

Cross-Party Group on Older People, Age & Ageing

Wednesday 4th June 2025 1-2.30pm,

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Jeremy Balfour MSP – Convenor

Colin Smyth MSP – Deputy Convenor

Roz McCall MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Moira Bayne – Housing Options Scotland

Sam Blackley – British Geriatrics Society (left at 2pm)

Louise Brown Nicholls – University of Strathclyde

Dave Budd – Partners in Advocacy

Eileen Cawley – Scottish Pensioners Forum

Lyndsay Clelland – Age Scotland

Michael Driscoll – Horizon Housing Association

Sarah Duckmanton – Life Care Edinburgh

Diana Findlay – Scottish Older People's Assembly

Iain Fraser – Age Scotland

Anne Gallacher – Luminate

Alan Gow – Heriot Watt University

Ben Hall – Cyrenians

Debbie Horne – Independent Age

Susan Hunter – Befriending Networks

Dawn Irvine – Meeting Centres Scotland

Rose Jackson – Scottish Pensioners Forum - Treasurer

Councillor Isabelle MacKenzie – Councillor of Highland and Older People's Champion

Mark McDonald – Scottish Autism

Robert McGeachy – Food Standards Scotland

Leeanne McGurk – University of Dundee (School of Life Sciences)

Jean Monaghan – LGBT Health and Wellbeing

Dr Gareth Mulvenna – Hourglass

Brian Murphy – Scottish Fire & Rescue

Sarah Murray – Royal Voluntary Service

Denis O' Keefe – Voice of Experience Forum

Jules Robinson - RoSPA
Donna Scott
Mehar Shagufta – Playlists for Life
Raj Singh – Sikh Sanjog
Prof Judith Sixsmith – University of Dundee
Adam Stachura – Age Scotland
Kim Stringer – Vegetarian for Life
Nicola Watson – Shared Lives Plus

In attendance

Andrea Ma – Age Scotland (Secretariat)
Julia Shillitto – Senior Caseworker
Annalisa Boni – Individual (Observer)
Kaukab Stewart MSP – Minister for Equalities (Guest) (only available till 1.30)
Catherine McMeeken – Deputy Director for Equalities (Guest)
Sam McCabe – Assistant Private Secretary for Minister for Equalities (Guest)
AI Media Captioners (x2)

Apologies

Beth Allen – Age Scotland
Elizabeth Baikie – Lothian Older People's Psychology Service (LOPPS)
Bernadine Blair – Scottish Fire & Rescue
Sophie Bridger – Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland
Michelle Candlish – Linking Lives
David Cavanagh – Salvation Army
Councillor Beverley Clark – East Ayrshire Councillor and Older People's Champion
Alison Clyde – SOPA
Chloe Fawns-Ritchie – University of Edinburgh
Jen Grant – Food Train (Eat Well Age Well)
Trish Hafford Letchfield - Health Care Futures, University of Strathclyde
Prof Anne Hendry – IFIC Scotland (International Foundation for Integrated Care)
Jennifer McAughtrie – Simeon Care for the Elderly
Christine Ryder – Outside the Box
Jo Savege – Scottish Association of Social Work
Andrew Senew – Home Instead (Edinburgh)
Trishna Singh – Sikh Sanjog
Iain Templeton – Partners in Advocacy
Elaine Thornton- Nichol – Royal Voluntary Service
Sarah Van Putten – Life Care Edinburgh
David Weir – Gilead Sciences UK & Ireland Ltd

Agenda

Agenda item 1

Welcome and Apologies

The convenor welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance and noted the apologies for the meeting.

Agenda item 2

Minutes 12th March 2025 AGM Meeting

The minutes were confirmed however with the stipulation that the AGM portion of the minutes are to be approved at the next AGM.

Agenda item 3

Matters Arising

No matters arising were noted.

Agenda item 4

New Member Requests

The convenor shared that Annalisa Boni is requesting membership as an individual member. The members approved the request

Agenda item 5

Minister for Equalities, Kaukab Stewart MSP

The Minister for Equalities, Mrs Kaukab Stewart MSP was welcomed to the CPG.

The Minister for Equalities thanked the CPG for the invitation and the opportunity to outline the work of the Scottish Government.

- The Scottish Government recognises the issues and barriers faced by older people, from cost-of-living crisis, housing, food and energy and acknowledges the calls for a Pensioner Poverty Strategy, from Independent Age and that officials would be meeting with them in due course.
- The Equality and Human Rights Fund of over £2.2m is funding outcomes focused work of older people's organisations, including Age Scotland's national helpline.
- A social isolation and loneliness fund of £3.8m launched in 2023, funding 53 projects that support people at risk of social isolation and loneliness.

- A universal Pension Age Winter Heating Payment will launch with every pensioner household in Scotland (815,000 households) receiving a guaranteed minimum of £100. A total forecasted winter heating benefit of £141m.
- Scottish Government are working closely with partners including the Older People's Strategic Action Forum (OPSAF) on issues related to age equality and actions from the 2019 "A Fairer Scotland For Older People Framework".
- Roundtable sessions were held recently, to hear the concerns of older people and the organisations that represent them, to determine key priorities and themes including the cost of living, healthcare, digital inclusion and accessible transport.

The convenor thanked the minister for her introduction and brought in Councillor Isabelle MacKenzie and Nicola Watson, who had submitted questions in advance of the meeting.

- Councillor MacKenzie introduced herself as the Highland Older People's Champion and expressed the deep concern within the Highlands area with the radio teleswitch service (RTS) ending on 30 June 2025. She asked the Minister what urgent measures were being taken to protect older people, particularly those in rural and island communities, from losing access to heating and hot water, or from facing increased energy costs due to delayed meter replacements.
- The Minister echoed the concerns but stated that RTS is a reserved issue, and the UK Parliament have responsibility to resolve the matter. The Scottish Government however is acting within the limit of devolved powers to hold the energy industry to account. They have written to regulators OFGEM, pressing for a managed phased switch off, ensuring that vulnerable customers are always protected and to minimise consumer detriment, where there is an update made to supplier's licence conditions.
The Minister for Climate Action wrote to the UK Government in January to seek urgent and proportionate action including calls for updated regulations to allow data communication companies to use mobile technologies to provide signal to homes in Scotland.
- Councillor MacKenzie added that mobile signal is also an issue in some areas of Highland, so the latter would not be a viable solution for everyone.

The Minister stated that she has a portfolio in equalities but that she is more than happy to take topics not within her remit away for a response as necessary.

- Nicola Watson from Shared Lives Plus and Homeshare UK stated that local authorities are struggling financially, and eligibility criteria for services is becoming more restricted. She asked how the Scottish Government is proposing to support development and access to preventative, community and relationship-based support for older people and their carers. In particular, the services members at Shared Lives Plus and Homeshare provide, which in Scotland are without government funding, resulting in the Shared Living sector lagging behind

the other UK nations.

- The Scottish Government's 2025-26 budget provided local governments with £15.1bn of funding, an increase of 5.5%. Whilst there is the Verity House agreement, ultimately local authorities are to operate independently. The Scottish Government however greatly values the third sector's strategic roles in enabling and their provision of transformative and person-centred services. They are committed to delivering a fairer funding pilot which is approximately £130m for a two-year funding cycle in 2025/26 and 2026/27 and will provide multi-year government grants to third sector organisations with priority to frontline delivered services as stated in the 2025-26 Programme for Government.
- Additionally, £88.4m per year will be invested in local care support through the local authority Carers Act funding. A right to breaks is being written into legislation to support unpaid carers. The voluntary sector short breaks funding increased by £5m making a total of £13m for 2025-26, enabling up to 15,000 additional carers to take short breaks from caring responsibilities, with £6.5m funding local carer centres.

Discussion and Questions

There was discussion and questions covering the following areas:

- Scottish Government is investing in public toilets particularly accessible ones to allow people, older, disabled and families to better access the green environment.
- There was a question on what support the Minister's department could provide on development of a strategy to tackle the abuse and neglect of older people and the resourcing of specialist services.
- The Minister stated that any kind of abuse is unacceptable, and that older people are often more susceptible to abuse, which can come from within their family. Investment into training of all professionals that have frontline contact with older people to recognise signs of abuse whether financial, social or emotional, is important to ensure signposting to services to empower older people to seek help.
It is however a complex area, with abuse coming in the form of wills, but also scams, and there is an impact on pride, stigma and shame being barriers to access and getting support. The Scottish Government provides awareness raising of scams, to allow people to recognise it, and what services can help.
- Eileen Cawley from the Scottish Pensioner's Forum asked a question relating to the Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy. A strategy group was set up in 2023, with feedback that it be included within the National Care Service. However, given that the National Care Service is now being reconsidered, it would be helpful to have an update on the Palliative and End of Life Care Strategy Framework, especially as it impacts on many not only older people.

- The Minister stated that she did not know the answer, as the work lies within a different portfolio however would provide a written response to the very important issue. The Scottish Government are committed to the view that palliative care services are of a high quality. The NCS, now the Care Reform (Scotland) Bill, stage 3 is scheduled for 10 June.

The Minister was thanked for her time to speak to the CPG. The convenor stated that the secretariat will be in touch with CPG questions to the Minister directly.

Actions:

- Minister to provide a written response to Eileen Cawley's question
- Eileen agreed to share the response with others on the CPG once available.
- Secretariat to collate questions to write to the Minister for a response.

Agenda item 6

AOCB

There were 3 AOCBs noted, each was taken in turn.

- **SOPA (Scottish Older People's Assembly) - Cash or Card.**

The convenor shared that a paper was circulated initially for information and handed over to Diana Findlay to introduce the topic.

Diana spoke on behalf of SOPA as a trustee. The topic was raised by a couple of SOPA's members that there are some companies that are refusing to receive cash payment, and it was felt that the topic was important and should be raised at other meetings.

Access to money and cash is becoming increasingly difficult with banks and post offices closing and is difficult for older people, disabled people and small businesses that need cash. The customer care from banks is inadequate.

There is recognition that it is a Westminster issue, but Diana has written to local MP, John Lamont who raised the issue with Emma Reynolds, economic secretary to the Treasury. Diana shared that the letter states that Ms Reynolds mentioned that she hopes that the banking hubs will be in position by the end of this Parliament, which would be another four years and that things should move more quickly.

Councillor Isabelle MacKenzie added that the depletion of banks in rural areas is an epidemic, and older people living in rural areas are becoming more cut off socially and more isolated, and a lot of places within rural areas do rely on cash such as lunch clubs and independent businesses. She mentioned that the lack of ATMs being another issue and that shops may charge you £5 to take out cash, as well as the issue of digital exclusion in relation to online banking. She added that there needs to be a practical outcome and solution to this issue, suggesting a temporary hub within community centre.

Another issue mentioned was potential loss of bank card, and that it can take several days for a replacement, but with the inability to use cash, it will be very difficult for people to survive.

The convenor acknowledged the concerns and stated that it is an important topic that should be discussed as part of the main agenda and suggested inviting speakers such as banks to come speak at the next CPG meeting.

Actions:

- Secretariat to circulate letter to CPG sent by Emma Reynolds for information.
- Secretariat to note Cash or Card as a topic for CPG meeting in September.
- All to contact secretariat with contacts relating to Cash or Card.
- **Befriending Networks and Food Train** are joining forces with colleagues from across Europe to study the actions of third sector organisations on the promotion of active and healthy ageing in rural areas.

The programme is being led by partners in Spain with contributions from Iceland, Norway and Scotland. The project will look at best practices and experiences of delivering activities which support older people to remain connected, involved, and healthy in their communities. There are six themes being explored, including reducing unwanted loneliness, increasing social participation, gender and diversity, and digital technologies.

Community organisations are invited to respond to a short survey that is available for completion by staff or volunteers from third sector organisations working in the area of active and healthy ageing in rural areas until 31st July 2025.

<https://encuestas.fundaciondiagrama.es/index.php/477346>

The results will be shared on 1 October 2025, the UN International Day of Older Persons.

Action: All to consider participating in short survey before 31 July 2025.

- **Age Scotland - Festival of Politics, 1-2.15 on Thursday 21 August**

The Cross-Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing have secured a session at the Festival of Politics. A brief description of the panel is below. The panel is yet to be confirmed. The formal announcement of the programme is not yet live. However, this information is to allow members to hold the date.

Does Scotland care enough about older people?

Older people make a huge contribution to society and the economy, but research shows that in Scotland the majority feel undervalued, feel it's hard to be heard by

decision makers, and face serious challenges - from low incomes and rising living costs, to struggles accessing the health and social care they need. Join the expert panel and share your views on whether enough is being done by governments and public services to support older people live well and what Scotland's priorities should be for our rapidly ageing population.

Action: All to hold the date -21 August for CPG on Older People, Age and Ageing, Festival of Politics session.

The convenor opened the floor for any other AOCBs, the following were received:

- **Partners in Advocacy – Integrated Impact Assessments in Edinburgh**

Integrated Impact Assessments were carried out by Edinburgh Health and Social Care regarding the complete disinvestment of funding for collective independent advocacy groups, which cover many vulnerable groups. Many of the groups have lobbied, fought for, protected, and shaped improvements and introductions of new services over many years.

Partners in Advocacy are attending the next Integrated Impact Assessment on 12 June, which is being chaired by Robert Smith from Edinburgh Council. If disinvestment goes ahead there will be an impact on East Lothian and Midlothian as well. Commissioners from both East Lothian and Midlothian areas have turned up to meetings to challenge the decision as the collective advocacy is pan-Lothian.

The Edinburgh HSCP legal team had inaccurately concluded that many of the groups, including those that cover older people and people with physical disabilities, were not protected under statutory legislation. Therefore, they believe they were justified in considering and implementing the complete disinvestment as they see Independent collective advocacy is optional, which is not the way the mental Healthcare Treatment Act and the Carers Act, and lots of different legislation was worded originally to protect independent advocacy.

- **Hourglass**

Early bird tickets are available for the Hourglass Safer Ageing Summit in Edinburgh in November: <https://wearehourglass.org/hourglass-conference-2025>

- **Heriot Watt University**

New network exploring how to support independence for people living with dementia by developing technologies to meet their needs, and opportunities to get involved <https://www.hw.ac.uk/news/2025/harnessing-technology-to-help-people-with-dementia-remain-at-home>

Please get in touch with A.J.Gow@hw.ac.uk if you, your organisations, or groups are interested in visiting Heriot-Watt's Health and Care Technologies projects and facilities.

- **Befriending Networks**

We are developing the work of the Scottish Forum on Social Isolation and Loneliness; and are looking to develop some specific asks of Government for addressing this issue over the longer term. The current government delivery plan ends in 2026. If the CPG are interested in joining the Forum please contact susan@befriending.co.uk . The next meeting is in September. Previous Forum reports are available here: [Research Archives - Befriending Networks](#)

- **Dundee University**

A community photographic exhibition to showcase older people's perspectives (based on the IncludeAge project - www.includeage.co.uk) on inclusion in everyday physical and online places and spaces is being held. The work focuses on LGBT+ older people and older people with learning disabilities. The venue is **13 Perth Road, DJCAD foyer** from **10th-24th June**. Please come along to enjoy the exhibition.

Action: All to consider and if interested to actively participate in the above AOBs. Please also share with any interested networks.

The next meeting of the CPG is on **24 September 2025** and will be held in person at the Scottish Parliament with the option for remote connection via MS Teams.