

SCOTTISH SENIORS

Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992



Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Issue 47/April 2018

SPF AND STUC WORK TOGETHER TO HELP TACKLE LONELINESS AND ISOLATION



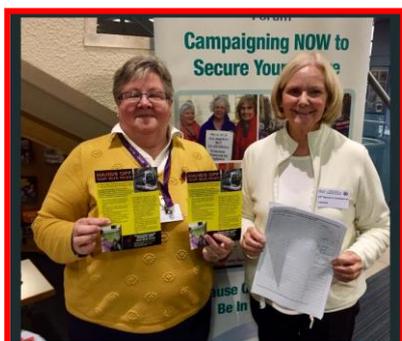
Dumfries, September 2017



Edinburgh, March 2018



Dumfries, September 2017



Glenrothes, November 2017

Over the past nine months, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum have been travelling across Scotland to hear your views on loneliness and isolation and what can be done to help combat this within society.

Over the course of the next three years, the SPF will be delivering a programme of work, in collaboration with the STUC, working with their equalities committees older people's organisations, trade unions and retired trade union branches and trades councils to implement change.

Please read on to page 2 for more information on this work →



Stirling, March 2017



Edinburgh, January 2018



Inverness, October 2017



Inverness, October 2017

The Scottish Government launched a new national strategy in order to tackle loneliness and isolation in Scotland.

This consultation closes on **30th April 2018** and can be accessed at https://consult.gov.scot/equality-unit/connected-scotland/?_ga=2.19322033.8692905.1519381443-294563350.1471344798

SPF AND STUC WORK TOGETHER TO HELP TACKLE LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

As far back as 1947, a study undertaken by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation showed that loneliness and isolation was “ a distressing feature of old age” and 70 years on this is still the case. During a person’s working life, they tend to engage in lots of social benefits which are very often taken for granted or not really thought about at all.

A regular daily routine may well include getting up out of bed, travelling to work, making several social interactions on the commute to work, perhaps speaking to customers and colleagues as part of their working day, catching up with people during lunch breaks, to name but a few. There are also many people whose closest friends are their work colleagues, who they confide in about personal matters or things that are worrying them, socialise with them on a daily basis or at weekends and even go on holiday with them.

On the other hand, there are also those work colleagues who you have more of a professional relationship with, perhaps working on projects together, engaging in meetings, asking for advice from them and valuing their expertise and opinion, all of



“As the UK’s population rapidly ages, the issue of acute loneliness and social isolation is one of the biggest challenges facing our society”

Social Care Institute for Excellence 2012

social communications. Even for those people with families, who it would seem would not really be affected by it, recent research shows that they actually are - in fact this research shows that children live on average 117 miles from their parents and only really get the chance to visit them during holiday periods.

The many challenges that retirement brings can cause people to withdraw into themselves leading to much bigger problems in the long run. In addition to the emotional aspects associated with social isolation, it has also been shown to be associated with increased risks of heart disease, cancer and depression as well as alcohol abuse, decreased cognitive function and sleep patterns.

It is therefore very important that new social networks are quickly established after retirement or ideally put in place beforehand.

When considering all of the statistical evidence on loneliness and isolation in older people, the Scottish Pensioners’ Forum found that research was seriously lacking when looking at the transition from working life into retirement and beyond and the many changes that this could bring in terms of the breakdown of social relationships and changes to everyday environments. So, along with the STUC, we decided to devise a programme of work to look into what we could do to better inform people as they reached retirement age.

Much of the work we will be carrying out on behalf of the Scottish Government will be based around a 2012 study by Sullivan and Victor which identifies that in order to understand loneliness and isolation, four main areas have to be considered:

- Interpersonal engagement
- life stage events
- wider social structures and
- social environments

“Certain groups, including women, and those of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Chinese origins are actually more predisposed to suffering from loneliness and isolation” Victor and Burholt 2012

these factors go towards making your job a worthwhile one.

All of these things in themselves allow an individual the opportunity to engage in social relationships, offer them a purpose, an identity, a value even. But what happens if this all suddenly stops? One day you have this purpose, a reason for getting up and starting your day, something to look forward to and the next its gone.

For some this is an ideal situation, a chance to enjoy their life without the confines of work, a chance to enjoy the leisure and freedom that retirement brings, a chance to make their own decisions without being told what to do and for some, who perhaps hated their job, it’s a welcome release, but for many people this is not the case at all.

For a lot of older people, the prospect of retirement is a daunting one with many of them being totally reliant on their work colleagues for most, if not all, of their

It is very important that new social networks are quickly established after retirement, or even put in place beforehand, to help combat loneliness and isolation.

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992

Firstly, when considering interpersonal engagement, it is widely acknowledged that most of a person's daily interactions are with work colleagues and so when this relationship is severed this may well prove to have a detrimental impact on their well being. Retirement is a major life stage event, which is often coupled with another, a reduction in physical health. These factors may also affect a person's feelings of self worth and wellbeing. Wider social structures and social environments can also be affected due to loss of income and the inability to engage in hobbies and pursuits due to the costs incurred. In addition to this, the living arrangements of many older people may also be affected by their retirement.

The SPF will concentrate most of their work on three specific areas, health and social care, transport and

welfare as we believe that these are the main areas of concern for many older people and are often the root causes of loneliness and isolation in this specific group.

We will be working with employers, older people's organisations, trade unions and retired trade union branches and trades councils to organise a programme of public meetings and events to identify target groups and to scope current intergenerational activity and build the capacity for future work on tackling isolation of older people and how workers are better supported during their transition into retirement. We hope from this that older people will be better informed of the changes they ought to expect.

SPF MOTION TO CONFERENCE, DUNDEE 2017

At the SPF Annual Conference in Dundee, a motion tabled by Individual Member, Maureen Gardner, was unanimously passed by delegates. It read as follows:-

"This conference is aware of the loneliness and isolation experienced by many pensioners. It therefore urges the STUC to encourage its affiliates to set up retired members' branches and regional committees where these do not already exist.

We believe that union members will benefit from this type of contact which can have a social as well as an educational and business function."

STUC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2017 APPROVES MOTION ON LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

At the STUC Women's Conference the following motion was successfully moved by Fife Trades Council:

"This Conference applauds the work being done by the Scottish Pensioners' Forum to address the issue of loneliness and isolation in older people. Its current programme focuses on how loneliness and isolation can arise around the life changing transition from work into retirement."

"Conference recognises that this is a very important time of life when these and other issues will arise. However Conference is also aware that loneliness and isolation are likely to increase as life goes on. As people become older their world often shrinks considerably. Women generally live longer than men and this is a particular problem for older women."

Although most of our work concentrates on issues affecting older people, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum is mindful that loneliness and isolation is also a major issue for many young people across Scotland. In this Year of Young People, the SPF are fully supportive of the work and contribution young people make within society and will be looking to engage in joint ventures particularly with the STUC Youth Committee and the Better Than Zero Campaign

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SUPPORTING

year of young people
bliadhna na h-òigridh
2018

AGE SCOTLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE, GLASGOW 2018

380 delegates from throughout Scotland came together on 20th March 2018 for the Age Scotland National Conference and Awards Ceremony, under the theme 'Later Life in Scotland: Taking the Long View.'

The Scottish Pensioners Forum was represented by Chairperson Rose Jackson and Executive member Elinor McKenzie.

The event was opened by Lord George Foulkes, Chair, Age Scotland who reminded delegates that the organisation was celebrating 75 years of service to older people, having been set up as Old Peoples Welfare Services in 1943.

There followed, a journey, 'From Paternalism to Co-production: The Changing Role of the Third Sector and Older People,' presented by Dr Robin Mearns, Emeritus Professor of Health and Social Care, University of the West of England. Dr Mearns urged delegates to 'learn from history' and introduced delegates to the work of two 20th century volunteers namely, Emily Sampson and Avril Osbourne, before moving swiftly through the uneven development and patchy provision of the voluntary sector (Third Sector) before and in the immediate aftermath of WW2.

The National Assistance Act 1948 and associated legislation led to better provision of services but as Dr Mearns pointed out 'statutory bodies began to take control' and by the 1980's the 'failure of the State' was addressed by the UK Thatcher Government' and the Third Sector 'became key players again' working alongside older people in Community Care Planning fora. Currently, the work of Age Scotland is guided by the aim of achieving an enhanced role for the Third Sector together with greater participation of service

users. This model is known as Co-production. Dr Mearns invited delegates to consider how this model could achieve greater inclusivity and service delivery for older people.



Next on the agenda were presentations celebrating 75 years of older people's groups in Scotland. Groups featured were from Grampian, Renfrewshire and Hawick. Delegates enjoyed an artistic and cultural interlude. First up was Dance across the decades, led by Chris Wilson and members of Still Dancing, Dance

House Glasgow.

This was followed by Writing about Age, presented by Jackie Kay, Scotland's Makar. Delegates heard her recite some of her work including Grandpa's Soup, April Sunshine, and The Oldest Woman in Scotland. Her range of poetry and wider contribution, incorporating many references to her own family life, and highlighting the crucial need for intergenerational solidarity, democratic rights and the concept of struggle in the march for a quality of life based on respect, dignity and equality for all. This was indeed a humorous, powerful and moving contribution.

During the Conference delegates had the opportunity to attend workshops on topics such as, Film memories, Dance, The Good Old Age, Isolated older veterans, and Transport.

The presentation of Age Scotland Awards 2018 was made by Jackie Bird, Broadcaster and Journalist.

In his closing remarks Brian Sloan, Chief Executive, Age Scotland told delegates

' it is time to be bold----- go, and initiate change.'



Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

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