

Campaign!

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

Pensioners' Parliament stands up for all ages

Over 550 delegates gathered in Blackpool in June for the annual Pensioners' Parliament.

This represented a steady increase on last year's attendance, and around one third of delegates were attending for the first time.

The event started with the traditional march, led by a jazz band before reaching the Winter Gardens for the opening rally.

Sessions included speakers on pensions, intergenerational fairness, social care, the future of the NHS, tack-



ling loneliness, making public transport more accessible and funeral poverty.

Many delegates also took to the dance floor for the social, and made

new friendships throughout the week.

A survey of those attending showed that 78% said they would definitely attend next year and 84% said the

event was well organised and very interesting.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "The Pensioners' Parliament is beginning to grow again, and now has a positive future ahead."

"It's the only event like it - and one that has put forward a very clear message of solidarity between the generations."

A detailed report of this year's Parliament is available from the NPC on request.

The 2019 event will take place from 11-13 June 2019.

Hundreds of pensioners took part in this year's march from the Blackpool Tower to the Winter Gardens, which signals the start of the annual Pensioners' Parliament
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Over 75s' free TV licence now under attack

The latest attack on the universal benefits available to older people has come from the Intergenerational Foundation (IF).

The think tank has called for the free TV licence for the over 75s to be means-tested and only available to those on Pension Credit.

The IF claims it is unfair that younger people are funding older viewers.

But like much in the phoney generational war, the claims very rarely tell the truth.

The latest audience figures

show that BBC viewing by the 16-34 age group has dropped by over 50% in the last eight years, with many no longer using their TV at all to access programmes.

As such, they are not required to even have a TV licence - so it's difficult for them to subsidise others if they don't pay themselves.

More worrying is that the NPC warned of a backlash when the government originally transferred responsibility for the free TV licences from the Department of Work and Pensions to the BBC.

At the time, the Convention said it was part of the Treasury's wider programme of cuts, but the blame would end up being targeted at the BBC.

In order to save money, the broadcaster would then inevitably have to look at ways of cutting the benefit said to cost £200m a year.

Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said: "The alarming increase in loneliness among older people will not be tackled by means-testing the free TV licence - and neither will it save that much money."



National Pensioners Convention

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Campaign Dates

Marking 10 years of the bus pass
Thursday 6 Sept, 12 noon, St Sampson's Square, York. Guest speakers include Jan Shortt NPC gen sec and Tosh McDonald ASLEF president

Women's Health Seminar

Saturday 8 September, Liverpool. Cost £7.50, open to both working and retired women. To book a place contact the NPC office

Jack Jones' Lecture
Tuesday 11 Sept, Friends Meeting House, Manchester 6.30pm. Speaker: Rebecca Long-Bailey MP

UN Older People's Day

Monday 1 Oct, NPC regions around the country will be staging activities and events. Please contact the NPC office

Solving the care crisis?

As the crisis in social care gathers more publicity, it is interesting that many commentators tend to ignore how people are already funding the care they receive.

For example, Baroness Ros Altmann has suggested that in the future people build up savings in a Care ISA really isn't any different from people using their savings now.

Altmann has said that low and modest paid workers in auto-enrolled pensions could add further contributions to pay for their care in later life, but to fund two years' worth of care, individuals would need a pot of around £100,000.

This would require them to make contributions in excess of 20% of their salary.

Most would acknowledge that this is totally unrealistic.

Many of the current suggestions also accept that

individuals should pay a certain amount of their care costs and when they reach an agreed limit, then the state steps in.

The arguments put forward are therefore about how to get more money into the social care system to keep it going at its present level, rather than to actually improve it, widen access or raise standards.

And all of these options still leave the main responsibility for care funding with the individual rather than society as a whole.

The NPC's position is that social care should be free at the point of delivery, publicly run and funded through some form of general taxation, such as income tax or National Insurance.

The Green Paper on social care funding's now expected towards the end of the year.

Housing on the agenda

The housing market in Britain is broken and there is an urgent need for a large house building programme of good quality, suitable and affordable accommodation for all the generations.

This is the view taken in the NPC's new housing document, due to be finalised over the next six months.

Over the last few years, older people have often been portrayed as having unfairly amassed huge housing wealth and deliberately holding onto under-occupied properties to the detriment of younger generations that are struggling to buy their first home.

In reality though, it is not older people, but central government who have failed to

deliver for those just starting out.

Key recommendations in the draft *Housing Policy and Older People* document include the call for a minimum of at least 85,000 properties to be built every year for older people in order to meet the current demand and the projected population rise, for house building, maintenance and adaptations to be based on the Lifetime Homes Standard and for local authorities to build and repair houses using their own Direct Labour Organisations or other suitable not for profit-based building companies.

Peter Rayner, NPC vice president said: "The housing crisis affects all ages, and this new policy will help put it on the political agenda."

Charged for falling over

Tendingring District Council has proposed a £25.92 additional annual charge to around 2,500 Essex residents who use its Careline service, to cover the cost of lifting someone if they have had a fall.

The so called "lifting service" will mean Careline staff go to the home of the elderly person after they have called the alarm, and help get them back on their feet.

The NPC's local affiliated group in the area, has said the proposal "penalises older people for falling".

It also raises the question as to whether someone would be left on the floor if they hadn't paid the additional "lifting charge".

Dot Gibson, NPC deputy general secretary said: "This charge was originally introduced in 2015, and since then the cost to users has steadily gone up, but frankly the whole idea is immoral."

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