

Campaign!

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

Experts warn social care cuts can kill

A leading public health expert has warned that cuts to social care budgets could be to blame for the biggest jump in the number of deaths a year for a whole generation.

Prof Harrison, director of public health in Blackburn and Darwen and adviser to Public Health England (PHE), has analysed official figures which suggest there have been 5.6% more deaths in England and Wales in 2015 than in the previous year - the biggest increase in the national death rate since the 1960s.

A separate report from PHE also reveals that a large number of local authorities showed a fall in life expectancy at age 85 in 2014.

Prof Harrison said: "Something is making the population more vulnerable to death and it is unlikely to be fully explained by winter infections or a rise in the elderly population."



His view was also shared by the health think-tank, the King's Fund.

Reductions in local council social care budgets in England have particularly affected preventative care services that would normally provide daily con-

tact for many older people.

"Cuts to meals on wheels services could mean more pensioners go through entire days without seeing anyone else, and if they are ill this would mean they deteriorate without anyone noticing," he added.

Social care budgets have been cut by £4.6bn since 2010 and over 1 million older people no longer qualify for any help at home

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New state pension brings more bad news

When the new state pension comes into force on 6 April 2016 it will have a major impact on existing pensioners, the NPC has warned.

In three key areas, the Convention believes that today's retirees will be unfairly treated.

Two individuals with the same set of circumstances - but for being born two months apart - will receive different levels of state pension, the different in-

dexation arrangements mean that all of the new state pension will go up in line with the triple lock, whilst that will only apply to the basic part of the existing pension and those dependent on their spouse's pension will no longer be able to make a claim and may be forced onto means-tested benefits.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "It is now clear that, despite what was claimed by gov-

ernment the new state pension is bad for both existing and future pensioners."

"We will campaign to put that right."

The NPC also intends to raise these issues with the pensions' minister, Ros Altmann who after nine months has finally agreed to a meeting.

Meetings are also to be held with spokespeople from Labour and the SNP.



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Campaign Dates

Intergenerational Fairness

The NPC has made a detailed submission to the House of Commons inquiry into "intergenerational fairness". Copies of this important document can be downloaded from the NPC website or requested from the NPC office.

Frozen Pensions

A new pamphlet from the ICBP and the NPC explaining the case for ending the scandal of frozen pensions for UK pensioners living in 150 countries is now available from the NPC office £1 plus p&p.

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.

NPC calls for cut to tax relief to fund care

Ahead of the Budget on 16 March, the NPC is calling on the Chancellor to reform tax relief on private pensions, to fund improvements in the social care system.

Pension tax relief is currently paid at two rates – 20% and 40% – with the higher rate going to those who pay higher rate tax.

Figures show that 70% of the £34bn payment goes to the better off.

The NPC argues

that a flat rate of 20% tax relief for everyone would raise an estimated £12.5bn a year - money that could then be earmarked for a reformed and improved social care system, through the creation of a National Health and Care Service.

The money raised by reforming pension tax relief would spread the costs of ill health in later life among the population as a whole, rather than leaving it to the individual and

their family.

Even those currently enjoying 40% tax relief would effectively be compensated in the knowledge that any social care they might need in the future would be provided free.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Without additional funds, the social care system will collapse and hundreds of thousands of older people and their families will be left to struggle without any support."

Malnutrition affects a million pensioners

More than one million older people could be at risk from malnutrition and starvation, experts have warned.

The Malnutrition Task Force claims that 1.3m pensioners are failing to eat food containing the right amount of nutrients.

Malnutrition is associated with long-term conditions such as cancer, dementia and swallowing prob-

lems as well as physical disability and social factors which can affect people in later life, such as bereavement and loneliness.

Every year, malnutrition among Britain's pensioners costs the NHS a staggering £13bn.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "Preventative help, like ensuring people can eat properly or helping someone with their shopping is a

basic requirement of any social care system – but ours is under such financial pressure that some older people are simply being left to starve."

"Over the last five years, meals on wheels services have been reduced from 300,000 to just 109,000 and some local authorities think the answer is to give older people a list of takeaways," she said.

Rural bus services in danger

Many rural bus services are being wiped out by council budget cuts, campaigners have warned.

Research by the Campaign for Better Transport says subsidies to rural routes have been reduced by £78m since 2010, with another £27m under threat this year.

The research shows that those living in Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Somerset, Dorset, West Berkshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, North Yorkshire and Lancashire will be among the worst affected.

Peter Rayner, NPC president said: "The government may

have pledged to keep the bus pass, but the cuts to funding are now removing the buses from our streets."

"In many rural areas, bus travel is vital to protect older people from social isolation."

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