

Scottish Older People's Assembly Newsletter



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

Welcome to the SOPA newsletter, please feel free to pass on to others!

July 2021

Older People's Champion Campaign

Since the launch of SOPA's joint campaign with Age Scotland earlier this year, the number of councils with Older People's Champions or Spokespeople has increased to 15 – almost half of all councils in Scotland.

Thank you to all our members that have promoted the campaign by signing the petition, sharing on social media or raising with local Councils. Please continue to raise the issue – particularly in those areas that have not yet appointed a Champion, but also to ensure Champions that are in post are as effective as they can be!



www.age.scot/opc
#OlderPeoplesChampions



As of the end of June 2021, the following areas had Older People's Champions:

Council area	Older People's Champion
Angus Council	Cllr Lynne Devine
Dumfries & Galloway Council	Cllr Andy Ferguson
Dundee City Council	Cllr Lynne Short
East Ayrshire Council	Cllr Jim McMahon
Falkirk Council	Cllr Denis Gouldie
Inverclyde Council	Cllr Robert Moran
Midlothian Council	Cllr Margot Russell
North Ayrshire Council	Cllr Jimmy Miller
North Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Jim Reddin
Renfrewshire Council	Cllr Jennifer Adam-McGregor
Scottish Borders Council	Cllr Elaine Thornton-Nicol
South Ayrshire Council	Cllr Julie Dettbarn
South Lanarkshire Council	Cllr Jim McGuigan
West Dunbartonshire	Cllr Diane Docherty
West Lothian Council	Role approved but yet to appoint champion

Further information about the campaign and how you can get involved, along with an up to date list of Older People's Champions and their contact details, is available on the Age Scotland website at <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/campaigns/older-peoples-champions/contact-details-opc/>

As part of the campaign, a network of Older People's Champions has also been established. The first meeting of the group took place on 21st June, attended by 10 champions and

facilitated by Age Scotland and SOPA. It was great to get this group of enthusiastic leaders together, some have been in the role for a number of years, others are new to the role, but all shared a commitment to listening to older people's concerns and acting to address their issues. We look forward to meeting the group again in September!

Reconnecting Our Communities

SOPA held an East Lothian focused outreach event online on 25 May with a theme of Reconnecting Our Communities, considering the challenges and solutions for supporting older people to reconnect as COVID restrictions ease. The event featured a local service, North Berwick Community Connections and also heard from Pilmeny Development Project, an organisation that has provided a similar Community Connecting service in Leith, Edinburgh, since 2009.

Participants then broke into discussion groups to consider the following:

- What should be the priorities in reconnecting older people as the restrictions are eased?
- What challenges do you see facing older people post-COVID?
- What ideas and solutions do you have for tackling these – for individuals, local groups, national organisations, government?

Key findings from the discussion were:

- **Lack of confidence/ anxiety** and **physical/ mobility issues** will challenge many older people in reconnecting with people and activities
- There needs to be **joined up, local plans** to support older people to reconnect
- The **third sector, local community and faith groups** are well placed to support people to gradually reconnect
- **Transport** is key and needs to be aligned with the opening up of activities and services
- The third sector should be **recognised** for its efforts to support people throughout the pandemic and treated as an **equal partner** in planning and delivering future services
- Having **accessible information** in channels other than digital and **hearing the voices of older people** is more important now than ever.

You can access the report below. Slides and a recording of the event are also available on the [News section of the SOPA website](#).

- [Reconnecting Our Communities full report \(pdf\)](#)

Access to primary care survey

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health and wellbeing of older people was identified as a concern by SOPA. Access to primary care services was a problem for many older people as restrictions were put in place which stopped most face-to-face contact. SOPA's Health and Wellbeing Group set up a survey to find out more about people's experiences.

Over 800 responses were received from people across 14 health board areas. 84% of respondents were aged over 60.

Key findings:

- **More than half** of respondents stated that their **ability to access GP and dental services was negatively impacted** by the pandemic
- **78%** of individuals reported **no disruption to obtaining prescriptions for pre-existing health conditions**
- **124 people stated that they had accessed private health or dental care** due to the inability to access NHS services during the pandemic
- **Around a quarter** of respondents felt that the pandemic has had a significant impact on their **physical health** (24%) and **mental health** (26%)
- **57%** of those who took part in the survey **were unable to access the support they needed**

The report revealed people's frustrations with the apparent inconsistencies of restrictions. Many older people were forced to pay for private care which was not available on the NHS, even though it was provided in the same location and with the same practitioners.

Respondents expressed feelings of abandonment, fear and anxiety in not being able to access essential healthcare and many people have been unable to access the support they need.

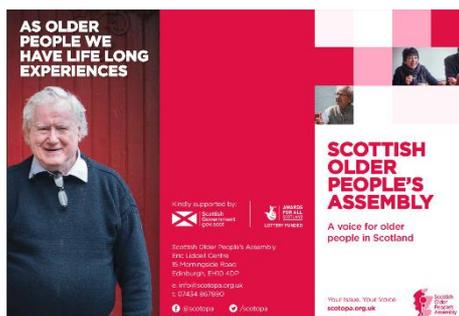
Many older people are concerned that the Covid-19 pandemic has given the opportunity for a major shift to delivering primary care services online. Whilst this may be beneficial to some, it poses a serious risk that older people are excluded from services, symptoms are missed and situations that could have been prevented result in crises. SOPA asks that people are always given a choice in how care is provided and that face-to-face consultations resume as soon as possible.

SOPA calls on the Scottish Government for a clear plan to address the issues raised in this report, ensuring that the basic health needs and human rights of older people are met and that the inequalities described in the report are prevented from occurring in the future.

[The full report is available on SOPA's website, under News.](#)

SOPA's New Leaflet

SOPA has a new leaflet! It's [available to print from SOPA's website](#) or contact Caroline to request printed copies.



SOPA's Lockdown Projects

SOPA's usual events were all postponed during lockdown, but we kept very busy! With thanks to Theresa Casey, our Trustees and members, we embarked on some exciting and innovative projects to ensure that despite the restrictions, the voices of older people continued to be heard. Find out more below.

'Older People – a bonus not a burden'

'Older people - a bonus not a burden' showcases the views of Older People in 'doorstep interviews' filmed during 'lockdown', in the summer of 2020.



Many Older People will tell you that although we may be a bit slower because of stiff joints we are still the same person we have always been inside - people who have worked hard in various occupations, raised families and lived busy, interesting and varied lives in society.

With this in mind, we ventured to counter the stereotyping of Older People as frail, weak and burdens by undertaking this filming project. We want to show that we may be very mature but we are still living worthwhile lives, working, volunteering and contributing to our communities whilst still having lots of fun. We are also sharing what we have learnt in our life experience to younger friends and our grand-children.

You can find the films on:

Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/scotopa>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/Scotopa>

Catalyst Top Tip Film Project

SOPA partnered with the University of Strathclyde's School of Psychological Sciences & Health on research into people's experience of change during national lockdown. A series of Top Tip films share insights into how people cope and maintain their wellbeing during lockdown.



The series of 6 films are available on the SOPA Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/733902343336491/225165499175243>

Your Issue, Your Voice

[Your Issue, Your Voice](#) is a series of information sheets which aims to support older people to have their say, with information on where and how to raise issues, along with tips from our members. The information sheets are available in this print-at-home version. If you would like hard copies, do drop us a line.

We are planning to build on Your Issue, Your Voice by arranging an online session later in the year to provide SOPA members and anyone else interested in how to influence decision making at the UK Parliament. Look out for further information via email.



SOPA's Three Year Plan

SOPA published its three-year plan in January 2021. It is based on the priorities, discussion and activities that have been identified over the last year and translates those into a clear objectives and actions.

In introducing the plan, Diana Findley, SOPA Chair, remarked

"We needed to re-balance our approach in the light of the COVID pandemic, but always with the aim of making the voice of Older People heard at all levels of government and promoting the great contribution of Older People. SOPA's diverse membership is a strength, something of which we are rightly proud. It gives us a wide appreciation of the challenges met by communities."

[View SOPA's three year plan.](#)

News from SOPA Member Organisations and Partners

Faith in Older People (FiOP) - Faith Communities and Mental Health

The mental wellbeing of our society is critically important if we are to weather the storm created by the pandemic. However, we must also consider that there are many older people who have been affected by mental ill health and challenges over the years who need support.



FiOP has been working with Voluntary Health Scotland which brought together representatives from a range of voluntary and public sector organisations to consider the issues that emerge for older people.

What happens to people with mental health conditions other than or alongside dementia once they become 65? Issues we have been exploring include under diagnosis, under-provision, poor transitions from 'adult' services to 'older people' services, discrimination and flouting of human rights. It is said that for some people with serious mental health issues, their 65th birthday is like 'falling off a cliff' in terms of service provision. We have been gathering evidence to raise awareness of the issues faced by people and to try and

improve policy and practice. See the following link to access the evidence and discussions. [Falling Off a Cliff at 65: Discussion Paper and Evidence \(vhscotland.org.uk\)](https://vhscotland.org.uk/).

FiOP is committed to working collaboratively and together with other organisations and we are currently highlighting the importance of support from faith communities. Over the past three months we have held a series of on-line seminars exploring how faith communities can and do support people experiencing mental health challenges. The presentations from them can be found on the FiOP website [Mental Health, Older People and Faith Communities \(faithinolderpeople.org.uk\)](https://faithinolderpeople.org.uk/).

Hourglass Scotland - Safer Ageing

Hourglass Scotland (previously Action on Elder Abuse Scotland) now has a Community Response Hub in Fife that provides specialist advice, information and pragmatic support to older people and any anyone concerned about the safety of older people. The community focussed support and information given covers all aspects of Safer Ageing, from prevention and early intervention, right through to direct support and recovery from abuse or exploitation. For further information see <https://wearehourglass.scot/scotland/community-response-local-response-safer-ageing>



University of Strathclyde – Ageing and Communication project, update from Laura Manderson

Last year I was given the opportunity to be involved in a collaborative research programme between SOPA and the University of Strathclyde. The project 'Ageing and Communication: understanding the roles of cognition, speech production and social participation', is a four-year PhD programme supervised by Dr Louise Brown Nicholls, Dr Anja Kuschmann and Professor Anja Lowit.

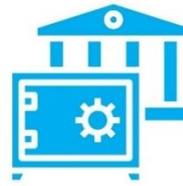


My research this year has involved conducting a systematic review to analyse the research that has been carried out in the field thus far. The review focuses on the relationship between cognitive (e.g. attention, memory) and motor speech functioning in older adults. This has included a thorough search of the literature to collect all of the available evidence on the topic and to compile a comprehensive overview of our current understanding of the relationships between cognition and speech in ageing. The results suggest that specific relationships may exist, for example, between attention and speech rate. However, the quantity and quality of this evidence is limited, and further research is required. I am currently developing the review to submit for publication over the next few months. Then, we will address the issues identified from the review within our own research over the coming years.

My first year with the programme has enabled me to hone my academic and research skills by completing a Masters degree in Research Methods in Psychology. I am now ready and looking forward to transitioning to year one of the PhD.

Age Scotland - “Check In, Cash Out”

Age Scotland’s “Check in, Cash out” campaign is seeking to raise awareness and take-up of social security among older people.



Older people are missing out on hundreds of millions of pounds in social security every year

The charity is encouraging older people to check in to see if they could be entitled to cash out by contacting its free helpline on 0800 12 44 222 or using its free information and advice guides.



While there are a range of social security payments available to help older people, millions of pounds worth of support is not being claimed every year in Scotland. Consequently, many older people are missing out on money which could make a big difference to their quality of life, health, and wellbeing.

Find out more by calling the Age Scotland helpline on 0800 12 44 222 or visit www.age.scot/CheckInCashOut

DLF (previously Disabled Living Foundation) - Impartial Information & Advice on Independent Living

A new, easy to use online self-assessment tool for older and disabled people has been launched by EquipU, serving a Scottish population of around 2.46 million.

AskSARA is a free to use guided advice tool which produces impartial advice, written by qualified occupational therapists, about suitable aids and adaptations on over ninety topics for daily living. Simply choose a topic, answer a few questions and view a report of advice tailored to your needs.

From the EquipU AskSARA report, users can then link to categories of suitable products in the Living Made Easy marketplace, many of which can be immediately purchased from online retailers and delivered to your door. Living Made Easy, from DLF, impartially hosts over 11,000 aids to daily living and assistive technology (AT) products.

Alison Docherty EquipU Project Manager who has been leading the venture says, “This initiative forms part of our partners’ Maximizing Independence agenda. It underlines our commitment to support people to independently identify their needs, and self-manage their conditions, wherever possible.”



The EquipU Community Equipment Partnership comprises of NHS Greater and Clyde (NHSGCC), and the six local authorities of East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, and South Lanarkshire.

Visit the EquipU AskSARA here: <https://equipu.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/>

Visit Living Made Easy here: <https://livingmadeeasy.org.uk/>

The Alliance - Digital Citizen Panel

The Digital Citizen Panel is looking for your experiences, learning and views to help inform and shape digital solutions, ensuring they are accessible and fit for purpose and be beneficial and supportive to the needs of all citizens. By joining The Digital Citizen Panel you will be participating in different opportunities and have your say on digital health and care.

The Digital Citizen Panel aims to

- ensure people are at the heart of service design and delivery
- identify and understand effective ways to empower citizens to consider accessing health and care support services via digital means, and what infrastructure needs to be in place to endorse this.
- ensure citizens have meaningful and active decision making over the use of digital technology in their care and support

To support or get involved in the work of the Digital Citizen Panel, please get in touch Louise.coupland@alliance-scotland.org.uk or 0141 404 0231

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) - Invitation to take part in research

Pye Tait Consulting have been commissioned by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) to undertake research to speak with people who don't normally get involved in their work. The NMC is the regulator for nurses, midwives and nursing associates in England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

The NMC want to hear from a broad range of people so they can take into account everybody's considerations and needs and understand all the implications of their suggested changes.

The NMC is currently running a consultation on its post-registration standards.

As part of this, Pye Tait is conducting one-to-one depth interviews with carers from across the UK between now and mid-July. Individuals will be required to read a short document before the discussion to familiarise themselves with the NMC and the standards. All participants will receive a £55 Amazon voucher to thank them for their time and valuable contribution.

Are you interested in taking part in this research? You can register your interest here: www.pyetait.com/NMC-future-community-nurse-signup or contact Kirsty Elliot k.elliott@pyetait.com

SOPA 2021 Dates

- SOPA Trustees Meeting (11.00 – 1.00) 3rd August, 5th October, 7th December
- SOPA Planning Group meeting (11.00-1.00), 11th August, 10th November (AGM),
- Outreach meetings and events:
 - Highland Senior Citizens Network “Ageing Well in the Highlands” online event - 9 September
 - Unforgotten Forces - end of September, planning for meeting in Aberdeen/ Inverness
 - U3A October online event - Autumn

SOPA Contact Details

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SOPA receives funding from the Scottish Government ‘Promoting Equality and Cohesion Fund’ and National Lottery Community Fund. We are also grateful to the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners for supporting our outreach work.



The Scottish Older People’s Assembly is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, number SC046520.