

RSSWS NEWS

AUTUMN 2025



The Royal Society *for the Support of Women of Scotland*

HRH The Princess Royal becomes the Society's Patron

The Society is both delighted and honoured that Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal has agreed to become the Society's Patron following the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She has taken on this role for an initial 3 year period, but we very much hope that Her Royal Highness will agree to extend her support beyond this limit.

When she accepted the Patronage of the Society, Her Royal Highness said "I have read with great interest about the important work that the Society does, and I send my very best wishes to all the Beneficiaries of the Society as well as its Trustees, the Staff Team and



HRH The Princess Royal

everyone connected with it". Bridget, Chair of the Society's Trustees, said "I am thrilled that Her Royal Highness has become the Society's Patron, and I very much look forward to working with her to build and develop the work of the Society over the next few years".



Andrew & Bridget

Since Her Royal Highness's decision, the Society has been making the most of our new Royal connection including Bridget and Andrew attending her Charities Forum in Buckingham Palace in June and Lucy and Sharon even getting to talk to her at the Garden Party at Holyrood Palace.



Lucy and Sharon chatting to our new Patron

Spotlight on Useful Services

In our Newsletter we try to raise awareness of services that might be helpful for our beneficiaries. This year it seems appropriate to publicise the support services provided by Age Scotland, our future landlords (even though we also did so last year)!



- **Helpline – 0800 1244 222** - their advisers provide information and advice on a range of topics from money matters and benefits entitlements, to social care, housing, energy and legal issues.
- **Friendship Calls - 0800 1244 222** – they make free weekly calls of friendship, companionship and support to older people across Scotland. Having a blether can have such a positive impact, and their volunteers are on hand to talk about many things. From current interests, hobbies, and previous work life to top-tier biscuits and time travel. The list is endless!



Luminate is a charity which works across Scotland to ensure that older people's creativity can flourish whatever their circumstances, experience, interests and ambitions.

They run training events for artists and provide bursaries to artists aged 50 and over who are working in Scotland to extend their professional development and launch new projects.

On 18th November they are running a free webinar focusing on the opportunities that can arise from finding a new creative career or developing a new artistic direction in later life. For more details call them on 0131 668 8066 or via info@luminatescotland.org.

Renovations draw to an end

The renovations of our Rutland Square building ended up taking much longer (and costing more) than originally planned, largely due to very slow decision making by the Council. However, the project has now drawn to a close and the building has been transformed. Andrew explained “we knew we would only have one chance to do what needed to be done so we have tried to make sure we have done it well. The works have included everything



Before!

Renovations draw to an end (cont.)



After

from a brand new roof through to re-laying the drains. The building has been completely re-wired to bring it up to modern standards and the old heating system has been replaced with a super-efficient air source heat pump. New toilets, showers, kitchens and parking facilities have been installed and some of the rooms opened up to better fit modern open plan offices. It has been a big project, but the investment of both time and money will all be worth it as the building has been protected for the future AND will now generate much more income for the Society's work."

Mrs Jean Ross – 1948 to 2025

RSSWS is very sad to have to share the news that Mrs Jean Ross passed away on 27th May 2025. Jean spent her entire working life with the Society as our Office Manager. For more than 40 of dedicated service Jean was the first person most applicants and beneficiaries will have come in contact with. Over those years she both witnessed and enabled huge changes in the way the Society worked - from the days when all records were kept by hand and issuing grant payments took days just to write all the cheques, to where we are today where payments to close to 1,000 women and totalling nearly £100,000 a month can be issued and authorised with the click of a few buttons.



Jean Ross

Andrew, the Society's Chief Executive, said "sadly I never worked with Jean as she retired in 2015, but it is quite clear that she was a larger than life character who loved working at the Society almost as much as she loved her holidays away! However, I was lucky enough to meet her on a number of occasions and she never failed to quiz me about any changes the Society was planning. I was never entirely sure if I passed or failed all of those tests! She will be sadly missed by all who knew her."

Welcome to the E McLaren Beneficiaries

In March 2025, the E McLaren Fund for Indigent Ladies (“the Fund”) merged into The Society. At the time the Fund had 94 beneficiaries and the Society has made a commitment to continue paying them the grants they were receiving from the Fund provided they remain eligible. Some of the Fund’s beneficiaries were also beneficiaries of the Society, but many were new to us. Bridget, the Society’s Chair of Trustees, welcomed these new beneficiaries saying “we are delighted to have you join the Society and we very much hope that the grants you receive from us, as well as the support offered by the Society’s fabulous team of Caseworkers, will make a real difference in your lives”.

The Fund was founded back in 1917, during the First World War, to provide financial assistance to single women with preference being given to the widows or daughters of Officers who served in Scottish Regiments. It operated for over 100 years providing essential support to countless women over those years. The Fund’s Trustees took the decision to merge with the Society because the costs of operating the Fund were increasing year on year and taking a bigger and bigger bite out of the funds available to support beneficiaries. By merging with the Society there are economies of scale for both organisations, and the Trustees felt this is in the long term interests of both current and future beneficiaries.

Could you qualify for the new Pension Age Disability Payment (PADP)?

The Scottish Government has slowly been taking over responsibility for a range of social security benefits. The most recent addition is Pension Age Disability Payment (or PADP) which will replace Attendance Allowance (although people who are currently being paid Attendance Allowance will continue to receive it).



Social Security Scotland
Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba

Dignity, fairness, respect.

Andrew explained “the rules for PADP are essentially the same as for Attendance Allowance, BUT the approach taken by Social Security Scotland when making decisions is quite different from the old DWP. There is much more emphasis on treating people with dignity and respect and we find that people who apply are more likely to be successful. You can qualify for PADP if you are above state pension age and are starting to find life more difficult because you are getting

Could you qualify for the new Pension Age Disability Payment (PADP)? (Cont.)

older or your health is getting worse. It might be that you now find practical things like getting about the house or getting in and out of the shower or bath harder, or it might be that friends or family worry about your safety more because of things like falls or forgetfulness. You can also still qualify for PADP even if you are determined to continue to be independent despite these difficulties – indeed being paid PADP might even help you to keep your independence”. Andrew went on to say “you can claim PADP online or by calling 0800 182 2222, but it is often a good idea to get some help with filling in the form from your local CAB, another advice agency or indeed from a family member”.

Trustee Changes

Trustees standing down

At the Society’s AGM in September 2024 two Trustees stood down from the General Committee. Ms Catriona Reynolds had been the Chair of Trustees until November 2023 and indeed was the first woman to hold this role. After handing over the baton as Chair to Bridget in 2023, she remained on the Committee for a further year to support Bridget in her first year in the role. Ms Carol Lawson was the Chair of the Investment Sub Committee and helped steer the Society through major changes in our investment strategy. Bridget said “it is impossible to overstate the contribution that Catriona, and more recently Carol, made to the Society. On behalf of all the Trustees, I thank them both for everything they have done for the Society”.

New Trustee joins the Society

The Society is very pleased to welcome Joyce Harvie as a new Trustee in June 2025.

Joyce is from Edinburgh originally, but spent most of her working life in London commissioning youth services. Joyce was also a Trustee of Scotscare, a charity which provides support to Scots who live in London and which dates back to 1611 (making the Society seem like a young whippersnapper!).



Are you a Carer and do you have an “Adult Carer Support Plan”?

The Society supports a lot of women who are caring for a disabled or frail family member. Under a law passed in 2016 all Carers are entitled to have an Adult Carer Support Plan completed by their local authority (though in practice Councils often arrange for these to be completed by local charities who support carers in their area). The first step is often just a chat with a support worker and getting a Plan in place is worthwhile as it should make sure that at minimum you get information and advice tailored to your situation. However, in some cases they can go further and they might even result in a larger package of care for the person you are caring for if you are struggling. Contact your local Council and ask about a Carers Assessment or find out more at <https://carers.org/>.

Changes in the Staff Team

Lucy's retirement

Very sadly, Lucy McRitchie retired at the end of May 2025. Lucy joined the Society as a Caseworker in 2018 after a career as a Nurse in the NHS and her commitment, dedication and unique sense of humour had been an inspiration for the whole Team ever since. The Team gathered for a day out on the Maid of the Forth and a meal in the Dome in Edinburgh to mark her departure and as a chance to say farewell.



The Team day out to say farewell to Lucy - from L to R - Lucy, Dermot, Sonia, Fiona, Sharon, Andrew, Laura & Pam

Changes in the Staff Team (Cont.)

Welcome to Laura!

More positively, the Society was delighted to welcome Laura Lilley to the Team as the new Caseworker covering the North East, the Highlands and the Islands. Laura was born and bred in Aberdeen and graduated from The Open University. She worked as a Welfare Rights Officer for many years with Aberdeen City Council and as a Housing Officer with Grampian Housing Association. Before joining the Society she worked for RNIB supporting people with sight loss. Laura's husband works in the oil industry and she has 3 boys - twins who are 14 years old and a 6 year old meaning her weekends are dominated by watching them all play football. If she ever has any time to herself, she enjoys running, cooking for the family and reading.



Laura Lilley

Strategy Review for RSSWS

Over the next few months the Society will be working with a number of other organisations to take stock of the work that we do and to explore both ways that we might do that better and find other ways of supporting women in the future.

Feedback from Beneficiaries

A key part of this review will be feedback from both current and former beneficiaries. We are launching a survey asking you about your experience of the Society, the difference our grants make in your lives, and for any suggestions you may have for ways that we could improve what we do.

To encourage as many people as possible to complete the survey, we will be entering anyone who does so (and who includes their RSSWS ID No in the survey answers – so we know who they are) before 10th November in a draw for one of fifty £25 “thank you” payments. The winners will be drawn at random in mid-November and payments will be made in time for Christmas.

Please complete the survey online if you can by using the QR code in the letter you received. We also send paper copies of the survey, but if you do not have this (or if doing things online is not for you), please just phone Sharon on 0131 229 2308 and she will send you another paper copy of the survey to complete.

We have changed address!

As note inside, the Society's beautiful, Grade A listed property in Rutland Square in the West End of Edinburgh has been undergoing a complete renovation over the past year.

We had to move out of the building into temporary offices to allow this to happen, but the plan was always that we would be moving back in once the works were complete. As our temporary offices were also in Rutland Square, we did not formally change our address and have instead relied on having our mail re-directed (and we know the postie well in any case)!

However, it turns out we have done rather too good a job with the renovations and we have found a tenant who wants to lease the entire building – including the space that we had planned on moving back into. This is good news because it means the Society will receive more rental income which will enable us to support more women, but it does mean that we have had to find a new office and change our address.

We are taking the opportunity to share offices (and other costs) with Age Scotland as they also support people age 50 and over. **This means our postal address has changed (see below in the “Contact Us” section) but our phone numbers and e-mail addresses have NOT changed.**

Please use this new address from now on and get rid of any of the old pre-paid return envelopes for Rutland Square. However, if you have recently posted something to our old address, please be reassured that we will keep the redirections in place, so your letter will still be delivered.



Contact Us...

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

Scottish Charity No. SC016095

