



2014 Report



31st October 2014
Scottish Parliament Debating Chamber

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Chair's Foreword



2014 will be remembered as the year of the independence referendum. Throughout Scotland people turned out in unprecedented numbers to become involved in the debate about the future of their country.

Against that background SOPA also expanded its role in promoting active citizenship. It organised meetings of older people and their organisations across the country where we encouraged them to take pride in the vital role they play in our society and to celebrate the longevity dividend that increasing life expectancy brings. At each meeting the delegates discussed the matters they felt were important to them and decided which issues they would like raised in our Assembly.

These topics then became the subject of question and discussion groups in the Scottish Parliament on 31st October. Their conclusions will become SOPA's agenda to pursue with the

appropriate bodies in 2015. This has to be a little vague at this point as it is not yet clear what recommendations from the Smith Report on further devolution will be implemented, or indeed what type of Westminster government will be in office after the 2015 election.

SOPA will continue to promote the interests of older people no matter what political challenge we face. There is much to be done. The UK is presently a country of declining standards as wages, pensions and working conditions are being depressed. The Institute of Fiscal Studies has forecast that the planned further cuts in public spending will require a "*re-imagining of the nature of the state*" and that the impact on public services will be "*colossal*". Even the new retirement pension is pitched below the national poverty level.

All of this is bound to impact on older people. It is essential that we are a united voice on protecting our conditions. SOPA will be working to achieve maximum unity from our own constituent members and other organisations by continuing and developing our national consultation meetings.

Thanks to all of you who have participated in our activities this year. The level of involvement and the feedback from our Assemblies and seminars has been very positive. This is gratifying, and it would be good to finish on a cheerful note, but I'm afraid that with the present forecasts of even greater "austerity" cuts, it will be a continuing struggle.

I tell you naught for your comfort

Yea naught for your desire

Save that the sky grows darker yet

And the sea rises higher.

'The Ballad of the White Horse' (1911) by G. K. Chesterton

Tom Berney, December 2014

KEY MESSAGES

What the Scottish Older People's 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. The Committee's remit is contained in its constitution. This document can be found at www.scotopa.org.uk/sopacommittee.asp. Every year the Assembly has used its links with older citizens, groups and organisations in Scotland, and the main Assembly event itself, to promote the assets and 'longevity dividend' of older people and identify concerns about life and living.

What the Committee does

SOPA's Committee comprises volunteer representatives of organisations across Scotland linked to later life that carries forward the work of the annual Assembly. SOPA now has good access to government and can raise issues directly with civil servants, Ministers, MSPs and with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Through workshops and knowledge exchange, the Committee has improved and enhanced its confidence and capacity to influence Scottish Government, Westminster Government and the Scottish Parliament. It aims to become more experienced and prominent in its role as an effective, democratic and accountable commentator on systems such as inclusion, social justice, health, social care, social security, transport and justice. The main SOPA outcomes during 2014 are listed in Table 1 on page 9.

The Assembly 2014

Over 200 delegates attended the Assembly at the Scottish Parliament on 31 October. In the Debating Chamber they heard from SOPA Chair Tom Berney about its 'Campaign Trail', followed by a presentation on the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill by Kevin Stewart MSP, Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee, and a keynote address by Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights. Delegates then moved to the Parliamentary Committee Rooms for lunch followed by presentations, discussions and action agreements on themes from the Campaign Trail:

- ✓ Communication and Information
- ✓ Community Empowerment
- ✓ Community Safety and Housing
- ✓ Health and Social Care
- ✓ Retirement, Pensions and Money Matters
- ✓ Transport, Travel and Environment

Facilitated participation in each workshop was lively and productive. Delegates prioritised action points based on issues from the grass roots during the SOPA campaign around Scotland.



What people think of SOPA

SOPA Local Meetings and SOPA Main Assembly 2014 Evaluation

The Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University conducted the evaluation of some of the SOPA Local Meetings and the Main Assembly in 2014 on behalf of the SOPA Committee.

Between June and September 2014 SOPA held local meetings around the country, of which eight were evaluated. These eight local meetings drew a total of 363 delegates. The vast majority of those who responded to the evaluation (91%) found these local meetings useful - with 65.7% rating it as very or extremely useful. Respondents appreciated the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with other people, and the information they received.

The 2014 Main Assembly was attended by around 210 delegates from all over Scotland, and 96% of those who responded to the evaluation said they found it useful - with 65.7% rating it as very or extremely useful. This year the Main Assembly was held in the Scottish Parliament. Respondents valued meeting other people from across Scotland, the opportunity to have their opinions heard and having access to MSPs. However, the security requirements of the Scottish Parliament and design of the building raised some practical and logistical issues.

Most respondents at the Main Assembly (63%) and the eight Local Meetings (68%) did feel that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland. Respondents valued the opportunity to raise concerns, and the links that SOPA has with the Scottish Government, and stressed the importance of making sure that all older people in Scotland are aware of SOPA and able to participate and make their views heard. It was suggested, however, that it should be made clearer how these views are taken forward, and the resulting action taken by the Scottish Government, local authorities, health boards and other relevant agencies. Feedback from the respondents also suggests that the SOPA Committee perhaps needs to better communicate its rationale, procedures and the necessity of current arrangements, in order that the role of SOPA is better understood.



Issues for SOPA 2015

The actions produced and listed below were presented in the Parliament and for campaigning by SOPA during 2015/16.

Communication and Information

1. SOPA calls for dedicated internet access for older people (for example, computers in libraries and community centres for people with impaired sight) and equivalent support for face to face methods of communication.
2. SOPA calls for the comprehensive scheme of intergenerational engagement that already exists to be enhanced and widened to overcome stereotypes and build solidarity between generations.
3. SOPA Committee is called upon to devise more ways to reach out to older people with particular needs, for example, people from the black and minority ethnic, deaf and blind and LGBT communities.

Community Empowerment

1. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to ensure that when engaging with the community the consultation must be clear and in a format that can be understood by everyone, allowing enough time for people to have meaningful actions that can be reported back to their community within a reasonable time scale. This will enable people to inform themselves and others.
2. Scope and width of the opportunities provided by the Community and Empowerment (Scotland) Bill needs to be clearly communicated to allow all communities to empower themselves, particularly through participation requests.
3. While recognising many different kinds of communities of both geographical and of common community interests, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill must recognise communities of age, that is older people in the ethnic minority and the LGBT groups, to empower them directly.

Community Safety and Housing

1. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that a variety of suitable housing, to include sheltered housing and assisted housing with 24 hour care, particularly in the rural areas is available for older and disabled people, with an appropriate amount of housing being ring fenced for use only by older people. New housing should be accessible and of an appropriate size too.
2. SOPA calls on the Government to increase the visible presence of police officers, particularly in rural communities, and to enforce traffic speed restrictions to enable older people to cross the road safely and with plenty of time.
3. SOPA believes that older people should have the autonomy to choose their own energy suppliers and factors regardless of the type of housing they live in.



Health and Social Care

1. SOPA calls for all care policy makers and care providers to give respect to the humanity and dignity of people who are cared for as well as paid and non paid carers.
2. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government and all local authorities to develop and implement a national standard for care at home to ensure that all health and social care staff are trained in the delivery of care, receive a living wage, and that all people across Scotland receive the same standard of care. In the time of budget cuts all of this should be cost effective.

Retirement, Pensions and Money Matters

1. SOPA expresses grave concern that the Westminster Government's intention to introduce a new flat rate pension in 2016 will create a two-tier pension system. SOPA calls for urgent action to ensure that everyone in receipt of a current state pension will be guaranteed a single rate pension above the poverty threshold of £178 per week for 2016.
2. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government to recognise the contribution to society of all non-paid carers and the savings made by them to the Government. SOPA calls on the Government to financially recognise the savings all carers make whether or not they are pensioners.
3. SOPA is called upon to organise a programme of scrutiny of all local authority and undertaker charges linked to funerals.

Transport, Travel and Environment

1. SOPA is dismayed that many people in later life cannot benefit from concessionary travel due to disability or the non-existence of appropriate public transport. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government and all transport providers, including community transport to work together to provide a link to an integrated transport system for all.
2. Given the emphasis the World Health Organisation places on the relationship between health and social care and built environments, SOPA is concerned about the ongoing closure of public toilets. SOPA calls on COSLA to work with local authorities to ensure outdoor places support active ageing, by improving and extending access to all public and green spaces, including toilets.
3. SOPA is disappointed that, despite repeated representations, the traffic signage between hospitals in South Lanarkshire is still inadequate.

SOPA 2014: MAIN REPORT

What the Scottish Older People's Assembly aims to do?

The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) exists to give a strong voice to older people about their concerns and experience of life in Scotland. SOPA identifies issues that worry the older population and conveys messages from the grassroots direct to Scottish and Westminster Governments. SOPA contributes to and supports policy that has a positive impact on later life and challenges when implementation falls short. SOPA also raises issues about inequalities because of age, and about successful volunteering where the voice and experience of older adults are making a difference across generations. 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 has improved and enhanced its influence on Scottish Government, Westminster Government and the Scottish Parliament.

- Six meetings were held following an agreed action plan. This aims to focus the work of SOPA and its Committee and raise the experience of older people in relation to the Scottish National Action Plan on Human Rights, and Reshaping Care for Older People.
- 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. Highland Senior Citizens Network is now aware that the Inspectorate is applying its criteria and making judgements favourable to vulnerable residents.
- The Committee contributed to and supported the Highland Senior Citizens Network to deliver its conference on "Human Rights – what's in it for us". The event was held on 23 April 2014 in Inverness.
- Committee members have attended and contributed to Scottish Government and COSLA policy development meetings on health and social care integration, development of older people's care and standards of care.
- Support was provided to the Borders Elder Voice event on physical activity and active ageing held in Galashiels on 7th May 2014.
- Participation has continued too in the later life working group of the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy. The SOPA co-ordinator presented a perspective about 'A Scotland for all Ages' relating to "Social connections and health across the life course" on 21 May 2014 at the University of Edinburgh (Medical School).
- Committee members met once with COSLA representatives and with a Scottish Government Minister on three occasions. This included the Minister's attendance at a Committee Meeting where she heard views on the proposed Pensions arrangements.
- SOPA has contributed to the Scottish Parliament's Cross Party Group on Age, Ageing and Older People where Age Scotland is the secretariat. Other 2014 outcomes are listed in Figure 1 below.

Table 2: Outcomes for SOPA during 2014

Item	Outcome
An improved profile of SOPA	An independent website and a bi-monthly e-newsletter were created and a communications advisor appointed.
Financial viability	SOPA received £40k from the Scottish Government and £10k from the Big Lottery
A positive and productive democratic experience for SOPA delegates	SOPA's independent evaluation of local meetings and its main event shows that the majority of participants found the experience very useful with suggestions for future arrangements
Engage with the views and experience of older people at grassroots	From 12 SOPA meetings in 11 locations the views of older people were gathered from grassroots. Local and social media were used to profile the events. Presentations of the views were made in the Scottish Parliament to an audience of over 200 people. The event was also webcast live.
Improved explicit and constructive dialogue between SOPA and Ministers	Three meetings were held during 2014 between SOPA Committee members and Scottish Government Ministers.
An improvement in the monitoring of care standards	Highland Senior Citizens Network has withdrawn its 'Vote of no Confidence in the Care Inspectorate'
Pensions and Benefits	Following the Referendum SOPA submitted its request for devolvment of Pensions and Welfare Benefits from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament This was based on the views of older people gathered during 2013 and 2014.
Pensioners' Poverty	SOPA continued to raise the issue of poverty, including the use of food banks by some older people.
Kinship care and grandparents	SOPA raised the issue that no older person is disadvantaged in supporting their families or by family in receipt of welfare benefits.
SOPA's policy, values and actions are acceptable to older people in Scotland	SOPA's evaluation shows that some older people regard SOPA as having a stronger voice but that improvements are suggested for the functioning of its Committee.
Reach vulnerable and less informed older adults who may have difficulties expressing their view.	Many delegates who attended local meetings and the main event had not heard of SOPA.
WHO Global Age Friendly Cities and Communities Programme	All of the issues listed below affect the older population and therefore are important to SOPA. Human rights, accessible transport, accessible tourism, communication, retraining, lifelong learning, new work opportunities, employment anti-discrimination, self-directed support, portability of care, long-term conditions and disabilities affecting older people, improved funding, urban and rural isolation, cultural issues, the allocation of Scottish Government funding, and end of life care. See http://agefriendlyworld.org/en/

Local meetings

Between June and September 2014, SOPA held meetings for older people in different parts of Scotland. Arrangements were made with existing forums of older people and other meetings were planned with the local authority or a voluntary organisation. Over 400 people representing these organisations attended 12 meetings in 11 locations. Two meetings were held in Edinburgh and one in South Lanarkshire; Glasgow; Dundee; Ayr; Penicuik; Dumfries; Kirkcaldy; Stirling; Inverness and Lerwick

Participant numbers ranged from 83 people in Ayr to 14 people in Lerwick and Dumfries. Presentations at the meetings were of SOPA, Human Rights and subjects by local contributors. For example, Dundee covered the importance of 'speaking up', Ayr included carers' issues, Stirling dealt with mental health issues relating to older people and the Penicuik meeting was held in new extra care housing.

Following the presentations and small group discussion each participant was invited to anonymously respond in writing to the following question:

If you had the chance to speak at the Scottish Older People's Assembly in the Scottish Parliament what one action would you request to benefit the older people in Scotland?

261 responses were received. Most were related to health and social care (111 responses), followed by 'Community Empowerment' (68 responses), pensions, retirement & money (62 responses), safety & housing (58 responses), transport, travel & environment (43 responses) and communication (24 responses). However responses from each meeting produced a different set of priorities. For example, Edinburgh 2 prioritised Community Empowerment while Edinburgh 1, Shetland and South Lanarkshire identified retirement, pensions and money as a priority. Dumfries identified safety and housing as its main issue of concern.

Briefing papers under the six headings below were prepared for each of the SOPA workshops. Details of these can be found in this Report on pages 15, 16 and 17.

- Communication and Information
- Community Empowerment
- Community Safety & Housing
- Health and Social Care
- Pensions, retirement & money
- Transport, Travel & Environment

The evaluation of the local meetings was conducted by the Employment Research Institute at Edinburgh Napier University. 239 evaluation forms were completed at 8 local SOPA meetings. The draft report states that the majority of respondents rated the meetings as either very or extremely useful. Recommendations have highlighted suggestions for future meetings.



Glasgow
meeting -
August
2014

The 2014 Assembly



Over 200 delegates from around 40 of Scotland's leading older people's organisations with representatives from many of the 32 local council areas attended. The event was webcast live on the Scottish Parliament website: <http://www.scottishparliament.tv>

Elaine Smith, MSP Deputy Presiding Officer, chaired the event and introduced SOPA Chair Tom Berney. He spoke of the "Campaign Trail" and the voice, experience and concerns from the grassroots. He was followed by Kevin Stewart MSP, Convener of the Local Government Committee, on the 'Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill and its implications for older people'. Finally, Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equality and Pensioners' Rights spoke on 'Older people in Scotland following the Referendum'. Appendix 1 provides detail of the speeches.

The Deputy Providing Officer invited questions from the floor and 16 delegates raised the issues below. Responses were provided by Tom Berney, Kevin Stewart MSP and Shona Robison MSP.

Delegates Questions

James Miller, G.M.B. Scotland Retired Members Association

- Difficulty accessing gardening allotments in North Ayrshire
- Who has access to the Minster regarding older people's issues?

Helena Scott, Action in Mind Stirling

- People aged 65+ are subject to age discrimination and cannot continue to access services for adults

John McCallion, Elderly Forum Saltcoats

- SOPA's submission to the Smith's Commission appeared to be without consultation with older people.

Deborah Ritchie, University of Edinburgh and North Berwick Community Council

- What plans exist to strengthen community councils and enable them to be more representative of the views of their communities?

George Paterson, Scottish Seniors Alliance, Aberdeen

- Will Welfare Reform be a reserved matter for Westminster and will this have a negative impact on bus passes, free prescriptions, free personal care, blue badges, the bedroom tax and could state pensions be means tested?

Dougie Malloy, East Kilbride Seniors' Forum

- Improve public transport to reduce isolation.

Surjit Chowdhary, Scottish Pensioners' Forum

- What steps are being taken to mitigate against the closure of day centres for older people from the black and minority ethnic communities?

Rohini Sharma Joshi, Trust Housing Association (Equality Scotland) and SOPA Committee

- What are the outcomes from SOPA and its Committee?

Jim Park, Scottish Pensioners Forum and Civil Service Pensioners Alliance

- Good to know that older people are an asset and that SOPA has been used to bring a consensus of older people to the Scottish Parliament. However, I am worried that SOPA may be the only vehicle.

Helen Biggins, Seniors Together South Lanarkshire and SOPA Committee

- Please support us in trying to influence local authorities and health boards to insure that older people's voices are heard at the operational and management level for the integration of health and social care.

Anne Berney, Seniors Together South Lanarkshire

- What will the Scottish Government do to assist local authorities in meeting the housing needs of older people?

**Alan Sidaway, National Pensioners Convention Scotland and SOPA Committee
and Samuel Gibson, Unite the Union affiliated to NPC**

- What will the Scottish Government do to prevent Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnerships (TTIP) in Scotland?

Bill Johnston, University of Strathclyde, Centre for Lifelong Learning

- How will the Government undertake public consultation and public involvement in the future?

Bill Martin, Renfrewshire Seniors Forum

- There are many other organisations throughout Scotland that the Government could be listening to as well as SOPA.

Marion Mitchell, A City for All Ages Advisory Group, Edinburgh

- Will the Government have funds to deal with the Smith Commission's proposals?



Responses

Responses to the questions were provided by keynote speakers:

Tom Berney

- The deadline for putting submissions to the Smith Commission was that day. Our input was based on views expressed at consultation meetings; basically we believe many benefits are better tailored to suit local circumstances (e.g. bedroom tax, housing benefits.)
- We believe that transport decisions should be appropriate to the people who use them.
- Regarding Renfrewshire being invited for the first time, SOPA has an open invitation to all older people in Scotland: we distribute a newsletter, have a website - everyone and every organisation is welcome to come along.
- In terms of which organisation the Government is going to respond to, this is not something I can answer. We are trying to be involved in policy decisions; we have been invited to Committees and to put forward our views on how to make things better.
- From the Government point of view, it's impractical to have all organisations represented here on policy committees. As volunteers we do our best to go around the country, to ask for feedback, we do our best to make sure our views are supported by older people in Scotland and I don't know that we can do more. SOPA is happy to consult with any older people's groups. We look forward to hearing from you.

Kevin Stewart MSP

- Garden allotments in North Ayrshire. We have found that availability and systems are very good in some areas but in others, such as yours, there are long waiting times. We would be pleased to receive an email from you describing your experience as the more information we have to scrutinise that aspect of the Bill, the better.
- Age discrimination. A growing number of people in Scotland want to see all equality legislation devolved to this Parliament to ensure its enforcement.
- Community Councils. In some areas community councils are very strong and have a good voice but in other areas they are nonexistent. We have found in our consultation that some local authorities communicate very well with community councils by listening to their views while in other areas this does not happen. We would find it very useful to have your experience on these issues.
- Welfare reform. We would like to hear your experience on the changes that have already happened and your view on the changes that have to come so that we can influence Westminster.
- Ethnic day care centres are closing down. Perhaps you can make a 'Participation Request' to the local authority or other bodies to provide reasons for the closure or a change in service?
- Health and Social Care Integration Transition Boards. We need to have the experience of people who are in receipt of services. Perhaps you can seek a 'Participation Request'?



Shona Robison, MSP

• Meeting SOPA and other organisations. I'm not going to refuse to meet anyone. It is about getting a balance and for the Government to have a clear idea of what the view is on a particular issue. It is helpful for me to have a united position on some issues, particularly when we get into detail of policy development. It is for you and your organisations to resolve how you agree a united position on particular issues.

- Age discrimination is a very serious issue. We have asked for equality legislation to be devolved here to the Parliament that would mean we can use the law in Scotland to strengthen equality duties.
- Strengthen local democracy. While seeking powers for the Scottish Parliament we are also asking to strengthen local democracy in Edinburgh as well as the rest of the country.
- Welfare Reform. We can't shy away from the impact of budget restrictions. For example, bedroom tax mitigation cost £50 million and this money had to come from other budgets. This is the reason we want full financial powers in the Parliament to grow budget and be able to spend more on the priorities of the people in Scotland. This is a very real issue for the Smith Commission.
- Transport. This is not just about concessions but where the buses travel. I will take this issue to the Transport Minister.
- Integration of Health and Social Care Transitional Boards. I will take it away and look at it; I don't think it's an unreasonable request. I will also talk to my health colleague to try and strengthen the voice of older people within those boards.
- Housing policy for older people. The Government has a strategy about improving housing particularly targeted at older people.
- TTIP. Alex Neil has written to the EU and to the UK Government expressing concern about opening up the health service to American companies and potentially privatisation. We don't want the UK Government to open up the doors against our wishes. In response, the EU has responded to Alex Neil with reassurance that the UK government has not done so. We will absolutely resist any privatisation of the health service in Scotland.
- Lessons learnt from referendum: We returned to the traditional way of talking to people. Social media, twitter and Facebook are very important and I use them myself, but there's nothing better than talking in a public hall or public forum. Many people turned out to the meetings and on both sides too. Perhaps it's face to face discussion that we need to take forward.
- Smith Commission. We need the powers and the money as well. Marion is absolutely right. It is about our ability to raise resources through control over the taxation system, borrowing and being able to grow the economy and get the benefit from it. We need to get people back to work and invest in our public services.

Workshops in Committee Rooms



35 people participated in each workshop most of who were older people. Delegates were invited to choose their preferred workshops. The majority picked Health and Social Care followed by Community Empowerment; Retirement, Pensions and Money Matters; Community Safety and Housing; Transport, Travel and Environment, and Communication and Information. Each workshop had an experienced facilitator, presenter, scribe and reporter who were asked to follow workshop guidelines. Discussion and agreed action points centred on the information gathered from older people who attended 12 local SOPA meetings held during the summer of 2014. The action points highlighted in Table 3 were then reported in the Parliament's Debating Chamber for the Plenary Session. Details of the workshop contributors are at Appendix 3.

Table 3. Workshop information and Agreed Actions

Workshop information from grassroots	Agreed Actions
<p><i>Communication and Information</i></p> <p>Issues are wide-ranging. Computer-use by a sector of the older population (possibly in late old age and less affluent) is unfamiliar and difficult, or people do not own a computer or tablet. Even with paper communications and forms, how to access and complete can be difficult, and the language can be ambiguous. Also loop systems and lip-reading facilities are patchy. How older people are communicated with face to face, and in the media, often conveys ageist attitudes and beliefs. Wishes regarding the future (Power of Attorney / end of life) may not be actively encouraged and followed through. Also communication between agencies dealing with the same person can be inadequate.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.SOPA calls for dedicated internet access for older people (for example, computers in libraries and community centres for people with impaired sight) and equivalent support for face to face methods of communication. 2.SOPA calls for the comprehensive scheme of intergenerational engagement that already exists to be enhanced and widened to overcome stereotypes and build solidarity between generations. 3.SOPA Committee is called upon to devise more ways to reach out to older people with particular needs - or example, those from the black and minority ethnic, deaf and blind, and LGBT communities.

<p><i>Community Empowerment</i></p> <p>This topic covers accountability of organisations, Government support, intergenerational work and the desire of many active older people for schemes to enable greater involvement as volunteers in sustainable projects. The latter would involve the reshaping of services. Inclusiveness and equal respect of all sectors and individuals within the older population is vital – for example, those in the LGTB or ethnic communities who often remain hidden on the margins of society.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to ensure that when engaging with the community the consultation must be clear and in a formation that can be understood by everyone and allowing enough time for people to have meaningful actions that can be reported back to their community within a reasonable time scale. This will enable people to educate themselves. 2. Scope and width of the opportunities provided by the Community and Empowerment (Scotland) Bill needs to be clearly communicated to all to allow all communities to empower themselves, particularly through participation requests. 3. While recognising many different kinds of communities of both geographical and of common community interests, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill must recognise communities of age that is older people in the ethnic minority and the LGBT groups to empower them directly.
<p><i>Community Safety & Housing</i></p> <p>A safe and congenial environment is central to peace of mind at any age but certain issues take on particular significance in later life. Neighbourhood crime is frightening, so a visible police presence is important. Maintenance is a concern, with a call for schemes to help, and options to move house if disability arises. Also subsidised renewable energy, (solar panels to reduce heating costs) would help. For some residents in retirement housing, factoring charges and arrangements are a major concern.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that a variety of suitable housing , to include sheltered housing and assisted housing with 24 hour care, particularly in the rural areas is available for older and disabled people, with an appropriate amount of housing being ring fenced for use only by older people. New housing should be accessible and of an appropriate size too. 2. SOPA calls on the Government to increase the visible presence of police officers, particularly in rural communities, and to enforce traffic speed restrictions to enable older people to cross the road safely and with plenty of time. 3. SOPA believes that older people should have the autonomy to choose their own energy suppliers and factors regardless of the type of housing they live in.

<p>Health and Social Care</p> <p>Comments highlight overriding issues, such as, preventing loneliness, how people are treated in the NHS, waiting times for assessments, and types of respite care. Particular services are criticised where there are wide variations across the country, such as audiology, dental care, accident and emergency, services for people with dementia and disabilities, and supporting people at the end of life. Issues around valuing paid carers, revisiting GPs' contracts, care home inspections and care continuity were raised.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SOPA calls for all care policy makers and care providers to give respect to the humanity and dignity of people who are cared for as well as paid and non paid carers. 2. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government and all local authorities to develop and implement a national standard for care at home to ensure that all health and social care staff are trained in the delivery of care, receive a living wage, and that all people across Scotland receive the same standard of care. In the time of budget cuts all of this should be cost effective.
<p>Pensions, retirement & money</p> <p>With the steep rise in the cost of living there is a call to reduce tax as well as ensure people are not anxious about how they will meet future basic costs, such as fuel and funerals, for example. Pensions, carers' allowances and disability allowances are full of anomalies that can reduce income as people reach pension age. There is also fear of personal assets being at risk from predatory professionals, tradesmen and family members.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SOPA expresses grave concern that the Westminster Government's intention to introduce a new flat rate pension in 2016 will create a two-tier pension system. SOPA calls for urgent action to ensure that everyone in receipt of a current state pension will be guaranteed a single rate pension above the poverty threshold of £178 per week for 2016. 2. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government to recognise the contribution to society of all non-paid carers and the savings made by them to the Government. SOPA calls on the Government to financially recognise the savings all carers make whether or not they are pensioners. 3. SOPA is called upon to organise a programme of scrutiny of all local authority and undertaker charges linked to funerals.
<p>Transport, Travel & Environment</p> <p>The ability to get out and about safely and easily contributes significantly to quality of life. Therefore certain basics require to be in place, such as even pavements, regular accessible bus services (in the evening also), parking concessions (particularly within hospital premises), as well as concessionary travel. It should be easy to enter buildings and navigate once inside. Designing an environment conducive to participation by everyone includes everything from good transport and accessible toilets to education, culture, recreation and sport. Also as life expectancy increases, travel insurance restrictions should change.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SOPA is dismayed that many people in later life cannot benefit from concessionary travel due to disability or the non-existence of appropriate public transport. SOPA calls on the Scottish Government and all transport providers, including community transport to work together to provide a link to an integrated transport system for all. 2. Given the emphasis the World Health Organisation places on the relationship between health and social care and built environments, SOPA is concerned about the ongoing closure of public toilets. SOPA calls on COSLA to work with local authorities to ensure outdoor places support active ageing, by improving and extending access to all public and green spaces, including toilets. 3. SOPA is disappointed that, despite repeated representations, the traffic signage between hospitals in South Lanarkshire is still inadequate.

Issues for SOPA 2015

The lively and productive debate at the Assembly in the Parliament has produced an action plan outlined in Table 3 above. We now need to embark on a SOPA campaign to deliver the Assembly action plan by targeting media and political lobbying opportunities, as well as current news issues and agendas. Identifying champions for SOPA both locally and nationally will push the action plan agenda by highlighting real examples of the longevity dividend.

What people think of SOPA

The Summary Evaluation paragraph is on Page 5 and the Report of SOPA local Meetings and Assembly 2014 is at Appendix 4.

Local meetings after the Assembly

The Scottish Older People's Assembly has received £10,000 from the Big Lottery's 'Awards for All'. The fund will be spent running more local events from January to March 2015 to update older people on how their issues and views were received as well as the actions agreed to achieve the improvements they suggested. Local meetings will also concentrate on how SOPA functions and what improvements can be made to ensure the voice and experience of more older people can be heard.

SOPA Committee 2014/15

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Appendix 1

Speeches

Elaine Smith, MSP - Deputy Presiding Officer



Welcoming the delegates to the Scottish Parliament and to the 2014 Assembly, Elaine Smith identified that Scotland's society has been changing: it has been estimated that at least half of Scotland's population will be over 50 years old in 20 years time which has great social, political and economic significance.

Ms Smith stated that older people had much to contribute: they have more experience, they enjoy more leisure time, volunteer and have adult or childcare responsibilities. She added that society can benefit from an ageing population, capitalizing on the skills and experience that older people undoubtedly have. For example, businesses need to recognize that older people have fast become the most powerful group in society

and should ask them about products and services they most want and value.

She stated that the Scottish Older People's Assembly gives a strong voice to older people across Scotland. And that the Assembly should be seen as a public statement that older people's issues and ideas are valued by the Scottish Parliament and is an example of involving people from different groups and communities in order to face the challenges that society has in future years.

The Deputy Presiding Officer concluded by stating that the Government can't do everything, but local communities have a role to play as well: the number of groups represented at the Parliament are a testimony of how vibrant ageing sector is and the Assembly was the chance to be heard and have a dialogue with politicians and policy makers.

SOPA Chair Tom Berney



Tom Berney said attendance at the 2013 Assembly had been disrupted by a storm. He was pleased to see everyone had made it this year.

We had more than 200 delegates from about 100 older people's organisations. He made particular welcome to those who were here for the first time such as Seniors Forums from West Lothian - Clackmannanshire - South Lanarkshire - Isle of Arran, Kilwinning - Dundee - Stirling - Saltcoats - Stevenson - Irvine - Ardrossan - Fife - Glenrothes - North Ayrshire. He also welcomed new trade union groups (Unison and the Communications Workers), Equality groups (Women's Guilds -

African Caribbean Women's Association, LGBT Age Scotland - Glasgow Disability Alliance) and even an elite Pub Discussion Group from East Kilbride (of which he is a member).

Tom described the Assembly as a terrific pool of talent and experience and invited everyone to use them to form propositions to put to the Scottish and UK government and other bodies.

He gave some statistics about older people, stressing how older people are the glue that holds society together - in families and communities: 42% of all voluntary work in Scotland is done by people over 55; old people look after other **OLDER** people; 21% over 65s support their parents; 73% of carers are 60-69; only 6% of carers are under 40; far from being a burden to be cared for, older people often do the caring and can be proud of that.

However, there are also many people who need state help: 50% of people over 75 live alone; 1 million a month go without speaking to anyone but shop assistants. A survey in Dumfries found that large numbers of older men only go out of the house once a month.

He added that thousands of pensioners live in poverty and have to choose between heating the house or eating. That is intolerable in a wealthy country like UK. And people are having to work longer for lower pensions. Those are the challenges that face SOPA and that the delegates would be discussing in the Assembly.

He then explained what SOPA has been doing in 2014: he said that SOPA increased consultations around the country, arranging local meetings and taking views from hundreds of older people; raised awareness of issues relating to Grandparents as Kinship Carers, and the impact of Welfare Reform on Older People; attended UK Advisory Forum on Ageing and DWP meetings in London; met with the Minister and civil servants; participated in the Scottish Government's Older People's Development Group and the Development of Outcomes for integrated health and social care; input to Committee on Human Rights and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill. Being on those official drafting committees, SOPA has hopefully been able to influence policies BEFORE they are enacted, rather than just complaining about them afterwards. He hopes SOPA will be able to do more of that and they will be arguing for more involvement for older people in regional matters.

SOPA chair congratulated Shona Robison for being appointed Cabinet Secretary for Pensioners' Rights and informed the delegates that she has agreed to meet them regularly, has attended SOPA's committee meetings and is sympathetic to what SOPA is trying to do, and will convey the voice of older people to the Cabinet.

Mr Berney continued to say that, as delegates had asked SOPA to raise its profile, SOPA had appointed a communications advisor and an administration assistant, developed the SOPA website, produced and widely distributed the SOPA e-newsletter and successfully applied to hold SOPA 2014 in the Scottish Parliament. Delegates also requested more input from MSPs. He was pleased to say that Shona Robison, Kevin Stewart and Christine Grahame were present at the Assembly.

He explained that all those events, including the Assembly, had to be paid for: SOPA successfully applied for a Scottish Government grant to support SOPA 2014 and successfully applied for a Big Lottery award to hold more local meetings after SOPA 2014.

He concluded saying that SOPA was still developing but he believes they are heading in the right direction: this isn't the end, it's the beginning. The rest of the day was about what all delegates would do and what they wanted SOPA to do. He finished with a poem from Berthold Brecht:

*"And I always thought
The very simplest words would be enough,
If I told them what things were really like
It would tear their hearts in shreds.
If you don't stand up for yourself
You'll go down
Surely you can see that"*

He said the message of the day should be that we would all stand up for ourselves in 2015!

Kevin Stewart, MSP - Convener of the Local Government Committee



Kevin Stewart talked about the work of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee on the Community Empowerment Bill and focused on certain aspects of it where older people may have interest and be able to provide inputs. He explained that the Bill has come about because of the poor record of both local and central government to involve citizens in matters which affect them. For many years Governments have decided what is best for the people and only then, if at all, had the thought and asked them how to deliver services.

What should happen is a discussion on what services older people need and a further discussion on how those services should be delivered: the approach of the Bill is to involve people also in earlier stages, not only in the design of a service but whether those services are actually required.

He said that the objective should be to increase, reach and particularly insure widespread participation and involvement: the government and cross party must value what happened in September with the Referendum and harness the energy and enthusiasm to be involved and utilise the collective knowledge available for the benefit of everyone, including old communities and groups of whatever shape or size.

Mr Stewart explained that the Bill has eight parts and he focused on two areas in particular, where older people might have views and have an opportunity to comment. The first area of the Bill he highlighted is the one designed to give a group a stronger voice in matters that affect or could affect them locally: the Bill provides the right to groups to ask for involvement in any matter being considered or which could be considered by public bodies. The range of matters that participation request could cover is potentially vast: they could be about input on how the local authorities are going to deliver or even provide services, care services, means on wheels, local transport, social work and the list is endless.

The second part is about allotments, explaining that the Bill updates over 100 years of existing law, but retains basically the same approach: local authorities shouldn't have long waiting lists for allotments and the use of allotments should be linked to wider health benefits as well as growing strategies.

He stressed how they needed older people's views on these and other issues, giving his Committee the benefit of their experience and thoughts: people who know what is needed locally are generally the people living locally, that's why this is a chance to be listened to, to improve services and influence their design to suit the people, not to benefit some central bureaucratic system.

The Convener of the Local Government Committee concluded saying that it's hard for public bodies to change if people don't demand to be heard and involved and hard for them to convince the authorities they must change unless they can point out people's support. He encouraged everyone to ask to be involved as his Committee needs to hear the voices of people across all of society, otherwise they're likely to only hear from the same people who have been claiming to speak for communities for years.

Shona Robison, MSP - Cabinet Secretary for Commonwealth Games, Sport, Equalities and Pensioners' Rights



Shona Robison began by speaking of the importance of older people in Scotland, where everyone should have the opportunity to make the most of their talents and be acknowledged as an asset of wisdom and experience.

She continued by stating that the Government and key decision makers should ensure that older people can flourish at the heart of society. The Government can't affect improvement without older people and that's why SOPA is important. It acts as a mechanism where older people can, as a collective, enjoy an ongoing dialogue with Government, Parliament and key decision makers in Scotland.

Regarding the Referendum, Ms Robison remarked that over 3.6 million people across Scotland turned out to vote. This was the highest turnout for any UK vote in history, setting a new record for democratic participation.

Although the result was against the 'yes campaign', she said it is clear there is significant demand for change in Scotland with many voters wanting to see a more powerful Parliament taking decisions for and with the people of Scotland.

Ms Robison added that the Scottish Government wants to harness the energy that was unleashed through the Referendum Campaign, to ensure that Scots everywhere are empowered to participate in the governing of their country. She said the Government must ensure that the deliberations of the Smith Commission get on with the work and meet the high expectations of the people of Scotland.

The Cabinet Minister explained that the Scottish Government will contribute fully to the process to empower the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people. Their key focus will be on putting forward proposals to deliver real change, create jobs, protect public services, tackle inequality and propose control over welfare and a minimum wage to ensure the ability to protect the most vulnerable and help people out of poverty.

She highlighted the importance of the older people's voice and believes SOPA has a huge role to play as the Government values the older person as a consumer who contributes to the economy and prosperity of the country.

The Cabinet Secretary concluded by stating that many older people may fear for their future, whether or not they will receive the quality of care they're entitled to after a lifetime of working hard, whether they will experience loneliness and isolation and whether they will be financially independent and secure. She commits this Government to do everything possible to ensure that older people in Scotland live a life of fundamental human dignity. She also commits to going forward with SOPA to consider today's discussion to ensure that issues are taken up with the relevant Government ministers and Cabinet Secretaries.

Appendix 2 - Parliamentary Speakers' Profiles



Tom Berney was a career civil servant engaged in financial control, policy development and project approval. He was also instrumental in negotiating staff working conditions. In his current role as Chair of the University of the 3rd Age in Scotland he is expanding learning opportunities. (SOPA Chair since 2013).



Shona Robison has been the SNP member for Dundee City East since 2003. Before becoming a politician in 1999, she worked for Glasgow City Council's Social Work Department. Responsible for Pensioners' Rights she liaises closely with SOPA.



Elaine Smith is the Labour Party MSP for Coatbridge and Chryston. Before becoming a politician she was a teacher, a local government officer and a volunteers' manager. As Deputy Presiding Officer she supports the Presiding Officer at home and abroad.



Kevin Stewart is the SNP member for Aberdeen Central. He is the convener of the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee, a member of the Welfare Reform Committee and sits on the Justice Sub-committee on Policing.

Appendix 3: SOPA's Workshop Contributors' Profiles



Helen Biggins, a former provost of East Kilbride, is a member of NHS Lanarkshire Public Partnership Forum, a Board member of South Lanarkshire Carers Network, and Chair of Seniors Together South Lanarkshire. (SOPA Committee member).



Val Bissland teaches in the Learning in Later Life Programme of the University of Strathclyde, leading classes on psychology and later life opportunities. Her recent doctoral studies focused on older adults' learning styles, brain plasticity and building 'mental capital' in the older population. (SOPA Committee member).



Diana Findlay is a founder member of Scottish Borders Elder Voice which evolved from Better Government for Older People. Currently, she is a regional trustee for Age Scotland, on the Board of Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber. (SOPA Committee Member).



Donald Macleod is a self-employed organisational and personal development consultant. He is particularly interested in the improvement of the health and well-being of older people, is a member of the Highland Senior Citizens Network. (SOPA Committee Member).



Jeanette Pieper is recently elected Chair of the Scottish Pensioners Forum. She is also Secretary of the East Kilbride Seniors Forum and has campaigned on older people's issues since her retirement from South Lanarkshire Council. (SOPA Committee Member).

Workshop facilitators and scribes: Sarah Bryson, Ruth Corbet, David Cullum, Oliver Escobar, Paul Hambleton, Susan Hart, Bill Johnston, Emma King, Suzanne Lowden, Janet McKenzie, Susan Shippey and Seán Wixted.

Reporters: Joyce Armstrong, Heather Goodare, Rose Jackson, Bill Martin, Tim Puntis, Alan Sidaway.

Appendix 4

Summary Evaluation Report

SOPA Local Meetings and SOPA Assembly 2014

Evaluation Report

Report to the Scottish Older People's Assembly Committee

09 December 2014

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Introduction

This document presents the findings of the evaluation of: eight of the Scottish Older People's Assembly Local Meetings 2014 (referred to in this report as the 'SOPA Local Meetings') held between June and September 2014; and the Scottish Older People's Assembly 2014 (referred to in this report as the 'SOPA Main Assembly') held in Edinburgh at the Scottish Parliament on 31 October 2014. In total 363 older people and their representatives attended the eight SOPA Local Meetings, and the SOPA Main Assembly was attended by over 200 older people and their representatives.

The evaluation was conducted by the Employment Research Institute (ERI), Edinburgh Napier University on behalf of the Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) Committee.

Methods

The evaluation of the SOPA Local Meetings and the SOPA Main Assembly had two phases (the data collection tools are included in Appendices 1 and 2):

- *Phase 1 - Evaluation Forms:* Delegates were asked to complete a short evaluation form asking for background information and how useful various aspects of the SOPA Meetings 2014 were. In total 239 paper evaluation forms were returned from the eight SOPA Local Meetings. A further 107 (both paper and online) evaluation forms were returned from the SOPA Main Assembly.

- *Phase 2 - Follow up Telephone Interviews:* Telephone interviews were later held with a sample of evaluation form respondents to provide a more in-depth insight into opinions. Telephone interviews were held with 30 respondents who had completed the evaluation form of the SOPA Local Meetings, and 17 respondents who had completed the evaluation form of the SOPA Main Assembly. One of these follow up interviews was completed via email rather than over the telephone at the request of the respondent.

Findings from the Evaluation of the SOPA Local Meetings

Who participated in the evaluation?

The majority of those completing the evaluation form were female (74.4%), and 71.8% were aged over 65 years. Most respondents (86.6%) were White Scottish. The majority (61.5%) did not consider themselves disabled as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. 96.4% of respondents were heterosexual. Most respondents stated that their faith was Church of Scotland (46.5%) or Roman Catholic (22.3%). Almost all of the Local Meeting participants were drawn from the immediate area.

The sample who participated in the follow up telephone interviews were selected to represent a range of different demographic characteristics e.g. age, gender, disability.

How useful did respondents feel the SOPA Local Meetings were?

Of those evaluation form respondents that answered this question, the vast majority of respondents (91.3%) found the meeting (moderately, very or extremely) useful - with almost two thirds (65.7%) rating it as very or extremely useful.

There were some differences between the meetings in the mean usefulness rating given by the evaluation form respondents, some of which were found to be statistically significant. Comparisons between pairs of venues found that the ratings of respondents at the Shetland and Hamilton events were significantly higher than those Dundee, Ayr, Glasgow, Penicuik and Stirling. Those evaluation form respondents attending the Inverness event also ranked it significantly higher than those at the Ayr and Glasgow events. No significant differences for the evaluation form respondents in the mean usefulness rating were found between different demographic groups.

The telephone interview respondents gave details of the reasons for why they found the SOPA Local Meetings very or extremely useful. These included: valuing the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with other people, and learning new things through attending. Those telephone interview respondents who felt that the meeting had not been useful or only slightly or moderately useful made comments about: sound problems or the speakers not being heard, and the discussions not going into enough depth.

Had the respondents heard about SOPA before attending the meeting?

Of the evaluation form respondents who answered this question, just over half (54.8%) had heard of SOPA before the meeting. There were substantial differences in this response between evaluation form respondents at the different meetings. All of the Glasgow attendees who had filled in an evaluation form had heard of SOPA, compared to just 12.0% of those at the Shetland meeting. There was a statistically significant association between venue and having heard of SOPA. However it should be noted that the observed differences between Glasgow, Hamilton and Inverness were not found to be significant; nor were the differences between Dundee, Ayr and Shetland.

The telephone interview respondents who attended the SOPA Local Meetings were also asked whether they had heard of SOPA before attending the meeting. Thirteen (43.3%) of the telephone interview respondents from the SOPA Local Meetings had heard of SOPA before attending the meeting, although not all had attended previous SOPA events.

What did respondents like best about meetings and what did they like least?

Evaluation form respondents were asked what they (a) liked best about the meeting; and (b) what they had liked the least about the meeting. This question was not asked to the telephone interview respondents.

Of those attending the SOPA Local Meetings who answered what they liked best (175 responses), the following broad core themes can be identified in the responses: issues related to hearing other people's views and having the opportunity for discussion/to voice their concerns; the information they received at the meeting; the presentations or listening to the speakers

One hundred and thirty nine responded to the question asking what they had liked least about the SOPA Local Meetings. The most common problems identified by respondents were issues with the sound and difficulties in hearing. Respondents also cited the presentations as an aspect they liked least or that the meeting had not been long enough. It must also be noted that of the 139 responses to the question about what respondents had liked least about the meeting, 33 commented that there was nothing that they liked least; that the question was 'not applicable'; or noted further positive feedback rather than leaving negative comments.

What did respondents think of the presentation given about SOPA at the SOPA Local Meetings?

Both the evaluation form respondents and the telephone interview respondents were asked what they thought of the presentation given about SOPA at the SOPA Local Meetings.

The majority of evaluation form respondents (72%) rated the presentation about SOPA as either good or very good. Hamilton and Shetland rated particularly well. The mean rating of the presentation in Shetland was significantly higher than all other venues. Respondents in Hamilton

rated the presentation significantly higher than those in Dundee, Ayr, Penicuik and Glasgow. Those in Inverness and Stirling gave higher ratings than those at the Dundee and Ayr events. Differences between demographic groups were also explored, but the only one of these found to be significant was between faith groups. Those stating a Christian faith gave the presentation a statistically significantly higher mean rating than those stating no religion.

Evaluation form respondents were also asked to write in any additional comments they had about the presentation given about SOPA at the SOPA Local Meetings. Sixty eight respondents provided comments. Thirty five respondents provided positive feedback, 22 respondents gave negative feedback and 11 respondents left comments that were more general.

The telephone interview respondents were also asked about what they thought of the presentation given about SOPA. The themes identified by the telephone interview respondents reinforce some of those mentioned by the evaluation form respondents. The majority of the telephone respondents gave mainly positive responses e.g. the presentation was informative and had explained well about SOPA as an organisation. However, even those who were generally positive mentioned issues with the sound, the way in which the speakers projected and being able to hear; their difficulty getting answers to specific questions; accessibility of the language used; and concerns that a lot of information only seemed to be available online. Those who gave the presentations mainly negative comments highlighted that sound and difficulty hearing was an issue or that the presentation was delivered too fast.

Do respondents think that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland?

Both the evaluation form respondents and the telephone interview respondents from the SOPA Local Meetings were asked whether they thought that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland.

A little over two thirds of the evaluation form respondents (68.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that SOPA gave a voice to older people. Differences between the mean ratings of the evaluation form respondents attending different meetings followed a similar pattern to ratings of usefulness of the meeting. Those attending the Hamilton and Shetland meetings gave a higher rating (i.e. were more likely to agree that SOPA gives a voice to older people) than those attending the meetings in Dundee, Ayr and Glasgow. Those attending the Stirling and Inverness meetings were more likely to agree than those attending the Ayr and Glasgow meetings. Differences in ratings between demographic groups were explored but the only significant difference was found between those with and without a disability. Evaluation form respondents with a disability agreed more strongly that SOPA gives a voice to older people than those without a disability.

The telephone interview respondents were also asked about whether they thought that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland. The majority of the telephone interview respondents agreed that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland. Reasons for this included: being able to voice opinions and feeling listened to, and the links SOPA has to national government.

However, some of the comments were quite mixed and questions were raised as to the extent which SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland (e.g. in terms of SOPA's independence from the Scottish Government).

How might the Assembly be improved in future and what issues should the Assembly consider in future?

Evaluation form and telephone interview respondents were asked for suggestions of how the Assembly could be improved in future, and issues to be considered in future meetings. The responses regarding areas to improve from the evaluation form and telephone interview respondents are considered separately but can be broadly summarised as:

- the need to widen participation in the SOPA committee
- the need to widen participation at SOPA events to ensure a range of older people are represented
- ensuring that SOPA is representative of older people in Scotland and their concerns
- ensuring that feedback on actions taken forward is provided to delegates
- improving the advertising of SOPA better and hold more meetings
- considering the hosting and format/facilitation of SOPA meetings.

In terms of issues to be considered in future meetings suggested by both the evaluation form and telephone interview respondents, these have been categorised into six broad themes: (1) finance (e.g. fuel poverty); (2) health and social care (e.g. help in the home); (3) housing (warden services in sheltered housing); (4) infrastructure (transport); (5) other (e.g. isolation); and (6) pensions and benefits (e.g. pensions changes).

Findings from the Evaluation of the SOPA Main Assembly

Who participated in the evaluation?

Around two fifths (61.9%) of the evaluation form respondents were female. There was a greater dispersion of ages than at the local meetings, with 20.0% of attendees aged under 50, 24.8% aged 51-65, and just over half (54.5%) aged over 65. Most respondents (74.3%) were White Scottish. The majority (88.4%) did not consider themselves disabled as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. 89.5% of respondents stated their sexual orientation as heterosexual. Roughly equal proportions gave their faith as Church of Scotland (33.7%) and non-belief (36.6%). Respondents had come from all over Scotland, with the largest proportion from an EH postcode (33.3%) or G postcode (21.6%).

The sample who participated in the follow up telephone interviews were selected to represent a range of different demographic characteristics e.g. age, gender, disability.

How did respondents hear about the SOPA Main Assembly?

Evaluation form respondents were asked about how they had heard about the SOPA Main Assembly (this question was not asked of the telephone interview respondents). Of those that answered this question (n=102) the majority had heard about the event through another

organisation or their workplace/a colleague. Only ten said that they had heard about the event specifically through the SOPA newsletter or website, or by attending a previous SOPA meeting.

Had the respondents heard about SOPA before attending the SOPA Main Assembly?

Of the 103 responses to this question by the evaluation form respondents, a large majority (81.6%) had heard of SOPA before attending the SOPA Main Assembly.

Fourteen of the telephone interview respondents from the SOPA Main Assembly had heard of SOPA before attending the meeting, although not all had attended previous SOPA events. Of those who had attended previous SOPA events, telephone interview respondents mentioned that they had attended a mix of the Main Assembly and the SOPA Local Meetings, although in some cases it was not clear what type of meeting they had previously attended. Three telephone interview respondents from the SOPA Main Assembly had not heard of SOPA before attending the meeting.

How useful did respondents feel the SOPA Assembly was?

The evaluation form and telephone interview respondents were asked how useful they found the event.

The vast majority (96.0%) of evaluation form respondents found the meeting (moderately, very or extremely) useful, with almost two thirds (65.7%) rating it as very or extremely useful. No significant differences in the mean usefulness rating were found between different demographic groups (tests were performed for age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and faith or belief).

The majority of the telephone interview respondents found the SOPA Main Assembly moderately or very useful. Reasons as to why the telephone interview respondents found the SOPA Main Assembly useful included: networking; learning about issues affecting older people; having the opportunity to raise older people's issues with government; and the workshops.

What did respondents like best about meetings and what did they like least?

The evaluation form respondents were asked to write in what they (a) liked best about the meeting; and (b) what they had liked the least about the meeting. This question was not asked to the telephone interview respondents.

Of those who answered what they liked best about SOPA Main Assembly (83 responses), the following broad themes can be identified in the responses:

- meeting other people from across Scotland and networking, and hearing the views of others
- the SOPA Main Assembly had brought together a range of individuals and groups
- the opportunity to ask questions, have a say and get involved in discussions as what they liked best about the SOPA Main Assembly

- the speakers, the question and answer session, or the workshops
- the venue.

Only one respondent stated that they had liked nothing. Seventy two responded to the question asking what they had liked least about the SOPA Main Assembly. Six respondents cited that there was nothing they liked least about the day. Aspects that respondents liked least included:

- aspects related to the organisation and structure of the day was what they had liked least
- the venue, in particular the security arrangements and the uncomfortable seating
- the catering
- the speakers
- lack of time for questions and answers
- the workshops and the feedback from the workshops.

How did respondents rate various aspects of the facilitation and organisation of the SOPA Main Assembly?

The evaluation form respondents were asked to rate various aspects of the event; each of the three main sessions (the speakers in the morning, the workshops and the response session), as well as the facilitation, venue and catering. This question was not asked to the telephone interview respondents.

- **The speakers (morning):** 74.8% of respondents thought that the speakers in the morning session were either good or very good. Differences between demographic groups were explored and significant differences were found with respect to age and disability. Those in the 50 and under age group gave a higher mean rating than those in the 51-65 age group. Disabled respondents gave a slightly lower mean rating than those without a disability.
- **The workshops (afternoon):** 64.1% of respondents thought that the workshops in the afternoon were either good or very good. No significant differences were found between demographic groups in the ratings given to the workshops.
- **The feedback and responses session (afternoon):** Only 52.0% of respondents thought that the feedback and responses session in the afternoon was either good or very good, although only 13.0% said it was poor or very poor. No significant differences were found between demographic groups in the ratings given to the feedback and responses session.
- **Facilitation of the event:** In general respondents were very pleased with the facilitation of the event, with 77.9% rating it as good or very good, and only 4.2% rating it as poor. No significant differences were found between demographic groups in the ratings given to the facilitation of the event.
- **Venue:** The venue was very popular among respondents, with 46.9% rating it as very good, and a further 32.7% rating it as good. Only 5.1% thought the venue was poor. However, even some of those who had rated the venue highly noted a number of issues. The only significant difference between groups in the rating of the venue was found with respect to disability. Disabled respondents gave the venue a lower mean rating than non-disabled respondents.

- **Catering:** Around half (49.5%) of respondents rated the catering at the event as good or very good. No significant differences were found between demographic groups in the ratings given to the catering.

Was the delegate pack useful?

The telephone interview respondents were asked whether the delegate pack was useful. This question was not asked of the evaluation for respondents.

Generally feedback on the delegate pack provided at the SOPA Main Assembly was positive. However, five respondents did comment that it was not comprehensive enough (especially in comparison to previous years).

Did respondents feel that they could contribute to the discussions at the SOPA Main Assembly?

The telephone interview respondents were asked whether they felt they could contribute to the discussions at the SOPA Main Assembly if they wished. This question was not asked of the evaluation for respondents.

The majority of the respondents (n=11) either agreed or strongly agreed that they could contribute to the discussions at the SOPA Main Assembly. Respondents gave detailed comments. Eight respondents cited that they had found the workshop set up comfortable or had contributed there. Two others felt that the presiding officer and the facilitators had facilitated the discussions well.

Some cited that they did feel a bit constrained or lacked confidence in contributing because they were a first time attender so or because of the time constraints.

Did respondents at the SOPA Main Assembly think that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland?

Both the evaluation form and telephone interview respondents were asked whether they thought that the Scottish Older People's Assembly gives a voice to older people in Scotland.

63.4% of the evaluation form respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SOPA gave a voice to older people. Differences in ratings between demographic groups were explored and statistically significant differences in responses were found by gender and age. Female respondents gave a higher mean response (i.e. were more likely to agree) than male respondents. Those in the 50 and under age group also gave a higher mean response than those over 65.

Regarding the responses from the telephone interviews, nine respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland. One respondent felt that it was good that SOPA provided a direct line to government and another cited the value of the media coverage given to the meeting. Two respondents commented on the fact that MSPs had attended the Assembly. However, others commented and questioned the representativeness of

SOPA, SOPA's role in the landscape of older people's organisations, and the way in which SOPA uses its voice.

How might the Assembly be improved in future?

Evaluation form and telephone interview respondents were asked for suggestions of how the Assembly could be improved in future, and issues to be considered in future meetings. The responses regarding areas to improve from the evaluation form and telephone interview respondents are considered separately but can be broadly summarised as:

- consider the venue used to hold the meeting
- consider the structure, format and the facilitation of the day
- provide more information to delegates before the Assembly
- advertise SOPA more widely
- ensure that the outcomes of the meetings are communicated to delegates
- ensure that SOPA is representative of older people and consider the way in which SOPA committee member are appointed.

In terms of issues to be considered in future meetings suggested by both the evaluation form and telephone interview respondents, these can be categorised as: (1) equalities issues (e.g. equality for older people in all aspects of life); (2) finance, pensions and benefits (e.g. heating allowances); health and social care (e.g. personal care); (4) housing and infrastructure (e.g. property factoring); and (5) other (e.g. intergenerational working).

Recommendations and Conclusions

Respondents provided some positive feedback on the SOPA Local Meetings and the SOPA Main Assembly, although a number of comments suggested aspects that could be improved in future. The majority of respondents – around two thirds – rated the SOPA Local Meetings and the SOPA Main Assembly as useful or very useful, and agreed that SOPA gives a voice to older people in Scotland.

However, respondents from the SOPA Local Meetings and the SOPA Main Assembly did raise areas in which SOPA might improve or could concentrate activity in future. From examining the data presented in this report the authors make a series of recommendations to the SOPA Committee about areas to consider when planning future activity. These recommendations relate both to areas positively rated in the evaluation (i.e. so it is important that this good work continues), and to areas where concerns were raised:

- *Recommendation 1: Consider the venue used to hold the meetings*
Consideration needs to be given to venues used to hold the meetings. For example, all delegates need to be able to hear what is being presented so that they can fully participate. However, the authors of this report do acknowledge that acoustic and technology failures for example may happen unexpectedly. Delegates also value the opportunity for networking

at SOPA meetings, so venues need to be chosen that allow delegates to move freely around in order to facilitate networking.

- *Recommendation 2: Consider the structure, format and the facilitation of the meetings*

Consideration needs to be given about the structure, format and the facilitation of the meetings. As stated previously delegates value the opportunity for networking at SOPA meetings, so this needs to be facilitated. Ample time also needs to be given for discussion and questions and answer sessions. The way in which these are facilitated need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are as effective as possible, and that delegate feels that their concerns have been adequately addressed.

- *Recommendation 3: Ensure that the outcomes of the meetings are communicated*

Delegates need to see that there are clear outcomes from the SOPA Local Meetings and the SOPA Main Assembly and that issues raised are taken forward. The authors of the report would suggest that this will help older people to see that SOPA provides a voice to older people in Scotland if they can see change being achieved.

- *Recommendation 4: Ensure that SOPA is representative of older people in Scotland and their concerns*

Efforts should be made to ensure that a range of older people are represented at the Assembly and on the SOPA Committee. SOPA should continue to work with a wide a range of older people's organisations as possible, and to hold meetings in different types of venues (for example the Penicuik local meeting, which was held in an establishment of Extra Care Housing). As part of this the authors of this report would suggest that SOPA considers a range of ways through which older people can have voice e.g. attending SOPA meetings, feeding opinions to SOPA through local groups etc.

- *Recommendation 5: Consider ways in which SOPA can be further publicised*

In order to increase awareness of SOPA, advertising of future events should use a range of media (not relying only on web based advertising) to reach as wide a group as possible. This will help to ensure that SOPA is representative of older people in Scotland and their concerns.

- *Recommendation 6: Consider ways in which to improve perceptions about the legitimacy of SOPA*

The SOPA committee need to be aware that some older people question the legitimacy of SOPA with questions raised about the ways in which members are elected to the committee and SOPA's mandate. This may be due to a lack of awareness of the process for appointing Committee members via older people's organisations. The SOPA committee perhaps needs to better communicate its rationale and procedures, and the benefit or necessity of current arrangements compared with a Committee that is fully elected (i.e. in an election open to all older people).