

Campaign!

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

Budget stays silent on social care crisis

Millions of older people would have been dismayed at the lack of any announcements from the Chancellor in his Autumn Budget statement on 22 November, that would benefit older people.

Like many, the NPC was hoping for some further details on plans to tackle the growing crisis in social care, a programme for dealing with fuel poverty and proposals for more suitable senior housing.

Instead, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies the economy is set for lower productivity, earnings and growth until 2022.

Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said: "The social care system has suffered over £5bn worth of cuts since 2010 – and over one million older people no longer get the help they need, staff turnover is high, the quality of care is sometimes questionable and there is a distinct lack of dignity in the system for both staff and residents."

"A Green Paper that's been promised next summer is simply too little, too late for hundreds of thousands of older people and their families and the Chancellor should have offered something now."

A detailed briefing on



the Budget and older people is available on

the NPC's website at www.npcuk.org.

The Chancellor's decision to stay quiet on the issue of social care funding was described as a "missed opportunity" by campaigners
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Winter deaths last year increase by nearly 40%

The NPC has called on the government to launch a new fuel poverty commission to urgently address the scale of annual winter deaths among the country's older population.

The call comes as official figures revealed an estimated 34,300 excess winter deaths occurred in England and Wales in 2016/17; the second highest number in the last five years.

Whilst the data does not break down the figures by age, the vast

majority of these deaths were among people over 65.

This equates to 9720 more people dying this winter than in 2015/16 and represents a 39.5% increase.

In total, the figures represent 285 deaths a day or 11 deaths an hour.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Successive governments have simply ignored the problem of winter deaths amongst the older population and seem to have a policy of crossing their

fingers and hoping things will improve."

"These figures show that this policy simply doesn't work – in fact things are getting worse."

Using the government's official definition of fuel poverty, around 1.4 million older people in England are at risk and almost one in three older people live in homes with inadequate heating or insulation.

This accounts for around 3.5 million older people at risk or suffering from fuel poverty.



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Campaign Dates

1 February 2018
Dignity Action Day
Groups around the country will promote the NPC's message for a National Care Service as one of the best ways of improving the quality of care

April 2018
This will mark 10 years since the introduction of the concessionary bus pass. More details to follow regarding the plans for the celebration

12-14 June 2018
NPC Pensioners' Parliament
Event includes a march, opening rally, keynote speakers on pensions, health and social care, transport, loneliness and funeral poverty. Tickets on sale now for the 3-day event, priced £10 or day ticket £5 from the NPC office or www.npcuk.org

No help for care self-funders

A year-long investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) into prices in the care home sector has stopped short of recommending that fees charged to self-funders should be set at the same level as those charged to local authorities (LAs) in any specific home.

The CMA admitted it decided to hold back because it felt to do otherwise would impose an immediate and very substantial public funding cost, and would lead to some care homes withdrawing places for local authority paid residents.

Fundamentally, they found that those requiring care needed greater support in choosing a care home and greater protections when they are residents.

But most importantly, the CMA recognised that the cur-

rent model of service provision cannot be sustained without additional public funding of between £1-£2bn by 2025.

The care homes sector is worth around £15.9 billion a year in the UK, with around 410,000 residents.

There are around 5,500 different providers in the UK operating 11,300 care homes and around 95% of their beds are provided by the independent sector.

The CMA estimates that the average cost for a self-funder in 2016 was £846 per week (nearly £44,000 per year), while LAs on average paid just £621 per week.

Dot Gibson, NPC deputy general secretary said: "Free at the point of need, tax-funded social care would eliminate all the unfairness that exists in the current care system."

Housing crisis hits pensioners

Housing group, Generation Rent have predicted that by 2035, nearly 1m households of retirement age will be renting from a private landlord.

Currently the figure stands at 370,000.

If those households owned their home, they would have minimal housing costs by the time they retire, but as renters, they will still have rent to pay and most will rely on housing benefit to keep a roof over their heads.

The campaign group estimates that if today's 45-64 year old private renters could access social housing by the time they retire, the taxpayer would save £930m per year in housing benefit.

But rather than tackling the housing crisis for all generations, the Communities and

Local Government Secretary, Sajid Javid has blamed it on pensioners - rather than the chronic under-supply of social housing, inflationary house prices, relative low wages and his own government's failure to act.

Norman Jemison, NPC vice president said: "There is no real evidence that pensioners are against a major house building programme, so this is just dog-whistle politics which tries to set one age group against another."

"Rather than blaming people who bought their houses over 30 years ago, Mr Javid needs to start allowing local councils to start building homes again, controlling rents and making it easier for older people to downsize."

The NPC will launch a new housing policy in April 2018.

Greetings from Solihull

In November members of the NPC and Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance gathered to celebrate the life of Syd Ashby.

Syd had been a prominent civil servant during his working life and eventually became Chief Immigration Officer at Birmingham Airport.

During the late 1990s, he became active in the pensioner

movement and served as one of the NPC's vice presidents for

a number of years.

Peter Rayner, fellow NPC vice president said: "Whenever Syd rang you on the phone he always started with the phrase 'Greetings from Solihull' and it sort of became his signature tune."

Syd was a great ambassador for the NPC and was able to mix with all sorts of people.

His generous outlook made him a real asset to the pensioner movement and he will be greatly missed.

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