

Campaign!

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

Pensioner winter deaths reach 43,900

The NPC has called on the government to launch a new fuel poverty commission to urgently address the scale of annual winter deaths among the country's older population.

The call follows the publication of shocking official figures showing there were an estimated 43,900 excess winter deaths in England and Wales in last winter.

The figure is the highest number since 1999, with 27% more people dying in the winter months compared with the non-winter months.

This is up by 25,700 on the previous year and represents a 140% increase.

The majority of deaths occurred among people aged 75 and over; and in total the figures represent 365 deaths a day or 15 deaths an hour.

The NPC highlighted the scale of winter deaths by staging a black balloon release in various parts of the country.



Balloons were released by the NPC in Barnsley, Birmingham, Colchester, Exeter, Milton Keynes, Southampton and Westminster - with all of the events gaining both local and national publicity.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Officials have tried to say that the large increase in winter deaths is due to an ineffective flu vaccine, but even if that were true it only accounts for a third of the increase in these figures."

"The truth is many older people are living in poor housing, unable to keep warm and frightened about paying their energy bills."

"We can't go on every year replaying the same tragic scene; the government should set up a special commission to urgently oversee a programme of insulating homes, building more suitable properties for older people, raising the winter fuel allowance and tackling the excessive profits of the big six energy companies."

NPC campaigners in Exeter featured on BBC News releasing black balloons on the day the winter death figures were published
© BBC

Chancellor offers "sticking plaster" on care

In last month'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.

Since 2010, the sector has suffered £4.6bn worth of cuts since 2010 - and campaigners argue this new plan will be nowhere near enough to address

the crisis.

Already over one million older people no longer get the help they need at home, staff turnover is high, the quality of care is sometimes questionable and there is a distinct lack of dignity.

Some councils in poorer areas will struggle to raise sufficient funds and a wider postcode lottery in care will emerge.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "Anyone associated with the care system will tell you that it simply cannot survive without major reform and all the chancellor has done today it put a sticking plaster over the problem."

The NPC full briefing on the statement is available at <http://npcuk.org/2097>.



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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.

Campaign to defend meals on wheels

Over a third of top-tier councils in the UK have scrapped their meals on wheels service, according to the National Association of Care Catering (NACC).

The NACC argues that many have been able to do this because meals on wheels is not a statutory service that councils are legally obliged to provide.

In some cases this has meant local authorities have simply replaced a daily ser-

vice with a list of local takeaways.

Neel Radia, NACC's chair told the recent NPC lobby of Parliament that meals on wheels was "more than just a meal".

It represented a preventative service, helping to keep people healthy and independent in the community.

Already more than 1million older people are malnourished in the UK and the cost of this to the UK economy is estimated to be

around £13bn a year.

Mr Radia said: "Keeping someone in hospital because of malnutrition costs £300 a day - compared with just £3.55 for the cost of a decent meal."

"Closing the meals on wheels service is short-sighted, expensive and in the long run is likely to have disastrous consequences."

Sign the NACC petition at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/111854>.

Campaign to improve training in social care

Improving training in the social care sector is key to improving quality, according to the Residents and Relatives Association (RRA).

Many private care companies are reluctant to provide proper training because of the cost and the high turnover of staff.

But the charity believes that if a training levy were placed on providers, staff could be trained centrally

and funded by everyone in the sector.

Training is not currently mandatory and poor care is one of the reasons why 40% of care homes regularly fail inspections.

The sector is likely to resist such a move though because it argues half of Britain's care homes could go bust because of the shortfall between the cost of care and the amount local authorities pay for

the service.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "We have to recognise that getting care on the cheap does not help either the staff or the residents."

"We need to professionalise the care sector, with proper training and rates of pay so that our loved ones see the quality of their care improve."

The RRA can be found at www.relres.org.

BBC and the over 75s

The NPC has made representations to government, opposition and the BBC over the decision to pass responsibility for the over 75s' TV licence to the broadcaster in 2020.

The Convention is concerned that part of the state's wider welfare policy is being passed to an unelected body, at a time when the BBC is facing huge cuts to its funding.

Critics believe it is therefore likely that over time, the BBC will seek to dilute the concession as a way of saving money, either by raising the age limit or means-testing.

At the same time, the NPC has been campaigning to defend the

BBC alongside many of the entertainment unions.

Support the campaign by signing the petition at <https://campaign.goingtowork.org.uk/petitions/love-it-or-lose-it-save-the-bbc>.

Sign a friend up to receive copies of the Campaign! E-Bulletin - simply send an email to: info@npcuk.org or follow us on Facebook and Twitter