

Campaign!

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

Dignity is everyone's business

Members of the NPC across the country staged a series of activities at the end of January to mark Dignity Action Day.

A key theme of this year's action was to call for the Convention's Dignity Code to be enshrined in legislation, as a way of ensuring those in care are treated properly.

Activities on the day ranged from stalls in hospitals and town centres, to open meetings and leafleting the public.

It also included a number of dignitaries signing up to the Code, as well as events organised by some local councils to award those staff who were already providing excellent care.

The continuing relevance of the campaign was highlighted by a special inquiry by Healthwatch England into the treatment of older people when facing discharge from hospital.

The findings show that older people are being discharged without adequate assessments or care plans, left alone and isolated whilst oth-

Getting the message across
(From top): Members in the West Midlands, Milton Keynes and Northern Ireland were just a few of the many groups that took part in Dignity Action Day.



ers are stuck in hospital waiting for assessments or for care arrangements to be put in place.

One participant in the inquiry from the Midlands and known only as Elsie is quoted as saying; "I was told I could go home without the assessment, but when I got home I couldn't get up the stairs, so I had to sleep downstairs for nearly six weeks."

Many older people feel abandoned by the system and left to cope on their own.

Being discharged without any support can therefore have a significant and detrimental impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "The social care system is in crisis and older people are bearing the brunt of the failures, but ministers seem incapable or unwilling to come up with a solution."

"That's why we need a new National Health and Care Service that can give all older people the dignity they deserve, whether in hospital, at home or in care."



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Campaign Dates

Biennial Delegate Conference
18-19 March: Every two years delegates from national and regional affiliates of the NPC gather to elect officers and decide policy. This year the event will take place in Stafford. A full report will be available after the event.

General Election
7 May: The NPC has produced a Pensioners' Manifesto which it is asking local groups to put to the main candidates in their areas and publicise their responses. Copies of the Pensioners' Manifesto can be ordered from the NPC office.

NPC Pensioners' Parliament 2015
16-18 June: Annual gathering in Blackpool with a range of guest speakers on various topics, plus entertainment and an exhibition area. Tickets priced £8.

Perils of cashing in your pension pot

People on means-tested benefits have been warned that withdrawing their pension pots under new rules coming in this April, could find they lose their entitlement to support with housing costs.

Financial experts are warning that anyone cashing in a pension pot worth more than £16,000 would lose out of housing benefit.

In the past, there have also

been warnings that unwary retirees will be heavily taxed for withdrawing big sums from their savings.

The key changes will mean that anyone aged over 55 will be able to take money out of their defined contribution/money purchase pension as many times as they wish, and pay tax on 75% of the amount taken.

The changes will also remove the need to buy an annuity to provide a regular income

in retirement.

However, critics are concerned that large numbers of workers will withdraw their pension pots long before reaching retirement as a way of funding ongoing debts or everyday expenses.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Those who regularly dip into their savings may find that by the time they come to retire, their pension pots will be empty."

Lack of technology leads to fuel poverty

The widespread use of the internet and other new technology in relation to energy suppliers is contributing to fuel poverty, according to new research by National Energy Action.

The tendency to put services and information largely online has led to large numbers of older people being digitally excluded.

This means they are more likely to face higher costs for energy ser-

vices and products which are not bought online, receive a lesser service or even be prevented from accessing some products entirely.

For example, without access to the internet it is almost impossible to compare energy charges.

The research also found that 57% of pensioners were worried about being able to afford their energy bills, while under-heating the home was a com-

mon practice by 77% of older people.

Marion Wilson, NPC vice president said: "There will always be a proportion of older people that are unable to use the internet and they should not be penalised as a result."

"Services to assist older people to get the best energy deal should be easily accessible and available face-to-face as well as in paper form."

A shock to the system

Older people are disproportionately at risk from electrical hazards, according to a new report from Electrical Safety Council.

The report claims that 1 million over 75s live in non-decent homes, and whilst the majority of older people live in owner occupied properties, these were found least likely to contain features which protect against electrical hazards.

Those in the private rented sector were also vulnera-

ble to exploitation from landlords because at the moment there is no requirement for electrical safety checks to be carried out at fixed intervals.

Fears of being overcharged can also restrict older people's ability to get essential electrical repairs carried out, and fuel poverty can result in the use of electric heaters which have a poor safety record. For more visit electricalsafefirst.org.uk.

You can now keep up to date with all the NPC's activities by following us on Twitter @NPCUK.