



May 2015

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

Message from Chair Tom Berney



I am writing in the wake of one of our most dramatic and unpredictable General Elections. The Liberal Democrats were depleted ending the coalition and we now have a new majority Conservative government. The

other feature of the election, of course, was the increase in SNP representation in Westminster. Discussions are underway on welfare policy being devolved to the Scottish Parliament. We were told prior to the election that the continuation of 'austerity' would mean another £12 billion pounds would be cut from the UK welfare budget. The new Cabinet has been appointed and frankly it looks very worrying. Politicians who previously took a hard line on welfare and pensions have been given responsibility for them.

People attending our round of SOPA meetings expressed great concern, that the 2012 Welfare Bill put a one year cap on disabled and sick people claiming contributory employment and support allowance (ESA). And that despite the House of Lords returning the bill with a request to double that limit to two years - and remove it for cancer patients until they had recovered. Their amendment was rejected. Older people at our meetings – many of them kinship carers – were worried about the impact on children. There again on learning that families with disabled children risked being £1,400 worse-off a year the House of Lords recommended that at least two-thirds of the higher rate of universal credit should be available as added protection for disabled children. That was also rejected, with the then

work and pension's minister declaring:

"Increasing spending is not an option .We simply cannot maintain the existing rates for disabled children if we are to increase the rates for severely disabled adults." If the Prime Minister sticks to his pre-election commitment not to increase any taxes for the next five years we will have to expect more of that kind of approach.

Pensions, and in particular the two-tier proposal were another major concern in our 2014 meetings but the new Pension Minister is someone who previously authored a report* which argued for making older people work longer by raising the pension age. It even recommended unpaid workfare style schemes for older workers, suggesting it was unfair that only the young are forced to work for no pay. No doubt some older people do want to work longer, but a government survey** found that only 10% of people wanted to work full time over the age of 65, whilst 26% would like some part time work. Just 22% of retired people said they missed work and the main reason given, unsurprisingly, was because they were worried about money. Only 9% of people questioned said they wanted to stay in work because they liked their job.

Read the Briefing Notes of our round of 2014/15 meetings - now on our [Events page](#), and the Assembly [Actions Points](#). It is certainly clear that we will need a stronger voice than ever if we are to defend the vulnerable against what looks like a new onslaught. SOPA will do all it can to combine the efforts of older people's organisations in achieving this.

* [A New Vision for Older Workers](#), ** [Attitudes of the over 50s to fuller working lives](#)

Update on SOPA Campaign Trail



Alan Sidaway, SOPA Vice Chair, in conversation with a member of Paisley's Sikh community.

10 post assembly local meetings were successfully delivered to raise the profile of SOPA's action plan and to receive the views of older people. The postponed meeting at Carnoustie will be held on 24 June. Further meetings will be held with LGBT groups, ethnic and cultural groups and people with disabilities.

Briefing Notes for Dalkeith, Livingston, Irvine, Kirkwall, Kilmarnock, Falkirk, Paisley, Edinburgh and Turriff have been posted on the SOPA website at the top of the [Events Page](#).



The SOPA events are funded through the Big Lottery's 'Awards for All'.

SOPA Business Plan

The Plan is based on SOPA's vision* and the successful application for funds of £65k to the Scottish Government. The work programme covers developmental and campaign actions, communications and research, regular Committee meetings, the annual Assembly and meetings with Ministers, MSPs and public officials through the year.

*SOPA's vision is for a society where all Scottish citizens are empowered and treated fairly whatever their life circumstances. SOPA focuses on ensuring older people have opportunities to have their voice heard to inform or challenge legislation and policies that may affect the quality and enjoyment of their later years.

Update: SOPA Action Points

The Assembly agreed a number of campaign activities for 2015/16. Through a range of meetings, including one with Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Equalities and Pensioner Rights Alex Neil, SOPA is making progress in influencing public policy and legislation. Examples are provided under each of the Campaign Plan headings below.

Communication and Information

Committee member and Scottish Senior Alliance Chair Bill Johnston has been leading SOPA's campaign by participating in discussions with Scottish Government and others on the Digital Inclusion Strategy. Key themes include:

- more older age-friendly awareness avoiding sole emphasis on Internet and digital aspects
- engaging with older users to co-design new services
- sharing best practice in health services and facing the challenge of co-ordination across 32 local authorities.



Let's Get On. Ensure people needing online help don't miss out in your organisation. A '[Let's get on](#)' team is moving round Scotland. Search its website for times and free places.

Community Empowerment

SOPA will be involved in the issues of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill by working with its Committee. SOPA will spread the word about how older people's groups can work with others to take advantage of changes in the law to improve citizen involvement.

SOPA calls for the enhancement and widening of the existing scheme of intergenerational engagement to overcome stereotypes and build solidarity. [Generations Working Together](#) are leading this action. See [Links page](#).



Update on Action Points (continued)

Community Safety and Housing

The SOPA Chair and Coordinator met with Police Scotland. Points raised were:

- no obvious local or national police presence
- telephone, bogus and doorstep crime
- 'hate' crime towards older people
- no third party reporting for ageist incidents.

Police Scotland provided detail of community safety plans and how to access these and contact community officers on their [community pages](#). Also download a leaflet on the [nominated neighbour scheme](#).

Tom Berney met with the Scottish Government and spoke of concerns about affordable housing. This emerged as a top priority at local SOPA meetings. All local authorities are expected to devise their own plans for the implementation of a [Scottish Housing Strategy for Older People, 2012 -2021](#). SOPA suggests that it might be useful if local groups could enquire on implementation progress.

Health and Social Care



The SOPA Committee agrees that liaising with various carer organisations (e.g. [Carers Scotland](#), [Carers Trust Scotland](#) or [Coalition of Carers in Scotland](#)) will progress its campaign actions to recognise the vital role of unpaid carers.

As the [Carers \(Scotland\) Bill](#) moves through Parliament, SOPA can lend its support to groups as they strengthen this Bill to maximise its impact.

Living and Dying Well: The SOPA Chair and Coordinator attended the first meeting of the Scottish Government Palliative and End of Life Stakeholders Group in Glasgow on 24th March and the second meeting on 28 April, organised by the [Scottish Partnership of Palliative Care](#).

The purpose of this group is to contribute to and inform the ongoing development of a [national framework](#) for palliative and end of life care. This involved sharing experiences on what is important when dealing with a life-limiting illness to the person and their family. Key messages were proposed and SOPA will continue to participate in this important stakeholder group and be represented on its National Advisory Group. Follow [blog on end of life care](#) research taking place at Glasgow University.

SOPA's Coordinator gave evidence to the Equal Opportunities Committee on Age and Social Isolation during January and March.

Retirement, Pensions and Money Matters

The Scottish Government is currently looking at pension and benefit arrangements within the context of the [Smith Commission](#) and the SOPA Chair has a direct link to the DWP through his attendance at the [UK Advisory Forum on Ageing](#).

Transport, Travel and Environment

Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee's [stage one report](#) on the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Bill seems an unlikely venue for SOPA's Chair. However, it also included the licensing of taxis and private cars to which Tom Berney made a contribution. Read also about Ferry Services in [Action Notes](#).

Christine and John McGiveron of the Scottish Pensioners Forum attended the first Transport Accessibility Summit on SOPA's behalf. The aim was to ensure the voice of disabled people are included in policy making when the Scottish Government launches a [Disability Delivery Plan](#) in June.

Christine's report relates to Abellio/Scotrail, First Bus, Community Transport Association, Sustrans and Visit Scotland. The report has been uploaded under [Action Notes](#) - "Transport Accessibility".

Special Events

Two dates for this year's diary

1. Christian Allard MSP is sponsoring the 2015 Assembly in the Parliament on **Monday 5th October**. (More to follow.)



2. The Garden Lobby, Scottish Parliament. **Wednesday 9th September**, 18.00 - 20.00.

Christine Grahame MSP is sponsoring a SOPA meeting in the Garden Lobby of the Parliament. This is an opportunity to network, socialise and meet MSPs. If you would like to set up a stall to promote your work and collective concerns of your group contact Glenda Watt.

LGBT Age



LGBT-AGE provides activities and opportunities for older people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender. As

well as social events it offers a befriending service through volunteers. It's a great way for older LGBT people to socialise and feel less cut off. Take a look at [what's coming up](#). LGBT Age also run training for professionals so older people's services become more inclusive, and it produces [resources](#). It's gratifying to see

many organisations now willing to work at becoming actively welcoming. Our short film, [Are We Being Served?](#) depicts older LGBT people generously sharing their experiences of life and accessing services.

LGBT's Reference Group encourages people to discuss community issues and provide consultations and feedback to policymakers and service providers for older people. If you are interested in getting involved contact [Lynda](#).

'My Home, My Rights, My Care'

This year's [Scottish Care](#) conference takes place on Friday 5 June at Glasgow's Marriott Hotel and will be chaired by SOPA's Tom Berney. It is specifically for care at home and housing support sectors, and themes will be human rights, partnership and personalisation.

There is not a better time to focus on what the future of homecare provision should look like, and to shape this in partnership with cross-sector health and care providers, Scottish Government, commissioners and of course, older people themselves. These are issues that are at the heart of SOPA's Action Points on health and national standards of social care.

Further details from [Becca Gatherum](#).

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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.