



Information Sheet 1

Introduction to the Your Issue, Your Voice information sheets

The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) 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.

OUR AIMS

We believe that older people's views and experiences should inform decisions made at all levels, but there are often barriers that prevent older people from having their say. These include:

- **not being asked**
- **lack of confidence**
- **not knowing where or how to raise issues**
- **lack of time or skills, for example using email or an online form.**

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. Many SOPA members are skilled and experienced in influencing and ensuring that the views of older people are considered.

This series of information sheets aims to support older people to have their say, with information on where and how to raise issues, along with tips from our members.

TOPICS

Who to influence – key individuals and groups you can raise your issue with (Sheet 2)

How to develop a campaign (Sheet 3)

Ensuring your message is inclusive (Sheet 4)

Examples from SOPA members and links to further information (Sheet 5)

Top Tips from SOPA Members

“The more groups that you can engage and gather round to support you the better.”

Eileen Wallace, Stirling Public Partnership Forum

“Try to use different formats such as social media, local newspapers and radio. If you don't know how, find someone who does!”

Diana Findley, SOPA Chair, Age Scotland, Borders Older People's Forum

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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**

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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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Information Sheet 2.2

Who to influence?

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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Information Sheet 2.3

Who to influence?

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)

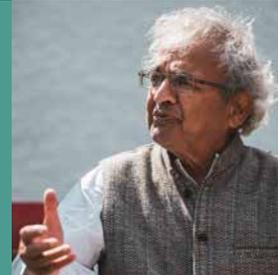
Every person in Scotland is represented by eight Members of the Scottish Parliament; one constituency MSP who represents your local area and seven regional MSPs who represent your larger area.

- 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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Information Sheet 2.4

Who to influence?

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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Information Sheet 3

Developing a campaign

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, with information on where and how to raise issues, along with tips from our members.

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 provides some key points to consider in developing an effective campaign.

1. IDENTIFY YOUR ISSUE

- Have a clear, simple message – even if your issue is complex, what are the key points that you want people to be aware of?
- Consider the level of action you want to take. For example, if your issue is the cracked pavement outside your house, do you want to focus on that or do you want to launch a wider campaign about improving pavements and streets across your neighbourhood?

2. SET A GOAL OR CHANGE YOU WANT TO MAKE

- If you have a problem or a complaint, try to re-frame it into a positive call for action. Using positive language about the change you want to make, rather than focusing on past negative experiences, helps to engage both your supporters and the decision-makers that you want to influence. For example, rather than focusing on the poor condition of local streets, Living Streets' *Walking Connects* project calls for improvements to streets and pavements that increase wellbeing through walking.
- Even if your experience was negative, your goal is positive – to prevent other people from experiencing the same thing.

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Information Sheet 3.1

Developing a campaign

3. COLLECT EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT YOUR POINT

- Knowledge is key to running a successful campaign.
- There is power in numbers – collect evidence of how the issue affects not just you, but others, and (with permission) record experiences to share.
- Facts, figures and case studies help to build an objective case that is more difficult to argue against.
- Explain the wider impact that an issue is having – for example, broken pavements can prevent older people from leaving their homes, leading to isolation, loneliness and deteriorating physical health.
- Find out whether similar campaigns exist or have taken place in the past – how can you use these to strengthen your case? Examples from elsewhere can help to show what can be achieved and motivate decision-makers to do the same.

4. IDENTIFY YOUR ALLIES AND PEOPLE YOU WILL NEED TO PERSUADE

- Find people who understand or have a connection to your cause.
- Identify routes of influence – politicians, charities, business or community leaders and well-known figures who can support your aim.
- Consider how your issue may affect different groups of people as this could provide a wider pool of supporters. For example, cracked

pavements might be important to older people, people using mobility aids, people with sensory impairments, parents with prams.

- Think about who might oppose your campaign so you can try to understand their point of view and look for common ground.
- Consider points they might put forward, to allow you to prepare any counter-arguments and consider if there are compromises to be made.

5. GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT THERE

- Use as many different channels as possible to reach a wide audience.
- Identify who you need to influence and how best to do this (see ‘Who to Influence’ on sheet 2).
- Understand your key allies and opponents and which channels they use.
- Use your contacts – do you know anyone who could help to design a leaflet or help with social media? (See ‘Using different channels to promote your issue or campaign’ on sheet 4.2).
- Be persistent. It can take a while to find the right person to help you solve a problem. There may be some false starts, but don’t give up!

Top Tips from SOPA Members

“Avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach – it may make the process easier but you will not reach those who are most in need and require additional support. Work with people and organisations who support those who experience communication barriers.”

Rohini Sharma Joshi, Trust Housing Association

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Information Sheet 4

Ensuring your message is accessible and inclusive

The Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) 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.

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 best to make your voice heard, who to contact and how to make an impact.

This sheet suggests ways to ensure that your campaign is as inclusive as possible, helping you gain supporters and deliver your messages effectively.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ACCESSIBLE?

Information needs to be good quality, reliable and accurate before people can make judgements about getting involved.

If information is not at a suitable level, in a language or format that meets a variety of needs, then some people will be excluded.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY AN INCLUSIVE CAMPAIGN?

An inclusive campaign embraces diversity by reaching out to people from different backgrounds or including stories that a range of audiences can relate to.

WHY SHOULD I MAKE MY CAMPAIGN INCLUSIVE?

You may primarily be interested in raising your issue as you have experienced it and getting a solution that meets your needs. However, a campaign is more likely to be successful if it relates to a wider audience. An inclusive campaign is more likely to:

- reach a wider audience by being accessible (for example, by using alternative formats or different languages, being easy to understand)
- gain more supporters, as different groups can relate to or empathise with your position
- be more persuasive to decision makers.

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Information Sheet 4.1

Ensuring your message is accessible and inclusive

1. IMAGERY

Images are an important part of any campaign. They can help to make promotional materials eye-catching and convey your message. They may even replace lots of text, helping to make your campaign more accessible.

However, images should be selected carefully to be as accessible and inclusive as possible. Avoid images that reinforce stereotypes that could alienate or offend people who you hope will support your campaign. Stereotyping is often unintended – everyone holds unconscious biases so you need to challenge yourself and be prepared to listen if others challenge you.

Examples of visual stereotypes to avoid when representing older age:

- wrinkly hands
- a walking stick
- an older person being taken care of by a younger person.

When selecting images consider:

- including as diverse a range of people as possible (gender, race, age, disability)
- using icons or graphics, as they can be more generic than photographic images
- fostering positive representations, for example older people as active, experienced, knowledgeable.

2. LANGUAGE

The language you use in your campaign is also important in making it accessible to as wide an audience as possible. The following can help improve accessibility:

- Use plain English – this allows as many people as possible to read your message quickly and avoid misunderstandings. Readability tools available in Microsoft Word and other computer packages can help assess how easy your text is to read.
- Use neutral and objective language – this allows more people to relate to your issue and can increase the credibility of your argument.
- Spoken language translation – depending on the size, scale and resources that your campaign has, consider whether you can translate materials into other languages. Are there particular communities that you want to involve in your campaign? Consider how you might best reach these audiences using different channels and formats. There are many online tools to help with this.
- Sensory barriers – make your campaign as accessible as possible to people with sight or hearing loss. This could include offering film clips, animations, visual representations, braille translations of written materials; using subtitles and British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation on visual formats; and ensuring that websites and electronic materials are accessible for screen readers and other adaptive technology. (For more information, see <https://www.gov.scot/accessibility/>)

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Information Sheet 4.2

Ensuring your message is accessible and inclusive

3. USE DIFFERENT CHANNELS AND FORMATS

There is unlikely to be one way that will reach everyone in your target audience so the more channels and formats that you use, the more likely you are to have an accessible campaign. Develop a plan of how, when and where you will use different channels. These could include:

- websites
- social media
- leaflets
- posters
- events
- phone calls
- emails
- media (national and local news)
- newsletters
- mail
- presentations.

4. ENGAGE WITH OTHERS

Campaigns are difficult to run on your own, so working with others will help to maximise your reach, increase accessibility and improve the effectiveness of your campaign.

Engaging with groups and organisations that represent wider and minority views can be a great way to reach wider audiences. These organisations also have expertise and experience to help ensure your materials are as accessible, available and inclusive as possible.

Top Tips from SOPA Members

“Remember many disabilities are hidden, so it might not be obvious that someone cannot see, hear or understand your message. Don’t talk down to people with disabilities or impairments.”

Sandra Wilson, RNIB

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