

SCOTTISH SENIORS

Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992



Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Issue 38/May2015

MEETING WITH ALEX NEIL MSP AT THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Earlier this year, members of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum Executive Committee met with Alex Neil, the newly appointed Minister for older people's rights, at Holyrood, to discuss the many issues facing older people in Scotland.



Several issues, which had been previously discussed, at an earlier meeting with Shona Robison MSP, were brought to the table for discussion and clarification as these now fell under Mr Neil's remit. After a brief discussion, the SPF were satisfied that these were still being considered and these included cleanliness in hospitals, home from hospital care packages and hospital transport, fuel poverty, the home heating scheme and the blue badge scheme.

Rose Jackson highlighted the concerns of the SPF, and other organisations which she represents, over TTIP and the fact that most of the negotiations and talks were being kept a closely guarded secret. Rose went on to ask the Scottish Government's position on this with Mr Neil indicating that the Scottish Government were not opposed to

trade with other nations however, he agreed that there are a few concerns surrounding this issue and that any developments must be closely monitored to stop the forcible implementation of privatisation. Mr Neil went on to confirm that the Scottish Government were staunchly opposed to any prospect of the privatisation of the NHS and a short discussion ensued culminating in the possibility that a clause be inserted in any agreement on TTIP which would ensure that all health and public services would be exempt from TTIP and that under no circumstances should any health or public service be privatised.

The SPF proposed that more should be done by the Scottish Government to work on intergenerational links between older and younger people. It was suggested that there was growing hostility between these specific groups when in fact many older people were the primary carers for their grandchildren and great grandchildren due to socio-economic difficulties.

As it stands, older people are still being targeted as a 'drain on society' and more must be done to prove

that this is not the case. The SPF had previously worked with Roseanna Cunningham MSP on the possibility of a community initiative scheme however this had not come to fruition. Mr Neil suggested that the SPF contact the Scottish Youth Parliament, in the first instance, and ask for a meeting with them to discuss these issues and also consider the possibility of the SPF taking the platform at any future events they may have.

Surjit Chowdhary once again raised the issue of the closure of day care centres in cities throughout Scotland and the fact that many older people are being left lonely and isolated. Mr Neil agreed that these closures could lead to increased problems for older people however the Scottish Government was not in a position to stop this as this was a local government decision. Mr Neil informed the SPF that a community empowerment bill was having its first reading in parliament soon and that this bill would allow community groups the power they needed in order to challenge these cuts.

The SPF discussed the issue of personal care for older people, often carried out by local authorities, and the fact that allocated time slots were not sufficient for adequate care for older people and also fell short when considering the additional services which older people had paid for. Carers were being expected to carry out additional tasks, often medical in nature, and were working over their time to meet their clients' needs.

Mr Neil indicated that this was unacceptable and remarked that care at home reviews must be carried out on a more regular basis as well as the introduction of a career development structure.

Mr Neil went on to say that there were very clear criteria on care homes and a recent survey by COSLA looked extensively at this. Their findings were that the introduction of a living wage should be introduced throughout the social care sector, proper training must be undertaken and the possibility of payment between clients introduced.

The SPF asked whether consideration could be given to older people acting as lay workers alongside the Care Commission when unannounced visits were being carried out. Mr Neil suggested that the SPF contact the Care Commission and look at the possibility of engaging in a public partnership scheme on this matter.

Other issues discussed included:-

- The single tier pension scheme
- Breach of confidentiality on patients health records and contact details being made public
- The expansion of the concessionary travel card to include other modes of transport

Mr Neil has indicated that he is happy to meet again with members of the SPF, after the General Election, to discuss older people's issues.

WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON?: RECENT EVENTS

GENERAL ELECTION HUSTINGS

The SPF recently held 2 hustings events, one on the morning of 7th April 2015 at Renfield St. Stephen's Church and again at the Fred Paton Day Centre on the evening of 13th April 2015.



Both events were chaired by Ian Pope, PCS National Executive and Scotland Committee Chair and representatives from the Labour Party, the Conservative Party, the Liberal Democrat Party, the Green Party, the Scottish National Party and the Communist Party took to the platform to answer questions posed on such issues as:- The state pension and the single tier pension scheme; TTIP and its effects on the NHS and links to privatisation; hospital admission times; care packages and home from hospital schemes; the decision by local authorities to close older people's day care centres and the effect this has on older people and their communities; food banks and their increased usage due to increasing poverty and the replacement of Trident, on whether it was necessary or was the money better spent on public services, welfare and pensions.

There were some lively political discussions from the floor which only added to the nature of the event and allowed older people to have their say on the issues that matter to them.

STUC CONGRESS & FRINGE MEETING, AYR

At the recent STUC Congress in Ayr, members of the SPF Executive Committee met



with delegates and politicians who visited our information stall to talk on issues affecting older people. Our Executive members also used this as an opportunity to voice their grievances to politicians and to ask for their help in ensuring that older people are better



provided for. The SPF is also delighted to welcome some new members on board and hope to further expand on this in the future.

On the Tuesday of Congress, the SPF held a fringe meeting "Who Really Cares?" which looked at the welfare needs of older people. Chaired by SPF Chair, Jeanette Pieper and with guest speakers Tommy Brennan, Community trade union and John McAllion of Dundee Pensioners' Forum, it was one of the most talked about and well attended fringe meetings at Congress with well over 40 people in attendance. Many valuable contacts were made and we hope to work with them over the coming months.



SPF 24th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By now all of our members will have received notification of our Annual Conference which takes place on **Tuesday 9th June 2015** in the **Grand Hall of the Palace Theatre in Kilmarnock**. As per the letter, we would ask that all delegates return their delegate forms and any motions to conference by Friday 15th May 2015 when they will be considered by our Standing Orders Committee. Formal paperwork will be with you by end of May 2015 and a copy of our annual report will be made available to delegates at conference.



We look forward to seeing you there.

SPF FUNDING FROM SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

We are delighted to report that we have secured funding from the Scottish Government to help fund our work for the year 2015-2016. We have been made aware that there was an increased amount of applications from smaller organisations, projects and charities this year and the fact that we, along with other older people's organisations, managed to secure funding stands as a testament to the valued contribution that older people make within society and reinforces the fact that our voice matters. We, at the SPF, will continue to work, at grass roots level, alongside older people's groups, trade unions and other affiliated organisations to ensure that our issues are heard at both local and national government levels

Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

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