



Campaign!

Fighting for the rights of older people

2021 Annual Convention – Dates Announced

Prof. Sir Michael Marmot among guest speakers at NPC's virtual 'parliament'



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The NPC Annual Convention will host an impressive list of leading experts at four topical webinars this June. The free to view sessions will feature key discussions on pensions, health & social care, older people's rights, and uniting the generations.

Our confirmed speakers include world famous health and social care leader Professor Sir Michael Marmot (pictured right), Director of the International Institute for Society and Health; Gail Cartmail, President of the TUC; Jackie Killeen, Director of the Equality and Human Rights Commission; and Judith Ish-Horowitz MBE, Founder of the UK's first nursery in a care home.

The virtual Convention replaces our usual annual in-person get-together, which was halted by the pandemic. But our free to view sessions, which will also be streamed on YouTube promise to be a must-see events.

General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "The Annual Convention is an important event on the NPC calendar, and while it is quite different this year, we want to ensure that it is very much relevant to our policies and campaigning remit. We hope as many people as possible support it."

The webinar dates are: June 8—Annual Convention Opening 'Rally' with TUC President, Gail Cartmail; June 18—State Pension Inequality & Pensioner Poverty; June 21—Who Cares: The Future of Health and Care; June 29—Generations United: Bridging the Age Gap.

You will soon be able to register for all four, free-to-attend Convention sessions on our website. **If you would like to note your interest in attending email** info@npcuk.org/convention **NB:** *If you are unable to go online to attend the Convention, you can read about the webinar discussions in a special post-event edition of the Campaign newsletter.*

Queen's Speech delay on social care reform makes way for damaging Health & Care Bill

The Government's failure to outline its promised social care reforms in this month's Queen's Speech has been condemned from all quarters.

The NPC views the move as a 'smokescreen' that allows the Government to introduce their much criticised Health and Care Bill, and has joined 15 other concerned organisations to issue a joint statement rejecting the proposals contained within it. NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "The Government's repeated commitment to bring forward proposals by the end of 2021 to 'improve the adult social care system' is we feel, something of a smoke screen that allows it to introduce its potentially damaging 'Health and Care Bill' for the NHS. **The NPC believes in a fully funded National Care Service that runs alongside, and works in collaboration with the NHS, not a service, where the care sector is the poor relation, whose budgets can be swallowed up by the needs of an already struggling Health Service.**

"It is time the government had an open and honest debate with the public on a National Care Service, funded

by taxation, free at the point of need - and that they listened to the many voices of those organisations who have spoken out today on their fears over what will eventually be presented in place of what is actually needed. Yet another missed opportunity."

The NHS Health & Care Bill will be discussed at the NPC Annual Convention webinar (see above) on June 21.

The partners to the joint statement, who include We Own It, Doctors in Unite, Keep Our NHS Public, and Our NHS Our Concern, are calling on the Government to halt the rollout of the Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) in the English NHS, and the further changes set out in the February 2021 White Paper and NHSE proposals for reform of the payment system. They believe the proposals represent a major reorganisation of the NHS, with far-reaching consequences for patients and staff, and they demand an extended and meaningful consultation with the public, NHS staff and unions, and Parliament, to decide how health and social care should be provided in England. **Sign a supporting petition at** <https://weownit.org.uk/blog/16-organisations-call-nhs-bill-be-halted>

Mary Feilding Guild Home closure

The final group of residents in the Mary Feilding Guild Home were sadly due to be moved out of the London care home last week despite protests from local groups, politicians and the NPC. The home was sold by Mary Feilding Guild, a charitable trust, to Highgate Care, a private company, on March 4, and the residents - aged between 80 and 100 - were soon afterwards told they were being evicted. NPC GS Jan Shortt said moves were continuing to investigate the process of the evictions: "To expect these residents to be happy about leaving is incredible - more so since they have not left the home during lockdown and restrictions still apply. There are no legal safeguards to give tenure for life for those needing care, there is no system in place to stop care homes from closing at the drop of a hat. Care homes have no more protection than a corner shop with the residents seen as commodities. It should be to their shame that our older generation and others in need of care are treated in such a manner."

NPC ANNUAL REPORT OUT NOW

Want to find out about the amazing range of work undertaken by the NPC? The NPC Report - April 2019 - March 2021 details all we are doing on issues affecting pensioners. You can purchase the NPC report for £2.00 plus postage and packaging at: www.npcuk.org/shop You can also pay by cash, cheque, BACS or postal order. Contact info@npcuk.org for information.

Fears rise over illegal e-scooter danger

The increased use of unregulated e scooters on our roads and pavements is posing a real threat to older people. The delay in introducing legislation is making it difficult for the Police to take action effectively. The Department of Transport has announced that a decision will be made next spring. Only hired scooters are permitted to be used and those only in the designated cities in which trials are allowed.

NPC Vice President Peter Rayner said “we are aware of the illegal use of e scooters on pavements, sometimes at high speeds and in a threatening and intimidating manner. We will see injuries, maybe fatalities, certainly we are going to see a situation where older and vulnerable people will be frightened to venture out. The situation is not helped by new e Scooter shops opening, how can that be acceptable, in effect the selling of something that cannot be used legally in public! If I opened a shop selling Crossbows and catapults, would the police not take an interest!”

Women’s WP video records fight for equality

The NPC Women’s Working Party (WP) made a remarkable video to mark International Women’s Day last month. Their stories, often told with great humour, will no doubt shock but also inspire those who didn’t have to start work as young women in the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s.

They relate the casual sexism of the era – the newspaper Page 3 nudes plastered on workplace walls, the sexual harassment and general attitude that women would ‘just get married and have kids’ and not need a career. The women tell how they fought to overcome these obstacles to have careers, often while raising families and fighting for better pay, conditions and opportunities for women. And they are still fighting for women – old and young – today through the NPC. **Women’s WP Chair, Rosie McGregor said: “I was very proud to be part of this video project, which we hope will inspire other women to join the NPC - because, while things have improved for women since we were young, there is still much more to do before women achieve full equality.** The gender pension gap between retired men and women is 40% - largely due to the fact that women took time off to have their families, and couldn’t afford to invest in a better pension. The picture is not hugely improved and we know that women, and working mums suffered most financially during the pandemic, because they tend to be in lower paid jobs. **“*To view the video visit: www.npcuk.org/post/womens-working-party-video**

Axing of LGBT+ Advisory Panel condemned

The LGBT+ Working Party of the National Pensioners’ Convention has issued a statement on the government’s decision to disband its LGBT advisory panel.

Speaking on behalf of the Working Party, NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: “We deplore the decision to dissolve the LGBT Advisory Panel, established by the previous Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May to ‘advise ministers on issues and policies concerning lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The decision could not have come at a worse time for the country’s 1.5 million LGBT+ pensioners’ as many face increased isolation and loneliness because of the pandemic. **Discrimination against LGBT+ retirees in the provision of Social Housing, Adult Social Care and End of Life Care remains a huge concern. A recent study by Age UK into the mental health of LGBT+ Pensioners has shown that many suffer from increased mental health problems impacted by years of prejudice,** There has been an increase in LGBT+ poverty, and a recent National LGBT Survey found that only 63% of trans people surveyed were employed. There are also concerns over hate crime and the rights of Black, Asian and other minority ethnic LGBT+ pensioners..”

Doctors told to offer face to face appointments again by NHS England

All GP practices must offer face-to-face appointments and have an in-person reception desk according to new NHS England guidance.

From Monday, 17 May patients must be offered face-to-face appointments if that is their preference.



The directive brings to an end to the ‘total triage’ system introduced during the pandemic which led to GP appointments mainly being held over the phone. One estimate suggests the number of in-person GP appointments fell by 90million in the past year.

Under the new guidance, GPs can still use telephone and online consultations where patients benefit from them, but physical appointments must also be available, and all practice reception desks must now be open to patients in a Covid-safe manner.

This is so those who do not have easy access to phones or the internet are not disadvantaged when accessing care.

It comes as the Royal College of General Practitioners warned against retaining the ‘total triage’ model beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, arguing that it may ‘exacerbate health inequalities’.

It added that it is ‘asking CCGs to prioritise support to practices who are reporting very low levels of face to face appointments’.

Before the pandemic, some 70% of appointments were face-to-face and 30% were phone, video or online, but this switched to 30% face-to-face and 70% remote at the height of the crisis.

Invest in digital inclusion but stop digital-only push leaving people behind

The move by a growing number of major UK companies towards digital-only services is putting many older and disabled people at a serious disadvantage.

While the NPC welcomes those retailers, such as Aldi, Asda, Coop and Lloyds Pharmacy who have pledged to keep accepting cash from customers as part of a Which? campaign, we are still concerned by the push to online-only by many others. Following contact from distressed NPC members, we are compiling a dossier of evidence demonstrating the problem to send to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP, with copies to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. Home delivery conglomerate Milk & More is just one firm which is moving to online-only, to the distress of customers who cannot or do not want to use the internet to place orders or pay bills. The NPC believes urgent government action is required to ensure that these companies still retain telephone and postal communication services for people who can’t go online, **General Secretary Jan Shortt said: “Access to information is a human right and those without technology are being excluded by the drive to digitalise everything from essential health services to ticket purchases and everyday milk and goods deliveries. Our research shows that our members are suffering exclusion in many areas through the drive to digital-only.** While this may be worthwhile for businesses, and indeed the government, customer choice does not seem to feature in their decisions. We realise digitalisation is inevitable, but the process should be approached differently.” The NPC dossier will cover issues such as: 2021 Online Census & alternatives not working; fear of scams & cybercrime; the cost of laptops, broadband & security; and digital banks/the ‘cashless society’ push.