

Campaign!

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

Chancellor ignores concerns of pensioners and leaves millions to struggle on

On 5 December, the Chancellor gave his Autumn Statement, but said nothing about the freeze on the age related personal tax allowances, reversing the cut to the winter fuel allowance, restoring the Retail Price Index or how social care was to be funded in the future.

As predicted, the basic state pension will rise in April 2013 by 2.5% (because both earnings and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) are below that minimum level), whilst

the state second pension and public sector pensions will go up by the CPI figure of 2.2%.

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "Mr Osborne's refusal to address important issues facing our older population signals another twelve months of belt tightening amongst Britain's pensioners - at a time when the super-rich are getting a 5% reduction in their tax rate."

A detailed briefing on the Autumn Statement is available either from the NPC office or at www.npcuk.org.

Autumn Statement

- From April 2013, the Basic State Pension will rise by 2.5% giving an increase on a full pension of £2.70 a week up to £110.15 for a single pensioner and £4.30 up to £176.15 for a pensioner couple. Millions of older women will only get an increase of £1.60 a week, taking their pension to around £66
- The Pension Credit Guarantee next year for a single pensioner will rise from £142.70 per week to £145.50 and from £217.90 a week to £222.05 for a couple
- The Chancellor will not reverse his decision to freeze the personal tax allowance for the over 65s at £10,500 and £10,660 for the over 75s
- The winter fuel allowance remains frozen for the lifetime of the Parliament at £200 for the under 80s and £300 for the over 80s
- No decision on the future funding of social care

Think tank latest to attack pensioner benefits

The latest attack on universal pensioner benefits has come from the Free Enterprise Group think tank.

In its report entitled *A New Beveridge*, Conservative MP Chris Skidmore

calls for the removal of bus passes, the winter fuel allowance and other benefits from any pensioner with an income of £50,000 or more.

But the report goes even further,

arguing that because younger people have yet to make a contribution to society, they should only receive benefits in the form of loans which they then have to pay back."

The NPC has

calculated that the amount raised by cutting pensioner benefits would be largely outweighed by the cost of introducing a means-tested system.

A fairer way of redistributing wealth would be to

ask those with higher incomes to pay more tax.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Universal benefits will be a major issue at the next election and one we must defend."



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Campaign Dates

28 February 2013
Transport Conference

11am-3.30pm, St Pancras Church Hall, Euston. Guest speakers will cover the campaign for improved public transport and details of the new trial of the bus pass for discounts on First Great Western trains. Booking essential. Contact the NPC office for details.

NPC Pensioners' Parliament 2013
18-20 June, Winter Gardens, Blackpool. New TUC leader Frances O'Grady will address the opening rally and there will be sessions on various subjects including pensions and benefits, transport, care and services in devolved administrations. Tickets priced £6 (including entry into prize draw). Bookings and initial programme will be available from January 2013.

State of pensioner care remains poor

The Care Quality Commission has reported that one in five nursing homes, one in seven hospitals and one in 10 residential homes are failing to meet basic standards of care and older patients are not receiving the respect they deserved.

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt has also joined the debate by saying that NHS managers had become "blind" to the fact

that patients were not being treated with dignity, whilst one of his key health advisers, Prof David Oliver said the care in some homes was "probably worse than in prison".

Whilst the words of indignation might be sincere, the NPC believes there needs to be more urgent action on this issue.

Alongside the Convention's Dignity Code, public sector union Unison has also recently launched

an Ethical Care Charter which seeks to improve the terms, conditions and working practices of those in the care sector so that they can deliver better quality care.

Marion Wilson, NPC vice president said: "We cannot wait for another headline telling us how the quality of care that older people are receiving is below standard - we need the Dignity Code enshrined into legislation."

NPC calls winter deaths a 'scandal'

The NPC has hit out at the latest official figures from the Office for National Statistics which show that last winter an estimated 24,000 older people died of cold related illnesses.

The figures are taken from December 2011 to March 2012, and represent 200 fatalities a day due to cold temperatures.

Whilst the figures are around 1700 less than

the previous year, the government has failed to make any significant impact on tackling the scandal of winter deaths amongst Britain's older population.

During this period, the big six energy companies have all announced large increases in bills.

As a member of the Energy Bill Revolution alliance, the NPC is now calling on the government to make homes more energy effi-

cient and are calling on supporters to sign a petition at energybillrevolution.org.

Norman Jemison, NPC vice president said: "We need a 3 point plan that increases the winter fuel allowance to £500 for every pensioner household, expands the programme of energy efficiency measures across the country and prevents the big six energy companies from making excessive profits."

8 April - RPI day of action

The NPC alongside other pensioner groups such as the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance, the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners and the Public Service Pensioners' Council have agreed to use 8 April 2013 as a day to lobby MPs over the indexation of pensions.

The government's decision to switch from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) has meant that all basic and second state pensions, public sector occupational pen-

sions and many private sector pensions are now

getting a lower increase each year than would previously have been the case.

It is hoped that MPs will be inundated with campaign letters and emails on the day the pensions are due to rise - demanding a return to the RPI.

If you know of anyone who would like to receive this bulletin please send their email address to the NPC