

Campaign!

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

Review of pension age exposes inequality

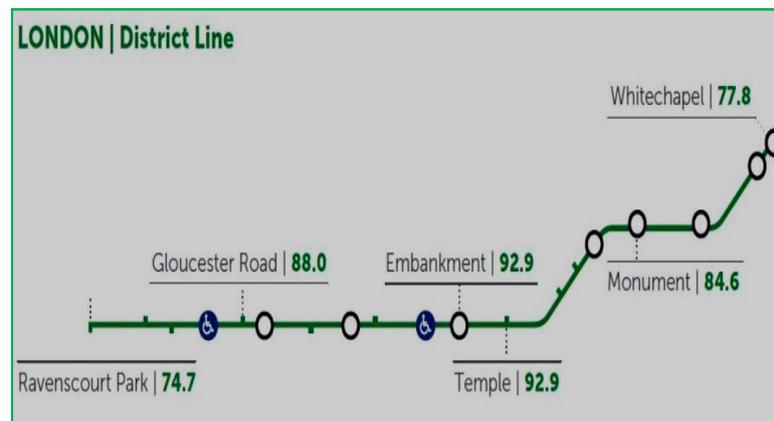
The first report into the future of the state pension age (SPA) has revealed a huge difference in life expectancy, the NPC has claimed.

In particular, the review carried out by John Cridland has shown gross health inequality based on income, with only half of all years spent in retirement being classed as free from illness.

It also shows how the UK already has one of the highest SPAs in the developed world, which is set to be 68 by 2044-46.

This is matched by just Ireland and the Czech Republic

Cridland also outlines how certain disadvantaged groups such as carers, those with a disability, the self-employed, ethnic minorities and women all benefit from the triple lock indexation on the state pension, and how all generations from those born in the 1950s to those born in the 1990s will continue to rely on



A diagram showing a maximum difference of 18 years' life expectancy for men between two parts of London, just miles apart on the District tube line©

Cridland Review

the state pension for the bulk of their income in retirement.

Despite some media reports, Cridland's review does not actually make any recommendations, but merely poses a number of questions as part of a further consultation that ends on 31 December.

It is essential though that those who recognise the dangers in scrapping the triple lock on pensions or raising the SPA to 70 take part in this consultation

and make use of the evidence in Cridland's report to show how unequal longevity is across the country.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary says: "The inequality that exists in society is between richer and poorer pensioners, not between young and old."

"For the first time, Cridland has explained why simply raising the SPA for everyone will have the biggest effect on those who can least afford it."

Campaigners set to lobby MPs on 2.11.16

Pensioners will gather on Wednesday 2 November, ahead of both the publication of the winter death figures and the Autumn Statement, for the annual NPC Lobby of Parliament.

Campaigners will meet at 11.30am in Old Palace yard, opposite the House of Commons for a photo opportunity before going into Committee Room 14

in the House of Commons for a rally.

Speakers will include Ian Blackford MP (SNP), Heather Wakefield (UNISON), Dave Ward (CWU) and shadow chancellor, John McDonnell MP.

The new pension minister, Richard Harrington has also been invited, but has said he is unable to attend.

Key issues to raise with MPs

will include the unfairness surrounding the state pension, its inadequate level and the need to keep the triple lock, the dire state of social care and the urgent need for extra funding, attacks on Attendance Allowance and universal benefits such as the winter fuel allowance, Britain's poor housing stock and the regular, unsubstantiated criticism of the older generation.



National Pensioners Convention

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Campaign Dates

NPC Lobby
2 November: Demo
11.30am Old Palace Yard, Rally 1-3pm Committee Room 14, House of Commons. Speakers include: Ian Blackford MP (SNP), Heather Wakefield (UNISON), Dave Ward (CWU) and John McDonnell MP (Shadow Chancellor). Pension Minister Richard Harrington has been invited, but is unable to attend.

Winter Death Demo
The official statistics showing the number of older people who died of cold related illnesses last winter is expected on 23 November - the same day as the Autumn Statement. A black balloon release to mark the announcement will take place in a number of areas around the country. More details to follow.

New pensions' minister says "door is open"

Richard Harrington, the new pensions' minister has told the NPC he believes it is part of his job to meet with pensioners' groups to hear what they have to say.

The Watford MP's approach is a complete contrast to that of his predecessor, Ros Altmann who spent nine months trying to avoid the Convention.

In the meeting, Mr Harrington said he felt the different indexation arrangements between the old and new state pensions were "irrational", but felt the triple lock as used currently was likely to stay beyond 2020.

He also said he felt that universal pensioner benefits

such as the winter fuel allowance would continue, but could be subject to tax for the better off, and stated that he did not think it was helpful for pensioners to be blamed for the problems now faced by younger generations.

The minister also confirmed that frozen pensions would be part of the Brexit negotiations and that more work could be done on seeing if existing pensioners could be included in the new state pension system, if it were financially beneficial to do so.

Both sides agreed to continue to meet over the coming months and discuss the issues further.

Train operators could be breaking Equality Act

The NPC has warned that driver only trains that stop at unstaffed stations will be committing an offence under the Equality Act 2010, following the findings of a "mystery traveller" experiment carried out in August this year.

As part of the experiment backed by the NPC, three Persons of Restricted Mobility (PRM) on one day took a series of train journeys on Southern Rail from East Croydon to Chichester and back again via a different route to test the practicalities of travel.

The "mystery travellers" included a wheelchair user, a blind passenger and a pensioner.

Their findings revealed a

number of problems when staff were not available to assist.

Peter Rayner, NPC vice president said: "Our concern is that if a driver only train runs to an unstaffed station with a passenger who is unable to exit the train unassisted, an offence will be committed under the Equality Act 2010 by putting that person at a substantial disadvantage."

"This needs to be understood and acted upon otherwise 30 years of commitment, effort and public expenditure to ensure that disabled people can travel by train with confidence, will be lost."

A full copy of the report is available at www.npcuk.org.

Altmann's ideas for social care

Former pensions' minister, Baroness Ros Altmann has suggested that the answer to the crisis in funding for social care would be to encourage more private saving.

Whilst Ms Altmann supports the idea of a Care ISA or using equity release to pay for future care needs, the evidence shows that the financial sector has been reluctant to get involved.

The latest report from the Care

Quality Commission shows the number of care home closures is rising, whilst

nine out of 10 local authorities are cutting back on how much they pay for home care services.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "The crisis in social care will only be solved by society pooling the cost and risk - and any suggestion that we are going to leave individuals and their families to carry the burden is completely wrong."

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