



Falkirk District Older People's Network
Thursday 20 November 2025, 10am – 12pm
1st Falkirk Scout Hall (Pleasance Gardens, Falkirk, FK1 1BG)

Present:

John McGhee (Co-Chairperson)
Victoria McRae (Guest Speaker)
Rachel McRae (Minute Taker)

Scottish Seniors Computer Club Falkirk
CVS Falkirk & District
CVS Falkirk & District

Anne Boyd
Julie Hayward
Helen McGarry
Susan Milne
Cllr Alf Kelly
Gavin Johnstone
Nina Hodgson
Isabel Sarle
Sonia McLay
Mehtar Shagufta
Helen Fleming
Doreen Moro
Gina Witty
Linda Black
Gillian Gunn

Alzheimer Scotland
Bailliefields Community Hub
Bailliefields Community Hub
Christians Against Poverty
Falkirk Council
Falkirk Libraries
Falkirk Trinity Church
Falkirk Trinity Church
N/A
Playlist for Life
Prostrate Scotland
Scottish Seniors Computer Club
Self Directed Support Forth Valley
Strathcarron Hospice
Strathcarron Hospice

Apologies:

Steph Davidson
Kim Duguid
Kirsty Nicolson
Caroline Nisbet
Kirsty Greenhowe
Sharlene Ramage
Caroline Martin
Vivienne Malcolm
Eloise Wilson
David Paterson

Volunteering Matters
Home Instead
Grangemouth Community Care
Forth Valley Sensory Centre
Falkirk Food Train
Falkirk & Clackmannanshire Carers Centre
Ability Net
Solicitors for Older People Scotland (SOPS)
CVS Falkirk & District
The NHS Retirement Fellowship



1. Welcome and Introductions

John McGhee (Scottish Seniors Computer Club Falkirk) opened the meeting and reflected on the previous session held on 28 August 2025. He spoke about the discussions from that session influencing the topics and speakers the OPN will look to provide moving forward.

John highlighted that since the last meeting, the OPN have successfully held a third Older People's Day, in partnership with Falkirk Delivers and Braveheart Association. The day saw 27 organisations represented and a good turnout from the public.

Closing off the opening remarks, John welcomed a pause for introductions from all in attendance – and brought forth the idea of formalising the OPN membership with the goal of constituting an AGM in 2026, with attendees asked to provide agreement on the sign in sheet.

2. Review of Previous Minutes

Review and approval of the previous meeting's minutes was carried out via email. The minutes were circulated to members on 14/11/2025, with a one-week deadline for any edits or amendments. No changes were received, and the minutes were therefore considered approved.

3. Local Garden Aid Service Changes (Victoria McRae, CEO, CVS Falkirk & District)

Victoria facilitated an exploratory discussion on the role of community-led support in response to Local Garden Aid Service Changes.

Previously Garden Aid Services were provided by Falkirk Council, with various eligibility criteria determining levels of support. However, due to budget cuts, the Council has had to stop certain services such as Garden Aid. Victoria highlighted that a lack of notice around this cut led to limitations on community response and noted the OPN's concern as members affected as well as lots of enquiries about support for older people coming through CVSFD as a result. She noted that the OPN has the potential to act as a decision-making body, due to the unique position as a voice for both the community and clients and come together to look at what could be done moving forward.

Opening the topic out for discussion, 4 attendees noted an increase in enquiries for low-level practical help, like garden maintenance, over the last few months; with a keynote being that even those eligible under new standards are still awaiting support due to a large waiting list. Victoria noted that for those limited to living at home, the loss of independence to maintain their garden can often be frustrating and create a sense of loss for those now further limited in accessible spaces outside the home – with the group noting that issues of service changes can create increased social isolation and loneliness.

From this standpoint, discussion moved to whether a gardening maintenance service should be pursued as a community project, with the majority in attendance raising hands to show agreement of worth pursuing. Expectation of the work that would be carried out would be mostly grass cutting and



basic maintenance of space – providing solutions to issues of skill, ability, comfortability of completing task; and noted that spaces not looked after and with an appearance of untidiness can increase litter.

For the project to succeed, Victoria noted from CVS Falkirk & District experience that the first steps would be creating a consortium of organisations to come together as a steering group – highlighting that CVSFD could provide project support (funding, governance, project planning) but the OPN would need to take ownership of project. Group put forth suggestions of consultation process to liaise with clients and contacts – providing a baseline for user interest – but also research into numbers and figures to support potential funding applications.

Cllr Alf Kelly (Falkirk Council) raised some concerns about replacing services still available through Falkirk Council, with a need to understand what the potential client group would look like in comparison to those already receiving support. Victoria emphasised not job replacement but community-led support through volunteers, with potential for a social enterprise model with tiered approach to charging, and emphasised the project will require a vast research process before launch – with key requirement to prove sustainability and longevity of project.

Discussion was closed with John (OPN) noted that this is an example of positive things the OPN should become involved in, and the potential of really useful activity coming out of the network. With attendees in majority agreement for driving project forward, John highlighted the first steps will be taking back the discussion to David Paterson (OPN co-chair) and Eloise Wilson (CVS Falkirk & District) to discuss feasibility of project, and setting up steering group with support/advisors from OPN membership/attendees.

Action Tracker: David, John and Eloise to meet/create a plan and timeline of requirements and contacts (to report on progress of project at next meeting in March 2026)

Victoria also recognised attendee, Bailliefields Community Hub, on their recent receipt of the Kings Award for Voluntary Service – showcasing the power of volunteers in taking one small project and developing into a multifaceted organisation.

4. Guest Presentation: Challenges of Running a Community Group for Older People (Roy Kerr, Committee, Callendar Park Tenants & Residents Association)

Roy Kerr (Callendar Park Tenants & Residents Association) presented an overview of the challenges faced by the Association during the running and management of their group over the last six years. The session demonstrated their purpose in providing social activities to residents (Knit & Natter, Keep Fit, etc.) which are breaking barriers of isolation, but also providing internal support such as digital/computer use as well as that which is reflective of individual circumstances such as housing or general maintenance.

Roy emphasised the importance of community groups such as the Association in combating isolation in older people through technological support, highlighting that as more agencies are adopting tech for dealing with customers and service users' older people can be left behind by technology advances



and changes to services. Through the Association, the residents of Callendar Park Towers can receive support to work with tech, or around it if necessary – with the option of borrowing tech such as computers through the Falkirk Seniors Digital Hub.

Challenges discussed included accessibility of space, venue management and maintenance, impact of anti-social behaviour, communication (interpretations and access), and external pressures such as local council changes impacting the level/type of support received.

From an organisational perspective, Roy highlighted a key challenge is succession planning and maintaining a strong management committee. Roy noted key issues within this include contacts moving on, long-term illness within the committee members, volunteer burnout and ensuring that each committee member can understand their role and have their voice heard within the space.

Discussion with the group referenced the importance of physical marketing and communication methods for the group, *'Because of the age range of the people there, we keep it to posters and word of mouth – signposting in ways they understand'*. Continuing Roy's explanation about the computer borrowing scheme within the Association, Gavin from Falkirk Libraries highlighted the *'libraries also have a device borrowing service (laptops, tablets, chromebooks), with three locations currently offering drop-in services each week for online learning (with the hope for future expansion to include in all).'*

5. Close of Session

John closed session with thanks to CVS Falkirk & District for their presentation and network support, to 1st Falkirk Scouts for use of venue, and to Roy Kerr for his presentation. Highlighted the next session will be held in early 2026. Rachel provided a reminder for members to complete evaluation forms.

Date of Next Meetings; 10am – 12pm on:

- Thursday 5th March 2026
- Thursday 11th June 2026
- Thursday 3rd September 2026
- Thursday 3rd December 2026



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