



Scottish Seniors

Issue No. 55

September 2020

The Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

Coronavirus: Keeping in touch during the Crisis

Since lockdown began in March, people's lives throughout Scotland, and the rest of the world, have changed in many ways. The initial expectation that things would be over in a matter of a few short weeks proved for many not to be the case. For almost five months, people continued to be separated from their friends and family leaving many people feeling lost and alone.

Over the past month or so things have tentatively been improving although normal life has evolved into something new. Masks are having to be worn in shops and on public transport, shopping takes longer due to people having to keep two metres apart at all times and even social and family events are limited in numbers.

However, this is most definitely a small price to pay in order to safeguard our health and wellbeing.

Recently lockdowns have been eased only to be reinstated again in many places and this only serves to show how unpredictable this virus can be but overall, we are beginning to see improvements in our social interactions and everyday lives. We can visit friends and family, albeit in limited numbers, and we can do more of the things we enjoy.

As yet, the SPF are still unable to carry out our outreach programme and face to face events however please be rest assured that we are still working tirelessly on your behalf to ensure a better deal and quality of life for older people in Scotland.

For now, we can only advise our members and affiliates to continue following Scottish Government advice on keeping themselves safe and well and in doing so hopefully it won't be too long before we'll be seeing you all in person again.

For those people with digital access, more information on the latest Scottish Government advice can be found here <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

As always, please feel free to get in touch and if you think of anything that may be of interest to others which could be included in our newsletters, please let us know.

Our telephone number is 0141 337 8113. Our website details are www.scottishpensioners.org.uk

We can also keep you updated on Twitter @ScotPensForum and on Facebook too

Our OPSAF colleagues, particularly Age Scotland, Glasgow Disability Alliance, Hourglass Scotland, Outside the Box and Generations Working Together continue to carry out voluntary work throughout this crisis on behalf of their communities and older people – thank you!



Virus Hit Care Home transferred to Public Sector Care

Over the past few months, it would be hard to ignore the troubling stories in the news surrounding coronavirus and its effects on older people within care home settings. Most recently Home Farm in Portree, a privately run care home owned by HC-One, hit the headlines when it was discovered that a total of 30 residents and 29 staff had tested positive for Covid-19 causing the death of 10 of its residents.



Damning reports from the Care Inspectorate, which have only recently been published, highlighted that the health and wellbeing of residents had caused “serious levels of concern” prompting them to take legal action against its owners. This was subsequently dropped when it appeared that improvements had been made. Whilst overall the reports were favourable in that most staff were “kind and helpful” there were however incidences when residents had failed to be treated with dignity and respect.

Bereaved family members described their horror at the reports with one commenting that “conditions were like those that existed in Victorian Britain” and most were angered that information had only just recently come to light. Concerned locals had previously called on NHS Highland to take over the running of the care home and talks had been ongoing between NHS Highland, The Highland Council and HC-One for several weeks although the running costs of the home, rumoured to be approximately £1.2 million, were seen to be a hurdle.



“There is no confidence and trust in HC-One locally so it’s the right course of action that NHS are the providers of care”

John Gordon, Highland Council

The welcome news that the Scottish Government would be stepping in with additional funding of £900,000 to allow the care home to be taken back into public sector control was announced just last week and will ensure that residents of the care home will be nurtured, respected and cared for in the manner which they undeniably deserve. The Scottish Pensioners’ Forum are pleased that the situation in Portree has been resolved however we believe that this decision will no doubt prompt calls for similar support from other concerned families and residents within privately owned care homes which have faced similar tragedies over the past few months - and rightly so!



Campaign on Free TV Licence for All Over 75s Continues



Over the past few weeks, over 75’s across the UK, not in receipt of Pension Credit, have been receiving letters from the BBC TV Licencing Department asking them to buy a TV licence and set out payment arrangements such as a direct debit of 12 monthly instalments or to pay the full yearly cost of £157.50 as their entitlement to the concession has been withdrawn. Application for a free TV licence is limited to those over 75 and in receipt of Pension Credit, for which formal documentary evidence is required. Despite calls from campaigning organisations across the country, and a petition by Age UK totalling over 600,000 signatures being handed in to Downing Street, the decision to means test the TV licence has not been revoked.

The Scottish Pensioners’ Forum’s commitment to our campaign continues. To ensure the voices of older people in Scotland were being heard, ourselves and our OPSAF colleagues, Age Scotland, called on the Minister for Equalities and Older People, Christina McKelvie MSP, to throw her support behind our campaign. Subsequently a letter was sent on our behalf to Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden MP, calling for the UK Government to take back responsibility for the concession from the BBC.

Despite the UK Government’s consultation on decriminalising non-payment of the TV licence earlier this year a decision on this has not yet been reached. Bearing this in mind, the Scottish Pensioners; Forum would therefore not recommend that our members, or any older person, takes the decision not to pay for their TV licence but would urge them instead to apply for Pension Credit, as many who are entitled do not apply.

More information on this can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim> or by calling **0800 99 1234** Monday-Friday 8AM-6PM.

In the meantime, the SPF are calling on newly appointed BBC Director General Tim Davie to overturn the contentious decision made by his predecessor to means test the TV licence for over 75s and instead look at the real value this concession will bring to so many older people – an essential lifeline and not only during these troubling times.

Triple Lock hits the Headlines Yet Again

No sooner was the ink dry on Chancellor Rishi Sunak’s latest mini budget statement than the headlines were once again screaming for the need for the Triple Lock Guarantee to be withdrawn. Here at the Scottish Pensioners’ Forum we are under no illusion that the attack on state pension provision will continue and we will be keeping our eyes peeled over the next few weeks watching for developments prior to the release of the Autumn Statement. We must work together to ensure that state pension provision won’t be a thing of the past but will still be in place for future generations to come.



UN International Day of Older Persons 2020 Online Event

Due to the continued guidelines on social distancing set out by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum have decided to dip our toes into uncharted waters and host an online event to help celebrate UN International Day of Older Persons on **Thursday 1st October 2020 at 11AM**.

Although the situation is not ideal (believe us we would much rather be demonstrating with you all outside the Scottish Parliament which has been the case for the past 5 years) we felt that again this year the contribution of older people should not go unrecognised.

In line with the United Nation's 2020 theme **Pandemics: Do They Change How We Address Age and Ageing?** we will be looking at the health and wellbeing of older people under the title **"Wellbeing and Welfare."** A range of speakers will be there on the day and we would be delighted if you could join us to perhaps make your own contribution, if you are able.

Tickets for the event can be accessed online through Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/spf-un-international-day-of-older-persons-2020-event-wellbeing-and-welfare-tickets-119083659431?ref=eios>

Numbers are limited so we would recommend getting yours ASAP.

For those of you unable to attend, or who may not have access to digital services, a report on the event will be made available at a later date.



The Poverty Alliance: Challenge Poverty Week 5-11th October 2020



As long-term members of The Poverty Alliance, we have always supported their cause by attending events and promoting their work particularly during **Challenge Poverty Week**.

This year we have decided to go one step further and host an online event on **Wednesday 7th October 2020 at 11AM**.

According to statistics, there are approximately 168,000 older people in Scotland in poverty and at least another 100,000 just on the cusp.

Bearing in mind the changes to the free TV licence concession, the SPF firmly believes that there is a possibility that some older people in Scotland will find themselves worse off as a result of having to pay for their TV licence than those actually in receipt of Pension Credit who won't. Also factoring in the hefty rises in food and fuel costs as a consequence of the Covid-19 crisis, we believe that our event has the potential for an interesting debate.

Tickets can be accessed online through Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/spf-challenge-poverty-week-event-tickets-120272810213?aff=ebdssbeac>

Again, numbers are limited so we would recommend getting yours ASAP.

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Save the Date: SPF Annual Conference 2021, Glasgow

This year, for the first time in our history, our Annual Conference had to be cancelled. Although it was a decision that we did not take lightly, the health and wellbeing of our members, affiliates and delegates must always be our main priority.

We are happy to announce that after discussions with Glasgow City Council we have set the date for our next Annual Conference as Tuesday 8th June 2021. More details will follow in due course but in the meantime please save the date. We can't wait to see you all again!



Survey: Covid 19 and the Safety of Older Workers in the Workplace



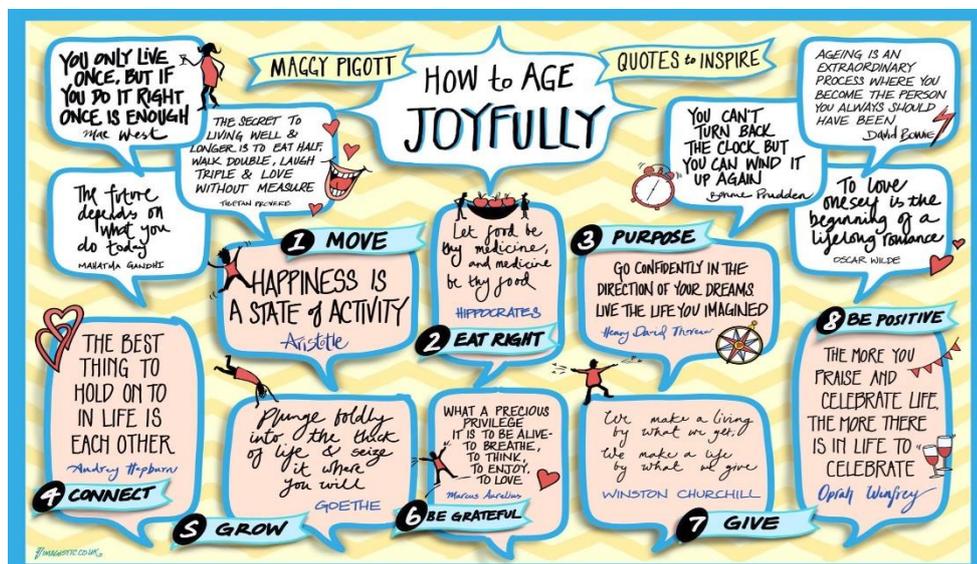
Drawing on the earlier success of our survey and report on workplace bullying in an ageing workforce, the SPF, alongside our colleagues from Scottish Hazards, have created a survey to look at the impact of Covid-19 on older workers in Scotland. The survey can be accessed online through SurveyMonkey at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/G6XHT7F> and we would be grateful if you could share this information to interested parties.



We also understand that digital exclusion can be a major barrier to participation in online surveys and so postal copies can be made available on request.

Age is Only A Number.....

Here at the SPF we know only too well about all the hard work and commitment older people do within their communities to make society better for all. We hope that this wonderful sketchnote by Emma Paxton and reproduced by kind permission of Maggy Piggot, author of How To Age Joyfully, will remind you, especially during these difficult times, of just how valued you really are.



Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

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