

Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) & Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) 1st of June 2017 Briefing Note

SOPA and GREC hosted a gathering of 57 older people on 1st June 2017. The meeting was held in the Credo Centre, Aberdeen as part of a series of SOPA meetings around Scotland. GREC also wanted to explore the possibility of establishing an equality forum of older people.

The meeting was chaired by Tanita Addario, GREC and included a welcome by the Deputy Lord Provost of Aberdeen, Tom Mason and Tom Berney Chair of SOPA. Presentations were given by Baldeep McGarry, Aberdeen City Council's Equalities Team, Tanita Addario, GREC on "Community Forums for Community Voices" and Tom Berney of SOPA

- Baldeep described discrimination and what it means to older people, that life expectancy is increasing, and how important it is for generations to work together with examples of this in care homes
- Tanita talked about GREC and its work to tackle inequalities and discrimination. She highlighted the work of the Ethnic Minority and Multi-faith forums and encouraged people to think about the benefits of joining a forum of older people
- Tom provided information on SOPA and its activities, and said that most voluntary work is undertaken by older people who make a great contribution to society. He also listed 'Matters of Concern' raised by older people during SOPA's local or national meetings. These are below.

Matters of Concern

Cost of living

- Cost of living is high, supermarket pricing policy is not good for older people and best prices are on line which may not be available to many older people

Care

- Uncertainty of recruitment and retention of nurses from the EU
- EU working time directive for care staff is ignored and care staff should not work split shifts
- Recruitment and retention failures of NHS personnel.
- Ensure older people have access to a full range of mental health services
- Scrutinise the work of Integrated Joint Boards and engagement with older people
- Eye care and visual support should be more readily available
- 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

Pensions

- Anomalies exist within the system and many people will not receive the entitlement as described
- 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 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 and actual crime to older people
- Train services should have trouble shooters

Citizenship

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

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Comments on the meeting

16 participants completed an evaluation form

- Most valued the meeting as extremely (4) or very (9) useful
- 6 rated the presentations as very good and 9 rated them as good

Participants' comments on the meeting

- Informative about other forums
- Increased awareness of organisations
- Had useful discussions
- Good presentations and speakers
- Brought a variety of older people and services together
- We had an open discussion
- Some people said they could not hear although a PA system was used
- Was a bit rushed and running late

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The following is a summary of participant's views.

Matters of Concern

- ✓ New buses are not accessible for people with disabilities or for 4 wheel trollies
- ✓ Access to hospital appointments do not allow time to travel there and back from the 'Shire'
- ✓ Grampian is large and prohibits easy travel
- ✓ Cost of living is expensive for single people. It is cheaper, if you bulk buy but we do not have enough money to do it
- ✓ Split shifts for care workers are a problem. We can't build relationships, it's hard to retain staff and there is no consistency
- ✓ People now need to work into their 70s to receive pension. I thought I was getting my pension at 60.

A Forum for Older People

- ✓ Queries about local versus area wide meetings and the format of the forum
- ✓ Take note of good practice in Portlethen and Mearns & Coastal Living Foundation
- ✓ Build on existing Community Councils as they have particular responsibilities
- ✓ Age classification and title of group will affect membership
- ✓ Draw on a volunteer pool who have skills, experience and good connections. There is power in the collective voice
- ✓ Use technology to engage more people
- ✓ The dynamic of the group will determine its success