

Campaign!

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

Successful Pensioners' Parliament

Hundreds of campaigners from across the UK gathered in Blackpool during the middle of June for the annual NPC Pensioners' Parliament.

The opening rally featured Paul Nowak from the TUC and Green Party leader, Natalie Bennett alongside Dr Brenda Boardman talking about fuel poverty, Dave Honeybone, a striker from the recent Care UK dispute and Carla Cantone from the Italian pensioners in CGIL.

The theme, as with other years, was the need to unite the generations in the struggle for better state pensions, proper health care and an end to austerity.

Addressing the rally, NPC general secretary Dot Gibson said: "The current pension, health and social care and housing policies mean it is going to be even worse for this new era of pensioners than it has been for us."

"We have to do everything we can to encourage them to join the fight today and for the future of their children."



Throughout the three days, delegates also took part in sessions on pensions, social care, NHS privatisation, financial affairs, accessibility to public transport, dementia and digital exclusion.

The Parliament finished with a look at what the next five years could hold for society, with contributions from Prof Tina Beatty from Sheffield Hallam University and CWU general secretary,

Dave Ward.

The new pensions minister Altmann was also invited to speak at the event, but was unable to do so.

The NPC has since written requesting a meeting.

A full report of the Pensioners' Parliament will be available shortly on the NPC website or by post, costing £1.

Next year's event in Blackpool will run from 14-16 June 2016.

The NPC's annual Pensioners' Parliament is a unique event that plays a vital role in advising on the main concerns of older people
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Figures show 1.9m pensioners live in poverty

The proportion of pensioners in relative and absolute low income (after housing costs) both increased in 2013/14 by 1 percentage point to 14% and 16% respectively, according to the latest figures from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

These figures show 1.6 million

pensioners in relative low income, whilst there were 1.9 million under the absolute low income measure of 60% median population income.

However, the DWP described this increase as "not statistically significant".

Nevertheless, it shows that changes to pension uprating and

rising living costs are having an impact on older people.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Pensioners' incomes have been seriously hit by the switch from RPI to CPI and these figures show that poverty among older people is now rising, despite claims that we have escaped the austerity measures."



National Pensioners Convention

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Campaign Dates

For What It's Worth
This new NPC pamphlet explains how the new state pension system will work in 2016 and what needs to be done to make it fairer. Priced £1 plus p&p; it is essential reading, especially for those currently at work!

UN Older People's Day

1 October: The NPC will use this event across the country to highlight the need for a living state pension. A national leaflet will be produced and groups are advised to start making plans to mark the event with street stalls, public meetings or protests. More details to follow shortly.

NPC Pensioners' Parliament 2016
14-16 June: Winter Gardens, Blackpool. Tickets priced £10 for three days. Booking forms available from NPC.

Social care now at a crossroads of survival

Leaders of social care have issued an urgent plea for "sustained and substantial" additional funds to be made available for the care and protection of older and vulnerable people.

The call by the directors of adult social services pre-empted a £1.1bn budget cut expected in 2015/2016 and follows what they call "almost unendurable" cutbacks in the past four years.

Clearly there are mounting pressures on social care budgets and a sixth consecutive year of cuts will mean further reductions in services and fewer people receiving support.

The fact that councils will spend £1bn less this year on essential services at a time when more of us will need support, defies demography.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "Social care is now at a cross-

roads and is at risk of becoming a residual service, available only to those with the lowest incomes and highest needs, leaving thousands of people and their families struggling to meet the costs of care."

"The new Care Act will do little to solve the problem and the government now needs to acknowledge that without additional funding, the entire social care system will crumble."

Pension freedoms may fund tax cuts for the rich

Treasury figures have revealed that since April this year, 60,000 savers have cashed in their pension pots to the value of £1bn.

But more than half of those taking advantage of the new pension freedoms that allow the over 55s to access their defined contribution pension schemes, are still at work.

Three quarters of the amount withdrawn is tax-

able, and this is expected to net the Treasury around £1.2bn this year.

A number of financial commentators have now suggested that this money could be used to offer those earning over £150,000 a year a 5% cut in their tax rate to 40%.

At the same time, the Chancellor is expected to use his emergency Budget on 8 July to deliver £12bn worth of cuts to annual welfare

spending.

Given that Mr Osborne has already ruled out increases to income tax, national insurance or VAT fears are growing that cuts will affect the most vulnerable in society, including the disabled.

The NPC will produce a special Budget briefing covering all the main issues of concern to older people.

A copy will be available from the NPC website.

Austerity shown in Age Audit

The NPC has produced a new document entitled *Age Audit 2015* which draws on a range of official statistics to counter the claim that older people have escaped the last five years of austerity.

The data shows that changes to the indexation of pensions and freezes to personal tax allowances have reduced the purchasing power of their income in the last five years, whilst severe cuts to social care budgets have left almost a million pensioners coping at home without any formal support.

The report covers pensions and income, health, housing, fuel poverty/winter mortality, social isolation and the prospects for future generations, and gives a more balanced view of what it is like to grow older in the UK in the early 21st century.

You can download a copy of the *Age Audit 2015* from the NPC website.

Sign a friend up to receive copies of the Campaign! E-Bulletin - simply send an email to: info@npcuk.org