

Pensioners' Manifesto 2015

Briefing Paper



Introduction

After months of consultation and thousands of responses from pensioners and their organisations across the country, the NPC Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool this year unveiled the Pensioners' Manifesto for the 2015 General Election. It was decided that the Manifesto would cover the top 5 concerns of older people, although we recognise that there were many issues that could have been included. This paper therefore provides a brief explanation of each item, and can be used when presenting the Manifesto to candidates over the coming months.

A basic state pension for all set above the poverty level of £175 a week

One in six older people live in poverty and millions more are struggling to make ends meet. The UK's state pension is amongst the worst in the developed world and successive governments have allowed it to deteriorate. All older people, both now and in the future, need a guaranteed income on which they can live. The simplest and fairest way of doing this is through improving the basic state pension for all pensioners.

Increases in pensions to be linked to the best of RPI, CPI, earnings or 2.5%

Since 2010, the decision to remove the RPI (Retail Price Index) for uprating pensions has cost pensioners an estimated £1bn. As a result it means that older people are struggling to keep up with the cost of living, and see the purchasing power of their pensions reducing. To ensure the gap between pensioners' incomes and the rest of society do not widen, it is vital that the RPI is reinstated, along with the best of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), earnings or 2.5%.

Maintain universal pensioner benefits without means-testing

Every year, older people contribute £40bn towards the economy above what they receive in pensions, care and benefits. Many of the universal benefits exist because the UK has one of the worst state pensions in the developed world. Others tackle a specific concern, such as loneliness or fuel poverty. Means-testing these benefits would therefore cost more in the long run, as older people felt increasingly isolated from society, and prevented from making a contribution through volunteering or caring because they were unable to get about.

A National Health and Care Service which is free at the point of use and funded through taxation

The current social care system is broken. The means-tested system is unfair, access to services is being denied to many of those in need and the quality of care is sometimes very poor. A combined National Health and Care Service, funded by everyone through taxation is the most efficient and effective way at tackling these problems. Almost every other public service is funded this way, yet at the moment a patient with cancer is treated free by the NHS whilst a patient with dementia is means-tested. This two-tier system of care must stop and organisations like the King's Fund now recognise the need for a new combined service.

A legally binding Dignity Code to improve the quality of care for older people

Every week, the media reports shocking details of how some older people are treated in hospitals, care homes or their own homes. The NPC believes that we need specific legislation to tackle this issue and a Dignity Code that enshrines in law certain rights. The NPC's Dignity Code already has the support of over 40 local authorities, as well as a host of health professionals, care providers and politicians, including the care minister.

For more information visit: www.npcuk.org