

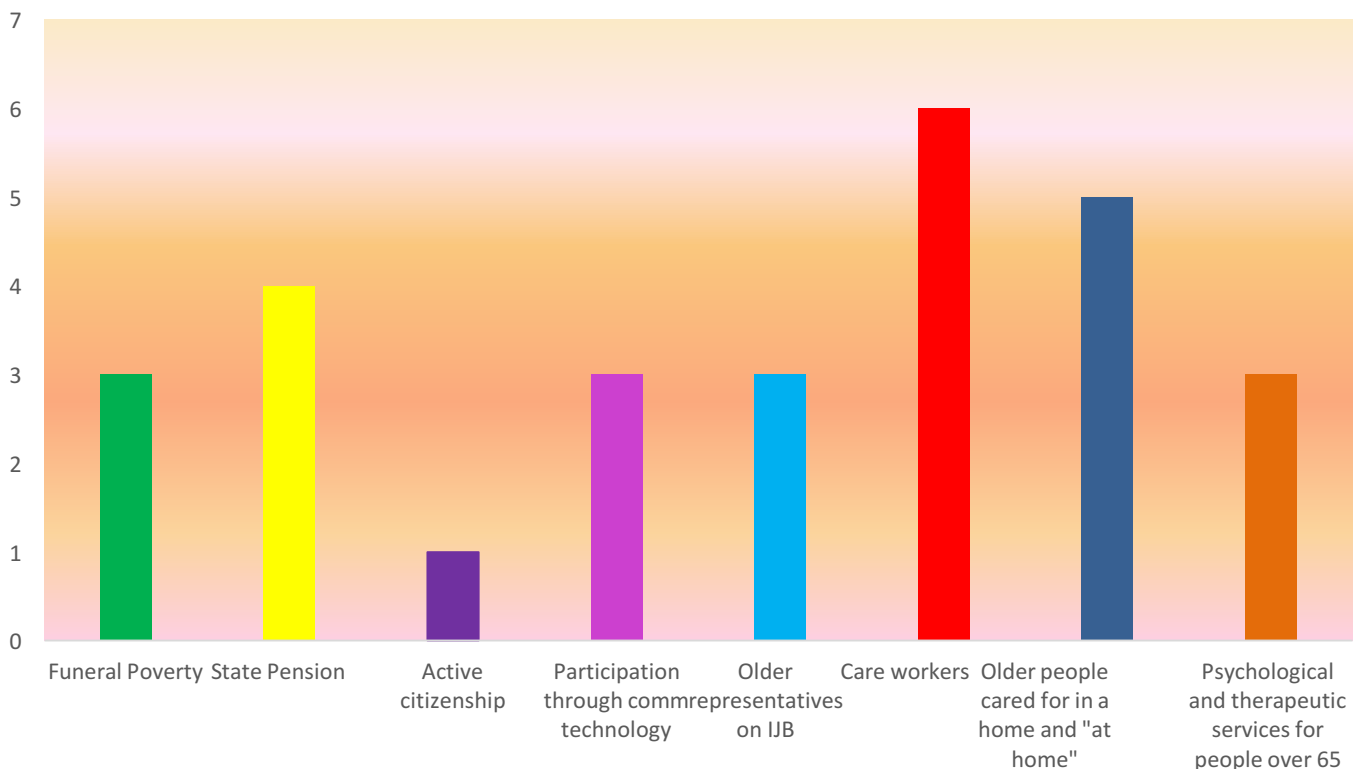
SOPA together with Scottish Borders Seniors Networking Forum hosted its fourth gathering this year of older people. This time the event was held in Galashiels as part of a series of meetings around Scotland between July and October 2016. The format included a welcome by Willie Archibald, Councillor and is Scottish Borders Council's Older Peoples' Champion, and a presentation by Tom Berney, SOPA Chair, on the growing role of SOPA in supporting and challenging policy and gathering the views of older people. 15 participants discussed their concerns, the SOPA Campaign issues 2016, and then their priorities on the campaign list.

### Results from 10 returned standard forms.

This question was addressed: *“In terms of SOPA’s Campaign Issues 2016 which of the following actions would you support by inserting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, against the list below? 1 being the top priority”.*

Some people gave priority 1 to more than one Campaign Issue. All of the priorities are included in the totals shown below in Figure 1.

**Fig.1 SOPA’s Campaign Issues**



SOPA’s Campaign Issues are below, with the number of votes for each one (priority 1) in brackets:

- Reduce funeral poverty through funded developments and promotion of social enterprise funeral arrangements (3)
- Raise awareness of the negative impact of major changes to the State Pension (4)
- Promote the need for funded programmes to encourage active citizenship in later life (1)
- Improve participation of older adults through funded use of communication technology (3)
- Seek to have older representatives on all Joint Integrated Boards (3)
- Emphasise the need for care workers to be respected, well paid and trained to highest standard (6)
- Highlight the importance of improved quality of life for older people cared for in a home and ‘at home’ through links to the community (5)
- Psychological and therapeutic services for people over 65 should be funded on a par with ‘adult’ services (3)

### Comments on the meeting

4 participants completed the Evaluation forms:

- all valued the meeting as very useful
- one felt the meeting was an opportunity to see what SOPA is involved in
- one participant thought each point deserved merit and a lot of attention i.e., 'can of worms'
- it was felt the meeting covered a lot of topics

*"(What I liked best about SOPA meeting was) the opportunity to find out what is happening in SOPA*

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Top Picture (L to R):

Diana Findley (Seniors Networking Forum & Age Scotland), Jillian Scott (Community Capacity Building Officer, Scottish Borders Council), Tom Berney (SOPA Chair), Robin Cowan (Old Folks Welfare Group Peebles), Tom Ingoldsby (Borders Talking Newspapers), George Gilchrist (Royal British Legion Peebles).

Lower L: Tom Berney, Lower R: Diana Findley and Councillor Willie Archibald, champion for older people Scottish Borders Council, who opened proceedings.

### Points covered by Tom Berney, Councillor Willie Archibald and participants:

- ✓ SOPA's success in listening to older people at grassroots and taking their concerns to Scottish and Westminster Governments
- ✓ SOPA's contribution to national policy
- ✓ SOPA's determination to tackle inequalities and discrimination
- ✓ UK pension and retirement compares badly with other countries
- ✓ In Scotland 120,000 pensioners live below the poverty line
- ✓ £5.5 bn in state benefits are under claimed: ensure you check your entitlements
- ✓ The cost of funerals increased by 90% over 5 years (average cost is £4000). SOPA was involved in a review of funeral poverty. The Scottish Government website includes a report about funeral poverty written by Citizen's Advice Scotland. It has suggestions on how to organise funerals in a cost effective way.
- ✓ Extend use of the bus pass to UK and Europe
- ✓ More opportunities for re-training older people after redundancy or retirement as some wish or NEED to be employed
- ✓ Growing need for community and volunteer run services to be adequately funded and recognised to prevent older people from isolation and poor standards of living
- ✓ Resources are essential on preventative services, such as adaptations to people's homes to prevent falls or admission to hospital
- ✓ Many older people are unable to drive and if buses aren't available people become isolated and dependant
- ✓ Emphasise on involving older people in all aspect of life is essential
- ✓ Some older people are dependent on reduced cost food
- ✓ Better nutrition for older people. Projects like 'Meal Maker' have nutritional and befriending benefits
- ✓ Under the Disability Discrimination Act users and carers are entitled to participate in strategic level committee such as Integrated Joint Boards