

Campaign!

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

Spending Review calls for cap on pensioner benefits

The government's mid-term Spending Review outlined a major challenge for older people, when the Chancellor announced that universal pensioner benefits such as the winter fuel allowance and concessionary travel would be included in an overall cap of welfare spending.

Given an ageing population, it raises

serious questions as to whether a future government would seek to cut these benefits further.

The other major announcement was the government's intention to withdraw the winter fuel allowance in countries where the average winter temperature is warmer than the warmest region of the UK – South West England.

This will mean

that pensioners in Portugal, Spain, Greece, France, Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus will no longer qualify.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Capping universal pensioner benefits might end up being a way of cutting them by the back door."

Support the NPC campaign to defend universal benefits - sign the petition at npcuk.org.

Death of the 'triple lock'?

Pension Minister Steve Webb has admitted that whilst he would like to see the 'triple lock' for the state pension continue after 2015, there is no guarantee.

The 'triple lock' raises the basic state pension every year by the higher of average earnings, the consumer price index or 2.5% - but legislation only guarantees an earnings' link. In a recession, this is likely to be almost worthless.

How state pensions are indexed is now likely to become a major issue at the general election.

Pensioners' Parliament is "best ever"

The 2013 NPC Pensioners' Parliament has been described as one of the "best ever", according to hundreds of delegates.

Around 1000 pensioners attended the opening session; featuring a strong line-up of guest speakers, including Frances O'Grady (TUC), Mark Serwotka (PCS) and author Owen Jones.

There were also sessions on pensions, dignity in care, the NHS, transport, devolution and uniting the generations.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said: "One of the key messages coming out of the Pensioners Parliament was the need to get young and old together."

A report of the event will be available shortly.



The jazz band leads the marchers along the streets of Blackpool for the start of this year's NPC Pensioners' Parliament
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National Pensioners Convention

Walkden House,
10 Melton Street,
London NW1 2EJ
T: 020-7383-0388
E: admin@npcuk.org
W: npcuk.org

Campaign Dates

TUC Fringe Meeting
NPC meeting on
Defending Universalism, 9 September, 12.45pm,
Bournemouth International Centre

NPC Dignity Code Exhibition
14-17 October,
House of Commons. The NPC will be tackling MPS and Peers over the Dignity Code

NPC National Council
17 October,
12.30pm, Unison HQ, London

National Dignity Day
1 February 2014,
organised by the Social Care Institute of Excellence. The NPC intends to mount nationwide activities to coincide with this day. More details to follow

NPC Pensioners' Parliament
17-19 June 2014,
Winter Gardens, Blackpool

Society sees older people as a burden

Research from the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) charity has revealed that 61% of older people think that society sees them as a burden.

The majority of respondents (57%) also felt that the media encouraged the idea that older people were a problem.

Even more worrying was the feeling from 66% that they felt stereotyped and 56%

said older people were often ignored.

The research shows that older people have a great deal to contribute to society and yet 71% of respondents said that they were rarely consulted on services that impact on their lives.

Peter Rayner, NPC vice president said: "This research really reflects what is almost a daily diet of anti-pensioner stories appearing

in the media."

"We are either the cause of problems in the NHS or we are to blame for younger generations not being able to buy their own homes."

"Some politicians are using this negative image to target universal pensioner benefits."

Every year, older people give society £40bn more than they take out of the economy in taxes, voluntary work and unpaid caring.

Government rush to bring in STSP

Concern is growing at the government's attempts to rush through the Pension Bill without proper time for parliamentary scrutiny, the NPC has warned.

The bill aims to introduce a single-tier state pension (STSP) from April 2016 by combining the basic and the second state pensions together, alongside plans to scrap contracting-out of the second state pension,

raising the number of qualifying years needed to secure a full state pension and raising the state pension age every five years.

The bill was introduced into the Commons on 10 May, and will be finished in the committee stage by the end of July.

Given that this is one of the most far-reaching and important reforms of social insurance, critics believe it is vital that all aspects of the

bill are properly debated.

One of the NPC's biggest criticisms is that the bill will not apply to any existing pensioner who currently gets a state pension of less than around £144 a week.

Marion Wilson, NPC vice president said: "The single-tier pension will create a two-tier pension system which will impact particularly badly on women."

A full briefing on the bill is available on request.

Pensioner poverty figures

There are currently between 1.9-2.1m older people living below the official poverty line, according to the latest figures from the Department for Work and Pensions.

The figures also show that the older the age of the pensioner, the greater the likelihood of low income.

Pensioners living in a household where someone is disabled were almost three times as likely to be in material deprivation compared to those living in families where no-one is

disabled and those from an ethnic minority were also more likely to live on a low income.

Norman Jemison, NPC vice president said: "When over 1m pensioners say they couldn't pay an unexpected bill of £200, it speaks volumes about the need for a higher state pension that is paid to everyone."

You can now keep up to date with all the NPC's activities by following us on Twitter @NPCUK.