SOPA's Three-year Plan 2024-2027 and the "to do" List for Members

SOPA News

By Teresa Lavery

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After the last year of reviewing, consulting, and identifying priority issues, SOPA members have produced a plan for delivery over the next three years.

As we start to roll out the plan and as SOPA's two members of staff plan their workloads for 2024, it might be useful to have a quick overview of the objectives we hope to achieve over the next three years.

Why Have a Three-Year Plan?

A three-year plan will help us focus on our long-term aims as we undertake our day-to-day work. It helps us recognise the priorities identified by members and plan how to use our resources effectively.

Our three-year plan will also be useful in informing our funders and supporters about what we are doing, how we are doing it, and how we measure our successes.

These are crucial factors that funders and potential funders will take into account when deciding if, and how much, they plan to fund our work.

Consultations and Updates

The SOPA trustees spend a lot of time and effort with members and other stakeholders in ongoing consultations. Most recently, we have undertaken an online survey, our assembly workshops, meetings with politicians and civil servants, and our Older People's Champions, to name a few.

We have overhauled our website and newsletter, and our Lead Officer, Hetty Malcolm-Smith, is active on X (formerly known as Twitter) in keeping people up to date with what is happening.

We want to use digital technology to support members networking amongst themselves as well as with Trustees, and we are looking forward to establishing members' working groups through 2024 to examine key issues in depth and make recommendations to the SOPA board on action on priority issues.

Our Four High-Level Objectives

1. Getting policy-makers at every level of government to listen to older people and act on what they hear.
2. Delivering the "Your Issue, Your Voice" project to highlight local issues that impact on older people.
3. Celebrating the positive contributions of older people in Scotland.
4. Having an Older People's Champion in every local authority in Scotland.

We also need to work on expanding and strengthening the membership and ensuring SOPA's future sustainability.

Measuring Impact

The trustees have also considered how to measure the impact of our work—not just measuring how well we perform on a day-to-day, month-to-month basis but measuring our success in delivering long-term change for the better.

This requires us to think about how we will know when we have achieved success when we get there, and how we can use evidence of our successes to demonstrate SOPA's ability to deliver or help deliver, long-term changes for the better.

Where are we now as at February 2024?

We held our AGM on 29 January 2024 and presented the three-year plan to members. We will shortly send out to members the three-year plan in various formats, including our new logo, for members to take to their networks when talking about SOPA.

We have agreed on three priority topics for discussion by members' working groups, which will be established in the next month or so.

The working groups are asked to tackle priority issues at some Zoom meetings over two to three months and make recommendations on action to the Board of Trustees. The first three topics are:

- Social Care (we anticipate a number of working groups tackling various aspects of Social Care over the life of the three-year plan).
- The potential pros and cons of the proposed Older People's Commissioner in Scotland.
- The impact of social isolation and ways in which it might be tackled in Scotland.

The Board of Trustees is looking forward to delivering the three-year plan to SOPA members and other stakeholders.

Our two members of staff are working on their calendar of work for 2024 to ensure that we tie in with key activities over the year, such as Scottish Government and Parliamentary action, key activities of our members, and our planned Parliamentary Reception.

Our 3-year plan