



2013 Report



The Assembly on 5th December 2013

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Participants at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre on 5 December

KEY MESSAGES

What the Assembly aims to do

SOPA is here to ensure that 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 in Scotland, and the main Assembly event itself, to identify concerns about life and living.

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.

Issues to be progressed by the Committee are on page 4. They arose from the SOPA 2013 Assembly and the seminars held in 2014 in three cities. Chair Tom Berney attended these events and has also addressed various local organisations.

Blown by a gale! SOPA Assembly - 5 December

Severe weather affected the main Assembly at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre in December, with travel disruption accounting for two thirds of the delegates and contributors not reaching the venue. However, those attending viewed the films produced by SOPA in 2013 covering money matters, productive citizenship and grandparents as kinship carers. They also heard a rousing presentation by Vice Chair Liz O'Neill on the need for older adults to engage actively in community life.

The discussions on the impact of welfare changes on older people were postponed until the seminars in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. Organising these was ambitious with SOPA's limited resources. However, councils generously provided rooms and equipment, although there were challenges with computers and projectors in locations using different systems. Despite this, attendance and feedback were good and people were able to prioritise the concerns they wish to raise at the 2014 Assembly.

What SOPA highlighted in 2013

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Role of older people in the engagement and co-production of services
- ✓ Dangers of electronic cigarettes

At the SOPA seminars people agreed with the Committee that there is more need than ever for views to be aired in 2014. They asked for a higher profile for Assembly voices, and they made clear that having good policies in place does not guarantee good delivery of services which help people maintain their independence.

Issues SOPA is raising in 2014

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



Delegates expressing their views at Glasgow City Chambers in February 2014.

Introduction



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 that our Assembly and our Committee comprise delegates from the main organisations representing older people's interests in Scotland. Most are volunteers. That broad spectrum of representation and interests allows us to present a united front to government. 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.

Chair Tom Berney

"Being involved at this stage allows us to directly influence policies rather than just criticise afterwards. However having well-intentioned policies is one thing, but ensuring better care flows from them is another. We still have many battles to fight."

Actions from SOPA 2012

Ministerial meetings

On 23 January 2013 representatives of the SOPA Committee presented the 2012 Assembly report to Alex Neil, MSP, and Minister for Health and Wellbeing. Further Ministerial meetings were held in 2013 and more are planned. The Scottish Government continues to support SOPA and the integration of the experience and voice of older people in the development of legislation, policies and services at strategic and local level.

Cross party group

The Scottish Parliament promotes and builds on the involvement of older people and their views 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. As a consequence, the Highland Senior Citizens Network (HSCN) no longer wishes to propose or support a 'Vote of no Confidence' in the Care Inspectorate. The process began when HSCN met with the Chief Executive of the Care Inspectorate in January 2013 with concerns over the quality of care in some local care and nursing homes shared. The Network representatives also attended a Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing and made their views clear.

The Highland Senior Citizens Network now records that subsequent actions of the Inspectorate following their meetings have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated. Whilst the Network realises there is some way to go to raise the quality of care uniformly across Scotland, it is clear that the Inspectorate is now rigorously applying its criteria. Also, when necessary, it is willing to make judgements favourable to vulnerable residents - for example, in its actions over Clachnaharry, Highview and Marine House Nursing Homes.

Care, support and active ageing

At a national level, SOPA committee members have met and discussed care concerns with civil servants and COSLA, with further meetings planned. Local Authorities and NHS Boards work together in different ways to improve the quality of care for older people in all care settings. It is important that the experience and voice of older people influences the implementation of policies and services, particularly those directly targeted at end of life care, personalisation, care and support. SOPA is working with the Joint Improvement Team at Scottish Government to assist in developing the targets for the integration of adult social care and the NHS.

Voluntary organisations, communities and individuals together

Over 40 people at Age Scotland's Regional Assemblies made contributions to three short films. Two were created specifically to be shown at SOPA events and are now available on YouTube. [Productive Citizenship](#) features people speaking about the importance of staying connected and being part of a community in later life, especially in rural areas. It was clear that the risk of loneliness and lack of purpose was ever present in modern society, and people should make the effort (and be encouraged) to find out what is on offer, and enable participation for self and others. A range of activities including volunteering, fundraising, campaigning, new hobbies or simply making new friends of all ages, were spoken about as adding meaning, happiness and good health to older age, benefiting all generations and enriching the whole community. The second film about [Money Matters](#) gives voice to the concerns of people about how they will cope financially in later life. The films have created a springboard for discussions in other settings too. The third film on care issues provides valuable evidence on the impact of care services that fall short of policy expectations.



SOPA Committee

The Committee considered the Assembly 2012 evaluation, the role of the Consultative Forum for Older People and the Steering Group. Subsequently, a new chair and vice chair were appointed and more organisations joined the newly-named SOPA Committee to provide wider representation. A written protocol was agreed, setting out how the Committee would operate.

A report commissioned for the Committee - **'Identifying Priorities and Gap Areas in Engagement and Co-productive Activity: A mapping exercise'** (Edinburgh Napier University, 2013), identified to what extent organisations are currently engaging directly with older people to shape their services. It concluded that participating or being engaged does not necessarily mean that people have a clearly heard voice. There is

variation too in the way in which people are involved or want to be involved. Therefore, more openness and participation are not necessarily linked to greater empowerment. This being the case, SOPA should ensure that people are not only encouraged to express opinions, but also that policy makers and organisations are receptive to these opinions, give clear justifications for policies and practices, consider real changes and supply feedback on comments and criticisms. Click to read [summary leaflet](#).

SOPA is now involved in the Scottish Government's Development Group for Older People's Care and is able to raise issues related to quality of care and length of home care visits. Involvement with the Government and the COSLA group dealing with Development of Outcomes for Integrated Health & Social Care, also allows SOPA to directly influence policies at critical stages. (See list of Committee members on p13.)

Fifth Scottish Older People's Assembly



The Assembly held on 5th December in the Edinburgh International Conference Centre was disrupted by severe weather resulting in many speakers and delegates having to cancel. However, out of 193 registrations 85 were able to attend. It was decided to condense the programme, postponing the 'Impact of Welfare Reform on Older People'. However, the films 'Productive Citizenship' and 'Grandparents as Kinship Carers', were presented. 13 people attended a simultaneous SOPA event in Inverness which covered welfare reform and

improvements to publicise Highland activity and opportunities.

The first film to be shown in Edinburgh featured grandparents and the discrimination they face as [Kinship Carers](#), with full parental responsibilities, but fewer payments than foster parents. This highlighted the intergenerational impact of this injustice, and its harmful impact on the young people in their care. Productive Citizenship (link on P 7) which was filmed at Age Scotland Regional Assemblies was introduced by the chief executive of Age Scotland, Brian Sloan.

Liz O'Neill, Vice-Chair of SOPA echoed this theme of being a participative member of society - "Active, engaged.... and visible!" She reflected the thoughts of many when she said: "I want to be a 'Grey Panther', a 'Silver Fox'. I want to be heard and listened to."

The activities at the Edinburgh Assembly were filmed and the morning's proceedings can be viewed at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/SOPA13

Minister's speech

Shona Robison, Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport & Equalities was among those caught up in the disruption, but her written speech is on the [SOPA13](#) webpage, along with her responses to written questions by Committee members. She stated that concerns raised at the Assembly 2012 about standards of care had been advanced with

the Chief Nursing Officer Ros Moore, to look at how care systems and quality can be improved. SOPA is also now involved in the current Review of National Care Standards. In addition, the Government has funded Highland Senior Citizens Network to produce a DVD to raise awareness around receiving care. She welcomed this initiative, and recognised the extent of the contribution that many volunteers already make in their own communities.

SOPA seminars



As a result of the curtailed Assembly, seminars were run in Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh in 2014. Of the 164 participants, around three quarters were women and one quarter men. The programme included a presentation by Bill Scott, Policy Director of Inclusion Scotland, on the impact of welfare reform on older people. After questions and discussion, the views and experiences of the delegates were recorded.

Welfare reform highlights by Bill Scott

£22 billion cuts are underway on UK welfare benefits* with more than half affecting households with a disabled person (some of whom may be older**). The impact in Scotland will be £4.5 billion taken out of local economies***. Thus Scottish disabled people will lose over £1 billion by 2015. Scotland is affected adversely because it has more people with impairments and poor health.

50,000 people aged 60+ in the UK are directly affected by the 'bedroom tax' while women aged 45+ with caring responsibilities are also affected. Although tenants over pension age are exempt, carers if tenants, are not exempt.

Regarding fuel poverty, each year around 2,000 Scots aged 65+ die in winter compared to other months. About 25% pensioner households live in fuel poverty, but the proportion rises to 40% with an income less than £200 per week. For every 5% increase in energy prices, as many as 46,000 households run into difficulties. Recent price increases have added as much as 12% to bills. When benefits are cut, some households are left juggling paying for rent, heating and eating.



* CPAG: Welfare Reform: what it means for families at risk of poverty

** Demos: Destination Unknown

*** Scottish Government Welfare Reform - Further Provision (Scotland Act 2012) Initial Report – 2013

Delegate views on the impact of welfare reforms



Capturing the way delegates saw the effects of welfare reforms was the priority for the sessions. This was done through electronic note-taking, facilitated small group discussions, written statements and a voting system. General surprise and some disbelief were expressed at the extent of welfare reforms and the impact of changes on the poorest that may be retired or disabled, in social housing, in receipt of Pension Credit or women who had paid the small insurance stamp. However, some people were reluctant to discuss their personal circumstances. Highland Senior Citizens Network noted that the Highland Council has campaigned vigorously against the "bedroom tax" and has sought an exemption for communities of less than 3000.

During discussions 218 delegate statements were registered which are categorised in the lists below. While there is a definite impact of welfare reforms on some older people, there is more impact on their families. Other important issues were cited by delegates and these are included below.



Impact of welfare reforms on self (74 statements)

- Difficulty paying fuel bills
- Reduced pension for women who paid the 'small stamp'
- Reduced accommodation through 'bedroom tax'
- Negative experience of ATOS assessment

Other important issues

- Impact of increased retirement age
- Fear of poverty on losing job
- Fear of losing concessionary travel and 'Blue Badge'
- Care costs too high
- Uncontrolled immigration
- Expensive housing and food
- High pensioner tax
- Difficulty accessing transport to some hospitals
- Concern about increasing reliance of volunteers
- Care visits that are too short
- Cost of community care alarms

Impact of welfare reforms on family (92 statements)

- Reduced benefits
- Negative experience of ATOS Assessment
- Poor understanding of welfare reform
- Loss of overnight stays with unwell son through 'bedroom tax'
- Worries about financial future of grandchildren
- Claimants being victimised when there is little real fraud

Other important family issues

- Reduced budgets affecting health care
- Personal medication taken away by family
- Difficulty paying fuel bills on line
- Difficulty obtaining information on dementia
- Care costs too high
- Cost of care alarms
- 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 older and disabled people
- Negative experience of ATOS assessments
- Difficulty paying fuel bills
- Financial inequality amongst friends
- Loss of accommodation though 'bedroom tax'
- Kinship grandparent (through own offspring's drug problems) in one/two bedroom house with no financial support for children.
- Claimants being victimised when there is little real fraud

Other issues

- People feeling lonely and isolated
- Difficulty obtaining employment as an older person

Issues for SOPA 2014

All seminar participants were invited to vote for SOPA 2014 priorities. They were asked to support one statement or another in three categories. An electronic voting system and the old fashioned show of hands were used and votes were recorded. 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)

What do people think of SOPA?



All the events organised by SOPA have been evaluated, including the views of the delegates. This work was undertaken by the Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University. The majority of respondents rated the Assembly and seminars as either very useful or moderately useful. Delegates at Edinburgh on 5th December appreciated that a shortened Assembly went ahead despite missing speakers and delegates. Although there were technical difficulties at the Glasgow seminar, all seminars provided opportunities for discussion and hearing other people's views. This was valued although some people felt that topics were not always appropriate and they wanted to discuss wider issues. There was a mixed response on whether local and national meetings are better, with some stating both are valuable. While most people agreed or strongly agreed that SOPA gave a voice to older people, others were neutral.

Delegates were disappointed not to have been addressed by representatives of the Scottish Parliament and have had the opportunity to ask questions direct. There was also a need to see clear outcomes from SOPA Seminars and know that issues are being taken forward. There was a general desire to see SOPA increase its influence in policy-making and implementation, and to find a way to attract significant press coverage. This would raise awareness not only of older people's issues, but also how the lack of support for the older generation can have a ripple-down effect (for example, on the grandchildren of kinship carers) and is to the detriment of a thriving and equal society for all.



Improvements for SOPA

The following recommendations made by delegates are being addressed by the Committee:

- Increase SOPA's profile in terms of government influence and awareness among the general population - for example, achieve press coverage and wider circulation of the eNewsletter, promote the website and SOPA films
- Enable and encourage older people to have a voice and express their views
- Make clear presentation of key messages at the Assembly.

Delegates also made suggestions for issues to address in future Assemblies. These centred on five broad themes: equality issues, finance, health and social care provision, infrastructure and participation.

Compilation of the history of SOPA

Committee members Brid Cullen and Dianne Wolfson have been researching and writing the history of SOPA. It began in 1997 when Strathclyde Elderly Forum facilitated a 'Pensioners Parliament' at the University of Stirling. This event was attended by over 300 delegates from across Scotland who proposed a legislated 'Pensioners Parliament'. However, no action followed with the impending elections to the Scottish Parliament in May 1999.

At this time, the older person's agenda was set in the context of 'Better Government for Older People' and the 'Older People's Consultative Forum'. Following on in 2007 came the publication 'All Our Futures - A Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population' by the Scottish Executive. This document included commitments to develop significant resources to deliver opportunities for Scotland's ageing population.

Exploring further the concept of the 'Pensioners Parliament', the Scottish Seniors Alliance (SSA) ran a consultation in 2010. Although the SSA gathered a substantial number of affirmative statements from their roadshows around the country, there was a minimal response from MSPs. How the stories of the Older People's Consultative Forum, the Scottish Older People's Assembly and the SSA linked up are described in the SOPA history. A summary of the main themes and outcomes of the five Scottish Older People's Assemblies from 2009 – 2013/14 are also included. This document will be available online soon.

What next?

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

The SOPA Committee 2013/14

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Betty Farmer, Cathy Hewit, Rose Jackson, Cathy Leach, Eric Souter and Joan Turner also served on the SOPA Committee from 2011 to 2013. (See www.scotopa.org.uk)

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New website: www.scotopa.org.uk



**A voice for older
people in Scotland**



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