



Information Sheet 2

Who to influence?

The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) aims to support and empower older people to raise issues that are important to them, so they can be **heard directly by decision makers**. This series of information sheets aims to support older people to have their say.

BURNING ISSUES

Do you have a burning issue, a local change you wish you could make or a national issue that you would like to influence? It can be difficult to know how to make your voice heard, who to contact and how to make an impact.

This sheet outlines some of the key groups of decision makers and influencers that could help you to make a change.

KEY GROUPS

59 MPS | **354** WARDS

MANY WAYS TO INFLUENCE THE **SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT** | **129** MSPS

31 INTEGRATED JOINT BOARDS

1,227 LOCAL COUNCILLORS

COMMUNITY COUNCILS **1,200**

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

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation No: SC046520





Information Sheet 2.1

Who to influence?

1. COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Community councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. They bridge the gap between local authorities and communities, and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent. There are around 1,200 active community councils in Scotland, you can find them listed at:

www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/community-councils

If your issue relates to your local neighbourhood, contacting your community council could be a good way of finding out if other people support your concern or idea and could provide a route to those who can deal with your issue.

How to contact your local community council:

Online

- The Scottish Community Councils website has a 'Community Council finder' www.communitycouncils.scot

- Once you know which community council covers your area, contact details should be available on your local authority website.
- Typing the name of your local community council into a search engine should provide a link to their website if they have one.

Other ways to find out about and contact your local community council

- Your local library will be able to tell you which community council covers your area and how to contact them.
- Many community councils have a local notice board with information about how to contact them.

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2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

If your issue is wider than your local area but is related to local services, you may wish to contact your local authority directly.

- You can find your local council and a link to their website using the GOV.UK website
www.gov.uk/find-local-council
- Your local council website should have contact details for email, telephone or mail.

3. LOCAL COUNCILLORS

You can also contact your local elected representative (councillor) about your issue. You can find out which councillor(s) represent the ward in which you live:

- on your local council website
- by contacting your local library.

Many local councillors have regular surgeries which provide an opportunity for any ward resident to talk with them face-to-face. Details can often be found on community notice boards, in libraries or local newspapers.

4. OTHER WAYS TO INFLUENCE YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL

There are other ways to raise issues or get involved in decisions being made.

- Take part in local consultations – these are usually published on council websites, or your local library may have information.
- Start, or take part in, a petition. Some councils have a petitions process – details can be found on their websites or you could ask your local library. If your petition meets the criteria set by your local council and gains enough support, it could result in a debate by councillors.
- Make a deputation (a small group) to a council or committee meeting – a request to speak on a particular issue should be made in advance. Councils all have their own processes for dealing with such requests. Further details should be available on the council website or by contacting them directly.
- Make a comment or complaint – councils should have a process for making a comment or complaint by phone, email or letter.

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5. INTEGRATED JOINT BOARDS

Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs) were established in Scotland in 2016 and are responsible for the planning and delivery of health and social care services. The 31 IJBs in Scotland include representatives from NHS boards, local authorities, third and independent sectors along with users of health and social care services.

If your issue relates to health and social care services, you may wish to raise it with your local IJB. There are a number of ways you could do this:

- Contact your IJB directly by email, phone or mail – see their websites for details.
- IJBs are required to ensure stakeholder engagement in developing their plans. There may be opportunities to participate in a local events, which are likely to be advertised on your council or IJB website, on social media pages or at local libraries.
- You may be able to attend meetings of your IJB and make a deputation, check with your IJB about the process for this.

Not all NHS services are delegated to the IJB, some remain the sole responsibility of the NHS Board. Details of how to raise complaints and comments about NHS services are available on their websites.

6. MEMBERS OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT (MSPs)

Every person in Scotland is represented by eight Members of the Scottish Parliament; one constituency MSP who represents your local area and seven regional MSPs who represent your larger area.

- You can find your local MSPs on the Scottish Parliament website www.parliament.scot/msps.aspx
- MSPs can support you with issues related to matters devolved to the Scottish Parliament.
- MSPs often hold local surgeries where you can talk to them face-to-face.

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7. OTHER WAYS TO INFLUENCE THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

- Get involved with Parliamentary committees – respond to a call for evidence on an inquiry or a bill, attend a committee or interact through social media.
- Submit or support a petition.
- Join a cross party group.
- Attend events and exhibitions arranged by the Parliament.
- Participate in demonstrations.

Further information is available on the Scottish Parliament website www.parliament.scot/global/games/your-voice/html/index.html

8. MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (MPs)

Members of Parliament represent you in the UK Parliament on matters reserved to Westminster. You can find your MP on the UK Parliament website <https://members.parliament.uk/FindYourMP>

For further information about asking your MSP or councillor for support, see this publication from SOPA member Outside the Box: https://otbds.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Guide_to_asking_MSP_or_councillor.pdf

Top Tips from SOPA Members

“Perseverance and persistence. Finding people with energy that you can trust can be difficult but key to getting things done. Use your contacts!”

John White, Dumfries & Galloway Seniors Forum and SOPA Trustee

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