



Livingston 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 the Provost Tom Kerr and a presentation by Tom Berney, SOPA Chair on the growing role of SOPA in supporting and challenging policy. 31 participants from the West Lothian Seniors 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 29 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 2 <sup>1</sup>.

Fig.1

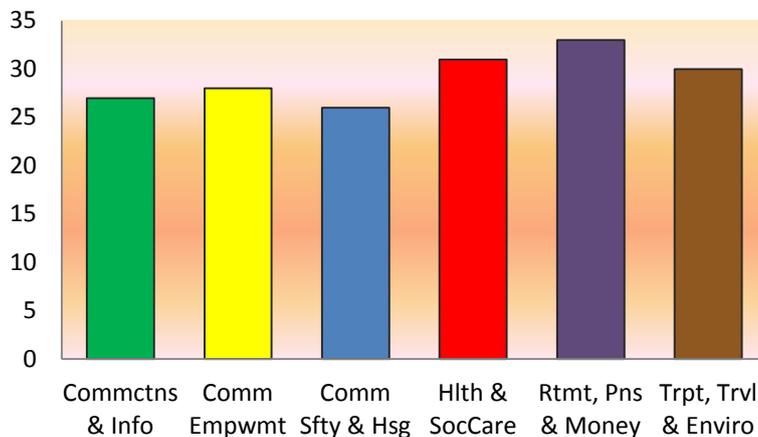
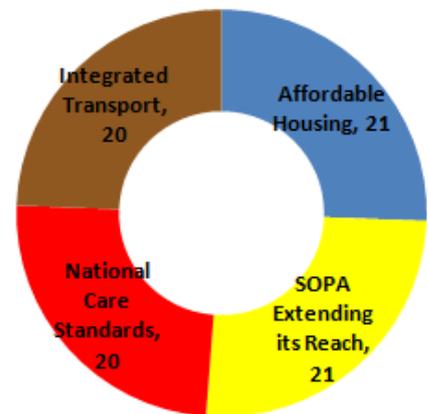


Fig.2



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

**Communications & Information:** accessible Internet access (4), solidarity between generations (16), and SOPA reaching out to groups of older people (7)

**Community Empowerment:** clear communication on how the Community Empowerment (CE) (Scotland) Bill will operate (7), reach out to the LGBT community and ethnic groups (0) and SOPA extending its reach to as many older people as possible (21)

**Community Safety and Housing:** all communities have access to affordable housing (21), street safety - traffic control and a police presence (3), clear comparisons between energy companies (2)

**Health and Social Care:** respect and dignity towards cared-for people (11), National Care Standards (20)

**Retirement, Pensions and Money:** pensions concerns over flat rate (18), expense of funerals (3), acknowledgement of unpaid carers and savings to the national purse (12)

**Transport, Travel and Environment:** integrated travel policy (20), public spaces for social life - including rest areas and toilets (10)

<sup>1</sup> A full ranking of priorities is available on request.



### Comments on the meeting

27 participants completed an evaluation form and of this number:

- 88% valued the meeting as very or extremely useful;
- many appreciated being with others too:

*"... a chance to meet like minded people and discuss relevant topics to older people."*

*"Got the impression that this is a slick organisation."*

- one person suggested an alternative way to conduct a group discussion.

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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](http://www.scotopa.org.uk)

### How SOPA can work with local groups

Suggestions on communication, contributing to local activity and help with computers:

- ✓ Provide up to date information on SOPA's activities and achievements but do not use acronyms
- ✓ Have regular events 3 or 4 times a year
- ✓ Have representatives from local forums to attend the SOPA committee
- ✓ Highlight legislation and policies that impact on older people
- ✓ Have links into existing networks and contribute to local meetings
- ✓ Attend local groups for feedback, get info on what works well, where the gaps are and inform on issues across country
- ✓ More help with computers.

### How the local group can work with SOPA

Suggestions focused on assisting local participation, gathering evidence, identifying local champions and help with computers:

- ✓ Promote and raise awareness of SOPA
- ✓ More involvement from local Councillors, MSPs and MPs
- ✓ Highlight issues to SOPA via e.g. senior people's forum
- ✓ Cascade info from SOPA to local communities e.g. community councils/churches/community centres, and provide grass roots information to SOPA on what works well and gaps in service
- ✓ More help for people to understand and use computers, including housebound people.



West Lothian Seniors Forum & SOPA.