

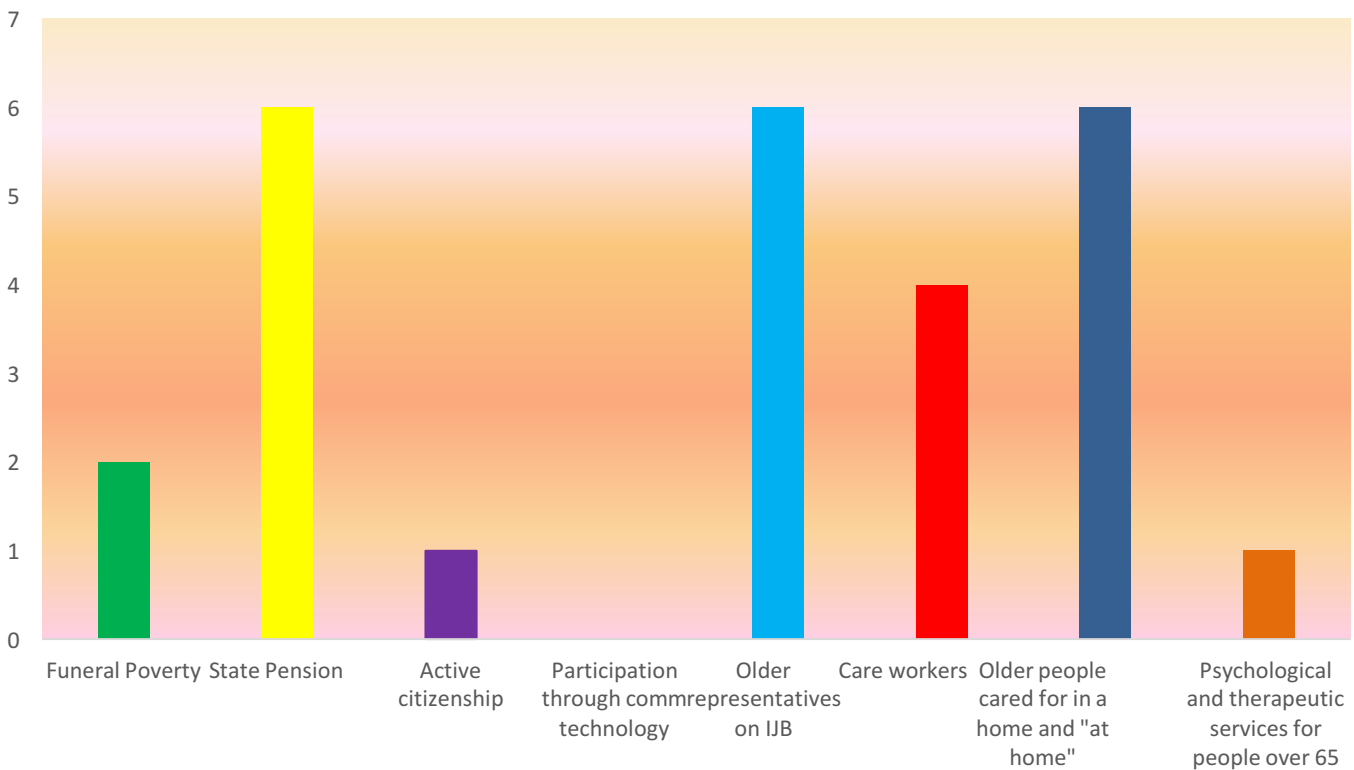
Saltcoats was the second gathering of older people from North Ayrshire for a series of meetings around Scotland between July and October 2016. The format included a welcome by Depute Provost, Councillor Robert Barr, a brief presentation by Kenneth Gibson MSP and a presentation by Tom Berney, SOPA Chair, on the growing role of SOPA in supporting and challenging policy and issues concerning veterans. 18 participants discussed their concerns as veterans, the SOPA Campaign issues 2016, and then their priorities on the campaign list. Four veterans were filmed speaking of their particular concerns.

### Results from 17 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 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 (2)
- Raise awareness of the negative impact of major changes to the State Pension (6)
- 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 (0)
- Seek to have older representatives on all Joint Integrated Boards (6)
- Emphasise the need for care workers to be respected, well paid and trained to highest standard (4)
- Highlight the importance of improved quality of life for older people cared for in a home and ‘at home’ through links to the community (6)
- Psychological and therapeutic services for people over 65 should be funded on a par with ‘adult’ services (1)

### Comments on the meeting

8 participants completed an evaluation form and of this number:

- almost 90% valued the meeting as very useful and extremely useful
- many appreciated finding out about SOPA and getting good information
- a few participants felt that more time was needed for Q&A and discussion
- one person felt the meeting was long & lacked focus on veterans
- one person said the meeting was advertised for veterans and he attended thinking it was about pensions & conditions for retired servicemen
- one person suggested SOPA could be improved in the future with more advertising.

*"Good knowledgeable presentation."*

*"(What I liked best about SOPA meeting was) raising awareness of older people's issues."*

*"It opened my eyes that the way veterans and older people in general are treated is totally unacceptable"*

*"It is essential that the older people have a say in decisions taken in Parliament."*

*"Overall very good."*

**SOPA Co-ordinator Glenda Watt**

[glenda.sopa@outlook.com](mailto:glenda.sopa@outlook.com)

SOPA Office Base: Hayweight House  
4th Floor, 23 Lauriston Street, Edinburgh, EH3  
9DQ Tel office: 0131 281 0875

**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)

### Points covered by Tom Berney, Councillor Robert Barr, Kenneth Gibson MSP 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 towards older people
- ✓ UK pension and retirement compares badly with other countries
- ✓ In Scotland there are 140,000 pensioners living 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.
- ✓ North Ayrshire Council are undertaking a consultation on the new cemetery in Stevenston as people in Kilbirnie don't want to be buried in Dalry
- ✓ A high rate of mental health problems exist in ex servicemen
- ✓ There are about 300,000 veterans in Scotland and some do not receive a pension from their time in the services
- ✓ The Scottish Government appointed a veteran's commissioner, Eric Fraser, to champion the needs of veterans: he published a strategy and work plan with recommendations to improve veteran's interests
- ✓ There is a £5 million service for people with missing limbs and special services for veterans with mental health issues with £3.6 million of funding.
- ✓ Veterans are less likely to be employed and are being helped to set up business. A £1.3 million package has been set up in Community Jobs Scotland for veterans.



Saltcoats meeting on 4 August 2016