

Campaign!

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

OECD ranks state pension 32nd out of 34

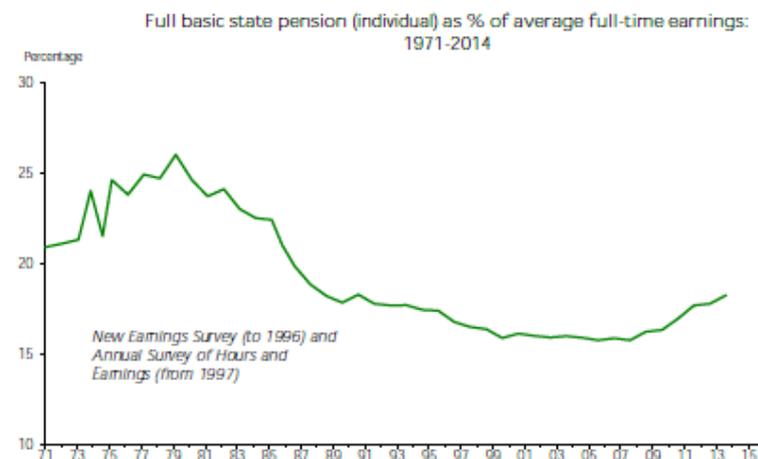
In its annual review of state pension provision amongst developed nations, the OECD has ranked the UK 32nd out of 34 countries, with only Mexico and Chile slightly worse off.

This means that the gap between state pensions and average wages in Britain is one of the largest in this group of nations.

At the high point of state pensions in 1979, the basic state pension was worth 26% of average earnings, whereas today the figure is just 18%.

Much of this decline was due to the decision in 1980 to remove the link between earnings and the state pension, and interestingly some of the same arguments from 35 years ago are now being used to suggest that the 'triple lock' guarantee of 2.5% is too expensive.

Campaigners fear that the decline in purchasing power of the state pension first seen in the 1980s could be repeated under the indexation arrangements planned for the new state pen-



The UK state pension is one of the least adequate in the developed world, largely due to the breaking of the link with earnings in 1980 © NPC

sion which is being introduced in April 2016.

Under government plans the 'triple lock' will be applied to the existing basic state pension of £119 a week, as well as to the new state pension of £155 a week.

Over time, the gap between these two will widen and current pensioners will see their relative incomes decline compared to that of newer pensioners.

However, even with this arrangement, those retiring after April this year will be worse off.

Figures from the DWP reveal that by 2060, 55% of pensioners will lose out as a result of the new scheme.

The NPC will be campaigning throughout 2016 to ensure that all existing and future pensioners get a Living State Pension which offers everyone real dignity and security in retirement.

Social care system no longer fit for purpose

In November's Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced that local councils would be able to raise an additional 2% in council tax in order to pay for social care.

But detailed analysis of the measures conducted by the ILC-UK Centre reveals a bleak future for older people needing care with approximately 1.86m peo-

ple over the age of 50 in England (1 in 10) with unmet care needs – an increase of 120,000 people (or 7%) since 2008/9.

Data from 326 local authorities also shows that the councils with the highest concentration of older people and unpaid carers will be the ones that will bring in the least amount of money from the 2% council tax precept.

Even if the plan did raise an extra £3.5bn into adult social care, it would still only mean that spending on care was returned to 2015 levels by the end of 2020.

The NPC believes the current social care model has collapsed and is calling for it to become part of the NHS and funded through general taxation.



National Pensioners Convention

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Campaign Dates

For What It's Worth
Second and revised edition of this best selling NPC pamphlet is now available. It 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 for anyone interested in pensions.

Dignity Action Day
1 February 2016:
Plans are being made for a number of protests across the country using the slogan "Better Care Now". A full briefing is available on request.

NPC Pensioners' Parliament 2016
14-16 June: Booking is now open for next year's 3 day event in Blackpool. Tickets priced £10. Contact the NPC office for a registration form. More details to follow.

Ministers to devolve Attendance Allowance

Ministers plan to give local councils responsibility for paying Attendance Allowance (AA), in one of the biggest shifts of resources within the welfare state for 25 years.

At present, AA is paid to 1.5 million people aged 65 or over in the UK, regardless of their personal means.

It is seen as a vital support for hundreds of thousands who live independently, but might otherwise need to go into residential care.

Compared with the 1.5 million people who receive AA, barely 300,000 in England now receive homecare funded fully or partly by councils.

The Chancellor is said to favour this move because it chimes with his devolution agenda of giving more and more responsibility to local councils.

The change would also mean that councils would receive a major cash injection into their funds at a time

when social care budgets are under immense pressure.

However, campaigners are worried that the money may not be ring-fenced and those who currently get AA may find they are rationed out of the system.

This concern is supported by studies showing that just one in seven AA recipients also gets funding for homecare.

A consultation on the plan is expected shortly, and the NPC will respond.

Two million pensioners live in poor housing

Two million older people live in homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes Standard, according to a new report from the Building Research Establishment (BRE).

The BRE also found that of those 2m, 1.3m were living in a home with a serious hazard, resulting in high costs to the NHS, particularly due to cold related health problems and

falls. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists estimates the cost of falls alone to the NHS at £275m a year, whilst the BRE estimates that for older households the cost of poor housing to the NHS (just for first year treatment costs) is £624m.

The report also highlights the lack of properties amongst the existing stock which meets the needs

of an ageing population, with just 4% of homes having basic accessibility features such as level access, ground floor toilet and wide doors (for wheelchairs/walking frames).

Whilst many older people want to downsize their properties, they find there are simply not enough suitable homes available.

The NPC plans to publish a pamphlet on housing later in 2016.

Fined for taking a tumble

Tending District Council has put forward controversial proposals to change its Careline service so that pensioners will be charged around £26 to be picked up if they have a fall at home.

Around 3000 elderly and vulnerable residents would be affected by the plan.

Those using the service currently pay £21.60 a month, for which they receive a wearable pendant that enables them to send a distress signal to a call centre should they experience a fall or minor emergency.

Under the planned changes, the council will introduce an additional £25.92 annual charge for a euphemistically entitled 'lifting service'.

Local pensioner groups have condemned the plan as "immoral" and "dangerous" with older people potentially being left unassisted if they forget or fail to pay the extra charge.

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