



Falkirk was part of a series of meetings for older people's groups around Scotland between January and April 2015. The format included an introduction by Marie Bishop of *Make It Happen Forum*, Provost Pat Reid and a presentation by Tom Berney, SOPA Chair on the growing role of SOPA in supporting and challenging policy. 50 participants from *Make it Happen Forum* discussed Action Plan 2015 statements and identified their priorities. Then these questions were addressed:

How can SOPA work with you? and *How can you work with SOPA?*

SOPA's Communication Adviser, raised awareness of events in the local press and media, and publicised them afterwards on SOPA's Facebook site - <https://www.facebook.com/scotopa>

Results from 47 returned standard forms.

Some people gave priority to more than one action from each topic and all of these priorities are included in the totals shown below in Figure 1. The top four priorities are shown in Figure 2¹.

Fig.1

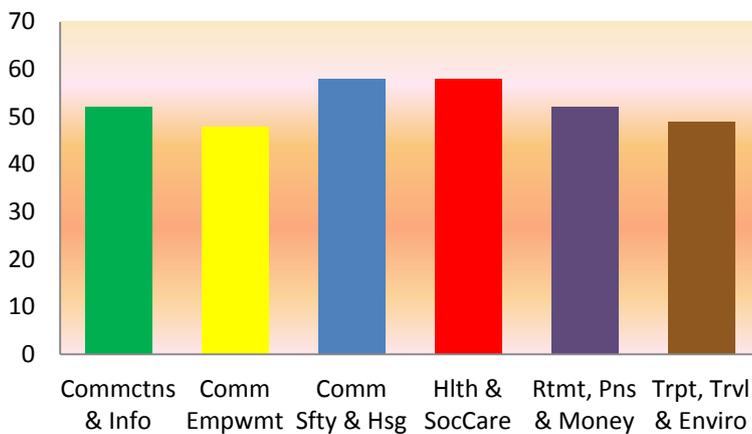
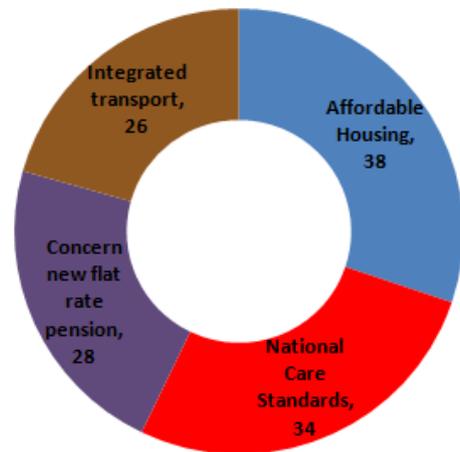


Fig.2



The action points break down as follows, with the number of votes in brackets:

Communications & Information: accessible Internet access (13), solidarity between generations (15), and SOPA reaching out to groups of older people (24)

Community Empowerment: clear communication on how the Community Empowerment (CE) (Scotland) Bill will operate (18), reach out to the LGBT community and ethnic groups (9) and SOPA extending its reach to as many older people as possible (21)

Community Safety and Housing: all communities have access to affordable housing (38), street safety - traffic control and a police presence (10), clear comparisons between energy companies (10)

Health and Social Care: respect and dignity towards cared-for people (24), National Care Standards (34)

Retirement, Pensions and Money: pensions concerns over flat rate (28), expense of funerals (10), acknowledgement of unpaid carers and savings to the national purse (14)

Transport, Travel and Environment: integrated travel policy (26), public spaces for social life - including rest areas and toilets (23)

¹ A full ranking of priorities is available on request.



Comments on the meeting

26 participants completed an evaluation form and of this number:

- 96% valued the meeting as very or extremely useful;
- many appreciated meeting other people and having an open discussion;
- some people suggested there should have been more time for group discussion:

“SOPA gives older people a collective voice on important issues so they can be more confident their ideas and concerns will not disappear into a black hole.”

“Relaxed atmosphere and facilitators at every table to help with questions.”

“It helped to generate enthusiasm to become involved in a local and national group and influence policy decision.”

“Not sufficient time to reflect on the various questions.”

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The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a 'voice' for older people.

Visit the SOPA website for up-to-date information about events and activities.

www.scotopa.org.uk

How SOPA can work with local groups

Suggestions focused on communications and contributing to local activity:

- ✓ Provision of paper information which could be distributed widely across the community
- ✓ Have more meetings at a local level
- ✓ Invite a representative from Falkirk to participate in SOPA events
- ✓ SOPA could come to some of our *Make It Happen* meetings
- ✓ More publicity for similar events, send newsletters and information locally
- ✓ Geographical sub-committees to capture local comment and priorities.

How the local group can work with SOPA

Suggestions focused on assisting local participation, gathering local evidence and developing communication channel:

- ✓ Gather information at *Make It Happen* meetings and feed back to SOPA
- ✓ *Make It Happen* can become members of SOPA and pass information onto other groups
- ✓ Strengthen our own network and develop communication channel
- ✓ Encourage more people get involved in communities and encourage inter generational activities
- ✓ Sign up for newsletter
- ✓ Include a disabled representative on the SOPA group.



Falkirk meeting on 6th March.