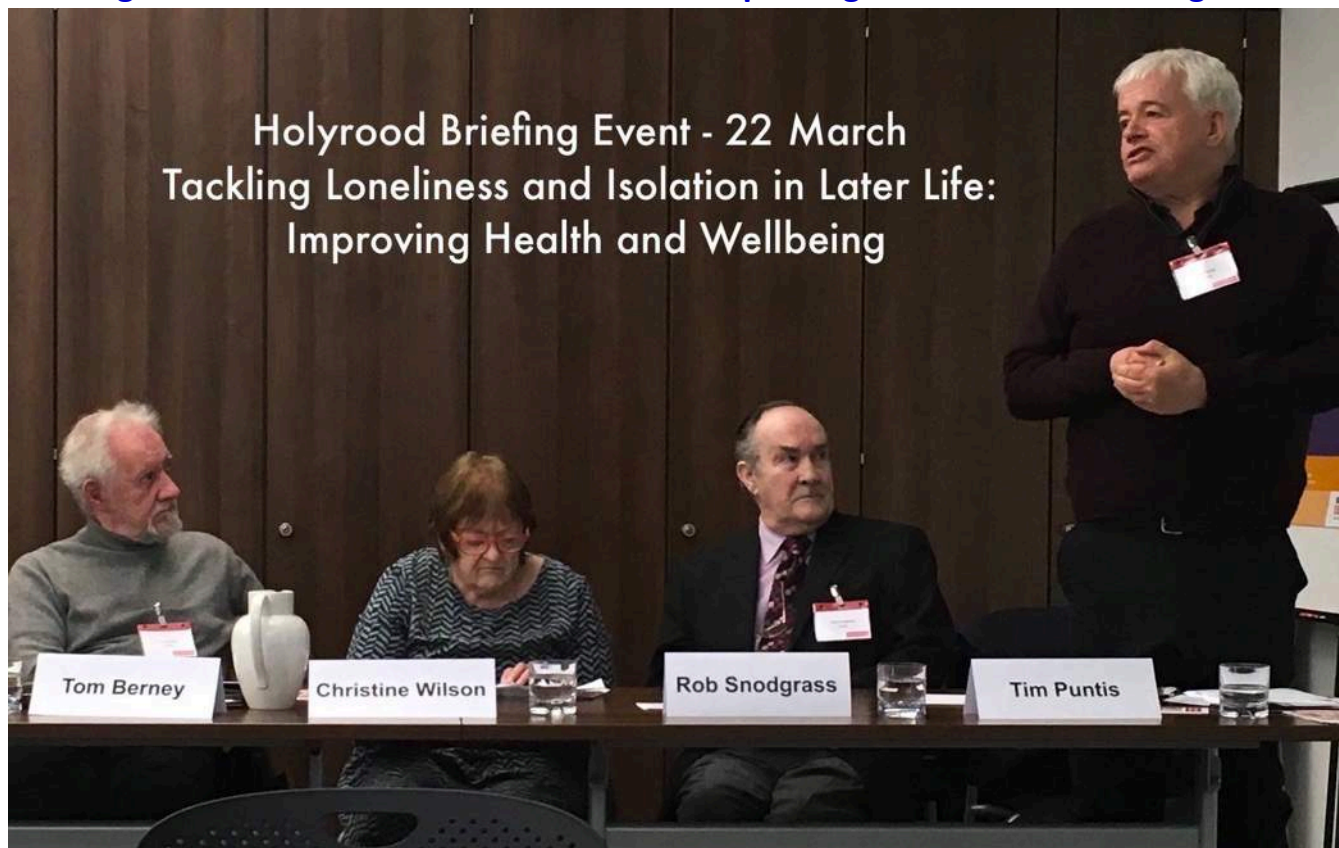
Scotland's In Care Survivor
Support Fund

Future Pathways

Future Pathways offers help and support to people who were abused or neglected as children while they were living in care in Scotland. It helps people access individual support to go forward and lead full, healthy and independent lives. There are people, now in later life, who have not felt able to speak up about the abuse or neglect they experienced, and Future Pathways are working with many who are seeking support for the first time. It is recognised that being abused or neglected as a child can have a lasting, lifelong effect, and FP offers support to those in this situation. Registration is simple and you will not be asked for any details of your experience. If you feel you could benefit from support, go to our website for more information - <https://future-pathways.co.uk> to register, or phone 0808 164 2005 (Freephone).



Tackling loneliness and isolation in later life: Improving health and well-being



The Holyrood Briefing on 22nd March began with a SOPA Panel Discussion involving Chair Tom Berney and 3 other SOPA Committee members - Christine Wilson, Human Development Scotland; Rob Snodgrass, Grey Matters, Helensburgh and Oban and Tim Puntis, LTGBI. They addressed the following issues:

- How ageism contributes to isolation and loneliness
- Disregard for older adults' contribution to society, the economy and services
- How some older people overcome loneliness and isolation
- Suggestions for future action

The meeting tackled how future actions will be embedded in a national strategy and the policy priorities of the Scottish Government. What actually works for improving mental and physical health and well-being? Almost three-quarters of older people in the UK are lonely and more than half of those have never spoken to anyone about how they feel, according to a survey carried out for the Jo Cox commission on loneliness. Previous studies have linked loneliness to high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, and a greater risk of depression, heart attack and strokes. Therefore loneliness has a huge cost not just in terms of personal happiness but to the public purse in terms of health care.

What they said:

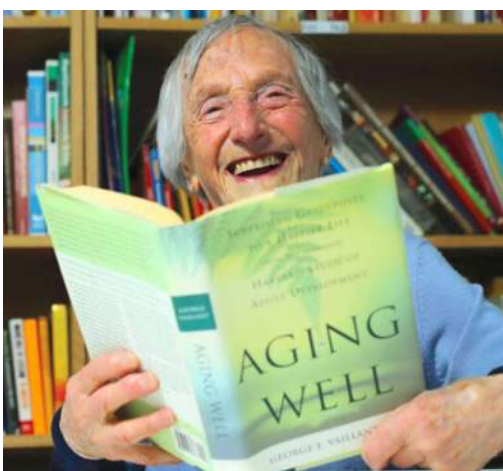
"Older people have knowledge and life experience and continue to learn. We use this experience in the U3A and SOPA. By asking people what they want to learn and what concerns them, and then sharing this with Ministers and officials, we ensure important messages reach the policymakers." Tom Berney

"Remember there are more older people living in the community than in care homes and the definition of community has changed. In Helensburgh, we have an older citizenship group of 200 people who readily support one another." Rob Snodgrass

"Scotland is the best country in Europe for LGBTI people, but organisations need to revisit the way services are delivered. Just ask us and we will help you!" Tim Puntis

"We live with different relationships following working life or losing a loved one. It means we have to get to know ourselves as single people. Some suffer from lifelong relationship difficulties - they want to be close but are afraid and push others away. We should recognise this and create an empathetic space." Christine Wilson

A case study: older adult learner extraordinaire



97 year old Anna Goldie has been attending classes at Strathclyde University's Centre for Lifelong Learning for more than 20 years. That may be a record! She likes nothing better than engaging in a controversial debate at her psychology class. She's also a member of the Learning in Later Life Association (3Ls) which is represented on the SOPA Committee by John Parkhill.

The 3Ls arranges many sociable and interesting educational away events, and supports a variety of clubs. Anna has learned a lot from members of the Computer Club and enjoys exchanging emails with her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

She was featured in an article in the Herald newspaper on 22 March entitled 'Loneliness - the Silent Epidemic' which highlights the dire physical and mental deterioration that can accompany loneliness. This was also the focus of the Holyrood Briefing Event involving the SOPA panel this month (see above).

Anna lives on her own and has adopted a philosophy that has sustained her throughout her life, keeping loneliness at bay. "Sometimes people are surprised to see me around the university, but I get great

pleasure attending classes. “Why shouldn’t I be there? I’m not too old to contribute my perspective and learn new things. And I’ve made great new friends in the classes in my 90s and that’s really wonderful,” she says.

The book Anna is holding is about a unique 75-year study of a group of Americans across their lifespans. What has emerged is that warm, social relationships is the key factor in a long and satisfying life. Anna has found the 3Ls Association and classes a wonderful source of friendship. With a son and daughter-in-law close at hand who love her to pieces, a passion for the outdoors, walking a mile or so every day, the odd game of golf, and her insatiable love of learning, she is sailing indomitably towards her 100th birthday in two years’ time.

Reception in the Scottish Parliament on 29 March



The reception will be hosted again this year by Christine Grahame MSP and is an invitation only event. The aim is to lobby MSPs at the end of day's business at Holyrood and raise issues that are important to their constituents.

Personalised Power of Attorney (PoA)



by Angela Dias, Scottish Mental Health Cooperative, Age in Mind Project
Did you know you can make your PoA document individual to you? It’s not just about handling finances. Whether it’s making sure you never miss your favourite TV programme or influencing your future accommodation, you can use your PoA to inform people about these preferences in the event of becoming unable to express your wishes due to a severe accident or illness. This should be a reassuring thought - your voice is not silenced. Even if you’ve already set up a PoA, you can add or change detailed instructions at any point.

[Age in Mind](#) is a project funded by “See Me” and led by the Scottish Mental Health Co-op. It has been working with older people across Scotland to address their concerns about losing autonomy. Watch out for Angela's blog on this topic on [SOPA's Blog](#) next month. We will flag it up on our [Facebook](#) page when published. Angela and Helena Scott gave a joint presentation on issues concerning mental health problems in later life at the 2016 SOPA Assembly. This is a SOPA campaign item.

Celebrate the Launch of the Age-Friendly Academy

Tuesday 2nd May, 1 - 4pm



You are warmly invited to attend the University of Strathclyde's launch of its Age-Friendly Academy in the magnificent TIC building at 99 George Street. The University runs a very large programme of daytime classes aimed at older adults. This contributes to positive attitudes to growing older and keeps people motivated to get out and enjoy mentally stimulating activities. Also across faculties there is research into different aspects of ageing. The new Age-Friendly Academy will be a showcase for this work and for learning in later life. The Principal will launch the Academy followed by short presentations by various speakers. Afterwards a reception will allow people to get together and network.

Registration and lunch from 12.30pm.

Register online at: <https://www.engage.strath.ac.uk/event/371>

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

THE NATIONAL
THE NEWSPAPER THAT SUPPORTS AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND

Year of the 70th Birthday

On January 27th Tom Berney reflects on 2017, the year when more people are reaching their 70th birthday than ever before. He looks at disparities between rich and poor and hopes the 'baby boomers' will champion the same life-enhancing improvements they have experienced for their children and grandchildren. [Click here](#) to read the article.

Home Care Policy

On 3rd March Tom Berney raises the issue of home care and queries whether people are actually experiencing quality care in this sector, as opposed to all the rhetoric about home care. [Click here to read article.](#)



With the state pension age set to rise from 65 to 67 by 2028, Age Scotland research suggests that there is inadequate support and opportunities for older people to retrain and learn new skills. There needs to be a change in employers' perceptions which tend to see older adults as likely to be off sick more and demand higher pay. However, the facts don't bear this out.

In Scotland, the number of people over state pension age still in work continues to rise.

The Scottish Government has stated it is committed to older adults' needs in the development of new employment services. This means not only retraining but also increased support for flexible working. Flexible working certainly helps people with young families, but it is also ideal for those nearing the end of their time in paid employment. It is such a waste of resources for firms to demand all or nothing and lose the experience and wisdom of older people in so many spheres of business. It makes good commercial sense to retain good workers irrespective of age. Reference: [Article published in The Herald 22 March](#). (6 articles can be accessed without subscription each month.)

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