

# **POPP works hard to combat isolation in Porty**

**The Portobello Older People's Project (POPP) has been going "for years". Two sessions are held each week, bringing older people together in the church hall behind the High Street.**

For some it is a lifeline – the only time they get out of their homes to meet up with others, made all the easier by POPP laying on transport.

POPP is one of the 60+ third sector organisations threatened by a sudden funding cut proposed by the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board (EIJB) to slash their £900 million budget by just £4.5 million.

This cut would remove core funding from the 60 or so charities – funding on which they can then borrow additional sums to allow them to

continue. In the case of POPP around half of their income is from the EIJB – which amounts to £14,000. This is a small sum in the scheme of

the £50 million deficit which the EIJB already have – and the larger amounts of funding made to other charitable bodies.

POPP is a lunch club and day care centre. Volunteers collect the members of the group from their homes in a bus which they hire, and

bring them to the hall in the centre of Portobello where they

enjoy bingo or listening to music by request or sometimes talks by representatives of the Portobello Heritage Society. During better weather they might go for a drive after lunch. Twice a year they go to Merryhatton for lunch, and in December they will have a Christmas lunch.

Catering is purchased from the council and comes from the kitchen at nearby Portobello High School.

Rose White, who is the only paid member of staff, explained that some of the older people who attend do not often get the chance to go shopping, "spending their own money choosing their own things" and so a trip to Merryhatton can be a real treat. Members also pay a "sub" and there is always room for anyone to make a donation to them to boost their funds.

Barbara (86) lives in Bingham. She attends POPP every week and said: "With my mobility issues I don't go out, but with getting picked up by bus I can come here and have a good blether. I look forward to it."

Margaret lives in Portobello. She recently lost several people close to her, including her husband, and has been attending since the pandemic. She said: "It is the best thing. Everybody is so friendly and we play games and enjoy activities. It's not just sitting around – but we do talk a lot!"

John (90) lives in Duddingston. He was previously a volunteer with the group for about 13 years. After having a stroke a couple of years ago, he is now a member. He explained that numbers have always been restricted to about ten guests for lunch in the hall. He said he had possibly been involved in POPP for the longest. He said : "I have been on my own for a long time now, and I was quite active until I had my stroke."

Joan has been coming for a couple of years now. She and the other members all know about the threat to their finances. She said: "It gets everyone out for a couple of hours, and it's good going in the bus. In the summer we go for a day out and enjoy ice cream down by the harbour in Musselburgh.

"If the council say this is it then think about Edinburgh and all the people of our age – what are we going to do? They don't think about that."

The EIJB met in December when the immediate cuts were delayed as a result of the council finding some funding.

The City of Edinburgh Council stepped in with sufficient funds to ensure that the third sector funding will continue until 31 March 2025, but there are still questions about what will happen then.

The EIJB meets next on 25 February 2025.







L-R Volunteers, Adrienne and Vivienne with organiser Rose White



Barbara





Eleanor



John was a POPP volunteer



Maggie







Joan



Moira





Members of POPP having a wee cup of tea on arrival





On the bus on the way to POPP



POPP volunteers set a lovely welcoming table for lunch