

Campaign!

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

Extra funding for care "is drop in the ocean"

The government's decision to allow local authorities to increase council tax in order to fund social care has been described by the NPC as "a drop in the ocean."

The announcement by ministers came after weeks of pressure following the Chancellor's failure to offer any additional funding in his Autumn Statement.

Under the revised plans published in the middle of December, councils will be able to raise an extra 3% from their local population for the next two years.

However, in 2016 when local authorities were able to raise an additional 2% through the so-called "council tax precept", the measure raised just £360m out of a possible £2bn and poorer areas, where income from council tax was lowest found themselves in a postcode lottery.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Given that council spending on care has fallen by 9% in real terms over the past five years because of a £4.6bn cut to funding from central government, this latest announcement is just a drop in the ocean."

Services for older people have been particularly badly hit, as the number of people getting help from their council with care fell by 26% to 850,000 in the four years to 2014.

More than 1.2m people with care needs now receive no formal or informal help - close to a



The NPC will be protesting about the crisis in social care over the next few months
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50% rise since 2010, care firms, which provide the services for councils, are pulling out of home care contracts and the number of care home and nursing home places has fallen by 1,500 in the past six years to 16,600.

Regulators have warned that these cuts have started adding to pressures in the NHS with A&E units said to be bearing the brunt.

Even Brits living in Europe are now being recruited to fly back for two weeks at a time to work as home carers, as the system shows all the signs of collapsing.

However, the crisis in social care is allowing some to use it as another way of attacking older people.

The latest comes from NHS chief Simon Stevens who has told MPs that the triple lock on

pensions and the free bus pass should be scrapped to pay for care services.

It's a concern that head of the NHS doesn't seem to realise the value of the bus pass in keeping people mobile and active, reducing stress, isolation and loneliness - and relieving pressure on health and care services.

"More of the same simply won't work, and it's time we had a combined National Health and Social Care Service that is funded by us all through general taxation," said Ms Gibson.

The NPC will be making the case for better social care as part of Dignity Action Day on 1 February and at the Health Campaigns Together march and rally in central London on 4 March.

See healthcampaignstogether.com for details.



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Campaign Dates

Dignity Action Day
1 February: Groups around the country will be marking the day

It's Our NHS Demo
4 March, London: The NPC will be speaking at this event. Details to follow

Biennial Delegate Conference
21-22 March: Every two years the NPC elects its officers and discusses its policies for the coming period. The event is open to NPC regions and national organisations representing older people. A report will be available after the event

Annual Pensioners' Parliament
6-8 June: Tickets priced £10 for the three-day event in Blackpool are now available from the NPC office. More details will be issued shortly

State pension triple lock must be defended

The NPC has produced a detailed campaign briefing in defence of the triple lock, following the announcement by the Chancellor that there would be a review of indexation arrangements for the state pension to take effect after the 2020 election.

Over the last few months there have been a number of politicians, media commentators and think tanks calling for the triple lock to be scrapped on the grounds that it is too expensive and unfair to workers who have not had similar pay increases.

In fact, over the last six years, the triple lock has only provided a higher increase in

the basic state pension (BSP) than the old system would have produced, on just one occasion.

Even with this in place, the BSP is just over £6000 a year compared to average wages of £26,000 and the actual amount of increases that older people have received over the last 15 years is just 27% of that going to average workers.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "It's ridiculous to suggest that a £3 a week increase in the state pension is too generous and can't be afforded."

Download the briefing at <http://npcuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Triple-Lock-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

Moratorium needed on rising pension age

The NPC has called for a halt to further increases in the state pension age (SPA) beyond 66, as part of its response to the Cridland Review that's currently looking at the issue.

The Convention's submission has called for existing plans to raise the SPA to 67 in 2028 and 68 by 2044-46 to be abandoned, and has argued that there is no case for stating that adults should spend a third of their adult lifetime in retirement.

An alternative would be to argue that retirement should be based around the number of years of healthy life expectancy.

This would recognise the growing problem that a sig-

nificant number of workers are already unable to keep working until their SPA.

The link between Pension Credit and the SPA should also be decoupled, so that Pension Credit can be claimed up to 5 years prior to SPA and certain defined groups, such as disabled workers and unpaid family carers should be able to access their State Pension up to 5 years prior to reaching SPA without any reduction in value.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "Growing health inequalities between the social classes and backgrounds is well documented and working longer is simply not an option for millions of ordinary people."

Household bills on the increase

Households' annual energy and insurance costs have leapt by nearly £200 in the last year, according to a comparison website, Comparethemarket.com.

The combined cost of dual fuel energy, car insurance and home insurance came to £2,216 on average, in 2016 - around £196 more than in 2015.

Despite tumbling wholesale prices in 2016, energy costs jumped by almost £100 from £1,289 in 2015 to £1,383 in 2016.

However, the change in the value of the pound following the EU referendum will have made the cost of importing wholesale energy more expensive for British energy companies.

Many analysts also predict that the rate of inflation is likely to increase by up to 4% in 2017 - considerably higher than increases in people's pensions and savings.

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