

Campaign!

The NPC's monthly bulletin for activists in the pensioners' movement

Hardship faces future pensioners

New evidence from the Centre for Ageing Better has revealed that millions of people risk missing out on a good retirement due to increasing pressure on health and care services, and low incomes.

Their report, *The State of Ageing in 2019* warns that today's least well-off over 50s face greater challenges than wealthier peers and are likely to die younger, become sicker earlier and fall out of work due to ill health.

The evidence shows huge differences in how people experience ageing depending on factors such as where they live, their income, their sex or ethnicity.

For example, the poorest are three times more likely than the wealthiest to retire early because of ill health.

Although the population is ageing, a significant and increasing number of people are managing multiple health conditions and mobility problems from mid-life onwards, with

23% of those aged 50 to 64 having three or more long-term health problems.

The report also reveals that pensioner poverty is rising for the first time since 2010 and is more prevalent for women and black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

At least 1.3 m over 55s also live in homes that are hazardous to their health.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "The idea that we can simply keep raising the state

pension age flies in the face of all the evidence which shows how more and more people are struggling to work even up to 65, let alone 68 or beyond."

"The pensioners of tomorrow are going to be more reliant on the state pension and decent care services than earlier generations."

"That's why it is vital that we unite the generations in the campaign for better state pensions and a National Care Service that is free at the point of need."

Protest tells BBC: Hands off our TV licence

Hundreds of NPC members gathered in Westminster at the beginning of March to oppose the BBC's plans to cut the TV licence for the over 75s, and to demand that the government take back responsibility for funding the concession.

The protest took place as the BBC considers the results of its recent consultation on the future of the concessionary scheme.

Sources suggest that the broadcaster is un-



likely to make any formal announcement before the summer, although two options appear to be gathering support: raising the age

of eligibility to 80 and reducing the value of the concession.

Campaigners say there are 1.6 million over-75s with a disabil-

ity, many of whom have serious mobility issues and could lose their TV licence if the rules are changed.

In the meantime, pressure is mounting to stop any cut, with the NPC's campaign receiving support from MPs, trade unions and the Mirror newspaper.

A petition with Age UK which aims to safeguard the concession, currently has over 80,000 signatories and you can add your support via: <http://ageuk.org.uk/tvpetition>.

The NPC's street protest held outside the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport © Jim Winslet/ Age UK



National Pensioners Convention

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Campaign Dates

Pensioners' Parliament 2019
Tuesday-Thursday
11-13 June, Winter
Gardens, Black-
pool. Cost £10 or
£5 for one day.
Speakers include
Dave Ward (CWU),
Zita Holbourne
(PCS), Richard Wil-
kinson (author) and
Eddie Lynch (NI
Older People's
Commissioner)

**Yorkshire and
Humberside
Transport Conf**
Saturday 1 June,
11.30am-3.30pm,
Barnsley Civic, free
entry + lunch. Call
07967348880 for
details

**Early Day Motion
2046**
The NPC is asking
all supporters to
contact their MP to
ask them to sup-
port EDM 2046
proposed by Jeremy
Corbyn on the re-
tention of the TV
licence for the over
75s

Green paper without the £s

A draft green paper on the future of social care has been drafted and circulated to government departments, but apparently there is no chapter on funding and no date for publication, the NPC can reveal.

A meeting is also planned sometime in April between the Health Secretary and the Prime Minister, but if the PM is replaced as a result of Brexit it is likely to push back social care reform even further.

So far the document has been delayed six times.

Meanwhile, soaring numbers are being left without support to get out of bed, dress, wash or go to the lavatory, according to a number of hospital leaders.

Millions more rely on un-

paid care from relatives and friends.

The NPC believes these loved ones are acting like shock absorbers in a system that is clearly failing our most vulnerable citizens.

Women are being left to shoulder the bulk of unpaid care work for two generations of their family because of the government's failure to act.

A report released by Age UK shows that women make up 68% of the UK's 1.25 million "sandwich carers", those caring for an older relative and children because of a lack of acceptable social care.

Women also accounted for 84% - nearly 75,000 people - of those providing 35 hours of unpaid care work a week.

Fuel bills on the increase

Average annual household energy bills across all payment types increased last year by £65 (up 5.2% to £1,314) compared to 2017, according to the latest official figures.

Average electricity and gas bills were £49 and £16 higher respectively.

The figures come as more than one over-65s in five was forced to cut back on their energy use this winter just so they would be able to afford their bills.

Industry figures also show almost half (48%) of older people are worried about the cost of their energy, while one in eight (12%) don't think they can afford any increase.

One over-65 in 12 said their health suffered because they limit the amount of heating they use while one in 14

said they were considering downsizing their home to reduce their energy bills.

Last winter, the UK witnessed the death of 50,100 older people due to cold related illnesses - the highest figure on record for 40 years.

"Nobody should be forced to sacrifice their health in order to heat their home, and especially not some of the most vulnerable members of our society," said Dot Gibson, NPC deputy general secretary.

"It should be an absolute priority to ensure that they are able to afford their energy costs and appropriately heat their home."

The NPC continues to campaign for the household winter fuel allowance to be set at £500 to account for the year-on-year increases in fuel bills.

Funerals under scrutiny

Britain's competition watchdog is launching a full investigation into the UK funeral market after it found the cost of organising a funeral increased by 6% each year - twice the inflation rate - for the last 14 years.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said funerals typically cost several

thousand pounds and accused some funeral directors of taking

advantage by charging high prices at a time when its customers were vulnerable.

The average cost of a funeral in Britain is £4,271, which is 68% higher than a decade ago.

Cremations account for 75% of funerals and the average fee has gone up 84% over the period to £737.

The investigation will focus on funeral director and cremation services and should be completed within 18 months.

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