

Campaign!

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

BBC to ask over 75s to give up free licence

The BBC is reported to be considering how it can cut back on the free TV licences for the over 75s, two years before it takes over responsibility for providing the concession.

In December, the broadcaster hired Frontier Economics, the company chaired by former cabinet secretary Lord O'Donnell, to look at a range of options including how to "reform" the free deal.

Options could include raising the age threshold for receiving a licence fee for free, or taking away the right to those over-75s who live with younger people.

The BBC has also considered using well known celebrity pensioners to encourage older viewers to give up their free licence, worth £145.50 for the good of the corporation.

Some of those backing the move include Dame Joan Bakewell and Melvyn Bragg.

Appearing in the media, NPC



The BBC does not want to take over responsibility for providing free TV licences, but has been forced to do so by the government
© BBC

general secretary Dot Gibson said: "The minute the chancellor announced passing responsibility for the free TV licence over to the BBC, we knew its future would be in danger."

"The BBC is under tremendous financial pressure and will look to make savings wherever it can, but it really isn't the job of a broadcaster to start administering the government's wider welfare policy."

The report of the BBC's intentions has again raised calls to

end other universal benefits such as the winter fuel allowance and the free bus pass and instead introduce a means-test.

Campaigners point out that one of the main reasons for such benefits remains the level of the UK state pension, ranked as 32 out of 34 OECD countries.

"The government must reverse this decision, otherwise the chancellor will have managed to privatise government cuts at the expense of Britain's older generation," added Ms Gibson.

MPs launch inquiry into 'generational fairness'

The Work and Pensions Select Committee is to investigate so called "intergenerational fairness" and assess whether existing pensioners have enjoyed and accumulated much more housing and financial wealth, public service usage and welfare and pension entitlements than more recent generations can hope to receive.

The inquiry is targeted at reforming both the winter fuel al-

lowance and the state pension 'triple lock', as well as considering whether the entire welfare system is sustainable.

Before the investigation has even begun, the committee seems to have accepted the view that older people have been protected from austerity whilst the rest of society has had to pay.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Older people are being

blamed for the fact that their homes have risen in value over the last 30 years, rather than there being any recognition that many are still struggling with the rising costs of living."

"Pensioners give back to society over £40bn every year in taxes, volunteering and unpaid caring and that needs to be recognised as well."

The NPC will be making a detailed submission to the inquiry.



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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.

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. Copies priced £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.

Pension minister tries to defend new pension

Illusive pension minister, Ros Altmann has made a rare public appearance before the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

During the hearing, she claimed that the complicated new state pension system was "much simpler" than the current one, and would be "more generous in the early years".

Yet, given there is no new money going into the scheme, any short-term winners must be offset by those who will

ultimately lose.

When asked repeatedly who those losers would be, Ms Altmann managed to avoid giving a straight answer.

But the DWP's own figures show that by 2060, 55% of pensioners will have lost out as a result of the new scheme.

The highlight of her performance was her re-branding of the phrase "flat-rate", when she explained that rather than everyone getting the same amount in retire-

ment - the term actually related to the figure (£4.44) that each individual would build up towards their pension for every year they paid National Insurance.

Despite repeated requests, the minister says she is unable to meet the NPC, and has said she is too busy to attend this year's Pensioners' Parliament.

In contrast, a meeting with Labour's new shadow pension minister, Angela Rayner has been arranged.

15 minute visits still plague care system

New research from health union UNISON has found three-quarters of councils are still using 15-minute care visits, despite official guidance recommending staff should spend at least 30 minutes with residents.

As a result, the union argues care is being compromised and staff find they do not have enough time to provide digni-

fied treatment.

One carer said: "I had to visit a lady who is 102 for a shower, help her get dressed, make food, tidy her kitchen, give her medication and put her bins out all in 20 minutes."

The findings come at the same time as Dignity Action Day (February 1), at which NPC groups across the country will be leafleting the public and health profession-

als with a call for better care services.

Key to improving the social care system is the need to raise standards by improving the pay and training of care workers, whilst sharing the cost through a new tax-funded National Health and Care Service, which widens access to services and ends the need for means-testing.

A new NPC pamphlet on care is planned for 2016.

Energy watchdog or lapdog?

Energy secretary, Amber Rudd has been accused of letting down vulnerable households after the former boss of npower, Paul Mas-sara and the chief energy industry lobbyist Lawrence Slade were appointed to sit on her new fuel poverty watchdog.

The committee on fuel poverty was convened to advise the government on how to reduce the number of households struggling with their energy bills.

It comes at a time of anxiety about rising winter deaths, with an estimated 13,000 out of the 43,900

cases last year being directly attributed to cold homes.

The NPC is calling for an urgent fuel poverty inquiry, and more suitable homes built specifically for older people, extra money for insulation and winter fuel payments, and tighter regulation of the big six energy companies.

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