

# BIENNIAL REPORTS

## INTRODUCTION

This year over one million people will have their seventieth birthday; the so called “baby boomer” generation; those who five years ago were tomorrow’s pensioners, are now today’s pensioners.

They started out in life, just as the NHS, our public services, including social housing, and the welfare state were being launched. Many were properly trained in apprenticeships, had jobs-for-life, became home-owners and joined good occupational pension schemes, they bought cars and began to have holidays abroad.

This same generation is now being criticised by the likes of the Resolution Foundation for having done what they were asked, and at the same time, are being used to attack the triple lock and the welfare state for future pensioners in the name of intergenerational fairness.

Equally, many of the older pensioners, born in the 1920s and 1930s, are living well into their 80s and 90s because they have been treated by the NHS, but they now need proper social care to maintain their independence and their dignity.

Today we have government austerity measures, cuts and privatisation of the NHS and our public services, a deep crisis in social care, an enormous housing crisis, growing personal debts, the closure of and cuts to many occupational pension schemes, and an uncertain future for the younger generation. The shock and anger is palpable.

It is incumbent on us to communicate, recruit, organise and act!

Just as the TUC is the voice of Britain at work, with 52 unions representing around six million workers, the NPC is the independent campaigning voice of older people, including retired trade union members. Through our one million affiliated members, our regions and our local groups, we campaign for the interests of current and future pensioners, and it is our responsibility to represent the frail elderly and disabled pensioners who cannot fend for themselves.

This report and the serious way in which our members have put forward their ideas and proposals for discussion over the two days of our BDC lay the basis for united and co-operative solidarity for the challenges we face.

**WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT**  
**Parliamentary Work**

The NPC is very grateful to Kelvin Hopkins MP for all his ongoing support. Through Kelvin, the NPC is able to table parliamentary questions and access information from government. He is also the sponsor of our annual lobby of MPs, as well as being the convenor of our parliamentary group.

In September 2015, Kelvin helped stage a meeting in Parliament on women's pensions, and has also been helpful in securing meetings with ministers and others, including the BBC in relation to the over 75s free TV licence.

### **The General Election**

As part of the 2015 General Election campaign, the NPC produced a 5-point Pensioners' Manifesto that was sent to all candidates across the UK.

This included our demands on the basic state pension, universal pensioner benefits, a National Health and Care Service and a legally binding Dignity Code.

Whilst the NPC does not recommend which way older people should vote, the manifesto was useful in bringing to the attention of would-be MPs the concerns of Britain's pensioners.

### **Meetings with Parliamentarians**

Over the last two years representatives of the NPC have met with Richard Harrington (Pensions Minister), Ros Altman (Pensions Minister) Nick Thomas-Symonds (Shadow Pensions Minister), Angela Rayner (Shadow Pensions Minister), Ian Blackford (SNP Pensions Spokesperson) and the All Party Parliamentary Group on frozen pensions.

### **Autumn Lobby of Parliament**

Every Autumn the NPC stages a national lobby of Parliament, and a meeting hosted by Kelvin Hopkins MP. The last two have been well attended, with a range of excellent speakers.

These have included Mark Serwotka (PCS), Neel Radia (NACC), Ian Blackford MP, Heather Wakefield (UNISON) and John McDonnell, shadow chancellor.

The event provides a very useful focus for our campaigns and highlights to MPs the concerns of older people from across the country, as well as achieving some useful publicity.

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### **Work and Pensions Committee Inquiry**

Early in 2016, the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee launched an inquiry into Intergenerational Fairness.

We submitted written evidence and also appeared before the committee, but it was clear from the initial press statement that this inquiry would give an "official" cover to the politicians, think tanks and media "experts" who argue that younger people are suffering from austerity as a result of older people being protected.

Since the last BDC, there has been a constant media barrage of stories at the heart of which is the call for abolition of the winter fuel allowance, the scrapping of the triple lock on pensions and the removal of the bus pass.

The inquiry report, issued in November, stated that: "*The millennial generation, born between 1981 and 2000, faces being the first in modern times to be financially worse off than its predecessors. . . . .*"

The report recommended that the basic state pension should be cut back and that Universal Pensioner Benefits "*should not be off limits when spending priorities are set in future Parliaments*" We have no doubts about the problems of younger generations. Under the latest pension legislation, they must work longer, pay more and get less pension. At work many are saddled with short-term and zero-hour contracts and low pay, many have university debts; there is a housing crisis and government cuts to young people's benefits. This is not the fault of pensioners.

It is government austerity measures, the property sharks and unscrupulous employers who are to blame.

Also, when the pundits tell us that we are protected, they overlook the reality: an estimated 6.5m older people have an annual income of less than £11,000; 5.8m older people struggle to afford food, gas and electricity; adult social care budgets have been cut by 4.6bn; an estimated 1 million pensioners are suffering malnutrition.

Anthony Curley, the UNITE young workers' coordinator spoke at the 2016 Pensioners Parliament and signed the pamphlet's introduction, along with the NPC general secretary. This publication has been very popular and lays out many of the arguments in our ongoing Generations United campaign.

#### **UK Advisory Forum on Ageing (UKAFA)**

One of the first acts of the Conservative government in 2015 was to abolish the UK Advisory Forum on Ageing. UKAFA had been set up by a previous Labour government to act as a forum in which the voices of older people themselves - rather than through professionals acting on their behalf - could be heard by ministers.

Whilst the NPC was aware of the limitations of UKAFA, the government's decision to close it down without consultation or without having any alternative in place has removed the only formal mechanism for older people's organisations to talk directly to ministers. A number of the regional forums on ageing have now also folded or are trying to find a new role. The NPC will continue to monitor developments.

#### **The Lobbying Act**

The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act (2014) - commonly known as the "Gagging Act" was implemented in the general election campaign for the period 19 September 2014 - 7 May 2015.

In September 2015 the Commission on Civil Society and Democratic Engagement, chaired by Lord Harries, published a report stating that the Act had had the feared "chilling effect" on charities, leaving them unwilling to speak up for fear of breaking the law.

In March 2016 the (Lord) Hodgson review, commissioned by the government, published its report on the effect of the Act in the general election campaign.

This recommended that the definition in the Act covering any activity which could be "reasonably regarded" as intended to influence voters should be amended to reflect the campaigning groups' actual intentions - so charities [and campaign groups] would only be in breach of the law if it could be shown that they had meant to campaign in favour of a party or candidate.

Also that the 365-day period covered by the Act for general elections should be reduced to four months in line with rules for European and devolved administration elections; and that the Electoral

Commission's online register should be improved, giving more information as to what the registered parties' campaigning interests are.

The government is still reviewing the proposals, and most charities welcome these recommendations, but do not think they go far enough.

We did not register the NPC under the Act, but we continue to follow the campaign against the "Gagging Act"

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## **PENSIONS**

### **The state pension**

In 2015 we published *For What It's Worth*, a pamphlet explaining the new state pension and its implications for future pensioners. The pamphlet is extremely popular and after a number of re-prints it is now on its second edition - updated when the National Council approved a new policy demanding a Living State Pension, set above the official poverty level and based on 70% of the Living Wage (outside London). This would currently give a figure of around £200 a week.

Our previous policy argued that the state pension should be set above the official poverty level (regarded as 60% median population income, before housing costs), but by giving an actual figure based on the Living Wage, the new policy clarifies the meaning of our demand for a state pension set

above the official poverty level and it overcomes the anomaly whereby, in times of austerity, population income and so the poverty level are reduced, meaning that the level of state pension for which we campaign would also be reduced.

We have always recognised that any increase that we campaign for must be easily understood and defended, and the idea of a Living Wage is now widely accepted, seems logical and chimes with those of working age who are more familiar with this concept. Also, given that older people do not face all the costs of working age people, but nevertheless experience additional costs that workers don't have, the figure of 70% of the living wage is reasonable. There also needs to be an acceptance that the additional finance for this proposal (as with previous policies) will rely on changes to the National Insurance Fund and contributions, the availability of pension tax relief and a different use of funds currently in the wider benefits system eg. Pension Credit.

With the ending or cut-backs in private occupational schemes, the state pension is more important than ever; at the end of 2015, over 200,000 people emptied their private pension pot or withdrew cash, the majority cashing in pots worth less than £30,000.

Also, whilst the government's auto-enrolment scheme is currently being reviewed, John Cridland is looking at the state pension age.

Through written submissions to government, meetings with ministers and other politicians plus a considerable amount of campaign material, we have continued to address the unfairness of the New State Pension brought in in April 2016 including a detailed briefing in defence of the Triple Lock, the unequal application of which has been raised with both government and opposition on a number of occasions and will continue to be a key issue, as part of a wider Pension Justice Campaign. The NPC has also played a key role in the discussions taking place regarding the future of indexation and the investigations to replace the CPI (Consumer Price Index) with a more suitable Household Inflation Index. A decision on this by government is expected in 2017.

Our current pension campaign also includes the following key demands:

- ☐ The inclusion of existing pensioners in the new State Pension on a no detriment basis
- ☐ Ensuring those women born between April 1951 and April 1953 are not disadvantaged by the changes in the state pension age
- ☐ Ensuring that fair indexation arrangements apply to both the existing and the new State Pension
- ☐ Introduction of equal pension rights for same sex partnerships

## **State Pension Age**

Under the 2014 Pension Act, the government is enabled to conduct a review of the state pension age (SPA) every five years. In 2016, John Cridland began the first of these reviews and the NPC has twice submitted detailed evidence.

We say there should be no further increases or acceleration of the SPA, and existing plans to raise the age to 67 in 2028 and 68 by 2044-46 should be abandoned because there is a lack of evidence to support any change beyond 66 for both men and women.

There is no case for stating that adults should spend a third of their adult lifetime in retirement. However

### **Resolutions Carried at the 2015 BDC**

¶1 and 4 on the state pension and universal benefits called on the NPC to highlight the dangers facing future generations, and to stress the need for decent pensions and benefits for all

¶2 was concerned with the unfair uprating arrangements that have been put in place between the old state pension prior to 6 April 2016 and the new state pension, as well as looking at what a future measurement of indexation might be

¶3 on the future of annuities called on the government to repeal their decision to enable individuals to cash in their defined contribution occupational pensions and to undertake a long-term policy review of pension provision

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there is little doubt that any attempt to raise the SPA further or accelerate an already planned rise would have a detrimental impact on certain sections of the population, particularly given the gross health inequalities that exist across the UK. An alternative would be to argue that retirement should be based around the number of years of healthy life expectancy and the link between Pension Credit and SPA could be decoupled so that Pension Credit could be claimed up to five years prior to SPA. Also certain defined groups, such as disabled workers and unpaid family carers could be enabled to access their State Pension up to five years prior to reaching SPA without further reduction in value.

### **Frozen Pensions**

The NPC and its Minority Elders Committee has been tireless in its pursuit of justice for those 500,000 UK state pensioners living abroad who are currently unable to receive an annual increase in their state pension. In 2016, the NPC and the International Consortium of British Pensioners produced a booklet explaining the issue and the case for parity across the countries.

Since the last BDC, various meetings have taken place with parliamentarians and the issue has been raised with the Pensions Minister. The outcome of

the EU Referendum has given the issue new impetus, as those UK state pensioners living in Europe become part of the negotiations over Britain's future relationship. In a new initiative the NPC has recently written to all Commonwealth High Commissioners with a request for them to raise the issue at the highest possible level.

## **ALLOWANCES**

### **Attendance Allowance**

The Convention continues to raise the inequity of the Carer's Allowance not being payable to those who are also in receipt of a state pension. Unfortunately, there has been no progress on this issue, but a renewed effort will be made with both government and opposition in the coming year.

In considering the resolution on the Disability Living Allowance, our policy is for the Attendance Allowance to include a mobility element instead and this is therefore being pursued.

After months of lobbying MPs, including by NPC members, in January the government announced that it had dropped plans to devolve the Attendance Allowance to local authorities. This is a welcome victory for the pensioner and disabled movement.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

### **National Health Service**

During the 2015 general election campaign the Convention raised with candidates their views on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and its relationship to the NHS, and at the 2016 Pensioners' Parliament the leader of War on Want, John Hilary outlined the issue in detail. The Brexit decision on 23 June has now called into question whether or not TTIP is viable, but there is little doubt that trade deals of this kind - that hand immense power and influence to private companies - are constantly threatening our public services. The NPC will therefore continue to monitor how this situation develops.

The Health and Social Care working party has considered the Forward View consultation on improvement in the ratio of GPs to patients and we joined the 'Patients First' Campaign run by the BMA, which calls for the expansion of the overall number of GPs in order to give patients the time, care and services they need.

At the same time, we continue to support and campaign with Keep our NHS Public and the NHS Support Federation in defence of the NHS and against cuts and privatisation. The NPC nationally, regionally and in local boroughs has taken part in "Defend our NHS" demonstrations and meetings over the two years since the last BDC.

More recently draft Sustainability and Transformation

Plans (STPs) have been revealed in the 44 footprints (areas) of the country arising from the behind-closed-doors discussions on the NHS initiative.

**Resolutions Carried at the 2015 BDC**

10 reiterated longstanding NPC policy on the issue of the Carer's Allowance

11 on the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was remitted to the EC for consideration. The motion called for the DLA (including the mobility component) to be paid to those over state pension age

14 called for rents and housing benefits to be kept in line with the cost of living

**Resolutions Carried at the 2015 BDC**

5 and 9 outlined the principles of a NHS and a social care system free at the point of use, and funded by general taxation

6 was on The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and its relationship to the NHS.

7 was on the self-management of older people and the role of the nurse

8 called for an improvement in the ratio of GPs to patients

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ed by the government at the beginning of 2016; many of our local and regional affiliates and individual members are actively engaged in campaigns on the cuts in services involved in these plans.

**Social Care**

At the time of writing this report, on two consecutive mornings, the crisis in social care has been the subject of lengthy reports and interviews on the BBC Radio Four *Today* programme, with Lord Norman Warner, former Labour Minister of Health and cowriter of the Dilnot report saying that there should be a tax-funded social care service; also a letter on this issue was published in the *Guardian*, signed by the NPC general secretary and Unison's national officer, Heather Wakefield.

After years as the Cinderella of the welfare state, the issue of social care has now risen to the top of the political agenda and barely a day passes without this being the subject of media reports and politicians' statements. But for the NPC, social care has been at the top of our agenda for at least ten years; since our last BDC, reports coming in to our Health and Social Care Working Party are persistent and alarming.

The problems, now at crisis point, have been growing gradually and then with increasing intensity since the early 1980s. Under the 1948 National Assistance Act, Local Authorities were only expected to supply low level domiciliary care and residential homes for people who could not manage at home. But in 1981 NHS beds for older people were cut and successive governments have defined illnesses affecting old age as "social" rather than "medical"; thus older people were shifted from the NHS into Local



Authority care.

However, this short-sighted attempt to reduce the number of older people needing medical care has rebounded. Despite growing demand, government cuts in grants to Local Authorities has led to a reduction of 12% in care budgets resulting in a 25% cut in the number of people receiving care. Also, despite government rhetoric about the need for support and preventative services in the community and the heroic efforts of care professionals to keep up with demand, the decline in these services is driving thousands of older people, their families and care workers to dial 999 for an ambulance to access hospital A&E departments.

The role of the nurse in assisting older people to selfmanage their (sometimes complex) medical conditions set out in resolution 7 (above) could be an important part of the support and preventative services in the community, and our Health and Social Care working party has taken this proposal on board. However, again, the cuts in health and care budgets mean that such an initiative is far from being implemented.

Government cuts have also forced local authorities to negotiate lower rates for long-term places in nursing homes for older people for whom they are responsible in the means-tested system, meaning that self-funders (those with assets, including their home, worth £23,250 in England and Northern Ireland, £24,000 in Wales and £26,000 in Scotland) are paying an estimated 40% more, resulting in many more older people being forced to sell their homes to pay for long-term care.

We had a speaker at our 2016 Pensioners' Parliament from the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC); their report *Where does the money go? Financialised chains and the crisis in residential care* reveals that the dubious financial engineering, tax avoidance and complex business models of some big private care companies shifts risk to care workers, local authorities and selffunders. The government stresses the importance of private insurance as a way of saving for care costs, but the private insurance industry has reacted saying that it would not have a suitable range of products in place for at least a decade, and eight people would need to pay in for one person to draw out!

But what about the solution?

Increasing numbers of politicians, think tanks and health professionals are now coming forward with proposals for raising additional funding for social care: Andy Burnham MP proposes a tax on property after death; Norman Lamb MP calls for a dedicated health and care tax; Paul Burstow (a Minister in the Coalition government) is calling for a Social

Movement for Social Care to keep the issue on the agenda with a view to making proposals in three years' time in the 2020 Spending Review; meanwhile Simon Stephens (head of the NHS) suggests scrapping the state pension triple lock and the pensioners' bus pass to raise the money.

Over the last two years, the Convention has been building support for our policy: a new model of free social care - one that shares the cost across society as a whole, improves access to services as well as standards of care. We are working more closely with UNISON, the NHS Support Federation and others to develop this further. This includes staging a crossparty roundtable in February, the publication of a new pamphlet and other campaign material and meetings with key individuals in the sector, as well as hopefully organising an important panel discussion

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at the 2017 Pensioners' Parliament.

Our Executive Committee meeting in January recognised the need to draw up concrete proposals for our policy of funding social care through taxation, and we are taking action to move forward on this.

### **Meals on Wheels**

Among the cuts in social care is the Meals on Wheels Service, and we continue to work closely and support the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) in its campaign to make meals on wheels a statutory service that cannot be cut by local authorities. Their research has found that just 48% of councils now provide a service compared with 66% only two years ago. Previously we have assisted the NACC with a parliamentary meeting, circulated campaign material and their chair, Neel Radia will again speak at the 2017 Pensioners' Parliament about the next steps in defending this vital service.

## **EVENTS AND ACTION DAYS**

### **Pensioners' Parliament**

The annual Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool remains one of the NPC's key events and activities of the year. The quality of the programme is always extremely high; attracting a range of first class speakers on various topics. In recent years, numbers have declined largely due to funding problems affecting many local groups, and cuts from Blackpool Council have put an additional £6,000 charge on staging the event. Nevertheless, the NPC continues to try and improve the way the event is organized, funded and perceived by those attending. For example, this year it is hoped to be able to live 'stream' the event online. The event is completely unique and offers one the best ways we can continue to build the pensioner movement. It promotes a shared identity and unity in campaigning, as

well as providing the opportunity to meet old and new friends and to socialise. All affiliates are therefore asked to encourage as many of their members to attend as possible.

### **Dignity Action Day**

Over the last few years, the NPC has set out to mark National Dignity Action Day on 1 February, promoting our Dignity Code and Social Care policy with a series of activities organised around the country by regions. The latest effort included a joint statement with UNISON which appeared in the national press calling for additional funding to be given to social care and the creation of a tax-funded health and social care service. The NPC and its regions also continue to promote the Dignity Code among local MPs, hospital trusts, local authorities and other care providers. To date, over 50 local authorities have signed up to the code. It continues to be our policy to secure the Code in legislation.

### **Winter Deaths and the Fuel Campaign**

The number of increased deaths of older people in winter is a disgrace; it is part of the problems created by the crisis in social care, but also by the high cost of fuel and by cold homes. In 2015, the UK saw the highest number of winter deaths among older people for 15 years, with a staggering 43,900 cold related deaths being recorded between December 2014 and March 2015.

Our campaign calls for a programme of home insulation, ending higher bills for those on prepayment meters and those who cannot pay online, scrapping standing charges (also on water - see above motion), an increase in the winter fuel allowance and action to tackle the excessive profits of the big six energy companies.

For the last two years, the NPC has publicly highlighted the scale of winter deaths amongst older people with the release of black balloons around the country. This has achieved some useful publicity in the regions. However, as a result of environmental concerns and local authority restrictions, the Convention will instead be looking into laying wreaths in 2017.

### **UN Day of Older Persons**

In the last few years the NPC has marked 1 October with a range of activities organised by regions across the country. The recent themes have focused on the state pension, universal benefits and care issues. In 2016 sixteen of our "skeletons" displayed a banner outside the Department of Health in Whitehall. It proves to be a useful day for linking up with local authorities and other organisations to mark the rights of older people.

### **Dismaland**

During the Autumn of 2015, the NPC's state pension

centenary banner made by Ed Hall, was given centre stage in one of the exhibition spaces at the Banksycurated art exhibition in Weston Super Mare, known as Dismaland. The banner was featured in a political section of the exhibition which showed different types of protests and campaigns from across the world, and was seen and photographed by tens of thousands of people as part of the event.

**Resolution carried at 2015 BDC**

13 called for the government to withdraw standing charges for pensioners on all utility bills

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## **TRANSPORT**

### **Concessionary bus pass**

The above motion was remitted to the EC and was passed to the Transport Working Party to consider. The intention of the motion was supported in principle however it was felt it was impracticable to implement the call for the national concessionary bus pass to include trains, especially in non-centrally controlled conurbations as boundaries are inadequately defined. In addition its usage would be disruptive to already well used networks and as such it would be divisive and could cause intergenerational division rather than solidarity. The Transport Working Party considers that the national concessionary bus pass should enable holders to obtain the concessionary fares similar to those afforded to the holders of a Senior Railcard. This is a policy it is continuing to pursue.

### **Accessibility issues on Driver Only Trains**

In 2016 the NPC published an account of a journey taken on Southern Trains by three older people; one of whom was a wheelchair user, one of whom was blind and one who was aged over 80. This publication has been extremely well received and highlights the many problems facing travelers who have restricted mobility.

Safety on public transport is an ongoing concern that the NPC is raising and we had a platform speaker at the RMT union meeting in the House of Commons and at a public rally in connection with the underground workers demands relating to safety.

## **OTHER DECISIONS AND ACTIONS**

### **Digital Exclusion**

The NPC has regularly campaigned against discrimination of consumers who are not willing or able to pay their bills online. Part of this includes support for the Keep Me Posted campaign which was represented in a session at the 2016 Pensioners Parliament explaining that it is every consumer's right to choose, without disadvantage, how they are contacted by banks and other financial service companies, utility companies, media

companies and other service providers.

### **Free TV Licences for the over 75s**

One of the former Chancellor's sleight of hand was to pass responsibility for the payment and administration of the free TV licence for over 75s from the Department for Work and Pensions to the BBC. The NPC has objected strongly to this, both in the national media, to the minister responsible and the BBC. The Opposition recently tabled an amendment to reverse the decision, but the plans are still going ahead for 2018-20. The NPC continues to therefore raise this issue at every opportunity.

### **Housing**

The 2015 resolution on housing benefit opened up the much wider issue of housing, and we are in the process of developing a suitable housing policy in which this call will be included. More widely, the NPC is aware of the huge pressure that pensioners are facing when it comes to housing. Not only does this include those who are renting from private or social landlords, but also those who are owner occupiers who want to downsize, but cannot find suitable alternative homes. There is also the growing problem that cuts in adult social care mean the end of managers in sheltered housing schemes so that the residents' only assistance is through a call centre accessed through a system of tele-care. Our housing policy will address all these issues and we will be submitting evidence into the Commons' inquiry into older people's housing.

### **Lifelong learning**

The NPC has been a long-term supporter of free adult education classes, but has recognised that successive governments have withdrawn funding from these important areas. In 2015, the NPC supported the UCU union and the Workers' Education Association which is leading a campaign to make the case for adult education and to give adult learners a voice.

### **Other older people's organisations**

#### **Resolution carried at 2015 BDC**

☐ 15 on the enhancement of the concessionary bus pass

#### **Resolution carried at 2015 BDC**

☐ 16 on widening NPC membership called for the NPC to contact organisations such as the Royal Voluntary Service and Women's Institute

#### **Resolution carried at 2015 BDC**

☐ Emergency resolution on adult education called for the restoration of funding for the educational needs of adults

#### **Resolution carried at 2015 BDC**

☐ 12 focused on digital exclusion in energy matters and raised the wider concern of older people being excluded from financial benefits and other services if they were not on line

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The Convention also contacted the Town's Women's Guild. However, there has been no progress at a national level in securing their support or affiliation to the NPC.

### **Court Case: Pride Mobility Scooters**

Throughout 2016, the NPC has been involved in the first ever UK class action legal case against Pride Mobility Scooters, over their decision to instruct retailers that they were unable to reduce the price of products in adverts, shops or online. In December, the Competition Court considered whether or not the case could go forward and a judgment is expected shortly. The NPC's legal team intends to appeal should the judgment go against us.

## **COMMUNICATIONS, ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **Communications**

The NPC's communications' strategy has a wide brief covering affiliates, members, potential members, the general public, politicians and other organisations. Our main methods of communication include the following:

■ **Publications:** The NPC produces a wide range of material including The Message newspaper, the monthly Campaign! Bulletin, campaign leaflets, pamphlets and a catalogue of briefing papers and other material. Since the last BDC, this has included the following:

Age Audit 2015

Pensioners' Manifesto 2015

Dignity Action Day briefings 2016 and 2017

Dignity Action Day leaflets

Lobby of Parliament leaflets and briefings 2015 and 2016

Older People's Day leaflets

Budget Briefing Papers (5)

Campaign! Bulletin (22)

For What It's Worth - 2nd edition pamphlet

Pensioners on a Southern Train Journey pamphlet

Frozen pensions pamphlet

Uniting the Generations joint pamphlet with UNITE

Women's Working Party Newsletter Exchange (4)

Minority Elders Newsletter Speaking Out! (3)

Health and Social Care Newsletters (6)

Transport Working Party Conference reports 2015 and 2016

Good Practice Guide to Bus Travel

Trade Union Working Party Advisory Conference report 2016

Whole Person Care briefing paper

NHS Mandate Consultation - NPC submission

Attendance Allowance consultation - NPC submission

Adult Social Care Inquiry - NPC submission  
CQC Strategy 2016 consultation - NPC submission  
Local Government Finance Settlement - NPC submission  
NICE Homecare consultation - NPC submission  
Care Act 2014 consultation - NPC submission  
Triple Lock Factsheet  
Review of State Pension Age - NPC submission  
Interim Report on the Review of State Pension Age  
- NPC submission  
Intergenerational Fairness Inquiry - NPC submission  
Derived and inherited entitlement to a state  
pension - briefing paper  
Equalisation and increase in state pension age -  
briefing paper  
Transferable Tax Allowance - briefing paper  
Understanding the new state pension inquiry -  
NPC submission  
Pension Tax Relief consultation - NPC submission  
Consumer Price Indices consultation - NPC submission  
Bus Service Bill inquiry - NPC submission  
Trade Union Bill Consultation - NPC submission  
Implications of the Referendum Vote - briefing  
paper

📄 **NPC website:** The NPC website has recently undergone a re-design and is a popular place for people to find out about the NPC's policies and campaigning. It is regularly visited by journalists as a source of useful background information. Visit [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org) for more information.

📄 **Mainstream media:** The NPC regularly appears in the national media; on average about once a week. Over the last two years, the Convention has been quoted in all the national press, and appeared on numerous BBC Radio programmes as well as featuring in TV news.

📄 **Social media:** In the last few months the NPC has been receiving some assistance from the Ron Todd Foundation to improve our social media presence through Facebook and Twitter. This is beginning to have some success and will be developed throughout the next two years. You can find and follow the NPC by searching for "NPCUK" on either Facebook or Twitter.

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### **Working Parties**

The NPC benefits from having a number of specialist working parties that look at specific aspects of our internal organization and policy-making. Following the 2015 BDC a new method of election to these bodies was adopted, and after this year's BDC the EC will once again be electing members to the working parties for the next two years. A brief overview of their activities is listed below:

**Finance:** The working party oversees the day-to-day financing of the NPC, considers fundraising

possibilities and sets the broad budget for the year.

**Structure:** Since the last BDC the working party has been involved in three main areas of work involving NPC Scotland, the merger of Devon and Cornwall and the future of the Anglia and Eastern regions.

**Women:** The working party continues to produce a regular newsletter, holds well attended fringe meetings at the Women's TUC, held a very successful training school in 2016 aimed at working and retired women, and continues to monitor the input of women in the leadership of the regions.

**Minority Elders:** The working party is pursuing the frozen pension campaign and produces a regular newsletter. Its work mainly focuses on building links with other groups of minority elders across the country.

**Trade Union:** The working party stages a biennial advisory conference, as well as co-ordinating exhibition stands at all major trade union conferences throughout the year. It acts as a voice inside the trade union movement.

**Health and Social Care:** With an expanded workload, the working party produces a regular newsletter alongside other briefing material on a range of issues. Its work has taken in the role of CCGs, the effect of STPs, the impact of cuts to social care and dignity issues.

**Pensions and Income:** The working party has been engaged on a number of issues including indexation, the new state pension and the state pension age. It regularly advises on policy issues.

**Transport:** The working party stages a popular annual conference, has produced guidance notes on bus services and meets with ministers. Its latest effort is the pamphlet on the problems facing older passengers on train journeys.

#### **National Pensioners' Education & Welfare Centre**

The NPC's trustees continue to play a leading role in this charity. During the last two years the main activity has been to stage the Jack Jones' Lecture, which in 2015 was given by Mirror journalist, Brian Reade. More work, including some much needed fundraising is due to be undertaken in 2017.

#### **Staff**

Since the last BDC we have experienced considerable change within our staff. Our well known office manager, Alison Purshouse retired in the summer 2016, after working for the NPC for 15 years. Over that time, officers, EC and National Council members, Regional Secretaries and many of our local affiliates got to know her as the voice at the end of the phone, and the friendly face in the office assisting them with their enquiries; she was at the heart of our annual Pensioners'



Parliament. A formal goodbye presentation was held at our National Council meeting in October, with the tributes led by former NPC President, Rodney Bickerstaffe.

However, in February this year she offered, and we thankfully accepted, her return to the job for six months on a part-time basis following the decision of Ann Brolan, who had replaced her, to take another job elsewhere.

In October 2015, our well-liked finance officer, Mahendra Radia died suddenly at home aged 62. Mahendra got on with everyone and was well respected for his attitude and commitment to his work. He is sadly missed. Shortly after, we were able to recruit Mohammad Jameer to take his place, and Mohammad has fitted into the NPC, working closely with the National Treasurer.

We take this opportunity to thank Alison, Mohammad, Ann and our other two longstanding members of staff Melek Maksudoglu, our administrative assistant and Neil Duncan-Jordan, the National Officer for their commitment and dedication enabling us to "punch well above our weight".

In particular, this report shows the huge role played by our National Officer. Over the years Neil has not been satisfied with simply doing his job, he has developed and continues to develop his job, organising and co-ordinating the Pensioners' Parliament, researching and producing our responses to government consultations, providing us with briefing papers, the Campaign bulletin and The Message, following up on the work of our committees and sub-committees, as well as sending out timely press-statements.

### **Office**

Early in 2016, the Convention moved from its basement offices within Walkden House to one on the first floor. By the end of this year, it is also expected that the entire building will be vacated pending the construction of HS2, and our landlord TSSA has agreed to put aside suitable accommodation for us in their new premises should we wish. Further details as to the location will be available later in the year.

## **REMEMBERING MEMBERS**

Last but by no means least, we remember all those members who, over the years, have worked hard to build and represent the NPC. With an older generation's organization like ours it is natural that each year we lose a number of people who have taken on important responsibilities in local, regional and trade union retired members groups, and we take this opportunity to remember them and their role in building the NPC. There are, however, those who we must specially recognise in this annual report:

**Ernie Purkis**

In January 2017 we learned of the sad death of Ernie Purkis from our West Midlands Region. Ernie served on the NPC's Executive and National Council for over 20 years, representing the CWU, as well as being the chair of the Structure Working Party for many years. He became a well-known NPC stallholder at TUC conferences. He was totally committed to the NPC and its cause.

**Helen Grew**

It was with great sadness that the Convention learned of the death of former Vice President, Helen Grew at the beginning of 2016. Helen had been involved with the NPC both as the secretary of the West Midlands Region, and as a vice president alongside Jack Jones. She was a committed trade unionist, feminist and fierce campaigner for older people; particularly on the issue of the state pension.

**Joe Harris**

Former General Secretary, Joe Harris died after a long illness with cancer shortly before the 2015 BDC. However, there was not enough time to include a tribute in the 2015 papers. Joe was an intellectual force and drove the NPC as its general secretary for nearly a decade. His particular interest was the history of the state pension and memorably he was responsible for a book, an anniversary magazine and a series of events in 2008 marking the centenary.

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Meeting in Committee Room 14, House of Commons, Lobby of Parliament  
November 2016

On platform, left to right: Ian Blackford MP (SNP), Dot Gibson NPC, Ron Douglas NPC, Heather Wakefield Unison, John McDonnell (Shadow Chancellor)