

Campaign!

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

Pension age review is bad news for under 45s

John Cridland's review into the future of the state pension age (SPA) has recommended raising the figure to 67 in 2037 - seven years earlier than planned, whilst the Government Actuary's Department has suggested the figure might be closer to 70 for anyone born after 1986.

The review also called for the triple lock on the state pension to be abandoned after 2020 and for the government to look at means-testing the winter fuel allowance.

Ministers will decide on the former CBI boss's proposals in May, but if they were to go ahead anyone currently under 45 would see their SPA rise more quickly.

However, one of the biggest disappointments in the report is that despite considerable evidence showing the gross health inequalities that exist in the UK, there was no serious attempt to tackle the problems.

Instead, all the review could offer was the chance for carers and disabled workers to receive



Pension Credit at 67 rather than 68.

Jan Shortt, the new NPC general secretary said: "John Cridland has asked all the right questions, but sadly come up with the wrong answers."

"Not everyone will be able to continue working up to SPA through ill health and some will find themselves out of work before they reach SPA and unable to get another job in the meantime."

"These individuals should have been allowed to access Pension Credit up to five years before reaching SPA," she said.

Similarly, the NPC believes that specific groups, such as disabled workers and unpaid family carers should be able to access their State Pension up to five years prior to reaching SPA, without any reduction in value.

Suggestions that the triple lock is too generous and unaffordable also ignore the very real reduction in value that the state pension suffered when the link with earnings was broken by the Conservative government in 1980.

In 2010, when the triple lock was introduced, the BSP would have stood at £161.30 a week had the earnings' link still been in place, compared to the actual figure of £97.65.

This loss has never been recouped.

"Taking the triple lock away will effectively mean future pensioners will end up working longer, paying more and getting less state pension," added Ms Shortt.

Basing the SPA on average longevity figures fails to recognise the number of years in which people are unable to work because of ill health, but are still living longer

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Budget offers 'sticking plaster' for social care

Chancellor Philip Hammond used his Budget on March 8 to announce a further £2bn on social care in England over the next three years, and the promise of a Green Paper on the long-term funding of the service to be published later in 2017.

But critics described the additional funds as little more than a "sticking plaster" on a system that was in severe financial crisis.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "This money won't reverse the £5bn cut that the service has suffered since 2010, it won't

give services to the 1.2m people who have been rationed out of the system and it won't ease the burden on millions of unpaid older carers who are working 24/7 to look after their loved ones."

A briefing on the Budget is available on the NPC website.



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Campaign Dates

Opposition to Driver Only Trains

26 April: The RMT union is to call a demo in London to mark its year-long dispute with Southern Trains over the introduction of driver only trains. The NPC will be supporting the protest.

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. March and rally followed by sessions on pensions, housing, health, transport and Brexit.

March for Homes

24 June: Demo against the Housing Act and for rent controls, tenants' rights, security and council housing. For info visit: axethehousingact.org.uk

DWP: Pensioner poverty starts to rise again

The latest government figures show that there were 1.9m pensioners in relative low income After Housing Costs (AHC) in 2015/16, representing 16% of all pensioners.

This figure shows a rise in pensioner poverty in the last year by 300,000.

The Department for Work and Pensions figures also showed that whilst median pensioner household income was unchanged between 2014/15 and 2015/16, working-age average income grew by around £10 per week.

In 2015/16, working-age average income rose by 2% whilst pensioner average

income remained flat.

This clearly contradicts the view that pensioners are doing better than those in work.

The figures also show that those aged 65 and over were more likely than younger age groups to have been in relative low income in at least one out of the four years.

Dot Gibson, NPC deputy general secretary said: "Despite claims that the triple lock is too generous, many are still living below or around the poverty line, on a state pension that is ranked 32nd out of 34 OECD countries, and set to get worse for both existing and future generations after 2020."

MPs suggest new tax could pay for social care

The Local Communities and Government committee has called on ministers to consider introducing a compulsory social care insurance system to address the funding crisis in the sector.

Based on a German scheme, employees would pay 1% of their annual salary into a fund to pay for their care in retirement, and the contribution is matched by their employer.

For the average employee this would cost an estimated £280 a year.

The MPs also said that the forthcoming Green Paper on the future funding of social care should look at scrapping free bus passes and prescriptions, ending the

triple-lock pension guarantee and abolishing the winter fuel allowance as other ways of funding services, although it stopped short of calling for social care to be provided free at the point of need, like the NHS and accepted it would remain means-tested.

In a separate finding the committee also said it was "unacceptable" that self-funders were paying an average of 43% more than local councils for an identical care home place.

MPs also found that 28% of care services were inadequate and one in five unpaid carers were providing 50 hours or more of care each week, but were not receiving any practical support from their local authority.

NPC gets new secretary

The NPC's 2017 Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) has elected Jan Shortt as the new general secretary, replacing Dot Gibson after eight years in the post.

Ms Shortt is currently a vice president and secretary of the NPC's Northern region.

Ms Gibson becomes a new deputy general secretary.

Ron Douglas was re-elected as president and along with Barry Todman, treasurer, and vice presidents Peter Rayner, Norman Jemison, Marion Wilson and newly elected Ellen Lebe-

the, they make up the NPC officers.

At the BDC delegates also agreed motions on Brexit, Labour's plans for an Older People's Commission, retention of the triple lock, pension protection and the funding of care.

A full report of the event will be available shortly on the NPC website.

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