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Campaign!

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

Cuts to care may have caused 30,000 deaths

A study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine has claimed that the "only explanation" for a huge rise in deaths among older people is the cuts in funding for care.

It is the first time a direct link has been drawn between cuts and a surge in deaths - totalling an extra 30,000 in 2015.

Since the 2010 election, the impact of cuts resulting from the imposition of austerity on the NHS has been profound.

Expenditure has failed to keep pace with demand, and the situation has been exacerbated by dramatic reductions in social care spending by around £5bn.

With an ageing population, the NHS is ever more dependent on a well-functioning social care system, yet it is collapsing under the pressure.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "The forthcoming Budget has got to put some extra funding into the care system as a matter of urgency, but in the longer term we need to consider how to introduce a health and social care system funded through taxation, that is part of the wider public sector."

The latest briefing on how care social care should be funded is available on the NPC website.

The NPC is leading the campaign for a tax-funded social care system as the most effective way of improving standards and widening access to much needed services
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Lord Willetts attacks state pension triple lock

Lord David Willetts is the latest figure to attack the state pension triple lock and universal pensioner benefits, as part of a report by the Resolution Foundation think tank.

However, Mr Willetts's claim that pensioner households are now £20 a week better off than working households is based on rather selective evidence.

The report acknowledges that 20% of all 70-year-olds are still working, and if they have paid off their mortgage, they will naturally have more money than young families that are just starting out.

Equally, most of the increases in state pensions were due to the 2.5% guarantee introduced by Gordon Brown in 2001 and nothing to do with the triple lock, and income inequality is still greatest within generations rather than between them.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Lord Willetts is seeking to remove a problem that doesn't exist, and is effectively taking away support from the pensioners of tomorrow, that he claims he's trying to help."

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Campaign Dates

It's Our NHS Demo
4 March, London: Assemble down Whitehall opposite Downing Street at 1pm, march to Parliament Square for a rally, at which Dot Gibson NPC general secretary will be speaking. For more details: www.ournhs.info

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. There will be an opening march/rally and individual sessions will include the impact of Brexit on older people, the NHS and STPs, accessible transport, effects of devolution, future of state and occupational pensions and a special panel session on the crisis in social care.

Bedroom tax by back-door to hit pensioners

Government plans to introduce a cap on Housing Benefit (HB) to the level of local housing allowance (LHA) in the socially rented sector in 2019 amounts to a bedroom tax by another name, according to campaigners.

Until now, pensioners in social housing have not experienced a reduction in their entitlement to HB if they occupy a home that is deemed to be larger than they need.

However, under the change, HB would be linked to the level of LHA for a particular area and based on a specific amount for each bedroom.

A single pensioner living in a two bed property would therefore only receive LHA for one bedroom (because that would be deemed all they need), and as a result might receive less HB.

Campaigners worry this could cause pensioners to get into rent arrears or be forced to move on.

Estimates from the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggest the cap will affect up to 800,000 tenants, who could lose an average of £1300 a year.

Jan Short, NPC vice president said: "Clearly this will have a massive impact on older people in the socially rented sector and could lead to a rise in pensioner homelessness."

Brexit will cause serious concerns for old & young

Whilst the impact on older people of Britain's decision to leave the EU is still being assessed, a number of concerns are beginning to emerge.

Up to 80,000 EU workers are currently employed in our social care system, and it would be difficult for those vacancies to be filled if they were no longer able to remain.

Equally, if that happened the position of UK nationals living in Europe would also be under threat, along with the annual uprating of their state pensions.

The future of legislation covering disabled travellers, the regulation of pharmaceutical companies, funding for social housing and issues around the European Health Card could also impact on Britain's pensioners.

John Cridland - heading the current review into the state pension age (SPA) has argued that if migration doesn't continue (bringing in younger workers to pay tax and National Insurance), the SPA will have to rise for those in their 40s and below to 70.

Peter Rayner, NPC vice president said: "We must ensure that Brexit is not allowed to drive a wedge between young and old, and show that we are concerned about the future generations and their rights to work, get a home and have a decent retirement."

DB pension schemes threatened

A government Green Paper has raised the prospect that private companies in difficulty might be allowed to water down their previous promises on defined benefit occupational pension schemes.

Instead of using the Retail Price Index (RPI), the paper acknowledges the possibility that some employers may wish to use the lower Consumer Price Index (CPI) to uprate their pensions in the future.

The government is also considering suspending any type of inflation indexation when schemes are in serious trouble.

Around 5% of businesses are currently unable to cover their pension deficits.

In January the CPI stood at 1.8%, whilst RPI was 2.6%.

Changes to pension uprating could cost the average pensioner up to £20,000 over the course of their retirement.

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