



# Campaign!

*Fighting for the rights of older people*

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NPC**—as an  
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*Join our Digital Exclusion webinar—1st October*

## The future is digital – but should we have more choice?



The next NPC webinar will discuss how the drive to digital-only communications alienates older people who do not have, cannot use, or do not want to use the internet.

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director of Age UK, and Dr Jennifer Bute, founder of dementia charity Glorious Opportunity will join the panel considering the current problems, and possible solutions to greater inclusion. The NPC advocates helping more older people to get online, which can bring many benefits. During the Covid-19 lockdown for example, internet video calls to family were a lifesaver for those with access. But NPC members fear the push to digital-only

by government, businesses and even the NHS, not only excludes them, it also infringes upon their rights, even preventing them using cash as more firms demand payment by card or internet banking. Many cite worries over online scams, while others simply cannot afford tablets and smartphones, never mind broadband, or internet security. They also fear getting confused and afraid of making mistakes online, even after training. **Join the free webinar, from 12pm to 1.30pm on Friday, 1st October. Call or write (address adjacent) for details, or email us at: info@npcuk.org**

## Fears grow that a move to ‘water down’ pensions triple lock is Chancellor’s first step to axing it

The NPC is writing to urge Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak *not* to abandon the Government’s pledge on the ‘triple lock’ on pensions.

We are also sending a personal letter\* to every MP asking them to vote against any attempt to change the safeguard for 2022—and to encourage Ministers to meet with the NPC



and other older people’s organisations before a final decision is taken. The triple lock is the government’s long-standing commitment to increasing the state pension annually by whatever is highest out of three figures: average earnings, inflation, or 2.5%.

**But the Chancellor (above) is reportedly considering changing it, after wages bounced back by 8.8 per cent following the easing of lockdown.** Fears are mounting that he is about to water down the guarantee linking pensions to wage rises, as a first step towards scrapping the measure altogether. NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: “The triple lock is a very important part of the pensioner entitlements package that props up the worst state pension in the economically developed

world. Even an 8% rise in the state pension next April will not recoup the losses to pensioners as a result of the Conservative government cutting the link to earnings in the 1980s. Remember, not every pensioner is on the new state pension, or has an occupational pension to fall back on. Pensioners of the future will be worse off if the triple lock is changed now.”

### *Pensioner poverty*

Jan added: “The Triple Lock was introduced in 2010 to address the falling state pension level as a result of the Conservative government decision in 1980 to break the link with earnings. In effect, the Triple Lock has 30 years of decline to undo, and it will take more than one ‘good’ year to make up the loss of 40% of its value relative to average earnings over three decades. The gender pension gap is 40.3%. Any changes to the Triple Lock will also have an adverse effect on women. Pensioner poverty will increase overall as a result of suspending the triple lock in 2022 and potentially scrapping it altogether in the future.” **\*To read the NPC letter in full, visit [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org), or call or write to us (address on this page, left) to request a copy to be posted to you.**

**NPC members asked to write to MPs and Ministers**

**NPC calls on politicians to stop new NHS Bill**

**The government's controversial new NHS Health and Care Bill could become law unless politicians mount strong opposition to it this autumn.**

The NPC, along with other organisations such as the British Medical Association (BMA), fear the Bill will do nothing to solve the crises in the NHS and social care, and will simply undermine the services, by putting more of them in the hands of the private sector. NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said we applaud those MPs who opposed the Bill in the House of Commons on 14th July, even though it went on to pass its second reading. It is hoped the Bill will now face strong opposition when it goes to the House of Lords for scrutiny, after a number of peers, including Dame Joan Bakewell spoke out against the legislation,

In the meantime, the NPC is urging its members to write to their local MPs asking that they oppose the Bill, when it returns to the Commons from the Lords.

Jan Shortt said: "Politicians do need to listen to their constituents and understand that this Bill will under-



mine public control and provision of the NHS as a national health service, providing comprehensive, universal treatment and care in response to need, free at the point of need. The new Bill does nothing to solve the crises in funding, staffing shortages, mental health and social care services, crumbling estate and other major problems facing the NHS. Instead, it enables increased involvement of the private sector."

"The government is still claiming their response to Covid has been a success, built on full co-operation with the private sector. They now wish to apply this model for 'success' to the NHS as a whole. Yet we know the private sector response to the pandemic was frequently shambolic and over-priced with millions of pounds of public money wasted."

**\*The full draft of the template letters to send to MPs – outlining 12 key reasons why the Bill will be a disaster – can be downloaded from our website at: [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org) Or write to us at our address overleaf to receive a copy by post.**

**NHS Digital delay on their GP data grab must be monitored**

**The battle over NHS Digital's controversial GP 'data grab' is not over despite the government announcing it has been delayed for further consultation.**

While the NPC welcomes the government's 'new tests' to ensure the secure collection of 55 million patient files from GPs in England, we remain concerned that it is only a pause in their plans.

The NPC and its coalition partners pressured NHS Digital into postponing the controversial move twice – on 1 July and then 1 September. But along with our partners, led by digital watchdog Foxglove, we will continue to closely monitor the consultation process.

***In the dark***

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "Millions of patients are still in the dark about this mass collection of their sensitive medical files.

"Through pressure from our coalition campaigners to stop the GP data being taken and used without the consent of individual patients, NHS Digital and the government have taken a step back. While this is good news, we will be keeping a strict eye on what is done and said in the coming months, particularly on how they communicate with every household in England about their plans. Because so far, they have done virtually nothing to publicise them."

**End of TV Licence 'grace period' for non-payment sparks visit fears**

**Many over 75s who cannot pay or who have made a personal decision on principle *not* to pay their TV licence fees fear they will face calls from collection agents.** News of a change in approach on collection follows the end of the 'grace period' for those pensioners who have still not paid their BBC's TV Licence fee yet. NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "The end of the free TV licence for over 75s is a worry for the group of pensioners who are just above the Pension Credit threshold. These are people who have to make decisions every day about what to spend their pension on. With increases in utility bills, and housing and living costs generally, the added burden of paying for a TV licence will push many pensioners further into poverty. The free TV licence for over 75s is part of a wider package of universal pensioner entitlements to prop up a poor state pension. TV is often the only lifeline to the outside world and the main companion for the majority of the age group living alone. **The NPC is campaigning for the government to take back responsibility and accountability for the free TV licence—social welfare is not the role of the BBC.** However, now the grace period is over, we worry about how those unable to pay will be treated—customer care visits must be undertaken with understanding and extreme care."