



Campaign!

NPC — Fighting for the rights of older people

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Will you keep your promises Boris?



The National Pensioners Convention is calling on Prime Minister Boris Johnson to keep his pre-election promise and retain free TV licences for over 75's.

If he doesn't keep his word, the NPC membership will take action.

Thousands of older people face the big switch off as the clock ticks down to the May 31 deadline when the universal benefit - first introduced in 1999 - is scrapped.

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt commented: "We appeal to the Prime Minister to be true to his word and save this vital benefit.

Isolation and loneliness are huge issues for older people. For many their TV is their window on the world and the only company they have. With over two million living below the poverty line, they simply can't afford £154.40 for a TV licence."

Mr Johnson is on record as saying it was 'crucial' to retain the benefit and he aimed to 'thrash out' a new funding formula with the BBC, who were passed the multi-million bill for the benefit by the Government. Speaking last November he said he would hold talks with the BBC urgently. However in his first interview of 2020 with BBC Breakfast, he made no mention of the issue.

The BBC says it cannot afford to

fund all free licences for over 75's and plans to means-test older people by giving it only to those who receive Pension Credit. The NPC strongly believes the Government, not the BBC, have responsibility for funding the free licence as part of a wider package of universal pensioner benefits in lieu of a decent state pension.

NPC calls on PM to save free TV Licence for over 75's & act fast on Social Care Plan to save lives

The NPC call on the Government to respect this and take the free licence back under the benefits umbrella to give peace of mind to those worried about how they will manage to pay.

Research by Age UK, working alongside the NPC to campaign for free TV licences for all over-75s, shows the cost of a licence equals three months fuel bills—meaning many elderly will have to go without TV or cut back on food and heating. The NPC believes this is an appalling way for a government to treat its oldest, most vulnerable citizens .

Tens of thousands more could die if the Government's new social care plan is not implemented until the end of the current Parliament, warns the NPC.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a recent BBC interview that the Government's plans to reform social care services - a pre-election promise - is set to come before parliament this year, but added that it might take the full parliamentary term - up to another five years - to be implemented. NPC Deputy General Secretary Dot Gibson fears this delay will prove lethal for huge numbers of desperate people. She commented: "It was calculated by Age UK that 77 people die every day under the current failing social care system. On that basis as many as 140,000 could die if it takes the length of this parliament to implement vital changes."

Research shows the social care crisis is contributing to deaths that can be avoided, with 1.9 million people who need even basic care, not able to access any help at all.

Article continues ...

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NHS urge over 65's to talk about their mental health

NHS England are joining forces with Age UK to encourage Britain's older people to seek help when it comes to their mental health.

A new survey shows two-thirds of over-65s in the UK have experienced depression and anxiety, but just one in seven said they would put their mental health before their physical health. The new joint campaign urges older people to seek help for anxiety and depression from their GP's.

Age UK says there has been something of a cultural revolution in people's willingness to be open about mental ill health, but it's one that's left many older people behind. Age UK Director, Caroline Abrahams sai this generation grew up in an era when there was a real stigma associated with mental illness, so for many, these attitudes are "deeply engrained and still driving their behaviour today."

NHS England national clinical director for dementia and older people's mental health, Alistair Burns added: that older people sometimes feel they have to have a 'stiff upper lip' towards health, but seeking help is a

sign of strength, not weakness, so anyone out there who is feeling down and needs help, can and should get it from the NHS.

The campaign also wants to encourage GPs to look out for symptoms of mental ill-health among the older generations and make them aware of NHS support services available.

Symptoms such as tiredness, weight loss and problems sleeping are often signs of depression.

Social Care continued...

The NPC believes in a National Care Service, funded in the same way as the NHS -free at the point of need.

We know the public will pay for proper care if the income is ring fenced and only used for that purpose.

The government can't have it both ways - on the one hand they accuse older people of holding all the housing wealth to the detriment of the younger generation; on the other hand they demand that housing wealth is used to pay for care.

Warning: TV licence scam—don't tell them anything!

Beware of a new scam where people are told their TV licence can't be renewed due to a problem with their bank.

The scammers send you an email, which looks like it's from TV Licensing (TVLA) and says something is wrong with your direct debit. They ask you to set up a new direct debit by clicking on a link. **If you receive this email – and you pay your licence fee by direct debit - don't click on the link! Contact your bank, or TVLA on: 0300 790 0368.** The real TVLA always put part of your postcode into the email heading.

Sadly scammers are everywhere! So remember—if you receive an email or a phone call from anyone saying they are your bank, or gas, or electric supplier, or the council, or even a charity – please do not be panicked into giving them your bank or personal or details or setting up a new direct debit . Keep yourself - and your money – safe! And warn your friends too!

Free Bus Travel for Durham WASPI women welcomed by local NPC

Durham County Council has approved a scheme which will enable some women in the WASPI age group to take advantage of free travel and reduced fares on bus services.

Changes to the statutory state pension age means many women who expected to retire at 60 now wait longer than they previously would have done for their pension income. This also means they don't qualify for concessions like free or reduced bus travel.

Under the Durham scheme – which is fairly unique in England – women born between December 1953 and November 5, 1954 who have not already reached state pension age, will now be able to take advantage of free and reduced fares.

The organisation Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) has been campaigning for compensation

for all UK women affected by the pension age change.

Christine Varty, Co-coordinator of the Durham Branch of WASPI and currently Secretary of the Northern Region of the NPC said: "We are delighted at the news and want to thank the council for making this concession for some of our WASPI women.

"t will make a big difference to them all, but especially to those women living in rural areas of the county who rely on buses for everything. It would be great if the concession could be extended to all WASPI women across England, but we know many councils are under huge pressure to make cuts in services."

The state pension age for women was equalised with men at 65. Under legislation the state pension age will increase to 66, 67 then 68. The NPC will work with the TUC/Trade Unions to support future pensioners.

Over 65's to account for half of employment growth by 2030

New figures predict workers aged over 65 will be responsible for more than half of all UK employment growth in the next 10 years.

By 2060 this age group will have risen even further to account for almost two-thirds of new employees. The Guardian reported that the Office of National Statistics forecast the increases after analysing the findings of the seasonally-adjusted UK labour force survey for 2019. The quoted ONS figures showed that by 2030, over 65's will account for 282,000 of new employees out of a total 546,000 across the country as a whole. But by 2060

there will be around 746,000 new employees in this age group, out of a total employment growth of 1,193,000. Commenting on the figures, the Centre for Ageing Better said older people will play a major role in tomorrow's workforce. But the organisation added that it is important people don't feel forced to work in their late 60s and 70s because of financial insecurity.

NEXT MONTH: January's National Council meeting & details on the 2020 NPC Annual Convention in Southport from June 2-4.

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