

Scottish Older People's Assembly



Report of the 2016 Assembly in the Scottish Parliament

On 25 November 2016

Scottish Older People's Assembly

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Acknowledgment

Thanks to the Scottish Government Equalities Unit, VAF and the Scottish Parliament Event Team for their support to deliver the 2016 Assembly.

Scottish Older People's Assembly

Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber 25 November 2016



Morning session

[Click here for the full programme.](#)



The Rt Hon Ken Macintosh MSP Presiding Officer opened the morning session with a welcome to everyone. He noted that people are living longer and they have much to contribute to society especially as grandparents and of giving their time as volunteers or carers. He said that by having the Assembly here makes a public statement that this Parliament takes the voice of older people seriously. In 2007 the Parliamentary Futures Forum produced recommendations on Positive Ageing and more recently the Parliament produced a report on Age and Isolation. The Cross Party Group on Age and Ageing deals with many issues of concern to older people, and acknowledgement was given to SOPA for contributing to the Community Empowerment Bill in 2014 and that it has held many meetings around Scotland to promote active citizenship.

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[Click photo above to watch the background film](#) to Tom Berney's presentation which highlights the activities of SOPA over 2016.



Tom Berney, SOPA Chair, also warmly welcomed the participants and especially SOPA's friends from Northern Ireland Pensioners Parliament. He described SOPA as a collective of organisations and a voice for older people. He welcomed the opportunities given to SOPA in speaking to Ministers and civil servants to contribute to a range of policy developments for older people. He also thanked those present and all other organisations for the work they had had done in promoting the interests of older people at local and national levels.

With reference to illustrations, Tom identified SOPA's activity and meetings around Scotland. In his update on SOPA's Campaign Actions, Tom stated that the UK pension compares badly to the pension in other EU countries, that 120,000 pensioners live below the poverty line in Scotland and that many women are badly affected by the new pension arrangements. He stated that SOPA will hold a meeting at Westminster early next year on pensions with Mhairi Black MP. In terms of funeral poverty, he said the average cost of a funeral in Scotland has considerably increased and that often even adjoining local authorities had very different costs. He applauded the work of John Birrell, and Fraser Sutherland of Citizens Advice Scotland who had undertaken a review of funeral poverty at the request of a previous Minister, Alex Neil. SOPA had contributed to their review on how to arrange cost effective funerals. In terms of active participation, Tom highlighted the 2012 SOPA's film of Trevor Morrison and the songs of St Kilda being at the top of the classical album charts, and SOPA's film of how Telehealth and Care demonstrates the value of how technology can help maintain older people at home. Tom said that the implementation of the integration of health and social care was patchy and that SOPA had argued for older people to be represented on the Integrated Joint Boards. He also said that care workers should have a decent wage as it was very difficult to attract people to care work when pay in the retail and other sectors is likely to be much higher. Tom concluded by stating that a million older people lived in Scotland and that we should all work towards the common cause of improving their quality of life through encouragement to stand up and speak for ourselves.

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Neil Findlay MSP and Convener of the Health and Sport Committee described the strategic plan of the Health and Sport Committee to improve people's health through the reduction of inequalities by encouraging preventions. He said the Committee is planning to monitor the progress of integrated joint boards, situations of delayed discharge, home support efficacy and staff shortages, including recruiting GPs.



In her speech the **Minister for Social Security Jeane Freeman OBE MSP** said the voice and experience of older people is of great importance to this government in tackling poverty and inequality. As a result of the national conversation on a Fairer Scotland, she stated Government's commitment to preserving Free Personal Care and extending it to people with dementia under 65. The Government will also explore options on use of a funeral bond, develop a cost plan and provide funds to Citizens Advice Scotland to support and train its advisors to deal with the new arrangements. She invited SOPA, together with other organisations which receive money from the Equality Fund, to meet with her in February 2017 at Holyrood to advance older people's rights. "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 1000 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 [the online survey](#).

Watch the morning's proceedings on the [recorded webcast](#)



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Concerns raised by older people to the 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

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As referenced on page 5 the 2016 Scottish Older People's Assembly was streamed live from the debating chamber of the parliament. The older people's groups started speaking at 1 hr 20 minute into proceedings. Drag slider of video player to this point to view this 30 minute section.

These speakers presented brief overviews of their organisation's activities over the past year and ways they are engaging with the older population at a local level, providing examples of good citizenship practice.



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



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: Helena Scott and Angela Dias, Scottish Mental Health Cooperative.

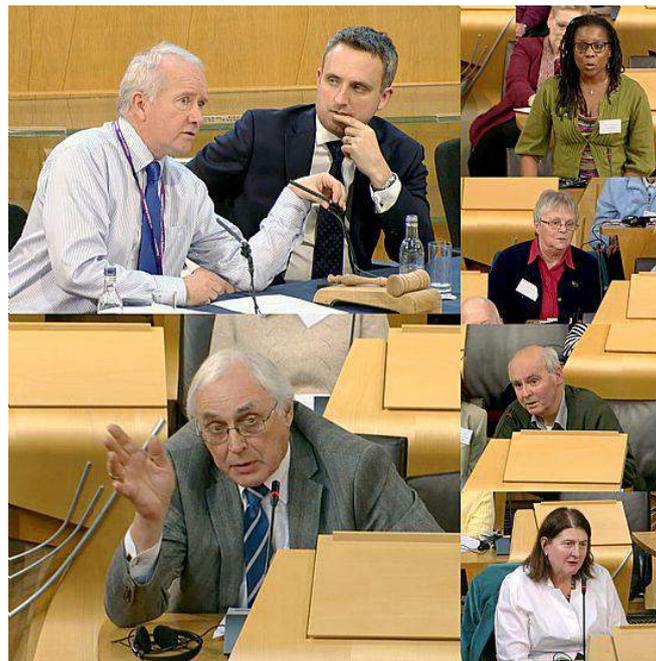
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Watch the afternoon session by clicking the parliament image.

Afternoon Session

Alex Cole Hamilton MSP who chaired the afternoon session (Top left in the suit) and David Callum (left), Clerk to the Scottish Parliament Health and Sport Committee, opened with brief presentations to encourage an interactive engagement on preventative actions with SOPA delegates.



Issues raised during the interaction

- 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.

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Assembly Evaluation

200 people registered for the event and 160 delegates attended from 60 different organisations and a wide range of equality groups. The majority were from the Central Belt but Dumfries, Grampian, Orkney and West of Scotland were also represented. 69 (44%) people completed an evaluation form. Of those who responded 80% said they were either extremely or very satisfied with the event. Quotes below illustrate items they liked the best.



"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."

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In terms of least liked items, some respondents said they were unsure of the new format but noted it worked well while others were critical of the political input and the curtailed planned interactive afternoon session. Quotes below reflect this sentiment.

“political speakers, standard poor, level of knowledge very poor, to intent on political agendas”

“A member of the audience asked twice about a care home worker whose working hours conflicted with the working time directive, without receiving a definitive answer “

“I found the whole day very interesting and informative. The afternoon session could perhaps have encouraged wider participation - but that's difficult to achieve with such numbers and in a lecture setting. I enjoyed the event very much”



Ideas for future Assemblies

Some participants were unaware of the organisations and opportunities available to older people and would like to see more stall holders and interactive sessions at future events.

“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 discussion on costs and problems of integration of health and social care.”

Suggested campaign actions

Cost of living

- Deal with the cost of living and supermarket pricing policy. Although best prices are on line this is not acceptable or available to many older people

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Care

- Uncertainty of recruitment and retention of nurses from the EU
- EU working time directive for care staff is ignored – care staff should not work split shifts
- Train services should have trouble shooters
- Ensure older people have access to full range of mental health services
- Scrutinise the work of Integrated Joint Boards and engagement with older people
- Eye care and visual support to be more readily available to patients and in the community
- Deal with long-term effects of anti-psychotic medication
- Address the variety of costs for personal alarm systems in different areas
- Worrying cuts in home care services
- Recruitment and retention failures of NHS personnel.

Pensions

- Anomalies within the system and many people are discriminated against
- Some ex-service personnel are not entitled to a pension

Support and Advice

- People appreciate easily accessible local services
- Home owners and private landlords require information on available benefits

Prevention

- Doctors recommend exercise and use of local sports centres but costs are prohibitive
- Publicity is required on prevention of falls
- Tackle the fear of crime

Citizenship

- Ensure good use of older people's experience
- Forums for older people should welcome people from the African and other communities

Age

- Value and support grandparents
- Continue to tackle age discrimination

SOPA Activities to June 30 2017

SOPA is funded by the Scottish Government Equalities Unit via VAF to contribute to the reduction of discrimination against older people, including those who share protected characteristics, and address multiple prejudices so that barriers to participation are reduced. In dealing with these aims SOPA will undertake the following activities to June 30 2017:-

- At the invitation of the Minister for Social Security, Jeane Freeman OBE MSP , SOPA will meet with her and other organisations in February to discuss areas of concern

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to older people and to consider how we can work together to tackle barriers to independent living and promote older people's rights and equality

- In conjunction with older people from Northern Ireland and Wales, SOPA will deliver a reception, hosted by Mhairi Black MP in the House of Commons on 6TH March 2017. The event will include older people from Scotland who share protected characteristics.
- To further enhance the relationship between older people's organisations and MSPs, and to pave the way for new campaign issues, SOPA will deliver a reception, hosted by Christine Graham MSP on 29 March 2017 in the Scottish Parliament.
- SOPA will follow through a suggestion from the Assembly and in partnership with the Retired Police Association of Scotland, Trading Standards Scotland and Police Scotland to deliver an event in the Scottish Parliament on Safer Communities and Fear of Crime. This will be hosted by Alex Cole Hamilton MSP
- SOPA will build on its relationship with the Scottish Youth Parliament to identify common issues of concern and agreed joint action.

SOPA 2016 Exhibition Stands

Action on Elder Abuse is a UK-wide charity, and our unique confidential Helpline has been successfully operating throughout the UK for around 20 years. We're now expanding in Scotland, and our fully trained, Scotland based volunteers are able to take calls from, and about, anyone concerned with an older person, living in Scotland, who may be being abused. Our helpline provides a listening ear and guidance on what to do and who to contact if abuse is suspected. In the very near future we are looking to develop the service to provide peer support to older people who have been subject to abuse and who would like a helping hand to reintegrate and take back control of their lives. Brian Rapley, Services Coordinator, Action on Elder Abuse Scotland Tel: 07496323801 E-mail: brianrapley@elderabuse.org.uk Postal: AEA Scotland, PO Box 29244, Dunfermline, KY12 2EG AEA Freephone Helpline: 080 8808 8141

Citizens Advice Scotland is Scotland's leading advice charity with over 61 member bureaux spread across Scotland's communities from city centres to islands and remote locations. Last year we gave a piece of advice every 19 seconds and helped 1 in every 14 adults living in Scotland.

"We are proud to have been around since 1939, helping Scots through the Second World War and ever since for over 75 years. We look at the problems people bring to our advice services and campaign for change where it's needed most. We work for a fairer Scotland where people are empowered and their rights respected."

Fraser Sutherland, Policy Officer and Rhiannon Sims, Policy Officer, Citizens Advice Scotland t: 0131 550 1074 e: fraser.sutherland@cas.org.uk Spectrum House, 2 Powderhall Road Edinburgh EH7 4GB

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The Care Inspectorate is the unified independent scrutiny and improvement body for care and children's services. We regulate and inspect care services and carry out social work and child protection inspections to provide assurance and protection for people in Scotland who use these services. We work with a number of organisations, professionals, people who use services, and their carers to help improve the quality of services and act as a catalyst for change and innovation. Find out about the ways you can get involved by visiting www.careinspectorate.com or get in touch with us on 0345 600 9527.

The Royal National Institute of Blind People Scotland helps blind and partially sighted people of all ages live as fully and independently as possible. It provides advice, support, training, equipment and transcribes books and other materials. It also campaigns to improve sight loss prevention. Website: www.rnib.org.uk/scotland The stall will have a combination of RNIB Scotland service leaflets, some products, promotional items and an iPad for visitors' digital demonstration. Gozie Joe Adigwe, Senior Eye Health and Equalities Officer RNIB Scotland 17 Gullane St, Glasgow G11 6AH 07918 640 505 Prevention Team Lead www.rnib.org.uk