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**Q&A:**  
**Tom Berney,**  
**Chair of Scottish Older People's Assembly,**  
**2 April 2016**

**Q. If you had the power to change one thing in Scotland what would it be?**

A. I would like to ensure that older people being looked after at home or in care are protected from both physical harm and financial exploitation. Certainly most care in Scotland is very good but examples of abuse still happen. Properly paid and trained carers are essential.

**Q Does Holyrood reflect the needs and priorities of older people in Scotland?**

A. I believe there is genuine commitment to improving conditions for older people, but there is still a lot to be done.

**Q What's missing from the Holyrood election campaign so far?**

A. Inevitably the campaign tends to be inter-party point scoring. I feel it lacks any definite proposals on how Scotland will become a fairer and more equal society. I would like to see cross party support to the preservation of universal benefits like the bus pass.

**Q. Does Holyrood or Westminster have the biggest influence on your working life?**

A. Holyrood definitely. We have regular contact with Holyrood ministers and officials. By contrast last year Westminster abandoned its only formal older people's consultative forum and its supporting organisations in England.

**Q. What lesson can Scotland learn from elsewhere in the world?**

A. We must be better informed about other countries. The British state pension, for example, is one of the lowest in the developed world in relation to final earnings. Why should that be the case when we are about the fourth richest? Countries like Finland are far ahead of Scotland in their methods of overcoming isolation for older people. We should study and learn from them.

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