

# Campaign!

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

## Government must fund over 75 TV licence

**H**undreds of NPC members and supporters are expected to gather in Westminster this week to oppose the BBC's plans to cut the TV licence for the over 75s, and to demand that the government take back responsibility for funding the concession.

The protest takes place as the BBC considers the results of its recent consultation on the future of the concessionary scheme.

Pressure is mounting to stop any cut, with the NPC's campaign receiving support from MPs, trade unions and the Mirror newspaper.

Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said: "We need to send a clear message to the government that it should be their responsibility to

pay for the TV licence for the over 75s, not the BBC's."

"This is really a cut to pensioner benefits by the government, but the BBC is going to take the blame for it."

"Millions rely on the TV as their main source of companionship and scrapping the TV licence for older people will send the wrong message – and once it's gone, it will be harder to get it back," added Ms Shortt.

Alongside Age UK and a number of other charities and pensioner groups, the NPC is also backing a petition which aims to safeguard the concession.

It currently has almost 80,000 signatories and you can add your support via: <http://ageuk.org.uk/tvpetition>



### SAVE THE OVER 75 s' TV LICENCE DEMO

**Thursday 7 March 2019, 12 noon**  
**Dept for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport**  
**100 Parliament Street , London**  
 Nearest tube: Westminster  
**Followed at 1pm by a meeting in**  
**Committee Room 10**  
**House of Commons**

Speakers inc: Sharon Hodgson MP,  
 Jan Shortt NPC, Caroline Abrahams Age UK  
 and Paul Routledge

*The attack on the over 75s' TV licence must be resisted or it is likely that the government will seek to attack other universal benefits, such as the winter fuel allowance next*

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## MPs vote for inflation busting 2.7% pay rise

**M**Ps have agreed a 2.7% pay rise from April, taking their salary to £79,468 a year.

Interestingly, parliamentary staff are only to receive a 1.5% increase.

A number of unions criticised the decision

as hypocritical, pointing out that there was still a public sector pay cap of 1% in place for millions of workers.

It also contrasts with the 2.6% increase in the pre-April 2016 basic state pension which will rise by just £3.25 a week to £129.20 for a

single person and by £5.20 a week to £206.65 for a couple (where a wife relies on her husband's contribution record).

For millions of women this actually means an increase of just £1.95 a week on their state pension.

The state second pension, SERPS or graduated pension will also rise in April by the Consumer Price Index figure of 2.4%.

Despite the increase, the UK state pension remains the least adequate among the 37 OECD countries.



## National Pensioners Convention

Marchmont  
Community Centre,  
62 Marchmont St,  
Bloomsbury,  
London WC1N 1AB  
T: 020-7837-6622  
E: info@npcuk.org  
W: npcuk.org  
Facebook: NPCUK  
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## Campaign Dates

**Save the over 75s' TV licence demo**  
Thursday 7 March,  
12 noon, Dept Digital, Culture, Media and Sport 100 Parliament Street, near Westminster tube station. Bring banners

**Biennial Delegate Conference 2019**  
NPC regions and national pensioner groups gather in March to debate policy and elect officers. A report of the event will be issued shortly.

**Pensioners' Parliament 2019**  
Tuesday-Thursday 11-13 June, Winter Gardens, Blackpool. Cost £10 or £5 for one day. Speakers include Dave Ward (CWU), Zita Holbourne (PCS), Richard Wilkinson (author) and Eddie Lynch (NI Older People's Commissioner)

## Bus pass needs more funding

**C**ouncil leaders are warning that, unless the government addresses the need for more funding for the concessionary bus pass, vulnerable residents could be left isolated and unsupported, particularly those in rural areas.

Communities could also see increased congestion and poorer air quality.

The Local Government Association (LGA) claims that reductions in government funding means the money available to councils to pay for concessionary fares, was underfunded by an estimated £652 million in 2017/18.

The National Concessionary Travel Scheme is a statutory duty administered by councils, which are having to increasingly fill the gap between the cost and govern-

ment funding for the scheme with their own limited resources.

As a result, local authorities are having to make decisions to reduce non-statutory services in order to fund the national scheme.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Properly funding the national free bus pass scheme is essential if the government wants councils to be able to maintain our essential bus services, reduce congestion and protect vital routes."

"If this is not addressed it could lead to older people having a free bus pass but no bus to travel on."

The NPC annual transport conference will take place on 18 September, in Euston, tickets priced £10.

More details to follow.

## End frozen UK pensions

**F**ive members of the NPC presented a petition to Number 10 Downing Street at the end of February, in support of half a million UK pensioners living abroad who are suffering under the government's frozen pension policy.

At the moment, UK state pensioners who retire to any one of around 150 countries, find their state pension is frozen at the level it was when they left the country.

The majority of those affected live in Commonwealth countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.

The five activists joined the Campaign to End Frozen Pensions to hand in a letter signed by 28 MPs, which was calling for an end to the 'grossly unfair and unjust' policy.



**Campaigners outside Number 10**

To join the campaign or write to your MP to call on them to support ending this cruel policy go to [www.endfrozenpensions.org](http://www.endfrozenpensions.org)

## Care on brink of collapse

**T**he government has been warned by health leaders that social care is "on the brink of collapse" with more than 1m older people denied help with basic tasks.

Soaring numbers are being left without support to get out of bed, dress, wash or go to the lavatory, according to a number of hospital leaders.

Millions more rely on unpaid care from relatives and friends.

The NPC believes these loved ones are acting like shock absorbers in a system that is clearly failing our most vulnerable citizens.

Senior health figures last night said the "perilous state of social care services" had now become "a national disgrace".

Despite the urgency of the issue, the NPC believes the green paper on social care is now likely to be delayed for a seventh time until after the May local council elections.

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