

Cross-Party Group on Older People, Age & Ageing

Wednesday 24th September 2025 1-2.30pm,

Hybrid meeting in CR4 & Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Jeremy Balfour MSP – Convenor

Willie Rennie MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Moira Bayne – Housing Options Scotland

Sam Blackley – British Geriatric Society

Eileen Cawley – Scottish Pensioners Forum

Michael Driscoll – Horizon Housing Association

Diana Findlay – Scottish Older People's Assembly

Iain Fraser – Age Scotland

Joan Fraser

Jen Grant – The Food Train

Trish Hafford-Letchfield – Strathclyde University

Rose Jackson

Lorna Jackson Hall –LifeCare Edinburgh

Councillor Isabelle MacKenzie

Robert McGeachy – Food Standards Scotland

Sarah Murray – Royal Voluntary Service

Louise Nicholls – Strathclyde University

Denis O'Keefe – Voice of Experience Forum

Dr Cathy Quinn – British Geriatric Society

Jules Robinson – RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)

Christine Ryder – Outside the Box

Colin Scott – Presenter - Hourglass

Donna Scott

Mehar Shagufta – Playlists for Life

Kshitija Singh – Playlists for Life

Adam Stachura – Age Scotland

Kim Stringer – Vegetarians for Life

Louisa Turner – Scottish Older People's Assembly

In attendance

Andrea Ma – Age Scotland (Secretariat)
Julia Shillitto – Senior Caseworker
Natalie Mauchline – Presenter - Electoral Commission
Pauline Cavanagh – Cumbernauld Action for Care of the Elderly – CACE (Observer)
Helen Duncan (Observer – Town Break)
Rebecca Fagan (Observer – Advice Direct Scotland)
Daniel Keane (Observer – Town Break)
Lynne Mann (Observer)
John McFarlane (Observer – Advice Direct Scotland)
AI Media Captioners (x2)

Apologies

David Edwards – Scottish Pensioners Forum
Chloe Fawns-Ritchie – University of Edinburgh
Anne Gallacher – Luminare
Alan Gow – Heriot Watt University
Anne Hendry - IFIC
Rebecca Hoffman – LGBT Health & Wellbeing
Susan Hunter – Befriending Networks
Jennifer McAughtrie - Simeon Care for the Elderly
Jean Monaghan – LGBT Health & Wellbeing
Kat Riach – University of Glasgow (Observer)
Pat Scrutton – Intergenerational Network
David Weir – Gilead Sciences

Agenda

Agenda item 1

Welcome and Apologies

The convenor welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance and noted the apologies for the meeting and welcomed observers who were joining the CPG for the first time.

Agenda item 2

Minutes 4th June 2025 Meeting

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate reflection of the meeting

Agenda item 3

Matters Arising

No matters arising were noted.

Agenda item 4

New Member Requests

The convenor shared that the following were requesting membership on the CPG: Town Break, Cumbernauld Action for Care of the Elderly, University of Glasgow, and Advice Direct Scotland as organisational members and Stephen Joyce and Lynne Mann as individual members. The members of CPG approved the request.

Agenda item 5

Presentations

- **Colin Scott, Hourglass, Frontline Services Lead (Scotland and Northern Ireland)**, presenting on the issues facing older people who are open to abuse in Scotland.

Colin provided an overview of Hourglass, which is a UK wider charity calling time on the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people. The main service offered by Hourglass is a 24/7 helpline which is free to call from mobile and landline including on Christmas Day and New Years. He added that people can also contact Hourglass via text, instant messaging service, email or via post. Separate to frontline services Hourglass also offer one-to-one casework support; provide information and advice, awareness raising training and information sessions, regional updates, and influence policy and research. There is also a qualified independent domestic abuse advocate (IDA) who can provide safety planning, and risk assessment amongst other work.

An online knowledge bank also exists with dedicated Scotland section which signposts to other organisations resources including relevant legislation, literature and work from Hourglass. Hourglass are keen to work alongside statutory services, such as social work, and do receive referrals from social work and refer to social work and other services.

Hourglass defines abuse of older people as “a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there's an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”. This is the definition used by the World Health Organisation which Hourglass helped them to write in 2003.

The majority of cases that Hourglass support, the person inflicting abuse is known to the victim and takes place within the older person's own homes and can be abuse inflicted by friends, family and neighbours, partners and occasionally professionals. Nearly 50% of perpetrators are sons and daughters of the older person.

Service user data from 2024-25 was shared including types of abuse, location of abuse, the pool of perpetrators which increases as a person ages, and the relationship between them and the victim.

Economic abuse was the most common, with abuse of power of attorney to gain finances; scams and fraud; wills and inheritance abuse; and exploitation of taking an older person's benefits. The second most common type of abuse Hourglass are contacted about is psychological abuse which includes bullying, name calling; threats; blackmail and attempts to control and isolate an older person.

Hourglass carried out polling of 2000 people in the UK, which included 4-500 people in Scotland on what they consider or do not consider as abuse of an older person. Some of the figures highlight the level of tolerance for behaviours particularly around financial aspects. There is a sense of entitlement of family members who expect money will go to them and use that as leverage to get money from an older relative now. There are other cases where the older victims state that because they are old, they do not need the money and so give it anyway.

Social isolation is a particular risk factor which is more prevalent in older people but is not exclusive to older people, as is increased dependence on others, and a decline in physical health, mobility and mental capacity such as onset of dementia. In addition, there may be a lack of familiarity with financial matters or have a lack of digital literacy or confidence, and older people may reach out to people for help and end up being exploited.

The barriers to seeking help were mentioned which included feelings of guilt and shame, reliance on the perpetrator for help or care and reluctance to criminalise family members, which is a huge issue.

Others include the ability to speak up from lack of confidence, lack of fears to not being believed and uncertainty on who to contact, or they may have exhausted all options. The services to do so may not be accessible. There could be fears of repercussion, a loss of faith in services especially where there were negative experiences in the past. In addition, some victims may not realise they are being abused, and the abuse is seen as normalised. There are some cases, although not as common that the victim is asset rich but cash poor and do not have the resources to seek support in particular legal support.

Hourglass mentioned their campaign – OATH – Older Age Tomorrow's Hope, to generate support and promote a safer ageing society for everyone and to utilise this collective support as a means to influence decision makers to protect older people.

Lastly the Conference on 12 November, Tynecastle Stadium was mentioned, and that tickets were available.

Discussion and Questions

- A question was asked on whether financial abuse of older people has resulted in financial instability, insecurity and poverty. Colin confirmed that it can and impacts on older people being able to afford to heat their homes and can cause them to be in financially precarious situations.
- A member asked whether Hourglass has data on geographic breakdown of abuse against older people, and what can be done regionally to support this work.
- Whilst Colin stated he did not have any data to hand presently; Hourglass has last year analysed the loss of value of assets over a 3-year period and this information is broken down by local authority figures and can be shared with interested parties.
- A few members shared that they were not aware of Hourglass and really valued the presentation and were keen to connect with Colin and Hourglass regarding their work including work on abuse, financial abuse in form of scams and hearing more about the independent domestic abuse advocate and what training and information could be imparted to staff and wards especially where there is contact with older people and what signs or potential identifiers to look out for.
- A question was asked about what can be done to better protect older people and is presently not as good as it can be.
- Colin stated that Scotland is ahead compared to the rest of the UK in relation to the Adult Support and Protection Act. However, the legislative protections are not there for older people in relation to the domestic abuse legislation in Scotland which only covers intimate partners whereas wider family members are included in other jurisdictions. There is as no access to criminal justice in Scotland and this makes it difficult to prosecute. Whilst older people may not wish to go down this route initially there is no route for them to do this should they wish to do so. They would like to see that the domestic abuse legislation is expanded to cover this.

The convenor thanked Colin for his presentation and suggested that the statistics and information may be of interest to MSPs. He proposed that Hourglass or Hourglass and a few organisations or CPG could issue them to MSPs. The convenor added it could be a good discussion starter for leading up to elections next year.

Eileen Cawley shared that she has provided a press release on scams and the winter fuel benefit to MSPs, and they will also be engaging with the Cabinet Secretary in due course.

Action: CPG to offer support to circulate to MSPs with Hourglass, if they wish.

- **Natalie Mauchline, Electoral Commission, Senior Communications and Engagement**, presenting on the public awareness and communication activities for 2026 Scottish Parliament Election.

Natalie shared an introduction of the Electoral Commission's role, which is wide reaching including supporting candidates and agents to engage in the election, ensuring the public are provided with information for the elections including understanding the political parties and how to register. The aim of the Commission is to encourage as many eligible people as possible register by the deadline so they can cast their vote in their preferred way, whether at a polling place, postal or via a proxy.

Key election deadline dates, eligibility, registration, and methods of voting were shared. Detailed communication regarding not requiring a Voter ID; two ballots: for constituency and regional; and constituency name changes will be provided. In addition, there will be communications to inform voters of the roles of election staff and what assistance they can provide, as well as councils in providing equipment for disabled voters at polling places.

The Electoral Commission's communication plans were shared including their 'show it off' registration campaign – to motivate the public to register to vote by trying to celebrate a sense of pride in being registered to vote to encourage people to share pride of being registered to vote. The images shown depicted a diverse range of people in different scenarios showing off that they have registered to vote, which will be used across a variety of media channels. This will be paid advertising both offline and online targeting all eligible voters and those under registered groups too by reaching a mass audience.

There will also be a new feature of the campaign which previously did well in May 2025 elections in England – to target private renters and recent home movers in Scotland. As well as on social media this will be targeted on different websites including Zoopla who they have worked closely with.

Digital resources, resources and templates have also been produced for partners and organisations to amplify the campaign, which is available on their website. A media guide and briefings for journalists is also being developed.

A household information booklet before the elections also provides the key details for voters which will be sent out the week commencing 23 March including information

on polling cards, polling place information and method of voting that voters wish to use. The booklet is accessible in BSL, Arabic, Polish and Ukrainian.

Engaging with young people: Natalie went on to share information on how they are engaging with young people and the education resources they have developed for teachers to encourage young people to vote. They hope to develop a webpage which will host information and resources for teachers for young people eligible to vote.

A virtual assembly in partnership with the Scottish Youth Parliament and the Scottish Parliament Education Team, will be held and is accessible for schools across Scotland.

Electoral Commission Consultation: There is a consultation on the Electoral Commission's update guidance for returning officer for assistance for voters with disabilities which is open until 26 October. The UK Elections Act 2022 places a duty on the Commission to provide guidance to returning officers to provide equipment as is reasonable to enable disabled people to vote both independently and in secret. The Commission has met with Age Scotland, RNIB Scotland, Inclusion Scotland to strengthen the guidance.

The Convenor thanked Natalie for her presentation.

Discussion and Questions

- A member shared that it was helpful to have the resources available on the website which can be easily lifted and used.

Agenda item 6

AOCB

The Convenor shared one AOCB of his own and an AOCB from Befriending Networks in their absence.

- **Befriending Networks:** Befriending Week will take place from 1-7 November 2025, and we would invite all organisations to support the awareness week and recognise befriending projects in their local areas. During Befriending Week, communities across the UK and beyond gather online and in person to raise awareness about befriending, celebrate the contributions of befriending volunteers and the staff who support them, and advocate for befriending to local and national decision-makers. Further information is available on our website www.befriending.co.uk/bw
- **Commissioners**
The convenor shared that there was a standalone committee that were to look

at Commissioners, their roles and going forward what will happen with Commissioners. A debate occurred in Parliament and there was a vote. The Parliament voted overwhelmingly to halt any new establishment of Commissioners, with only one person, himself voting against it.

As a result, there will be no more commissioners in future, but may change for next Parliament. But in principle for the next 7-8 months there will be no new commissioners appointed in Parliament despite there being four member bills still going through Parliament in relation to commissioners. The Parliament has given an indication that it would not be supportive of a Commissioner for Older People on this side of an election.

A question was raised on the rationale for the lack of support for Commissioners. The convenor explained that some state it is due to the finances and the spend on commissioners; others state that if Scottish Government carried out their role as intended there would be no need for Commissioners, thirdly there is the requirement for Commissioners to report to the Scottish Corporate Body and they are overwhelmed by the number of commissioners reporting to them. In addition, the staffing that is needed to support a commissioner and there is an intention to merge resources, and the roles of Commissioners in place.

A further question was asked on the number of commissioners presently in place, it was confirmed that there are 9 independent commissioners:

- Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland
- Scottish Information Commissioner
- Scottish Biometrics Commissioner
- Scottish Human Rights Commission
- Standards Commission for Scotland
- Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
- Patient Safety Commissioner
- Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland
- Victims and Witnesses Commissioner

The member expressed disappointment that it felt like older people are being deprioritised despite there being an increasing older people population.

- **Minister for Older People**

It was raised that the Scottish Pensioners Forum would like to have a dedicated Minister for Older People and suggested that this could be something the CPG could be advocating for across all parties.

It was added that there is a need for older people to be more assertive and to work collaboratively. The first thing that occurred this Parliament was the

removal of social security support for older people and disabled people, and presently it's driving tests, also impacting older people, and those of more rural, remote locations who may end up isolated due to poor public transport links. This will have an impact on loneliness and isolation and in turn increase the number of people needing social services and the NHS.

- **Age Scotland** will be involved in a public awareness campaign with Cyber Scotland on cyber fraud, cyber scams and cybercrimes. This is in the development stage however there will be advice and routes for support for older people on how to stay safe online. The intention is that it will be launched from December onwards.
- **Scottish Pensioners Forum** will have a demonstration to mark UN Older People's Day at the Scottish Parliament the week commencing 29 September, and then at the Scottish Poetry Library thereafter, to call for support from the Scottish Government and MSPs for no further rises to the State Pension age. There is also a meeting arranged with the Cabinet Secretary at the Scottish Government.
- **RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)** shared that they were approached by the English coroner twice in the past year regarding section 28 for the prevention of future deaths. The concern was there has been an increase in accidental poisonings by 96% over the past decade.

This can be through ingestion of laundry detergent, notably the kind of liquid tabs, which is normally associated with deaths and poisonings for children. RoSPA as a result will be developing a pack for casual and professional carers of older people, particularly those with cognitive impairment on the accidental poisonings from domestic chemicals and medications.

Action: All interested parties with expertise to contact RoSPA via – email address - jrobinson@rospa.com

- **Promotion of age friendly communities** was raised and whether this could be included as a future agenda topic.

Action: Secretariat to note promotion of age friendly communities to local authorities as a future topic of the CPG.

The next meeting is 26 November 2025 from 1-2.30pm and we hope to have LINK and Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel Chair joining us to provide an update on their work, and to pick up the discussion again on the topic of cash or card from the June meeting. This will be held online via MS Teams.