

GIVING A VOICE TO YOUR EXPERIENCE

**Voice
of
Experience
Forum**

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VOICE OF EXPERIENCE FORUM NEWSLETTER



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WE HOPE YOU ARE SAFE & WELL



Welcome to this, the third edition of the Voice of Experience Forum newsletter for 2021. It has been a year of hope so far, with some light now appearing at the end of the tunnel.

On this positive note, Voice of Experience Forum are looking forward to meeting with you and your groups and learning from your experiences. If any of your groups have plans to meet, then I would be happy to come along to introduce myself. Until then, stay safe and happy.

Online
Information
Session

INFORMATION SESSIONS FOR OUR MEMBERS

In the April edition of the Voice of Experience Forum newsletter, we spoke about resuming the delivery of information sessions via Zoom, until such times as we are allowed to meet face to face again. Since then, we have developed an information session entitled "Social Security Scotland – An Introduction to Social Security Scotland Benefits for Older People" and another, in partnership with Citizens Advice, which addresses "Pension Credit Entitlement and Gambling Harms". Gambling harms have been reported by several agencies as increasing during "lockdown."

We are also pleased to announce that these sessions have commenced with a pilot session for each topic being delivered to a small group.

For those individual members or groups who are interested in receiving this information, participants will require to have an email address in order to receive the invitation to the session.

To arrange delivery of either or both of these, please contact Denis on 01236 439551 or 07305 692098 or email info@voef.org.uk

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE FORUM — IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

AGM

VOEF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021 UPDATE

As mentioned in our previous newsletter in April, Voice of Experience Forum intend to hold this year's AGM as a hybrid event. This means planning for a traditional meeting alongside plans to deliver the meeting online via Zoom.

Due to ongoing uncertainty over restrictions, and to increase the opportunity for attendance in person, VoEF have decided to delay the event until 2nd November at the same venue, St Margaret's Church in Airdrie. Further information will follow in due course.

OVER 75'S TV LICENCE FEE

The National Pensioners' Convention is concerned to learn that the BBC will end its 'licence fee grace period' for over-75s on 31 July with 260,000 pensioners still yet to pay. The right to a free TV licence for that age group ended last August for all, except those in receipt of the Pension Credit benefit.



It is understood that the BBC will issue letters urging those still to pay to do so as soon as possible – and that there will be “customer care visits” to pensioners' homes this autumn. The NPC has always believed that the free TV licence for over 75s is a government responsibility – an entitlement to compensate for the low state pension – and that Prime Minister Boris Johnson should take back its administration.

Read and download the full press release on

<https://www.npcuk.org/post/on-the-bbc-s-decision-to-end-the-free-tv-licence-fee-grace-period-for-over-75s>

STAY ALERT TO SCAMS



Track and trace scam

A new telephone scam is coming to light callers contact residents saying they are from NHS Track & Trace, telling the resident that they have been in contact with someone suffering from Covid 19 and need to have a test sent out to them. This is swiftly followed with a request for the resident's bank details; the caller states that the test and results cost £500. Please do not fall for this scam. If you need a test sent out to you because you are unable to attend a test site, this is done for free, both delivery and collection, followed up by the result.

Important!

The NHS Test and Trace service will **NOT**:

- *ask for bank details or payments
- *ask for details of any other accounts, such as social media
- *ask you to set up a password or PIN number over the phone
- *ask you to call a premium rate number, such as those starting 09 or 087

SOPA – Access to Healthcare Survey Report

SCOTTISH OLDER PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY— ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SURVEY REPORT



The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health and wellbeing of older people was identified as a concern by SOPA. Access to primary care services was a problem for many older people as restrictions were put in place which stopped most face-to-face contact.

SOPA's Health and Wellbeing Group set up a survey to find out more about people's experiences. Over 800 responses were received from people across 14 health board areas. 84% of respondents were aged over 60.

Key findings:

- **More than half** of respondents stated that their **ability to access GP and dental services was negatively impacted** by the pandemic
- **78%** of individuals reported **no disruption to obtaining prescriptions for pre-existing health conditions**
- **124 people stated that they had accessed private health or dental care** due to the inability to access NHS services during the pandemic
- **Around a quarter** of respondents felt that the pandemic has had a significant impact on their **physical health (24%)** and **mental health (26%)**

57% of those who took part in the survey **were unable to access the support they needed**. The report revealed people's frustrations with the apparent inconsistencies of restrictions. Many older people were forced to pay for private care which was not available on the NHS, even though it was provided in the same location and with the same practitioners.

Respondents expressed feelings of abandonment, fear and anxiety in not being able to access essential healthcare and many people have been unable to access the support they need.

Many older people are concerned that the Covid-19 pandemic has given the opportunity for a major shift to delivering primary care services online. Whilst this may be beneficial to some, it poses a serious risk that older people are excluded from services, symptoms are missed and situations that could have been prevented result in crises. SOPA asks that people are always given a choice in how care is provided and that face-to-face consultations resume as soon as possible.

SOPA calls on the Scottish Government for a clear plan to address the issues raised in this report, ensuring that the basic health needs and human rights of older people are met and that the inequalities described in the report are prevented from occurring in the future.

The full report [Access to Healthcare Survey Report \(pdf\)](#) is available at:-

<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3.spanglefish.com/s/31982/documents/consultation-events/final-survey-report-v2.1.pdf>

INFORMATION FROM ACROSS NORTH LANARKSHIRE

VoEF Membership

FREE Membership of Voice of Experience Forum is open to anyone over the age of 60 and organisations representing older people in North Lanarkshire.

Benefits of becoming a member include:

- Regular Newsletters
- Invitations to events
- Involvement in consultations
- Your views & opinions being heard by other agencies
- Influence in the planning of service provision for older people

VoEF also deliver presentations throughout North Lanarkshire.

If you run a group or attend a group for individuals over the age of 60 and would like to book VoEF for a presentation, please get in touch with Denis O'Keefe using the details on page 1.

Remember, Membership is **FREE!**

TRAINING FOR CARERS

Lanarkshire Carers new Online Carer Training Programme for July - December 2021 is out now!



Some of the different courses featured in the new programme will:

- Help you manage stress in your caring role
- Improve your digital skills for the future
- Learn more about the condition of the person that you care for
- Help you maintain your overall physical and mental health & wellbeing

Visit www.lanarkshirecarers.org.uk/training to find out more and book your place, or give them a call on 01698 428090 / 01236 755550.

To access these training courses, carers need to be registered with Lanarkshire Carers which can be easily done by completing a self-referral form via the website or by giving them a call.



YOUR FORUM, YOUR VOICE

As the voice of its members, Voice of Experience Forum is guided by your views and opinions. With this in mind, and in order to remain relevant, we would like to take this opportunity to ask you for your suggestions on which topics, subjects or areas for discussion you think the Forum should be providing a focus upon. This could be a local issue or a wider concern.

Please feel free to contact Denis using the details on page 1.

THANK YOU—FLEXIBLE CVS FUND!

We would like to say a great big 'Thank You' to the Scottish Government, North Lanarkshire Council and Community Matters for the kind award of £4,125 via the Flexible CVS Fund.

This award will be used to purchase 30 tablets, 30 myfi mobile internet connections and 30 cases to protect the tablets. These purchases will allow Voice of Experience Forum to commence the 'Chatterbox Project'. The 'Chatterbox Project' aims to provide those in the greatest need, with an existing email address, and a desire to become digitally connected, the means to do so.

Along with the device and connection, we can offer - through our partners - remote training, which means that an individual can learn in their own home without the need for an in-person visit.