



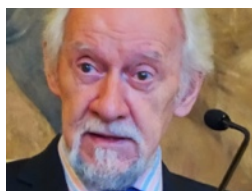
April 2014

The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a 'voice' for older people.

Welcome

The fifth newsletter from the SOPA Committee contains a summary of the important issues which SOPA has highlighted over the past year, and actions from 2012. It also sets out the key messages from participants at the seminars held in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen during January and February. Full details are in the [SOPA 2013 Report](#) available online shortly.

Message from Chair Tom Berney



We have progressed a long way in terms of meetings with Ministers and officials in the Scottish Government and COSLA. During 2013/14 we addressed the many issues

detailed in our annual report by becoming members of the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Groups on subjects affecting older people, and perhaps more productively by joining the Government's Development Group for Older People's Care, and the Joint Improvement Team. It draws up the objectives, standards and monitoring arrangements for the integration of health and social care. Being involved in the drafting process allows us to directly influence policies rather than just criticising afterwards.

However, having well-intentioned policies is one thing, but ensuring better care flows from them is another. Unacceptable problems still arise in care homes and we have protested that too often fifteen minutes seems to be used as a norm for home visits. We recognise that most carers are competent and attentive, but set in a context where many are overstretched and underpaid, and in some cases poorly trained, it

is almost inevitable that things will go wrong. It is vital that management is structured to ensure that care is tailored to specific needs, rather than to pre-set time limits. The Scottish Government has given us a commitment to review the time allocated for visits and accepted our urging that caring has to be recognised as a vocation that should be adequately staffed and rewarded.

These proposed changes are being introduced against a background where billions of pounds are being cut from UK welfare budgets and from the funds available to the Scottish Government. That is bound to have an impact on older people's well-being. Major decisions on pensions and welfare are, of course, made by Westminster. And though we participate on the United Kingdom Advisory Forum on Ageing it is still frustratingly difficult for us to influence those key issues as we do not have the same level of access to Ministers there.

Our strength is our Assembly and our Committee comprising delegates from the main organisations representing older people's interests in Scotland. Most are volunteers. This broad spectrum of representation and interests allows us to present a united front. However, we are conscious of the need to raise our profile and communications with 'grass roots' people. To that end we have been organising public SOPA seminars around the country.

Let's hear from you!

Email in your feedback on the Newsletter content. Also let us know how changes are affecting you, your family and friends - what is working and what isn't.

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What the Assembly aims to do

SOPA is here to ensure the voice of older people in Scotland is heard by the Scottish Parliament, and Scottish and Westminster Governments. Every year the Assembly has used its links with older citizens, groups and organisations, and the main Assembly event, to identify important concerns.



Outcomes from the Assembly 2012

Ministerial meetings

Several constructive meetings were arranged in 2013 including presenting the 2012 Assembly report to Alex Neil, MSP. The Scottish Government continues to support SOPA to enable the integration of the experience of older people in the development of legislation, policies and services at strategic and local level.

Cross party group

The Scottish Parliament builds on the involvement of older people in the work of the Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing. Age Scotland is the secretariat. There are now plans for more meaningful discussions and outcomes to bring about greater benefits.

Motion of 'No Confidence'

The Scottish Government with the Care Inspectorate addressed the Assembly's motion of "No Confidence" as a priority. Through subsequent meetings improvements have been implemented and the Highland Senior Citizens Network has withdrawn its 'No Confidence' vote. HSCN is now aware that the Inspectorate is applying its criteria and making judgements favourable to vulnerable residents.

Care, support and active ageing

At national level, committee members have met to discuss concerns with civil servants and COSLA with more meetings planned. Older people's experience is particularly important in the formulation of policies concerning care and support, personalisation, and end of life. SOPA is working with the Joint Improvement Team to assist in developing the targets for the integration of adult social care and the NHS.

What the Committee does

The SOPA committee comprises volunteer representatives of organisations across Scotland linked to later life, who carry forward the work of the annual Assembly. SOPA now has good access to government and can raise issues directly with Ministers, in cross party groups in Parliament and with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

What SOPA highlighted in 2013

- ✓ The work of SOPA and its Committee in four widely distributed eNewsletters
- ✓ 'No confidence' motion in the Care Inspectorate's role in maintaining quality
- ✓ Standards in health and care services
- ✓ Concerns about the Liverpool Care Pathway
- ✓ Experience of changing services where they fall short of policy expectations
- ✓ Inequity of low pensions
- ✓ Hardships encountered by grandparents as kinship carers
- ✓ Inadequacy of short visits for care at home in some circumstances
- ✓ History and development of SOPA
- ✓ Dangers of electronic cigarettes
- ✓ Role of older people in the engagement and co-production of services (See article which follows on page 3)

Priorities and Gaps

'Identifying Priorities and Gap Areas in Engagement and Co-productive Activity: A mapping exercise'

The Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University was commissioned by the SOPA Committee to find out to what extent organisations are currently engaging directly with older people to aid in the design and planning of their services. This mapping exercise covered 90 examples of co-productive activity, primarily in Scotland.

The report published in 2013 concluded that different terms are used to describe engagement and co-productive activity. Therefore, in undertaking such activity there should be clarity about how the process is defined. Then, it can be conducted in a transparent way and evaluated later. They also discovered that participation does not mean that people have a clearly heard voice, and there is variation too in the way in which they become involved or want to be involved. So more participation does not necessarily mean greater empowerment.

This being the case, SOPA must ensure that people are not only encouraged to express opinions, but also that policy makers and organisations are clear about the process and receptive to opinions, give justifications for policies and practices, consider the impact of changes and supply feedback on comments and criticisms. Click to access [Executive Summary leaflet](#).



SOPA SEMINARS on welfare reforms

Because the full 2013 Assembly was curtailed (as reported in the December newsletter) the important discussions on the impact of welfare reforms took place at seminars in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen early in 2014. Organising these was ambitious with SOPA's limited resources but attendance and feedback were good.

Bill Scott, Policy Director of Inclusion Scotland, gave a presentation on the impact of welfare reforms on older people. After questions and facilitated discussions, delegates were able to prioritise the concerns they wish to raise at the 2014 Assembly. 218 statements were registered.

While there is an impact of reforms on some older people, there is likely to be more impact on their families. A sampling of welfare and other issues are shown below and on p 4. (For the full list see the SOPA Report online.)

Clarification was sought concerning impact on self, family and friends separately.

Impact of welfare reforms on self (74 statements)

- Difficulty paying fuel bills
- Reduced rooms through 'bedroom tax'

Other important issues

- Impact of increased retirement age
- Bus pass and 'Blue Badge' possible loss
- High care costs costs
- Expensive housing and food
- Care visits too short

Impact of welfare reforms on family (92 statements)

- Reduced benefits
- Poor understanding of welfare reform
- 'Bedroom tax' impact on unwell son
- Worries about future of grandchildren

Other important family issues

- Reduced budgets affecting health care
- Rising costs causing debt
- Long reapplication for 'Blue Badge'
- Less care for people in sheltered housing

Impact of welfare reforms on friends

(52 statements)

- Reduced benefits for some
- Difficulty paying fuel bills
- Loss of rooms though 'bedroom tax'
- Claimants being victimised

Other issues

- People feeling lonely and isolated
- Difficulty obtaining employment

Issues prioritised for SOPA 2014

Seminar participants were invited to choose priorities given three categories of issues. Results are listed below in order of importance (Number of votes in brackets).

1. Difficulty with bills (78)
2. Families hard hit by welfare reform (63)
3. Fight for equality and fairness for all (55)
4. Older and disabled people losing income (52)
5. Improving the image of older people (36)
6. 'Blaming' older people for needing care (36)
7. Dislocation of families via 'bedroom tax' (27)
8. Better information on financial matters (23)
9. Impact of reduced pension for women (6)

Issues selected for SOPA 2014

- ✓ Standards of care
- ✓ Cuts in welfare budgets
- ✓ Hardship in meeting bills
- ✓ Family impacts affecting older people

Compilation of the history of SOPA

Committee members Brid Cullen and Dianne Wolfson have been researching and writing the history of SOPA from 1997 when Strathclyde Elderly Forum facilitated a 'Pensioners Parliament' at the University of Stirling. They have recorded subsequent initiatives and the further exploration of the idea of a 'Pensioners Parliament' in 2010 by the Scottish Seniors Alliance (SSA). Its wide consultation found the momentum to create a separate body had no demonstrable support. How the stories of the Older People's Consultative Forum, the Scottish Older People's Assembly and the SSA linked up are described in this SOPA history. A summary of the main themes and outcomes of the five Scottish Older People's Assemblies from the first in 2009 to 2013/14 are included. This document will be available soon online.

What next?

The Scottish Government has promised further funds to support SOPA 2014. The Assembly will be held in the Debating Chamber of the Parliament on 31 October 2014. Building on insights from the 2013 Assembly and the seminars, SOPA will continue to work at increasing its impact on influencing policy issues and drawing on people's experience at grassroots level.

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The Scottish Older People's Assembly is a collaborative way to promote concerns to the Scottish and Westminster Governments. The Assembly supports or challenges legislation and policies and their implementation which have a bearing on the quality of later life in Scotland.