

FIFE FORUM ACTION GROUPS

Annual Report 2025



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Background

According to the National Records of Scotland (2020) the population of Fife is some 374,130 with 78,169 people aged 65+, which is around 21% of the total population. This demographic is rising and is projected to reach 25% of the population by 2030.

Fife Forum was originally designed with the intention of providing this segment of the population a platform upon which they could be afforded a voice on the matters and issues relevant to them. In this sense, this was a pre-cursor, for this particular population grouping, to the wider all-encompassing programme of 'Participation & Engagement' supported by the Fife Health & Social Care Partnership. Fife Forum remains a platform upon which older people are encouraged to participate and engage and contribute to the Participation & Engagement programme supported by the Fife Health & Social Care Partnership, in relation to the issues and processes relevant to them. We hope by supporting this we allow older people opportunity to express their thoughts, voice their opinions and influence the issues that matter to them alongside the policy areas which direct health, well-being and care.

Traditionally this work was undertaken via local Forums for retired people aged 55+ and local User Panels for frailer elderly older people 70+. As previously reported, the Covid pandemic had significant consequences for these groups and post-pandemic the service has been on a journey of recovery; being reformed and reconfigured to best support the continuation of providing the older people of Fife a relevant platform upon which they are enabled to participate and engage in the processes which impact their lives and daily living.

The Covid Pandemic & Post-Covid

Historically Forums and User Panels operated in 12 local areas (8 Forums and 4 User Panels) within the 7 Fife localities. These were supported by two part time project staff with oversight provided by the then CEO (prior to the expansion of the charity the CEO was the Fife Forum Co-ordinator whom in addition to his management responsibilities co-ordinated these groups). The Forums operated as individually constituted groups under the umbrella of the Fife Elderly Forum (now Fife Forum) and contributed to the governance of Fife Forum via Board Membership (trustees).

Prior to and during the Covid pandemic the operation of these groups were impacted by staff vacancies alongside the mandatory national shutdowns imposed as a consequence of the pandemic on public health grounds. The resulting anxieties post-pandemic in relation to re-emerging from this and, sadly, the death of members had a significant detrimental impact on the groups with only 3 Forums emerging from this (Benarty, Dunfermline and Cupar).

Commencing September 2023 to support the service area and to assist recovery a full-time staff member was employed in a new guise as a 'Support & Development Worker'. Since this time there has been staffing issues, however, a new Support & Development Worker was appointed June 2025 (28 hours per week).

Moving Towards an 'Action Group' Model

Traditionally groups supported by Fife Forum were known as 'Elderly' Forums and operated as individually constituted entities under the umbrella of Fife Forum, however, during 2025 the remaining Forums bar one (Cupar) were formally wound down (Dunfermline, Benarty and Glenrothes). Conversely and in tandem with this, User Panels operated under the direct supervision of Fife Forum and were geared towards older frailer people 70+. These groups followed a similar format, however, Panel participants were required to be recipients of Health & Social Care Services to help focus on the issues they faced as a demographic group. These groups hosted fewer members than Forums, however, as previously reported were more vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic.

Whilst there has been a continuation of both Forums and Panels up to 2025 in some guise, moving forward, these have been slowly moved away from traditional delivery methods moving towards an 'Action Group' model which is approached more uniformly with a view to ensuring representative and inclusive groups under the direct framing of Fife Forum. This is to help ensure continuity of service, provides a shared framework upon which to work and, importantly, provides safeguards for all concerned.

The purpose of the Acton Groups is to engage with and support older people (over 55) in Fife to share lived experience and influence change in Health & Social Care planning and delivery and their communities. The groups provide opportunity for older people to come together locally within sociable user-led peer environments to learn, be provided with meaningful information, to be heard and to contribute to the matters that are important to them. To be included in this is an aim to involve those aged 75+ to help ensure representation from those who might be amongst the frailer and more elderly. These groups are and will be directly facilitated by the Support & Development Worker and/or will be shared/sourced with other stakeholders with an interest in older people (for example: Retirement Villages/Complexes).

Key to each group is members are and will be encouraged to:

- Engage in participation and engagement exercises relating to local and national policy
- Engage with and lead a programme of learning/activities relevant to their membership

Members are encouraged to informally volunteer within their groups as partners and leaders. Alongside this, to promote the value of older people and their contributions, members are encouraged to formally volunteer by considering roles and responsibilities with Fife Forum as trustees (governance). It should be noted, the latter role, is not a given as both a recruitment process and skill set are required in line with legislation and responsibilities. This said, three current Fife Forum trustees, including the chairperson, have or had a direct link to our groups.

During 2025 new groups have been developed under the auspices of 'Action Groups' in Kirkcaldy, Leven, Glenrothes & Dunfermline. These have operated in addition to the Cupar Forum. At the year-end groups operated in 5 of the 7 localities (during 2025

there has been operations in 6 localities). Moving forward it is intended to operate groups in all 7 localities (both ongoing and focus groups where appropriate) which would include South West Fife (this being the remaining locality without representation).

Support & Development Worker Role

From January and then July 2025 with a newly appointed Support & Development Worker, focus continued to seek ways to re-energise the remaining forums whilst exploring new opportunities to develop participation and engagement under the guise of Action Groups. During this process, it became apparent pre-existing groups, bar Cupar, were no longer viable and were supported to disband.

Following previous consultations with existing groups, new and potential members findings suggest the Support & Development Worker has key roles in:

- Administration, such as minute/note taking
- Sourcing and organising speakers (or assisting with)
- Increasing membership
- Acting as a liaison/conduit with Fife Forum and other Fife Forum services (such as Local Area Co-ordination)
- Supporting the social aspect of the groups
- Informing members of financial, welfare, social and health developments locally, Fife-wide and nationally

With this in mind, the Support & Development Worker has assisted by:

- Providing administrative support
- Promoting the groups within the communities of Fife and with potential stakeholders, including producing and distributing promotional materials
- Collating shared themes and introducing speakers/learning based on this
- Providing a conduit to more closely connect the groups with Fife Forum, including facilitating information points at groups with the support of its sister service, Local Area Co-ordination Older People
- Engaging with the Fife Health & Social Care Participation & Engagement Team on public and policy interest matters

During the reporting period the groups were shared information on and encouraged to engage in consultative exercises. Some members opted or advised they would engage in processes independently of the groups having received information and/or guidance. In relation to the Dementia Strategy for Fife, the Participation & Engagement Team (Fife HSCP) directly consulted with members and in turn members



“Kim is a good listener, very patient & gives time for thoughts to emerge. She is a fount of pertinent knowledge”.
Member

were encouraged to join the Fife-wide Public Participation & Engagement Group. This is important as this helps to ensure representation from people with the protected characteristic of age.

As the groups are also drivers for shared learning, speakers and subject matters included:

- CARF
- Active Fife
- Fire Safety

Pending subject matters to be explored in the early New Year will be:

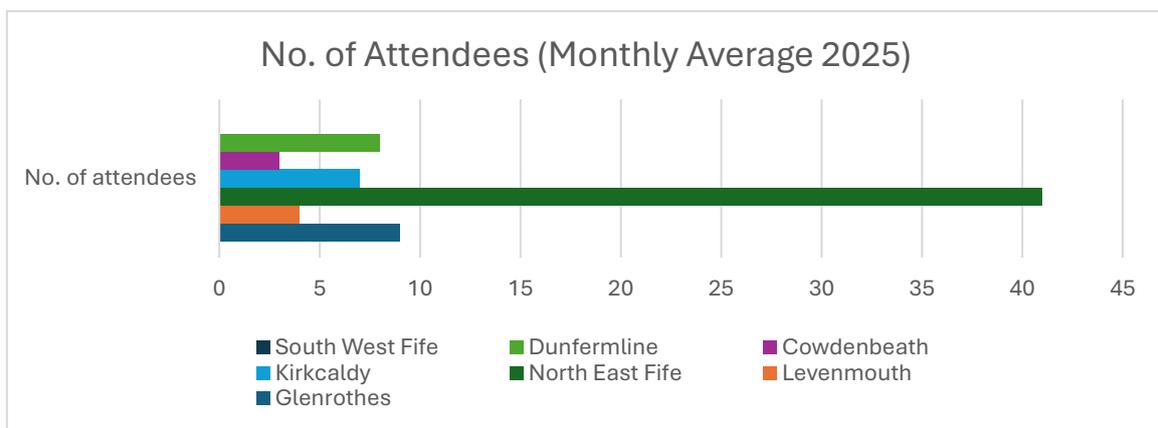
- Digital skills (AbilityNet)
- Our Fife
- Home Food Delivery (taster sessions)
- Consultative exercises pertaining to the participation and engagement agenda

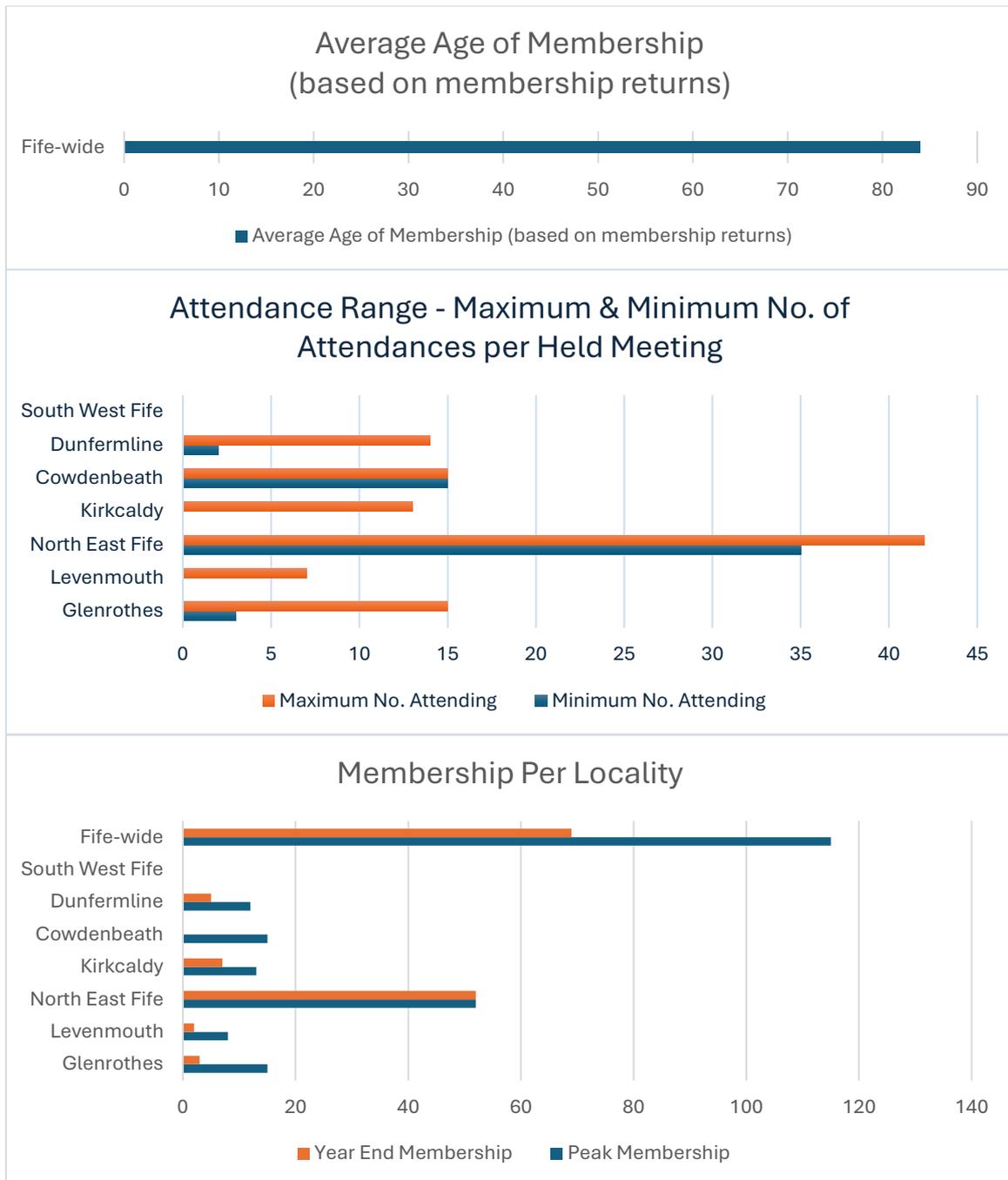
Group Membership

During the reporting year, average monthly attendances at each group meeting ranged from 0 to 42 and were facilitated in 6 of the 7 localities within Fife (all bar South West Fife). As new groups were being formed during the year it proved difficult to generate immediate interest and this accounts for 0 attendances in some instances.

Fife-wide the number of members peaked at 115, reducing to 69 by the year end. This in part was the result of experimental openings of multiple new groups in some localities to gauge initial interest.

The average age our members remains well above our starting age point, albeit this is slightly lower than the previous year (decreasing from 85 to 82). Our members are predominantly female accounting for 89.9% of the membership.





Membership Experience

We aim to measure the experience of our membership by measuring 3 key target areas which seek to ascertain if their involvement has impacted their levels of engagement, sense of value and connectivity. To support this a snapshot survey was issued with the following results:

- 🚩 80% felt more engaged
- 🚩 95% felt valued and heard
- 🚩 85% felt more connected



Challenges

Staffing issues delayed progress with developing new groups and with this restricted our ability to grow membership across all 7 localities. In particular, and not an uncommon issue, generating interest in new groups has been difficult particularly as the groups key focus is not social. This said, moving forward our learning has highlighted it is important with new developments to include a 'soft' focus on the social element as a benefit of participation and engagement-type groups.

Additionally, previously reported challenges remain:

- Reluctance to assume leadership roles, even in an informal capacity
- Limited reported demographic range

The Year Ahead

There is no doubt with an ageing population in Fife the participation and engagement of older people remain relevant and providing a platform for this is crucial to ensuring older people are heard to enable influence over the issues and policy areas that impact and matter to them. Action Groups are pivotal to this by providing a voice for older people locally and independently of decision-makers.

Moving forward our aim is to reinvigorate and re-purpose our Action Groups in a way which will support older people participation and engagement

Fife Forum, and by extension, the Support & Development Worker will aim to:

- Work with our remaining Forum to repurpose this as supported by the membership and connect them more closely to the parent body which includes providing direct informational portals for older people within their group setting
- Develop new groups in all 7 localities as either directly supported Fife Forum groups or in conjunction with existing providers who have direct contact with the demographic concerned
- Develop, adapt and implement monitoring and evaluation processes which record relevant data and feedback which support funding requirements and outcomes
- Work closely with our Participation & Engagement partners (Fife Health & Social Care Partnership) to ensure the demographic is more fully engaged in relevant processes within localities, Fife and where appropriate Scotland-wide

Key to success will be planning, collaboration, consultation and dedicated staffing which should support a fuller and more effective engagement process for older people in relation to the issues, matters and policy areas relevant to their overall health and well-being.

Kim Reid, Support & Development Worker (Fife Forum)

18/12/2025