

Campaign!

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

Snap election may decide future of triple lock

The future of state pension triple lock could be decided by the outcome of the General Election, the NPC has warned.

The stark warning comes just days after the Prime Minister, Theresa May announced a snap election for 8 June, and highlights the importance of the issue to older voters.

Most of the main political parties have yet to spell out whether or not they intend to keep the triple lock if they win in June, apart from Labour who have pledged it will remain.

The Chancellor, Phillip Hammond is said to be in favour of scrapping the 2.5% guaranteed minimum given to state pensioners every April, and instead introducing a link to average earnings or inflation under the Consumer Price Index.

However, a number of economic experts and Conservative advisers are now saying that with earnings and inflation likely to rise above 2.5%, scrapping the triple lock would save very little and was likely to put off many older voters.

Just days after Mrs May's statement, the NPC published its own six-point Pensioners' Manifesto that will be given to candidates standing across the country.

As well calling for the retention of the triple lock, the manifesto also puts forward the case for a state pension of £200 a week, greater funding for the NHS, an end to privatisation in the health service and a national social care system funded from general taxation that is free at the point of delivery and without means-testing.

The other points also include maintaining universal pensioner benefits, building more homes that are suitable for older people and introducing legal protection from all forms of elder abuse.

The other big issue dominating the election is Brexit, and the manifesto calls for a deal that safeguards the payment of pensions, the EU health insurance card and the rights of those UK pensioners living abroad.

Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said: "The triple lock could end up being a litmus test for the way in which older people vote in the election."

A Pensioners' Manifesto



In recent years, various politicians, think-tanks and media commentators have suggested that older people are the cause of many of the country's problems - from the shortage of housing to the lack of hospital beds.

"...Britain is not a great place in which to grow old - our state pension is inadequate, our social care system is in crisis and every year tens of thousands of pensioners die from the cold..."

Some have also argued that the older generation has escaped austerity at the expense of the young, despite the fact that older people are very concerned about the future of their children and grandchildren. Plans to take away benefits such as the pension triple lock or the bus pass will not help younger people - but are being used to roll back the welfare state for everyone.

In reality, Britain is not a great place in which to grow old. Our state pension is among one of the least adequate in the western world, our social care system is in crisis with 1.8m people no longer getting the help they need and in the last 5 years over 141,000 pensioners have died from cold related illnesses.

That is why at this General Election we will call on all candidates to support a manifesto that will put the concerns of today's and tomorrow's pensioners at the heart of the political process.

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"That is why at this election we will call on all candidates to support a manifesto that will put the concerns of today's and tomorrow's pensioners at the heart of the political process," added Ms Shortt.

Tens of thousands of copies of the Pensioners' Manifesto will be distributed over the next six weeks to prospective MPs across the country. You can order copies from the NPC office
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Campaign Dates

Annual Pensioners' Parliament
6-7 June: Tickets priced £5 for the Tuesday rally and £10 for the two day event plus evening social in the Winter Gardens, Blackpool are now available to order online or from the NPC office. The key theme throughout will be the priorities for the pensioners' movement after the general election.

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

Join the NPC
If you are a member of a local pensioner group or trade union branch they can join the NPC. For details contact info@npcuk.org

MPs uncover the real crisis in social care

A shocking new report from the Communities and Local Government Committee is the latest to reveal the extent of the crisis in the social care system.

The MPs found that 28% of care services are inadequate or require improvement and staffing is under pressure.

A staggering 47.8% of care workers leave within a year of starting and the median hourly pay is just £7.40.

Some 49% of home care workers are also on zero hour contracts, compared with just 2.9% of the workforce nationally.

Residents are also getting a raw deal, with 96% of people paying for their own care

on average paying 43% more than state funded residents in the same home, for the same room and the same level of care.

MPs also found that one in five unpaid carers — many of them older — receives no practical support from the local authority.

Dot Gibson, NPC deputy general secretary said: "This is the latest in a very long line of reports to show that the existing means-tested social care system is failing both those who try to deliver the services and those who need the support."

"The parties at the election must spell out how they intend to tackle this problem, rather than just ignoring it."

Pensioner problems for those in rural areas

The view that people who live in the countryside are rich and enjoy a rural idyll masks pockets of deprivation and poor health, according to a new report from the Local Government Association (LGA) and Public Health England (PHE).

Almost one in seven rural households live in relative poverty after housing costs are taken into account, while more rural households experience fuel poverty than urban ones.

Poorer public transport links also have a significant impact on people's daily lives and access to services.

People are also increasingly experiencing social isola-

tion and loneliness, especially among older people, which affects their health and in turn places additional strain on services.

The costs of delivering social care, such as help with daily tasks, to rural locations is also higher than in cities and towns.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "Rural communities are also increasingly older as young people move away from the area, and older people often experience worse health and have greater need of health and care services., yet find themselves miles away from their hospital or GP surgery and without decent public transport."

Pensioners' Parliament rolls on

The Prime Minister's decision to call a snap election that coincides with the annual NPC Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool has forced the Convention to restructure the programme for the event.

The traditional march and rally will open the Parliament as planned, and the organisers are trying to arrange for an election hustings

later that evening - providing all the parties are willing to send along a suitable representative.

Day two will go ahead as normal and will include six sessions on pensions, housing, public transport, health and social care, Brexit and local campaigning.

However, the Convention has decided to close the Parliament after the social on the Wednesday evening so that people can return home early if they wish on 8 June to vote.

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