

SOPA together with Grey Matters, Helensburgh hosted a gathering of 74 older people on 3 December 2016. The meeting was held in the Victoria Halls as part of a series of SOPA meetings around Scotland. It included a welcome by Alison Gildea, Argyll and Bute, Third Sector Interface (TSI) and Rob Snodgrass of Grey Matters. This was followed by presentations from Glenn Heritage, TSI CEO who referred to the role of the TSI in supporting and building the voice and experience of older people in Argyll and Bute. Glenn said that she welcomed the views of older people to inform the work of the TSI on the Integrated Joint Board and in building resilient and empowered communities. She added that over a 1000 older people had informed the TSI of the need for volunteer support, community transport, information, excursions, technical assistance and friendship.

In his presentation, Tom Berney, SOPA Chair, gave information on SOPA's Campaign Actions and its work on contributing to a range of policy developments for older people. He stated that the UK pension compares badly to the pension in other EU countries and that 120,000 pensioners live below the poverty line in Scotland. He added that the average cost of a funeral in Scotland is around £4000, that SOPA had contributed to a review of funeral poverty and Citizens Advice Scotland's report on how to arrange cost effective funerals is a worthwhile read. Tom also referred to the 160 people who attended and contributed to SOPA's national event in the Debating Chamber of the Scottish Parliament on 25 November 2016. During the Assembly, Rob Snodgrass was one of 10 representatives who gave a brief presentation on the work of their groups. As the event was filmed, detail of this is on the SOPA website at [www.scotopa.org.uk](http://www.scotopa.org.uk)

### **SOPA's Campaign Actions 2016/17**

- Reduce funeral poverty
- Raise awareness of the negative impact of major changes to the State Pension
- Promote the need for funded programmes to encourage active citizenship in later life
- Improve participation of older adults through funded use of communication technology
- Seek to have older representatives on all Integrated Joint Boards
- Emphasise the need for care workers to be respected, well paid and trained to highest standard
- Highlight the importance of improved quality of life for older people cared for in a home and 'at home' through links to the community
- Equality of access for older people to use psychological and therapeutic services



## Comments on the meeting

31 participants completed an evaluation form

- Most valued the meeting as very or moderately useful
- 3 people said it was extremely useful
- 4 people said it was slightly useful
- Majority of respondents enjoyed the chance to be with others and share views
- One person hoped that views would be sent to relevant agencies and not just put on the website
- Some people said they could not hear although a PA system was used

*"Taking forward of local issues"*

*"Range of issues taken forward to Scottish Parliament. Some positive ideas among all of the negative issues"*

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## A summary of participant's ideas to maintain health, prevent ill health and admission to hospital.

- ✓ Do not close Vale of Leven Hospital, use Gartnavel or Golden Jubilee
- ✓ Poor transport to hospitals, time tables not synchronised & help to arrange appreciated
- ✓ Support for people with mental health issues
- ✓ Take full medical prescriptions
- ✓ Ensure physiotherapy and information to prevent falls after hip replacement
- ✓ Care home costs need national similarity
- ✓ Ensure better hospital discharge and communication about it
- ✓ OT's should visit people in their homes
- ✓ Befrienders are needed
- ✓ Roads are full of pot holes and a hazard
- ✓ Maintenance of walkways and leisure pathways are advocated
- ✓ Many areas do not have public lighting
- ✓ People need help to manage wheelie bins
- ✓ Loop system in shops & meeting areas needed
- ✓ Increase the pension to avoid poverty
- ✓ Free, accessible activities – dancing, computer
- ✓ Improve generations being together
- ✓ Local authority 'cut backs' are a worry