



NEWS RELEASE

Sussex Elders' Commission launch their report in Parliament

On Tuesday 8 March the Sussex Elders' Commission, (SEC), will present the findings of their year-long consultation at a launch event in Portcullis House Westminster, hosted by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Ageing and Elderly people, Chaired by Wealden MP Nus Ghani.

The keynote speaker will be Paul Greenwood, Deputy District Attorney in San Diego, California, an experienced prosecutor and a leading authority on Elder Abuse. He will be joined by Action on Elder Abuse, Age UK representatives, senior police officers and partners from voluntary and statutory agencies.

Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner, Katy Bourne, said: "I asked older people in Sussex to help me set up an Elders' Commission to build on the successful model of our award-winning Sussex Youth Commission which engaged with 4000 young people to inform, support and challenge my work and local policing priorities.

"Over the last year, my Elders' Commission members aged 60-85, have talked to thousands of Sussex residents and captured nearly 6,200 concerns. Alarming they have highlighted concerns about the potential scale of Elder Abuse that is either hidden or under-reported, including scams, cyber crime and financial coercion."

SEC member, Pauline Jackson, from Bexhill who will be presenting at the launch in Portcullis House said: "I joined the Elders' Commission in order to give older people a voice, particularly those who feel isolated. Many people told me 'this is the first time that anybody has asked for my opinion and to hear what concerns me.' Falling for scams was a recurrent theme. I spoke to an older gentleman who had been romanced and conned out of his savings by a younger neighbour. I was also shocked that so many people did not know about the 101 police non-emergency number".

Commenting on the launch of the report, Mrs Bourne said: "I am very proud of the achievements of this dedicated group of community-minded volunteers. They have tapped into their networks and social groups to lift the lid on older citizens' concerns about crime and revealed that some people are being exploited and intimidated simply because their age and isolation makes them more vulnerable. They have a clear message that adult protection needs to be taken as seriously as child protection."

"SEC members have an extensive and influential network of contacts at many different levels, and they have the capacity and will to help inform thousands of older people to avoid scams, stay safe online and have the confidence to report abuse."

"Some of the recommendations in their report can be achieved in Sussex by collaboration and information sharing between partners, such as Action on Elder Abuse, Age UK East Sussex, Trading Standards, the Post Office and Neighbourhood Watch.

"Some recommendations are more challenging and will undoubtedly require discussion at a national level with police, financial institutions and other statutory bodies.

"The 30 members of the Sussex Elders' Commission have invested a year of their time to conduct this extensive person to-person survey. I think we owe it to all those senior citizens who talked to us to look at their concerns and act on them where we can."

Further quotes from SEC members:

- ✿ Jean Holmwood, from Heathfield, who was the victim of a scam in 2015, said: "My age group grew up seeing their local officers out patrolling the streets...through my work with the SEC I have been able to explain to hundreds of our more senior Sussex residents how technology is enabling officers to work more efficiently and deal with the change in crime types, like for example, online scams, which I unfortunately fell victim to last year."
- ✿ Ray Hoare, from Horsted Keynes, said: "As a member of the Elders' Commission I have been advising people to stay safe; I want my fellow senior citizens to feel safe where they live and I want to reduce their vulnerability to scams and fraud. Too many older people won't engage with their neighbours or venture out because of - in most cases - a disproportionate fear of crime and worries about anti-social behaviour. In my role as a SEC member I believe that I have been able to reduce the feeling of isolation and helplessness that some of my peers feel and subsequently lessen their fear of crime, which has been very rewarding."
- ✿ Kate Davies, an SEC member and Chair of East Sussex Seniors Associations (ESSA) said: "I have really valued the opportunity to use my large network of ESSA members in order to speak about the Elders' Commission and how we are the conduit to the PCC and Sussex Police in getting the voices and concerns of our more senior citizens heard. I have been able to explain to my peers about different types of crime - such as persistent nuisance telephone calls, offers of easy wins on non-existent lotteries and the term 'suckers list' which fraudsters use to target the more vulnerable in our society."
- ✿ Mark Brown from Seaford said: "I was amazed at the lack of knowledge and interface there was between older people in my town of Seaford and Sussex Police until I was invited by the PCC to join the Elders' Commission. Through my local Neighbourhood Watch, of which I am Chairman, and my contacts as a Town Councillor, I have encouraged older people in the community to voice their concerns and opinions through the Elders' Commission through to the PCC and onwards to Sussex Police so we can make a difference to the way our communities are policed. "