

Campaign!

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

Minister says families should care for elderly

Care minister, David Mowat has told MPs that society must take greater responsibility for the care of older people when budgets are being cut.

As council leaders were warning that the social care system was in danger of "falling apart" through lack of funding, Mr Mowat's alternative solution reinforced the view that the government is in denial over the scale of the care crisis.

Councils have warned that the number of people who had unmet needs such as getting washed, dressed or getting out of bed was set to rise, whilst only 8% of directors of adult social care were confident they could meet their full duties under the Care Act.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Asking families to look after their elderly relatives is clearly the government's way of passing the buck on social care."

"Rather than being honest with the public and saying that we all need to pay through taxation towards the care of our loved ones, the minister seems to be suggesting that all we need is a return to the days before the welfare state, when people were left to fend for themselves."

The minister's suggestion sounded even more out of touch when considered alongside the growing number of older people who have no-one to



*NPC regions took to the streets on February 1st to mark Dignity Action Day and to get people to sign up to the NPC's Dignity Code. Here Oxford Mayor, Altaf Khan adds his support
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care for them.

According to research from Collinson Group insurers, 2.5m older patients would have no one to care for them if they were discharged from hospital, whilst 51% of those aged 75 and over live alone and around 3.9m pensioners say the TV is their main company.

The NPC continues to campaign for an integrated health and social care service, funded through taxation and free at the point of need.

Campaign to save Attendance Allowance wins

Local government secretary, Sahid Javid has confirmed that the government has dropped plans to devolve Attendance Allowance (AA) to local authorities.

This welcome news follows a campaign by the NPC and other pensioner and disability groups who had been concerned that passing responsibility and fund-

ing to local councils would have created a postcode lottery, with different rates of Attendance Allowance and different eligibility criteria appearing across the country.

AA is currently paid to 1.5 million people aged 65 or over in the UK, regardless of their personal means.

It is seen as a vital support for

hundreds of thousands who live independently, but might otherwise need to go into residential care.

Having safeguarded AA for the time being, the NPC is now looking to include a mobility component as was the case in the old Disability Living Allowance, but which has so far not been recognised as part of the AA.



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Campaign Dates

It's Our NHS Demo
4 March, London:
The NPC will be speaking at this event. Assemble Tavistock Square at 12 noon, march to Parliament for a rally. For details: www.ournhs.info

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 full report will be available after the event

Annual Pensioners' Parliament
6-8 June: Tickets priced £5 for one-day and £10 for the three-day event in Blackpool are now available to order online or from the NPC office. A full programme will be available shortly

Figures show growing pensioner inequality

The gap between the richest pensioners and the poorest is the highest in 15 years, according to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The "Gini coefficient", which measures inequality, shows that since 2009 inequality has fallen among working age people by 1.5%, and risen among retired people by 3.8%.

The ONS report suggests that significant private pension wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, while others struggle on small pensions or benefits.

The growing inequality could be down to the divide between younger, wealthier

pensioners, and the over-75s, who on average are more impoverished.

Recent research showed that the over-75s have income £59 a week lower than younger pensioners, and £112 a week lower than working age adults.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said: "These figures show that older people have not escaped austerity at the expense of younger generations, despite what a number of politicians and think tanks might argue."

"We need to improve the state pension for all and ensure it remains properly indexed to the triple lock."

A briefing on the triple lock is available at npcuk.org.

MPs launch inquiry into pensioner housing needs

The Communities and Local Government select committee has launched an inquiry into whether the housing on offer in England for older people is sufficiently available and suitable for their needs.

Members will also be looking at whether there should be additional financial help to enable older people to move into more suitable accommodation.

The inquiry follows research which indicates just 2% of the country's current housing stock is designed with pensioners in mind.

Official data also shows that 8.1m properties, or 35% of all homes in the country, are "under-occupied", which is defined as having at least

two spare bedrooms.

The committee believes that addressing this issue could help to ease the housing shortage, improve well-being and reduce isolation for older people.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Some pensioners are living in houses which they would like to sell, but they find there is a lack of a suitable smaller accommodation available."

"They also find the whole process of moving too daunting to consider and a national strategy that looks at housing provision for both young and old, rather than relying on the market to come up with all the answers, would certainly be a step forward."

Ofgem to end online only deals

Energy firms will be forced to drop deals that only give lower prices to online customers, Ofgem has revealed.

The energy regulator is consulting on measures that would make it compulsory for providers to tell the over-65s about the best deals that exist, even if they were only advertised online.

On average, an online energy plan is around 10% cheaper than standard plans.

Under the plans, suppliers will be required to take steps to identify and support

"vulnerable" customers - including disabled consumers and pensioners without access to the internet—to get the same deals as other customers.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Around seven out of 10 older people simply don't have access to the internet, and they should no longer face higher bills as a result."

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