



# NPC Campaign!

NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION

**NPC**

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Join the  
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**\*NPC  
OFFICE  
XMAS  
CLOSING  
DATES**

The NPC  
offices  
will close  
at 5pm  
on Thurs-  
day, 23rd  
Decem-  
ber 2021  
& re-open  
for busi-  
ness on  
Tuesday,  
4th Janu-  
ary 2022.

## Fighting for the rights of older people

### **Thanks to all our members for your hard work & support**

**A**s we come to the end of another year of uncertainty, I want to send my thanks and appreciation to all NPC members for the hard work and support given to us under such difficult circumstances. The challenges we face through this parliament are enormous, but we will always fight the good fight, never give in and make absolutely sure that the issues impacting on older people are raised at the highest level. I send my best wishes to you, your family and friends for a safe and happy festive season, with the hope of better things to come in 2022.

*Jan Shortt, General Secretary, NPC*



### **After NPC campaign with concerned groups**

## **Lords to scrutinise flawed Health and Care Bill**

**T**he government's controversial Health and Care Bill will face amendment when it is scrutinised in Committee at the House of Lords in the coming weeks.

The NPC joined with other campaigners to urge the Lords to halt the progress of the flawed Bill, which fails to solve the devastating immediate and long-term crisis in the NHS and social care sectors. Many Peers acknowledged our concerns when they debated the legislation, moved by Lord Kamall for the government, at its second reading in the Lords on December 7.

### ***Privatisation***

Baroness Thornton summarised views when she told the House that the Bill still offered 'no overall strategy or plan to address the immediate scandal of inadequate social care.' She told Peers: "Surely our job is to make it into that? The (House of) Commons had 21 sittings in Committee and did not even scrutinise the social care cap amendment\* and other government amendments. We will have to do that too. I congratulate your Lordships' House on giving the Minister (Lord Kamall) a clear insight into the scrutiny we believe the Bill now deserves and will receive in the coming weeks." \*(The new £86,000 cap on the cost of care could still

see pensioners having to sell their homes to pay the bills).

The Lords Committee stage involves a detailed examination of the Bill by Peers of all parties, before it is sent back to the House of Commons, where the government can choose to accept or reject amendments.

**The NPC would prefer to see the government scrapping the Bill altogether and starting again, with fully funded plans for a National Care Service, free at the point of need, and running in tandem with the NHS.** Jan Shortt, the NPC General Secretary said: "We would like to thank the many members of the House of Lords who challenged this Bill which truly represents a creeping backdoor privatisation of health care services. Despite government claims, it will badly impact on patient care. They promise that there are no plans to privatise the NHS – but that is quite different from the slow privatisation of health care services that this Bill enables. It's a muddled vision for the future of health and care."



**Pension Age Rise to 68 - 7 Years Early P2**

**Review may raise pension age to 68 – 7 years earlier than planned**

**T**he state retirement age could rise to 68—seven years earlier than currently scheduled.

At present the pension age is set to gradually rise from 66 to 68 between 2044 and 2046. A new review just announced by the Department of Work and Pensions from now until May 2023, could change that, with major implications for millions primarily born in the 1970s.

DWP Minister Thérèse Coffey said that the review will consider how ‘the costs of (the) state pension provide fairness to both taxpayers and pensioners,’ as the population increases and people live longer. As a result, it will also look at evidence for

paying pensions at an earlier age in regions of the country where life expectancy is lower. In other words, if you’re likely to die early in your area, you might get your pension sooner.

**NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said:** "As suspected, the 'fairness' applied by the government will inevitably see the worst state pension in the industrial world become even more inadequate. Inflation has already outstripped the 3.1% offered in April 2022. The NPC demand a review of the offer and for the government to play 'fair' with pensioners and increase the state pension by the full amount of inflation."



*Lord Prem Sikka leads NPC demo*



*NPC VP Ellen Lebethe & London Reg. Secretary Barry Todman lay the Winter deaths wreath at the Cenotaph.*

**Inflation hits 5.1% to push up prices of food & heating - just as the Triple Lock is suspended**

**P**ensioners face a bitter winter trying to afford food and keep warm as record 5.1% inflation—the highest rate in 10 years—sees prices rocketing.

NPC members, who have been calling and writing in protest to their MPs, staged two demonstrations outside Parliament against a crisis which is pushing millions into poverty.

Addressing protestors at our 2021 Winter deaths demo, Lord Prem Sikka criticised the government for saying they can’t find the money to help pension-

ers, while always being able to find billions to prop up banks.

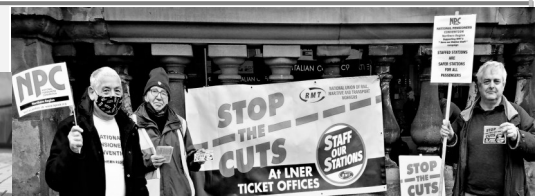
Lord Sikka, Lord Bryn Davis and Baroness Ros Altmann are also among Peers in the House of the Lords who tried to stop the government breaking their Manifesto pledge, and suspending the Triple Lock to give pensioners a smaller increase in April. Thanking the Peers, the NPC’s Jan Shortt said, “MPs who voted to suspend the Triple Lock voted against the needs of their constituents. We are urging them to reverse the decision.”

**Transport: e-scooters & office closures anger**

**G**etting around safely and cheaply if you are a pensioner these days is getting harder. Trying to buy ever-more expensive tickets for buses or trains is impossible for many as more local ticket offices are closed.

And the increase in e-scooters on our roads — and even on pavements, where they are illegal - is proving a hazard for older people.

Many NPC members, such as our Northern Region group in Newcastle, joined RMT members to



*Northern Reg. at RMT demo on closures*

protest at booking office closures. While others are protesting at the National Express offices closing up and down the country.

The NPC is taking members complaints to Transport Ministers to call for action on both issues. NPC’s Jan Shortt said: “The government needs to realise that being able to travel safely and cheaply is a necessity for older people who rely on public transport more than most. They are not always able to book bus and train tickets online, so they need local offices to stay open.”

**OMICRON – STAY SAFE!**

Omicron is spreading at a frightening rate so take care. Also beware of vaccine scams - report any call selling a vaccine to Action Fraud: 0300 123 040

## **Our Working' Parties look ahead to the issues for 2022**

The NPC formulates its campaign policies thanks to the efforts of the dedicated volunteer members of our Working Parties. Here are some of the matters they will be looking at in 2022. The Chairs of each working party have given an overview of the issues they are investigating – often raised at grassroots level by members – with the aim of campaigning for a better life for older people.

*\*If you are interested in any of the issues the NPC is working on, you can email us at: [info@npcuk.org](mailto:info@npcuk.org)*



### **Digital**

The Digital Working Party's campaign for the NPC, 'Connections for All' was only launched on 1 February, so we still have much to do in 2022, including:

- Continuing to address the barriers to people getting online – including digital poverty, lack of broadband/poor connectivity, lack of digital skills.
- Promoting ways people can access information and services if they are not online.
- Enlisting support from political and other "champions" for the campaign.
- Building partnerships with other campaigning organisations with similar goals.
- Looking to collaborate with other working parties on digital issues.
- Encouraging and helping the regions to engage in the campaign.

### **Health & Social Care**

Pressures on the health and care sectors are sadly set to continue into 2022, and the proposed Health & Care Bill is not the solution many sought. Here are just some of our concerns:

- Accessing Primary Care, including our GPs is fast becoming almost impossible. Our priority is to take a forensic look at what is happening and call for changes.
- Our investigation will also cover Secondary Care, and our hospitals which are clearly struggling. Community Care, with patients nursed at home or in care homes, was touted to relieve the pressure, but care staffing levels are far too low to take this on.
- The NPC will continue to campaign for a National Care Service, free at the point of need, funded by taxation, & working in tandem with, but not subsumed into the NHS.

### **Housing**

The housing crisis has created many challenges for the NPC in 2022. Our three most prominent priorities next year will be:

- Successfully updating our housing policies at the NPC policy conference.
- Increased urgency to drive down pensioners housing costs and reversing the huge increases in fuel costs.
- To change the position of pensioners so they have homes that are safe and meet all their individual needs.
- We will work to increase the size and influence of the NPC on all housing issues.
- The WP will also work with other likeminded organisations who support our aims.

### **LGBT**

It is just over two years since the formation of the NPC LGBT Working Group. We are beginning to raise issues facing LGBT+ pensioners and to better enable the NPC to represent and campaign on our behalf. Our 2022 priorities are:

- Build our base by encouraging more delegates from NPC Regional Councils, Affiliates & National Trade Union Retired Members Sections.
- Continue to welcome the chance to address our Regional Councils and other NPC Working Parties.
- Campaign for the Government to commit to an outright ban on Conversion Therapy when legislation is due in May 2022.

**NPC Working Parties – campaign issues for 2022**

**Minority Elders**

The Minority Elders is an active group with a list of priorities for 2022. They include:

- Digital Inclusion – highlighting the difficulties BAME elders have in accessing IT, such as affordability, language constraints, training, and dealing with bureaucratic barriers when trying to get help.
- Housing - drawing special attention to the disadvantages, inequalities and racism experienced by BAME elders in accessing housing.
- Social Care – to support the NPC campaign for a National Care Service, and address issues elders face in terms of support for and understanding of informal care, community care, and in care homes.

*\*To join the Elders contact [info@npc.org.uk](mailto:info@npc.org.uk)*

**Pensions & Income**

Priorities for the Pensions and Incomes Working Party next year include:

- Campaigning for legislation to prevent insurance companies transferring Annuities to other providers against the will of the Annuity holder. (A new NPC document on the topic, 'Your Annuity at Risk,' is now available from the NPC Office).
- Continuing to campaign for the retention of the Triple Lock, including compensation for the one year suspension, which will result in permanent financial loss for existing pensioners.
- Campaigning for the retention of all age related benefits, including the re-introduction of the axed, free TV Licence for all over 75s.

**Transport**

The Transport Working Party has been investigating a range of concerns for older people. Our top priority for 2022 will be persuading the Government, together with Civic and Police leaders, to tackle these issues:

- E scooters - To stem the menace on our streets we are calling for regulation of their use, and enforcement rules that compel users to wear protective clothing, and stay separate from pedestrians.
- Contactless Payment – We will also be tackling the drift towards contactless payment on public transport.
- Closure of booking offices and travel shops in favour of online booking—which discriminates against the poor and oldest.
- Bus legislation—that threatens the seniors' bus pass.

**Women's WP**

The Women's Working Party campaigns on many issues adversely affecting women, ranging from pensioner poverty and the pension gender gap, to health and social care.

- We continue to campaign against discrimination, harassment, sexism and misogyny affecting most women. Women had a long and hard fight to gain the rights we have today but there is still more to be done. We also seek to gain greater representation at all levels of the NPC.
- Domestic violence continues to be an issue, not least the rise caused by the pandemic and enforced isolation.
- Not specifically a woman's issue but the draconian measures contained within the Policing Bill will stop us from publicly protesting and speaking on women's issues.

**Power cuts caused by Storm Arwen highlighted a threat which could affect many older people when traditional landlines are phased out in 2025.** The UK is moving to a digital, broadband enabled phone system which is reliant on electricity. But a weakness in the changeover was revealed when thousands of homes in northern England lost power in the storm, leaving people in remote areas without mobile reception—and unable to call for help. **NPC's Jan Shortt, says the issue needs a rethink:** "Even with a mobile phone, you still need electricity to charge it. We will be alerting the government to flaws in this new system, which most people don't even know is coming."

