



SOPA Manifesto 2021 Parliamentary Election

Further information about SOPA and the work that we do is available at www.scotopa.org.uk

The Scottish Older People's Assembly exists to give a strong voice to older people about their experience of life in Scotland, their challenges and concerns, and to celebrate the positive contribution that older people make to society.

A WORD FROM DIANA FINDLEY, SOPA CHAIR

We welcome the opportunity to publish a manifesto in advance of the Scottish Parliamentary election. Over the last 12 years, SOPA has worked hard to make the voices of Older People heard at all levels of government and promote the great contribution that Older People make to their communities, work-places and through volunteering.

The last year has posed challenges to the work of SOPA and to older people across the nation. The pandemic has exacerbated issues of loneliness, isolation and exclusion for many older people and SOPA has had to find new ways of trying to ensure that the voices of older people are heard. We have risen to the challenge by using 'Zoom' to counter the difficulties of holding in-person meetings. We are adapting our outreach activities by holding virtual sessions until we can meet together once again. Using film, we have been involved in two projects to share the views of older people, to challenge stereotypes and to offer tips on dealing with lockdown.

As the country looks to recovery, it is more important than ever that older people are seen and heard. Many issues that were important before are even more critical now.

Our manifesto sets out six recommendations that we believe should be priorities for the next Scottish Government. It is based on the views of our members, the experiences from their organisations working with older people and from SOPA's outreach and consultation activities.

Diana Findley

Your Issue, Your Voice
www.scotopa.org.uk

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: SC046520





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Over the course of the next Scottish Parliament, SOPA believes that the Scottish Government should:

DELIVER ON THE FINDINGS OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Over the last decade SOPA members have contributed to numerous reports, reviews, conferences and discussions on the actions required to improve social care. We implore the Scottish Government to stop talking and start acting on delivering what is required to meet people's human rights, to value the workforce and to end the chronic underfunding of care services. In any redesign of care services we ask that the focus is on people using the service rather than structural change and that people with lived experience are involved from the outset to ensure we get it right.

Issues of particular importance to our members include:

- **Home care and residential care should be funded adequately and sustainably to deliver equitable and quality care for all older people**

- **Health and social care workers should be paid fairly and provided with appropriate training and career paths**
- **Nutritious meals must be provided to older people as part of care services**

SUPPORT THE APPOINTMENT OF AN OLDER PEOPLE'S CHAMPION IN EVERY LOCAL AUTHORITY

In partnership with Age Scotland, SOPA is campaigning for an Older People's Champion in every local authority in Scotland.

We are calling on all of Scotland's 32 local authorities to create the role to ensure that older people's voices are heard, their interests catered for and their concerns addressed.

Nine local authorities have already appointed a councillor to the apolitical role but the Age Scotland and SOPA campaign aims to build a network of champions to represent older people's views and identify issues that affect older people locally.

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SUPPORT THE RESTORATION OF FREE TV LICENCE

The removal of the free TV licence for over 75s impacts on thousands of older people in Scotland who were already struggling to pay the basic costs of food and heating, increasing feelings of loneliness for many. The importance of the TV as a key connection to the outside world has been heightened during the pandemic. We ask the Scottish Government to address this issue either by influencing Westminster and/or the BBC, or by meeting the funding gap for Scottish citizens.

ENCOURAGE THE TAKE UP OF PENSION CREDIT

Figures published in 2020 showed that four in ten of the poorest pensioners in Scotland are not claiming pension credit which they are entitled to. That is estimated to be 123,000 pensioner households missing out on up to £332 million. SOPA calls on the Government to take action to increase uptake and improve the lives of thousands of older people.

DELIVER AFFORDABLE DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Whilst many older people have embraced technology as a way of keeping connected, shopping and accessing services, others are being left behind. The pandemic has increased the digital divide and for those without technology feeling more isolated and excluded than ever. SOPA asks the Scottish Government to deliver affordable and accessible digital inclusion, including personalised support which is key to achieving this aim. Non-digital formats should always be available for people that need them.

COMMITMENT TO THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE IN COVID RECOVERY THROUGH AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The economic, social and health impacts of the pandemic will be extensive and long lasting. In prioritising actions for recovery, we ask the Scottish Government to commit to ensuring that the rights of older people are considered and protected. As communities rebuild, we ask that they are supported to do this in an age-friendly way. We want to see residents, local groups, councils, and businesses working together to create places where people of all ages can live healthy and active lives.

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“As Older People we have life long experiences and should be part of any, and all Strategic Policies involving us. Remember we are a Bonus not a Burden.”

Eileen Wallace, Trustee

“Older people are as diverse as any other sector of the population.”

Christine Wilson, Trustee

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