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Foreword

This is a longer report than normal, covering the period from November 2016 to June 30 2018.

I doubt if any reader could fail to be impressed by the amount of work SOPA has accomplished in this period. Our role, as ever, has been to inform and involve older people in influencing the policies and services that apply to them. We do that collaboratively working firstly, with the 25 organisations that form the SOPA Planning Group (page 16) and with civil servants, local authorities and the wide range of voluntary organisations that represent, or serve, Scotland’s one million plus older people (19% of the population). In 2018 - the Year of the Young Person - we made a point of also collaborating with the Scottish Youth and Children’s Parliaments to dispel the spurious notion of intergenerational rivalry that is so often promoted in the media.

This report mainly deals with our annual Assembly in the Scottish Parliament where participants were able to discuss in some depth almost the full gamut of age-related issues, but the Assembly is only the tip of the iceberg of SOPA’s activities. We continually make representations, regularly chair, or give keynote speeches at conferences and seminars, and perhaps, most importantly, we organise consultative meetings of older people in their own towns around Scotland.

SOPA is not politically aligned, but regrettably for funding we are subject to the vagaries of politics and a new minister meant new priorities and an unforeseen and drastic cut in our funding. Forcing a cut in the pay of our two part-time staff and diverting our efforts into a search for cheaper accommodation and for sponsors to support our latter activities. Fortunately, we were successful on both front and were able to continue our successful 2017/18 programme and to plan future events for the coming year.

SOPA will continue our commitment to work to promote the well-being of the older people of Scotland. To that end I thank all the members of our planning group and Val Bissland who does great work on our website and social media, but most of all, thank you for the selfless efforts of (our now grossly underpaid) staff, Avril Crossley and Glenda Watt.

Tom Berney
Introduction

As part of the Scottish Government's programme to promote equality and cohesion, the Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) was awarded £20k during 2017/18. The award is to deliver effective engagement with older people to enable them to have direct communication with and influence decision makers to ensure older people are better informed, empowered, and able to contribute as part of civic society. Additionally, the Scottish Government requested that the Scottish Older People's Assembly, during its national event, would contribute to and celebrate 2018 as the Year of Young People.

To begin the planning towards a national assembly and parliamentary reception, SOPA engaged with older people to co-design what shape the events should take. The partnership supported a Planning Group of 25 older people from across Scotland to lead the process of engagement with their peers and stakeholders. This process would enable them to make informed recommendations for a vision for the 2017/18 Assembly and Parliamentary Reception.

Scottish Government officials and Ministers attended some of these meetings, listening to older people to hear what their hopes and aspirations are for the events. Engagement through meetings has also been complemented by engagement of older people and stakeholders through digital channels.

The commitment of the Scottish Government to collaborate with older people is part of the Ministers' wider ambition to ensure "A thriving third age" and "Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older, and access support when they need it."

The rest of this report presents the activities of the Planning Group and the delivery of the Scottish Older People's Assembly on 23 April 2018 and Parliamentary Reception on 6th June 2018.

Who we are

In July 2017 the Planning Group held its first meeting of this funding period. We came from a variety of areas in Scotland representing 25 organisations working with older people covering all protected characteristics. Page 15 lists partner organisations. Our youngest members are in their late fifties and early sixties while the oldest are in their mid to late eighties.

We have travelled, expressed our opinions, built our confidence, developed new partnerships, recruited new members, gained new funding sources and learnt new skills. We are now more confident individuals, proud of our work with SOPA and enthusiastic about our achievements.

What we did

In our first Planning Group meeting, we participated in an interactive discussion with Lord Bracadale to contribute to his Review on Hate Crime. We appraised our last Assembly and Parliamentary Reception with the intention of instituting change, if necessary. We brainstormed how we might arrange the Assembly and Parliamentary Reception agreeing that we would like to use the Scottish Parliament again. We took into account our resources and the size of
the events but decided we could not plan the detail of these until the venues had been secured. However, it was clear from the previous Assembly evaluations that older people:

- enjoyed meeting politicians
- using the Scottish Parliament
- participating in interactive discussion
- being informed of Scottish Government developments concerning older people
- hearing opinions and activities of other older people from different parts of Scotland, and
- receiving evidence that their contributions had advanced policy and service developments.

It was important to make sure that we thought about how to involve older people with disabilities, such as sight, hearing and mobility impairments and engage with people with dementia and from the LGBTI and ethnic communities.

As a group we met to plan our contribution to unexpected event opportunities prior to the Assembly. Each event was different, and we enjoyed the variety of roles of participant, facilitator, presenter and host. We:

- contributed to the newly established Scottish Government’s Older People's Strategic Action Forum on 29 November 2018
- presented at the Holyrood Conference on Loneliness and Isolation on 13 February 2018
- delivered a Civic Reception at Dundee City Chambers in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland’s Dementia Working Group on 8th March 2018, and
- on 14 April 2018 facilitated two workshops at the Soroptimists International Conference.

During the events we presented information on SOPA’s campaign actions and at the last two events, gathered participants views. These were on their personal and local experiences of concerns, services and opportunities for presentation during the Assembly. All participants were informed of the national assembly and invited to register their interest in attending. These events were well attended by older people and also by approximately 60 stakeholders.

Of our continued planning for the Assembly, we were delighted to be granted use of the Scottish Parliament’s Members Room, including Committee Rooms for themed interactive workshops. Arrangements were made for SOPA members and Clare Adamson MSP to chair each interactive workshop. To facilitate discussion, current information was to be presented by officials from the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland, Citizens Advice, Trading Standards and SOPA on topics identified by older people as matters of concern:

- sustainability of adult social care
- preventative interventions to deal with falls and safer communities
- funeral poverty,
- Beveridge’s Giant Evils ‘want’, ‘disease’, ‘ignorance’, ‘squalor’, and ‘idleness’ Where are we now?
To celebrate the Year of Young People and to hear their views, in conjunction with the views of older people, we worked with the Children’s Parliament and Scottish Youth Parliament to deliver a first of its kind interactive session on human rights. The Assembly then concluded with an MSP Question Time.

**Online engagement**

We know it is difficult to attend lots of events on a regular basis while older people juggle with everyday life, volunteering and caring responsibilities. Although we would have wished to have a stronger online presence, due to our resources this was not possible. However, we have continued to promote our events on the SOPA webpage, social media and via a newsletter.

**Assembly Keynote Addresses: What we heard from the Minister and SOPA**

The Scottish Older People’s Assembly was held on 23 April 2018. Clare Adamson MSP hosted the event while Jeane Freeman OBE MSP Minister for Social Security and Tom Berney Chair of SOPA gave keynote speeches and responded to questions.

Although over 170 people registered for the Assembly, capacity was limited therefore only 130 could be welcomed from all parts of Scotland to it. The event was streamed live and can be viewed at [https://www.facebook.com/scotopa/](https://www.facebook.com/scotopa/)

Ms Freeman congratulated SOPA for organising another excellent gathering. She spoke of Scotland’s growing ageing population and the opportunities and challenges the Scottish Government and individuals face, in terms of communities, policy and service provision, work, health and care.

Ms Freeman has established the Older People’s Strategic Action Forum which SOPA and other organisations are part of. The Forum is working with the Scottish Government to develop a framework by the end of this year that will cover key areas where government and others need to push for progress. Emphasis was placed on the importance of older people’s views and the Minister hoped the Assembly will add their views to the following areas:

- improving health provision and support
- opening up employment opportunities for people to continue in work, if they want too
- having enough of the right kind of housing
- developing community activity opportunities, including intergenerational work
- the challenges of financial support and the 11 social security benefits being devolved to the Scottish Parliament where an investment has been made in the integration of principles of dignity and respect.

Before concluding, Ms Freeman outlined the Scottish Government’s investment:

- of half a billion pounds of frontline NHS spending to fund social care services and integration this year
- to mitigate increasing fuel costs the creation of a range of schemes under the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland, including help for pensioners in keeping their homes warm, their bills down and getting the best possible deal.
- in the Fairer Scotland Action Plan to tackle poverty through use of a Financial Checklist to help older people make the most of the money they have and claim all they are entitled too, such as the Scottish Funeral Expense Assistant Benefit, and
- in addressing social isolation and loneliness, by developing "A connected Scotland” a strategy which is the first in the UK and one of the first in the world.
Tom Berney thanked Clare Adamson for hosting the event and Ms Freeman for giving her keynote speech. He was pleased to note her intentions to improve life for older people in Scotland.

Tom outlined the work of SOPA’s Planning Group in holding local meetings, gathering the views and experience of older people and forwarding information to Government Ministers and officials, he regretted that SOPA’s overall activity had been curtailed due to reduced funding from the Scottish Government.

SOPA’s collaborative work included Alzheimer Scotland’s Dementia Working Group, Trading Standards Scotland, Poppy Scotland’s Unforgotten Heroes and Soroptimists International. During the events older people had informed SOPA of their concerns listed below:

- discrimination towards older people continues
- older people are blamed for high expenditure of public services and for younger people having difficulties
- extensive closure of banks negatively impacting on older people who do not have access to the internet or are fearful of exploitation
- Scottish Government’s economic and budgeting policies sometimes conflicted with policies intended to benefit older people, such as intergenerational activity, the planned strategy on isolation and loneliness, concessionary travel and older people’s wish to remain safely and independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

**Question Time: What we heard from older people and stakeholders**

- Alan Sidaway SOPA member from Dumfries and Galloway asked the Minister to enquire, if it is possible to have the public bus from Dumfries to Edinburgh fitted with toilets or if the bus will stop at a suitable place to enable passengers, most of whom are older people, to use toilets. The Minister will raise this issue with Stagecoach.
- Marion Mitchell said that many older people on low incomes are now surviving on their capital. Rather than undertake means testing could the Scottish Government or DWP consider using the method of checking a tax code to determine, if an older person is entitled to benefits. The Minister responded by stating that 11 Benefits would soon be under the Scottish Government’s jurisdiction but it did not include pensions or pension credit as this remains with Westminster. Nevertheless, the Minister will consider the suggestion.
• Jimmy Miller Councillor for North Ayrshire and SOPA member asked the Minister to reconsider the funding for SOPA and other similar organisations. The Minister said that the Scottish Government had an imposed budget reduction of 9% by the UK Government which had been applied to its funding of various programmes. She said she could consider SOPA's and other organisations funding, if proposals came forward. Tom Berney commented that SOPA’s reduced funding at 60% is far in excess of 9%.

• Dr Agarwal, a retired Edinburgh GP asked the Minister about the Health and Social Care Policy towards older people, as in his experience there is a discriminatory attitude towards older people receiving care and treatment by the NHS. Ms Freeman said she would raise this issue with the Minister for Health. Tom Berney responded by describing the discriminatory attitude by the media and TV, in particular where older people are stereotypically shown to be dependent and inactive.

• A representative of RNIB complained about the inadequate care and attention to pavements and pavement parking, causing hazards for wheelchair users, people with impaired sight and mobility problems. Ms Freeman referenced current consultation on the Scottish Parliament’s Planning Bill urging participants to contribute to this. Tom Berney outlined the importance of local groups contacting the local authority to seek installation of benches and handrails to support mobility and independence and to comment on the importance of joined up policies.

• John White SOPA member from Dumfries and Galloway said he had not received a reply from Ms Constance or Ms Freeman when writing to complain about the closure of dental practices and consequently many people attending hospital for dental treatment. He did however, receive a reply from Ms Robison but the problem still exists.

**Interactive Workshops**

Participants chose to attend one of four interactive workshops.

i. **Funeral Poverty**

After presentations on the Funeral Costs Plan, Funeral Expense Assistance, Planning Your Own Funeral leaflet and developments from the Scottish Working Group on Funeral Poverty, a facilitated discussion identified the following issues.

- Facilitate a joined up approach
- Standardise funeral costs
- Better sign posting of information as there is lack of experience of what to do after a death
- Encourage conversations on dying, death and funeral arrangements
- More guidance could be provided by Health and Social Care
- Regulate the funeral industry
- Leave the body to science
- Discuss wishes in advance and form a funeral plan
- Council facilities could be on standby
- Cost of cardboard coffin is greater than wood coffin
- Assistance needed to choose a funeral director
ii. **Beveridge's 'Giant Evils' - Want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness – where are we now?**

Following a summary of the background to the Beveridge Report, participants were asked to identify the present causes of greatest hardship for older people, and state their priorities and what needs to be done? Issues listed below emerged from the discussion.

- Austerity is causing death, too many people are "too near the line" which impacts on mental health
- Lack of money with women greatly suffering. For example, looked after children by older parents who can’t always be employed. These people have particularly low pensions and insufficient money to live off. We understand need for means testing, but level is too low.
- Continual, rapid change, no periods of stability for people to adjust to changes. Often insufficient publicity to allow full understanding of current situation.
- Rural vs urban poverty. For example, perhaps only 1 energy supplier in rural area and perhaps no natural gas supply, access to internet is sporadic, unreliable or not available.
- Transport and internet are two of the biggest problems for people in the Borders. People may have to move for better access as the internet is needed to do school work.
- Cycling is good for health but roads are hazardous due to potholes and poor continuity in routes.
- Nearest emergency hospital to Roseneath in Argyll & Bute is 1.5hrs away. Helicopter used to pick up emergencies but funding has been cut.
- Lack of footcare contributes to loneliness and isolation, especially in rural areas, as people can’t get out.
- Deterioration in NHS services: NHS dental facility has moved from Yoker to Paisley. Similar situation for Podiatry in West Lothian. Waiting list exists for voluntary service.
- "We don’t see things getting better, they are getting worse". We are not a civilized society, if we are not caring for young and older people. It appears it doesn’t matter to the Scottish Government. This is a common voice and not isolated incidents.
- Geriatric hospitals are closing. Seems as if people are just to go to home, but staff are not trained in healthcare for sick people.
- People are looking for houses and help at the Lothian Veterans Centre, but they do not know how to complete the forms
- People must travel to East Lothian due to the closure of a clinical facility in Borders
- Older people are being looked after in hospital wards for people with dementia, even though they do not have dementia
- Debacle within NHS Tayside causing concern
- Lack of public toilets
- Hope is diminishing and we are making sacrifices. Should we be faced with food or heating choices?
- Dementia day care is needed. Edinburgh is the loneliest city in Europe.
- We need quality care assessments
- Too little care in own homes as workers should spend more than 30 mins with older people who live alone.

iii. **Preventative Interventions**

Two presentations were given in this workshop, the first dealing with falls experienced by older people, raised the following concerns.

**Falls**

- Communication from Active and Independent Living Programme in Edinburgh is not good.
- Councils may not grit all roads and pavements are a hazard to older people during the winter.
• The National Institute for Clinical Excellence requires that each GP visit includes an enquiry on falls. However, this does not always happen.
• 129,000 people attended Stirling Royal Infirmary A&E in January 2018 due to falls.
• How can a person be referred to an osteoporosis clinic and get a DEXA scan?
• To prevent osteoporosis exercise should begin between 40-50 years.
• There is confusion on coordinated falls assessment as many people do not know what is involved. Ann mentioned that the first thing is a screening at home to identify the risk factors, after that patients are directed to the right people for help.
• Osteoporosis affects men and doctors’ appointments are not always easy to get with older adults having 6 or 7 falls before reporting anything to their GP.
• National Osteoporosis Society is available to provide support and information.

**Safer Communities**
The second presentation dealt with preventative interventions to enable safer communities by tackling fear of crime. It raised a number concerns -
• An older veteran was intimidated into buying useless bank accounts and insurance by a reputable organisation. What could Trading Standards Scotland do about this? Laura said she will investigate and report back to SOPA.
• Door step crime is a big problem for people with dementia. Laura said Trading Standards Scotland can supply people with ‘no cold calling’ stickers.
• Where cold calling posters were used in the Scottish Borders, a 90% success rate over 4 years was achieved.
• Community Health Partnerships used to talk to people but this no longer happens.
• What can Trading Standards do to raise the alarm on scam HMRC calls?
• Reference to GDPR which will make it more difficult for personal details to be misused? Laura said it’s the responsibility of each individual to read all information on anything they are given.
• A hoax Natwest Bank caller had suggested a card replacement to an older person. The older person complied and was swindled. The warning is that no one should give bank details to anyone who calls them.
• It was suggested that a programme which resembles the “Named Person Scheme” could be considered to support older people. Laura said she would investigate this with her colleagues.
• Trading Standards Scotland encourage everyone to put the phone down anytime they receive a cold call and consider obtaining a call blocking system.

**iv. Sustainability of Adult Social Care**
After presentations by civil servants on key issues towards sustaining an adult social care system, participants raised several concerns, including preventing health deterioration; integration of NHS and adult social care; complex health conditions and needs; self-directed support; cost and quality of care; and NHS and social care workforce.
Participant concerns

- Integration could be better, GP practices are closing, councillors and NHS don’t appear to engage, and locality plans don’t include community councils.
- Not all older people are comfortable with new technology, or they are scared of it, what’s the provision for those people?
- We must recognise that there are some good examples of Integrated Joint Boards performing well and that this is not an easy fix.
- Computers don’t help isolation, care packages in rural communities like mine in Currie are impossible to get, keen to see Scottish Government stats including views from those in rural communities, carers save the NHS £ millions, NHS staff are brilliant on the ground, not in the senior roles, we are fobbed off.
- Automation is going to get worse, increasing use of smart phones, who will pay for this, how will taxes be raised to meet this ambition?
- External care we receive in Edinburgh is excellent, but staff don’t follow European Working Time Directive of 11 hours between shifts, they only get 10, so cannot get properly rested, is this a problem in the rest of Scotland?
- Spent working life in NHS, those in senior positions in the NHS are young and don’t take older people into account, integration is a shambles, IJBs are powerful bodies, Dumfries have an older people’s Consultative Committee, the same senior people are on the IJBs as well as the Health Boards so a conflict of interest, they are letting older people down.
- My mother was in care suffering from delayed discharge due to waiting for a prescription. Should there not be a system where there are services available at weekends?
- When my husband was in hospital they wanted to send him home but he couldn’t stand, family paid for a psychiatrist who advised he had to go to a care home. Care home changed from BUPA to another provider, HC1, Standards of care are now appalling and complaints are ignored.
- Newly built care homes now being used for the wider community – who take ownership here / monitors? Negative effects on those with dementia who cannot use a space.
- What is the role of occupational therapy?
- Re Minister’s comments on social isolation and loneliness, why did the SG do away with the Individual Learning Accounts? ILAs were a cheap way to allow older people to learn and this minimal cost outweighed the medical impacts (of not learning).
• I cannot understand how the problems with IJBs can’t be solved. Can’t we get rid of all the committees and just get things done?
• Delayed discharge is an issue. I know of one person in hospital over 400 days.
• We should be developing an intermediary stage of care. I live in Hannover Housing. We need more sheltered, and very sheltered housing. The SG should release ground to provide more amenity housing to give people more options instead of just care homes.

Intergenerational discussion on Human Rights - Benefits, Barriers and Breaches

The rights of older and younger people living in Scotland must be upheld, respected and taken into account by decision makers and service providers. However, not everyone understands their own rights and may not feel empowered to defend them or the rights of others. The Assembly’s interactive discussion, with views presented by members of SOPA, Children’s Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament, contributed to this significant on-going dialogue in the context of celebrating 2018 as the Year of Young People.

Key Messages

The proceedings were streamed live and can be viewed at https://www.facebook.com/scotopa/

• Although it is 70 years since the UN Convention of Human Rights was embedded in UK law, not everyone is aware of their rights or upholds them for others.
• Everyone has a right to life and to be free from torture and degrading treatment, yet older people and others were subject to the Liverpool Care Pathway until the Scottish and UK Governments disbanded this policy. Some older people in care are still experiencing neglect, exploitation and abuse at the hands of some care workers and friends and family, and we now know that thousands of children were abused and neglected while in the care of religious orders or in orphanages and who still suffer from their experiences.
• Some people have sight loss but with the right kind of education, support and opportunity are capable of leading a full and productive life.
• Education and support for people with sight loss has diminished
• 50% of sight loss is preventable, if individuals care for their diet, general and eye health
• An attitudinal change is required, if sight loss is to be prevented and people with sight loss are to be fully included in society
• The Scottish Youth Parliament campaigns each year on issues of concern and recently 5000 young people looked at rights law and policy to enable them to become more empowered as ‘Rights Defenders’.
• Scotrail utilised 'Mosquito' devices to disband groups of young people. The device emitted a high frequency sound only heard by people aged from 16-26 causing excruciating pain. Due to the SYP campaign the devices are obsolete.
• Members of the Children’s Parliament met with the First Minister and Cabinet to speak about their wishes and hopes for their futures, feeling safe at home and confident to do things outside
• Members of the Children’s Parliament say that adults should not make decisions about the children without speaking to them first
• One child was told she was moving to another school but she was not informed of its practices and rules which made her feel confused and lonely
• Adults should respect a child’s life. For example, a social worker was visiting a child at school while wearing her name badge which meant everyone knew she was in care
• Adults should not put ideas into children’s heads about gender stereotypes. For example, if a girl wants to play football, she can, if she does not want to wear pink she does not have to, if she wants to get dirty while playing, she can
• Children should tell adults what they think, not be afraid to ask questions and feel it is OK to say no or I do not know.
• Scottish education used to be the best in the world but not now
• Education and lifelong learning is an investment for young people and our future
• Young people are not being taught personal, social and health life skills
• Are adults paying enough attention to children?

MSPs Question Time

The following questions and comments were presented to Clare Adamson MSP and Alison Johnstone MSP
• What happened to our system of education. We do not have the engineering and science skills that are required to progress into the future.
• We should have 'parity of esteem' regardless of the type of education received
• Our centres of excellence are developing
• Recycling arrangements are confusing and causing some older people a problem
• What is the Citizens Basic Income
• Why are 'green funerals' more expensive than traditional ones
• SOPA is delivering an event in Glasgow on 22 June on Citizen's Basic Income

What people said about the Assembly

Comments were received in 18 evaluation forms and many emails from guests and stakeholders.

• "Absolutely terrific event it seemed to run like clockwork and all the feedback on the day was excellent. This is due to the first-class work carried out by you two ladies. You are both a credit to SOPA and I would suggest invaluable."
• "Many thanks for all the work before today's event and making sure everything went well to-day"
• Everyone appreciated the key note speeches and information on Scottish Government and SOPA actions.
• Some respondents were not aware of SOPA’s activities or Scottish Government’s work on Funeral Poverty, Social Security Benefits, sustaining adult social care, falls and crime prevention
• Some people were dismayed to learn about the demise of the welfare and education state and the changing role of local authorities.
• Some people appreciated the presentation on sight loss and how it could be prevented.
• Some people were heartened to know that the Scottish Government listens to and acts upon the concerns of older people and that SOPA and its associates contribute to this.
• Many people were delighted to hear the voice and opinions of young people, stating there is hope and care for the future.
• Some people could not understand why young people were contributing to the Assembly.
• Many people appreciated the presence and contribution of the MSPs.
• Clare Adamson MSP was congratulated on her warm and competent hosting of the event.
• Some people would have valued input about housing arrangements and options for older people.

SOPA’s Parliamentary Reception

On June 6th, 2018 we co-hosted a Scottish Parliamentary Reception with Christine Grahame MSP. 50 older and younger people participated in it from a range of locations across Scotland. The purpose of the event was to exchange experiences and information on older people as consumers. Many positive comments were received on the liveliness, humour and contributions delivered during the Reception.

Christine Grahame MSP chaired a lively interactive discussion with contributions from Tom Berney, Chair of SOPA, Lucy Manson of Citizens Advice Scotland, (CAS) Sheila Scobie, Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and SOPA participants.

Key Messages
• The older consumer market is large and growing.
• Ageism and stereotyping is depicted by the media and can be patronising and belittling to older people.
• For older people with mobility issues, going to shops can be challenging, if premises aren’t accessible e.g. with narrow aisles, cluttered entrances or labels with small font sizes on products.
• Common challenges faced with telephone-based consumer interactions include long waiting times, poor staff knowledge and frustrating automated phone menus. Poor sound quality, unclear speech and call handlers speaking too quickly can also create a negative experience for older consumers.

• Further concerns with online shopping include security around entering credit card details, difficulties with receiving or returning goods or long delivery times and not being able to physically touch or understand an item before purchasing it.

• Scams are a major threat to older people’s financial security and overall health and wellbeing. Although anyone can become a victim of scams, older consumers are often particularly targeted, because it is assumed that they have more money than younger people or because of personal circumstances, such as social isolation, cognitive impairment, bereavement and financial pressures.

• A survey on an everyday shopping basket across Dumfries and Galloway found that some shops in the region are charging three times as much as others for the same basket of items.

• The ‘Cost of Living’ Report by Dumfries and Galloway CAS finds that the cost of a basket of essential everyday items ranged from £8.79 to £24.70. In the same report shoppers in the poorest and rural areas are on average paying the highest prices.

• All of the big supermarkets chains are charging very different prices for the same items in different stores just a few miles apart. Critical items have some of the largest price differentials and in fact are often unavailable in local stores. The report written by Dumfries & Galloway Citizens Advice Service is available here: https://www.dagcas.org/News/cost-of-living-report

• CMA launched a market study into care homes for older people in the UK in December 2017 to review how well the market works and if people are treated fairly. Findings included:
  - Choosing care homes. Prospective care home residents and families need to be able to exercise informed choice. Our research shows many people struggle to make decisions on care.
  - Complaints and redress. It is difficult to move between care homes, so it is important that residents are protected by effective complaints and redress systems. Residents find it very challenging to make complaints: there is fear of retaliation, reluctance to complain against carers, and few ‘consumer’ type complaints.
  - Consumer protection. For self-funded residents, there are concerns about a lack of indicative fee information on websites, the charging of large upfront fees and deposits, and requirements to pay fees for an extended period after a resident’s death. CMA have opened a consumer protection case against some providers due to concerns that some of their contract terms and practices in relation to large upfront fees and the fees charged after a resident’s death may breach consumer law.
• State procurement. Generally, there is effective competition between care homes for local authority placements. Some providers have told us of instances where they have found public procurement complex, inflexible and insufficiently person-centred. But we have found a great variety of practice, some sophisticated practice. Differential pricing is common; self-funders tend to pay higher charges compared to state-funded residents.

• Investment in future capacity. Demand for care home services is expected to increase. Current short-term funding pressures on local authorities means they cannot offer fee rates which provide an attractive rate of return to support modernisation and investment in new capacity, nor do local authorities have other tools to ensure appropriate local long-run development of provision, particularly aimed at state-funded residents.

• Funding challenges. There are concerns about the sustainability of the care homes sector due to fee rates, increasing staff costs and recruitment challenges. Findings suggest levels of profitability overall are low, and lower for homes focused on state-funded residents.

• Community Pharmacies now have a significant role to play in supporting their community in the provision of information, simple health checks and dealing with prescriptions.

• Preparing for and dealing with funerals are a big worry for many older people. Citizens Advice Scotland and the Scottish Government have produced worthwhile reports and checklists to help families with these concerns.

8. Recommendations

Based on what we heard through the engagement process, we have set out our recommendations below for what the priority themes should be for 2018/19.

• Topics not previously dealt with by SOPA such as oral health and use of high cost telephone numbers

• Although Governments promote policies to promote inclusiveness of older people, tackle injustice, discrimination and abuse towards older people, it appears the incidence is getting worse

• Provide a platform for older people to have their views heard and acted upon at a local and national level

• Showcase the good work that is making a real difference to older people at grass roots and is firmly rooted in its local community

• Develop better understanding, cooperation and respect between generations

• Provide opportunities for older people to express themselves through avenues seldom used

List of SOPA organisations