



The Royal Society for the Support of Women of Scotland

Scottish Parliament Anniversary Reception

The Society celebrated its 175th Anniversary in 2022 and marked the occasion in a number of ways including a greeting from our Patron, Her Majesty The Queen, a special grant of £70 to all our beneficiaries (timed for the Jubilee celebrations), and lastly a Reception held at the Scottish Parliament in November 2022.

Ms Catriona Reynolds, Chair of the Society's Trustees, said "the reception was a lovely evening and a chance to both celebrate the past and look to the future of the Society. We were very grateful to the 3 MSPs who sponsored the event, Beatrice Wishart, Siobhian Brown and Maggie Chapman, and to Christina McKelvie, the Minister for Equalities and Older People at the time (she has just been given a new role in the recent Scottish Cabinet changes), for also attending and speaking about the support the Government is providing for older women."

The evening featured a short film where two beneficiaries described



From R to L – Beatrice Wishart MSP, Siobhian Brown MSP, Maggie Chapman MSP, Christine McKelvie MSP (Minister for Equalities and Older People), Mary Burney (From SWI), Catriona Reynolds (Chair of RSSWS), Andrew Tweedy (Chief Exec of RSSWS), Anne Kerr (From SWI)

the difference the Society's support had made in their lives. Ms Reynolds said "we are indebted to Nancy and Fiona for sharing their stories and everyone agreed they were the stars of the evening! We were delighted that they were both able to attend the reception along with many friends and supporters of the Society over the years including the two previous Chief Executives, Dr Maurice Hankey and Mr Sandy MacKay."

A New Patron for the Society?



Like everyone, the Society was deeply saddened by the death of Her Majesty The Queen. Catriona Reynolds said “as well as giving over 70 years of dedicated service to the whole country, Her Majesty was also our Patron making her death particularly poignant for everyone connected to the Society”.

After Her Majesty’s death, the Society was contacted by the Palace to explain that (a) His Majesty The King was happy for us to continue to use stationery that referred to the late Queen as our Patron, as they did not want us to go to the expense of having things re-printed, and (b) that they were reviewing all the organisations where the late Queen had been Patron to consider who might now take on that role. The Palace asked that we wait for them to contact us and we have of course respected their wishes.

Andrew Tweedy, the Society’s Chief Executive, said “the past months will have been a very busy, and difficult time for the Royal Household, and they will now be focused on the preparations for His Majesty’s Coronation. The Society must just be patient until the Palace tells us which member of the Royal Family will take on the role of our Patron. Having said that, it is worth remembering that not all Royal organisations have a formal Royal Patron, and it might be that the Society does not have one in the future. However, whatever happens, the Society was both honoured and grateful to the late Queen for her support over the years, and we are very proud of our Royal Charter and our long association with the Royal Family.”

Re-starting Visits and Covid

The Society took a very cautious approach to visiting beneficiaries during the COVID pandemic to keep everyone safe. We focused



on visiting new applicants to the Society initially, but we are now re-starting our regular visits to beneficiaries, albeit perhaps not quite as frequently as we did in the past. We are pleased to be able to do so as many beneficiaries have told us how much they appreciated our caseworkers’ visits. However, while COVID is now much less of an issue (thankfully), it has not gone away fully, and we know there may be some beneficiaries who are continuing to try to self-isolate, and we will of course respect that. If you have any concerns about being visited, please let your caseworker know and we will be happy to complete your review by phone.

Trustee changes

As is always the case in Charities, the past year has seen a number of changes in membership of our Trustees. Very sadly both Mrs Maureen O'Neill and Mrs Margaret Moyes stepped down from the Committee during the year. Ms Catriona Reynolds, paid tribute to both noting that "Mrs O'Neill was a long-standing Trustee from the old IGF days and Mrs Moyes was the Society's Vice Chair whilst also running another charity. We will miss both of them greatly and I want to thank them both for their significant contributions to the Society's work."



Ms Sue Freeth

On the positive side, the Society was delighted to welcome Sue Freeth as a new Trustee in November 2022. Sue has a long career working for various grant making and service providing charities including over 20 years in leadership roles. She is currently the Chief Operating Officer for Victim Support Scotland.

Search for a new Chair of Trustees

In addition, Ms Reynolds' term of office as Chair ends later in 2023. The Chair is a very important role in the Society and the Trustees have started the process of looking for a new Chair to lead the Society during this important period of growth and development.

Welcome to Fiona

The Society was delighted to welcome Fiona Henderson to our staff team as the new Caseworker for the West of Scotland after Pam took on the role of Welfare Manager. Fiona joined the Society in August 2022 so a number of beneficiaries will already have met her. She has a wide range of experience including working for Alzheimer's Scotland and the Key Housing Project before moving over to a local authority Social Work Department where she worked in both community and hospital-based teams locally. Most recently she worked in the Social Care Review Team where she completed reviews of people's circumstances on a yearly basis – very similar to her new role with RSSWS. Fiona has qualifications in Counselling, speaks Gaelic and is a British Sign Language user. She lives in Ayrshire and is married with 2 children. In her spare time (if her family ever let her have any!) she loves to read, enjoys travelling and has recently taken up paddleboarding.



Ms Fiona Henderson

Changes to Grant Amounts



The Society's main grant was increased to £115 per month in 2021. Last year, as the cost of living rapidly increased, the Society took the unprecedented decision to pay all our beneficiaries living in their own homes an additional £50 per month over the past winter. Andrew Tweedy explained "we decided to pay this extra grant because the costs of everything, but especially fuel, had skyrocketed. Thankfully, the Government confirmed that benefits and pensions would be uprated by over 10% but that only happened recently in April. The delay left people with much higher bills over the winter without a lot of extra support and the additional £50 per month from the Society was intended to help bridge that gap". These extra £50 payments ended in April as benefits and pensions have now been uprated.

However, the Society's Trustees have also agreed to increase the main monthly grant to £120 per month starting in May 2023. Andrew noted "we know that an extra £5 per month won't go that far these days, but we prioritised providing extra help last winter when it was most needed. The Society also needs to ensure that increases in grants are affordable especially as our goal is to increase the number of women we support overall. However, as Tesco never tire of telling us, every little helps!"

A New Approach to Social Security?

The Scottish Government has promised that people will be treated with dignity, fairness and respect by the new Social Security Scotland agency (SSS). Initial feedback seems to

be positive with people telling us that their interactions with the staff from SSS seem to be better AND that they seem to be getting more positive results.



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Dignity, fairness, respect.

Adult Disability Payment (ADP)

Many benefits are still administered by the UK Government including Pensions (and Pension Credit) and Universal Credit. However, SSS now administer several benefits using this new approach notably including "Adult Disability Payment" (or ADP).

Adult Disability Payment is replacing old benefits of DLA and PIP for people who live in Scotland. Dermot Dooley, the Society's Financial Resilience Caseworker, explained that "ADP provides extra money to help you if you have a disability or long-term health condition. Like PIP, it is made up of two components: daily living and mobility. The daily living part focusses on whether you need additional support inside your home, with things such as: preparing food, managing your medication, getting dressed, or having a shower. The mobility component considers whether you need support outside your home either because of limited mobility or because you need help planning and following a journey. At the moment ADP is only for people below their State Pension age and people over Pension age can apply for Attendance Allowance instead. However, at some point ADP will be open to all adults living in Scotland who meet the conditions. ADP is not means tested and it can often mean you get an increase in means tested benefits like Universal Credit. You also do not need to actually receive support for your health condition, you only need to show that you need help".

Andrew Tweedy added that "many people found the old benefits of PIP and DLA difficult to apply for and they were often unsuccessful. We hope that people's experiences with ADP will be better under the Government's new approach of dignity, fairness and respect. If you have been refused PIP or DLA in the past, and you are still below your pension age, please consider applying for ADP. There is lots of help to apply available and you can always contact the Society for more information." However, Andrew also pointed out that "the Society does take into account part of ADP when we look at your income each year, so getting ADP **might** mean our support ends. However, that would only happen if you were much better off with your ADP payments so it would still be worth your while applying".

New "Beacon" Database for the Society

The Society has started work on moving to a new database to help us securely manage the records about the people who apply to the Society and all the beneficiaries we support.

Andrew Tweedy explained "until now we have used a database developed for us by one of our Trustees, Mr Graeme Whyte. Thanks to Graeme's expertise, this has served us very well for many years, but recent changes to the way we work make it important that we update our systems." The Society appointed consultants to help us find the best new system for our needs and we appointed Beacon as our preferred provider".



Andrew went on “making sure that the records we hold are secure is a critical part of what the Society is looking for in any new system and Beacon impressed us greatly. They are trusted by a wide range of other Charities from Hospices to NHS Charities to the RSPCA and we share that confidence”. The Society will be updating our Privacy Policy to reflect the use on the new database, but the actual change over to the new system won’t happen until later in the summer. If any beneficiaries have questions or concerns about these changes, please get in touch with the office.

Planning for Changes to the Society’s Offices

The Society is very fortunate to own a beautiful Grade A listed Townhouse in Rutland Square in the West End of Edinburgh. For many years we have occupied the first floor and let the remaining space to a firm of accountants. However, the building does now need some upgrading (we only have two toilets for all the offices!) and, like all old buildings, it needs repairs and maintenance. The good news is that there is considerable potential to increase the rental income that we receive from the property, so the Society’s Trustees have appointed a firm of surveyors, Reid Mitchell, to provide professional advice and take forward the renovations. Any building work won’t start until spring 2024. When they

do, the Society will need to move into temporary accommodation for several months before we return to the building – albeit probably into basement offices. All staff have been kept up to date about these plans, including our wonderful caretaker Linda, and we will let everyone know of any changes to our address and contact details in due course.



Do you know someone the Society could support?

We mentioned this last year, but we are doing so as again as word of mouth is the most effective advertising! Women applying for our support must be aged 50 or over, have lived in Scotland for at least 2 years and they must be single. If all of this applies to someone you know, and if they are struggling to get by financially, please do suggest that they get in touch with us!



Spotlight on useful services

The Silver Line is a FREE helpline specifically for people aged 55 or over. They provide friendship, conversation and support and you can call them 24 hours a day, every day of the year on 0800 470 8090. This means you can call anytime you are feeling down or even if you just fancy a blether!



We know many of our beneficiaries worry about getting trades people in to do work in their homes. Care and Repair is a network of local charities who provide help with just that. The services vary slightly between different areas, and many are restricted to people aged 60 or over, but all will give you impartial



advice and put you in touch with a reliable local tradesperson to get the job done. Contact your local Council (or Library) for information on how to get in touch with your local Care and Repair service.

Flower fairies of the Spring



We were delighted to have been sent this lovely poem by one of the Society's beneficiaries and she has kindly agreed to let us share it with everyone in this Newsletter.

*Flower fairies of the Spring are in our gardens you know
Working their magic to make everything grow.
Their pastel palette of colours dapple the trees,
Catkins and daffodils dance in the breeze.
Easter bunnies watch as hens lay chocolate eggs,
Birds are busily building their nests.
Butterflies and bees kiss the flowers,
In between the warm Spring showers.
In the meadows lambs frolic and bleat,
Soft and fluffy, so cute and so sweet.
The world reawakening after its sleep,
The sun's beaming smile radiates heat.
It's cherry blossom time once more,
But in a very few days the petals carpet the floor.
Our clocks spring forward returning the light,
The dawn chorus singing in the trees out of sight.
So you don't believe in the magic the flower fairies bring?
Oh, of course you do otherwise there would be no Spring!*

Contact Us...

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Our office is normally open Monday to Thursday from 9am to 2pm

