

Cross-Party Group on Older People, Age & Ageing

Wednesday 11th September 2024 1-2.30pm

Minutes

Present

MSPs

Jeremy Balfour MSP – Convenor
Richard Leonard MSP
Colin Smyth MSP

Non-MSP Group Members

Andrew Ainsworth – Space Scotland (Observer)
Liz Baikie – Lothian Older People's Psychology Service
Sam Blackley – British Geriatric Society
Louise Brady – Independent Age
Lorna Cameron – Chair of Housing Association (Observer)
Dr Hariette Campbell – SOPA
Eileen Cawley – Scottish Pensioners Forum
Ian Clement
Angela Currie
Tony Donohoe – SOPA
Chloe Fawns-Ritchie – University of Dundee
Diana Findley
Anne Gallagher – Luminare
Alan Gow – Heriot-Watt University
Prof Trish Hafford-Letchfield – University of Strathclyde (Observer)
Susan Hunter – Befriending Networks
Dawn Irvine – Meeting Centres Scotland
Rose Jackson – Scottish Pensioners Forum
Kellie King – Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Fiona MacIntyre – Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Rachel Moreland – Scottish Parliament (Observer)
Brian Murphy – Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Mairéad Murray – Impact Arts (Projects) Ltd (Observer)
Sarah Murray – Royal Voluntary Service
Cathy Quinn – British Geriatric Society
Arvind Salwan – Care Inspectorate
Colin Scott – Hourglass
Donna Scott
Mehtar Shagufta – Playlists for Life

Prof. Judith Sixsmith – University of Dundee
Kim Stringer – Vegetarian for Life
Sarah Van Putten – Life Care Edinburgh
Morgan Vine – Independent Age (Observer)

In attendance

Julia Shillito – Senior Caseworker Jeremy Balfour MSP
Andrea Ma – Age Scotland (Secretariat)
Tommy Campbell – Unite Retired Members Section
Linda Clarke – Unite Retired Members Section
Edel Harris – Independent Review of Adult Disability Payment
Mike Holmes – Scottish Parliament
Dr Tasneem Irshad – Independent Review of Adult Disability Payment
Claire Peden – Unite Retired Members Section
Ian Peattie – Unite Retired Members Section
Colin Wakeling – Unite Retired Members Section
Scot Walker – Unite Retired Members Section

Apologies

Katy Clark MSP
David Budd – Partners in Advocacy
David Cavanagh – Salvation Army
Anne Hendry – IFIC Scotland
Debbie Horne – Independent Age
Denis O’Keefe – Voice of Experience Forum
Jules Robinson – RoSPA
Christine Ryder – Outside the Box
Pat Scrutton – Intergenerational Network
Adam Stachura – Age Scotland

Agenda

Agenda item 1

Welcome

Jeremy Balfour MSP welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance to this meeting.

Agenda item 2

Minutes 5th June 2024 Meeting

The Minutes were accepted by the membership as accurate.

Agenda item 3

Matters Arising

No matters arising were raised.

Agenda item 4

New Member Requests

The convenor confirmed that he has approved MSP membership of Mr Colin Smyth MSP, and that the University of Strathclyde had requested membership. The members approved these additions.

Agenda item 5

Presentations

Independent Review of Adult Disability Payment - Edel Harris, Chair of the Independent Review of Adult Disability Payment

The Scottish Government set up a group to review ADP (Adult disability payment), which replaced PIP (Personal Independence Payment) which is delivered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The chair thanked the convenor for the invitation to speak about ADP and provided a biography, explanation of the review and of ADP. ADP is 1 of 15 devolved benefits delivered by Social Security Scotland. The payment is not means tested and provides financial support to people aged 16 to state pension age with a disability, a long-term health condition or a terminal illness. Eligibility criteria applied to determine the levels of award that a person receives.

The Scope: The scope of the review was shared, as was the timeline. The scope is based on the current rules surrounding ADP and people's experience of the first year of ADP run in Scotland. The clients' experience from pre-application: their awareness of the benefit, if the benefit reaches eligible people (such as seldom heard communities), right through to the end of that client journey: which might end in re-determination, appeal or tribunal and everything that goes alongside that. What's not in scope is adequacy of payments and requesting an alternative provider for ADP.

A first draft interim report has been produced captures recurring themes from stakeholders and recommendations of priorities that can be quickly actioned. The report will be submitted to Scottish Ministers in October 2024 and then made public for transparency accessibility, and openness. The final report is due at the end of

July 2025 and will include final detailed recommendations.

Information gathering and engagement: As part of information gathering and to shape the consultation questions a literature review was conducted, and there was engagement with various stakeholders including establishment of an advisory group with policy leads, third sector organisations and people with lived experiences. There is an intention to continue these for phase 2.

Public engagement events were also held, and a public consultation call for evidence was launched online, with information being collated and analysed presently.

A website and email address were shared on the slides, to allow CPG members to keep informed of phase two of the review.

Discussion and Questions

There was discussion and questions covering the following areas:

- If the scope extends to the arbitrary dates that are applied to ADP and Attendance Allowance, for example if an individual is one day short of turning 65 they are able to receive ADP for life, but if an individual is one day older then they receive Attendance Allowance.
- It is not in scope for phase 1. The aspect of eligibility and age in the current application process is considered, which is called 'safe and secure transition', and prioritises transfer of cases of PIP on to ADP for eligible people. As part of the case transfer some people will have crossed from 64 to 65. If the aspect of age does impact on a client's experience and negatively impacts them financially, that would be covered in the review. The age scales are considered in phase 2.
- Experiences were shared of the transition from PIP to ADP, in particular impact on awards being slashed timewise despite living with conditions such as musculoskeletal, and connective tissue disorders, which would expect a light touch award.
A lack of information has been shared in the process of transition to Social Security Scotland, with decisions made without consulting doctors. People who shared these experiences were encouraged to respond to the call for evidence.
- The chair thanked the member for encouraging responses to the consultation, and shared that there is opportunity to engage in phase 2 also and would be happy to speak at stakeholder meetings and listen to their experiences.
The chair added that issues with indefinite awards, and data between DWP and Social Security Scotland has been brought up and is being considered.

The convenor thanked the Chair for her attendance and for taking the time to provide an update to the CPG.

Housing and the impact on older people – Independent Age’s report - [Homing in: How to improve the lives of older renters in Scotland](#) – Morgan Vine, Head of Policy and Influencing and Louise Brady, Scotland Policy & Public Affairs Officer, Independent Age

An introduction of Independent Age was provided as was the background to the research and report into older renters. The report explains some of the problems experienced and offers some solutions to issues and was timely due to the Housing bill going through Parliament.

A summary of the sections of the report including statistics was provided and mentioned elements of the Housing Bill that were welcomed changes.

- **Affordability:** Many older people in Scotland, particularly those living in private rented accommodation are being pushed into poverty due to unaffordable rents. The Bill includes proposals to allow local authorities to designate rent controls.
- **Homelessness and evictions:** The number of older people experiencing homelessness has grown, increasing by almost a quarter last year, rising from 891 people to 1,100 people. Many older people were anxious about losing their homes and almost half of the older private renters were also worried, despite temporary protections being in place until the end of March. The Bill includes proposals to extend the homelessness prevention duty from 2 months to 6 months; and a proposal that places an ask and duty on relevant bodies to prevent homelessness in Scotland.
- **Standards:** Across Scotland, 65% of the homes lived in by older people across all tenures are in a state of disrepair. Some older people are living in privately rented properties that are cold, damp and in need of repair. Many of these tenants are scared to raise these concerns with their landlords. 40% of older people private renters said that they were not satisfied with the standard or quality of their home.

To ensure that older renters can live in homes and be warm and safe, Independent Age recommended that Scottish Government establishes a Housing Ombudsman to give tenants the ability to challenge landlords on issues such as poor maintenance, and to enforce repairs.

- **Housing rights:** There is a worryingly low level of awareness of rights in the private sector, particularly among tenants, and this is leaving poor and unlawful practises unchallenged. Only 30% of older private renters feel fully informed

about their housing rights, 21% said they don't know anything and over a third said they weren't sure. Older people are reluctant to raise concerns due to fear of negative treatment from their landlord.

The systems in place are not working for older renters and those need strengthened. The housing bill is an opportunity to ensure that tenants are fully informed of their rights, and to ensure that information is communicated in an accessible way that reaches older people who are living on a low income.

The convenor thanked Morgan and Louise and opened for questions.

Discussion and Questions:

- Members thanked Independent Age for their work in highlighting this hidden cohort of older people and encouraged others to read the report.
- A question was received on whether registered social landlord or local authority sectors were considered in the research. Independent Age stated they prioritised private renters due to their position of financial vulnerability and possession of fewer rights. A key theme was people being unaware of their rights.
Through research with a University in Summer they found that private renting will treble in later life by 2040. Meaning poverty in later life will also increase from 2 million to 4 million by 2040 if things remain as they are presently and there are no policy interventions.
- The balance of power and rights between the landlord and tenant was discussed and how rights can be enforced and people empowered to raise concerns.

Various members from Unite the Union who were currently working on the Defend the Winter Fuel Payment campaign, spoke about the report and WFP.

- The presenters were asked how recent the data was, and the impact WFP has had on older people that they are working with.
- Independent Age have, similarly to other organisations, received and supported many worried and anxious callers that are ineligible for Pension Credit and those who are unsure. Independent Age have been advocating the UK Government to change their decision. The UK Government know that over a million individuals and 880,000 households aren't going to get WFP.

- There was a query as to whether aspects such as unaffordable rents, high energy bills and high standing charges count towards eligibility in Pension Credit. It was suggested that the removal of WFP could be linked with a need for more social housing such as flats with quality building standards for heat protection.
- Independent Age have worked on standing charges and have pressed against these as have others in the CPG and are supportive of the need for more social housing across the UK.
In relation to thresholds and housing costs and eligibility for support. There is local housing allowance which has recently been uprated to cover the lowest 30% of rents, which provides some support to older renters.
- The presenters were asked if Independent age worked with Living Rent Campaign and other organisations such as Shelter and tenants' groups.
- They confirmed they did not but Independent Age has good relations with UK wide and Scotland based organisations and are keen to work with others and share information and advice.
- Other comments made included:
 - The triple lock is being put forward as a remedy but only comes into effect in April, whilst the winter months are on their way. The cold can severely impact health, both mental health and physical health.
 - The impact of removal of the WFP on top of high rents, the poor conditions that older renters have to live in, and the financial concerns they have to deal with such as increased energy costs.
 - It was suggested that roadshows could be beneficial to promote the issue to communities to build community cohesion and so that older people are not isolated.
 - Scottish Government should take responsibility for its own decisions and seek alternative options to build funding.
 - A more aligned approach to housing, social care and health was suggested. The condition of homes will have implications on health and where there is quality of life and good conditions it increases independent living within the community. It was felt that preventative care had been deprioritised particularly in respiratory or arthritic care, which many older people suffer from. If the house is not warm, then it impacts on health and increases admissions into hospital.
 - The RAC Concrete scandals were mentioned that in particular affected renters in Aberdeen and being forced out of homes that they've lived in for 40 years which will impact both mental and physical health.

- There was a comment on consideration of serious policies around distribution of wealth in Scotland within the limits of devolution.

The convenor suggested that the Housing Minister, or Cabinet Secretary be invited to a future meeting of the CPG and asked that WFP be taken as an AOCB.

Action: Secretariat to invite the Minister of Housing, to a future CPG meeting and Cabinet Secretary of Social Justice.

Discussion on key challenges facing older people in Scotland and potential collective action from CPG – Andrea Ma, Policy Officer, Age Scotland

The convenor introduced Andrea and took the opportunity to thank her for her secretariat support and work.

An overview was provided on the CPG Summer survey conducted by Age Scotland to understand what CPG members would like for the CPG to concentrate on as key areas of focus, which were as follows:

- 1st - Community services / access to community services
- 2nd - Healthcare / access to healthcare
- Joint 3rd - Cost of living & Social care/ access to social care
- Joint 4th - Digital Exclusion & Fuel poverty
- 5th - Dementia
- Joint 6th – Poverty /Low income; Housing & Mental Health
- Joint 7th - Tackling Ageism & Public Transport

Other topics rated more lower on the list were Personal Banking/ Access to cash; Social security support/ protections; Older workers/ workplaces/ employment; and Climate change/ environmental. Additional topics for focus that were mentioned were malnutrition and social isolation; and poor and less able older people.

Members were thanked for their participation in the survey. It was clarified that it was understood that all topics are important, with some interconnected however that the survey was created to understand the top priorities of the CPG to provide a focus for action. Some topics may be inter-linked such as community services, social care and healthcare access, and some kept separate.

As the CPG only meet 3-4 times a year there is only so much that can be done. The list of priorities will be used to plan for the next 12 months, with a draft proposal of what will be discussed in the next 4 meetings provided in due course. The convenor

requested members contact the secretariat if they had thoughts on speakers.

Action: CPG to contact secretariat with potential speakers for future CPG meetings.

Discussion:

- **Digitalisation:** Cyber-awareness information was provided to older people by Scottish Government. There was a lack of understanding of the needs of older people as the session was on multifactor authentication despite many older people not owning a smartphone. There was an emphasis on the need to emphasis older people's needs and to ensure it is understood and heard.
- **Loneliness and isolation:** It was emphasised that no organisations affiliated with provided support for loneliness or isolation for older people were awarded grants last year. The impact of COVID-19 has increased this issue, with many older people not seeing medical professionals or socialising. Some were malnourished and it has impacted on physical, mental health and wellbeing. This has improved with time, but WFP presents a new challenge which is needed, not only to heat homes but also to heat food and without the financial support it will get worse.

Agenda item 6

AOCB

The convenor introduced the 3 AOCB's noted for discussion: Winter Fuel Payment, a Heriot Watt Event and the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Group.

Winter Fuel Payment (WFP): The convenor asked that there is no further debate on the matter instead that a suggested practical action be discussed and provided.

There were some further comments on Pension Credit, the impact of savings causing ineligibility and that organisations are encouraging Pension Credit application to eligible people due to passported benefits. The issue of waiting times for Pension Credit applications were mentioned, with some people still awaiting a response for applications made in February. Further experiences were shared of people with disabilities, and health conditions and the impact that this decision will have on their health.

It was emphasised that the WFP decision has come in far too quickly, with no time for people to budget or make the necessary preparations.

The types of concerns older people were facing were discussed including concerns over recycling bins not being emptied due to inability to use hot water to clean. This was in addition to concerns with heating food, cleaning crockery or bathing.

The discussion continued as to whether the means-testing saves the budgetary figure announced. Another stated that means-testing is more expensive than a universal benefit, and the present system is full of inequality. It was

There were comments that Scottish and UK Government and Ministers need to hear from people that are being forced to live in homes that are damp and unfit for human habitation and the people on the ground. The issue is intergenerational as older people have families and they will feel impacted by this that their grandparents are anxious, worried and unable to heat their own homes.

Whilst considering fuel, the lack of regulation for oil central heating, for LPG, fuel, and solid fuel deliveries that many people in Scotland use as their basic heat source was mentioned. There was mention also of the increasing standing charges applied and that a 5-bedroom house can pay the same standing charge as a 1 room cottage.

The convenor proposed that the CPG write to both UK and Scottish Government to raise the concerns of the WFP and Pension Credit and to reconsider the decision made on the WFP and request a response as soon as possible.

Action: Secretariat to write to Prime Minister and First Minister regarding the Winter Fuel Payment Decision and the concerns raised by CPG and share round CPG for any concerns.

Heriot-Watt University – Healthy Ageing Showcase Event: An invitation from Alan Gow, Heriot-Watt University to a Healthy Ageing Showcase event to held on 2nd of October, will be shared by the secretariat post meeting.

Action: Secretariat to circulate the information and link regarding that event to everybody following the meeting before the minutes go out.

Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel Letter: Adam Stachura provided written comments on the letter which was read out to CPG regarding the lack of mention of older people in the workplan despite older households being the largest group in fuel poverty as was evidenced in Scottish Government's own House Condition Survey 2022, statistics published in February 2024, which Scottish Government had not commented on at the time. It was suggested that the CPG write to the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel to seek further activity around older people or to seek clarity

on their actions or priorities for old people.

The convenor agreed that the CPG should write to the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel regarding this and to the Scottish Government pointing out the figures in the February Housing report and to request a comment.

Action: The secretariat to write to the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel and to contact the Scottish Government Housing Minister to request a comment on the Scottish Housing figures in February 2024.

The following additional AOCB were raised by members of CPG.

Treasury Funds: The treasurer requested the treasury funds of £200 be discussed at the next CPG.

Action: Secretariat to add Treasury Funds for discussion in December CPG.

Scottish Pensioners Forum Demonstration – UN Older People’s Day: An open invitation was provided to members of the CPG to join the Scottish Pensioners Forum on 26 September at their demonstration on UN Older’s People’s Day. It was mentioned that the MSPs have been sent invitations to attend.

Human Rights Bill: The CPG was asked for their support on the Scottish Human Rights Bill. A letter with signatories was drafted emphasising the importance of the Bill which was delayed.

The convenor expressed his disappointment at the delay as the Bill contains rights for both disabled people and older people, and that it should be raised with the Minister for Equalities when she is invited to the CPG. The CPG confirmed they were happy for the convenor to sign the letter.

Healthcare: Various concerns relating to healthcare regarding the RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) vaccination; the issue of do not resuscitate orders on patient records; the lack of research into Long-COVID; and the use of physician associates in healthcare settings.

Next meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday 4 December (1-2.30pm) online via MS Teams.