



NPC

NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION

Campaign!

Fighting for the rights of older people

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WANT TO JOIN THE NPC?

Do you care about issues affecting older people? Want to do something about them? Then why not join us, as an individual or as an affiliate group. We are the biggest campaign group run for and by older people. So contact us today and find out how to get involved. Details above.

NPC members rally across UK to End Fuel Poverty

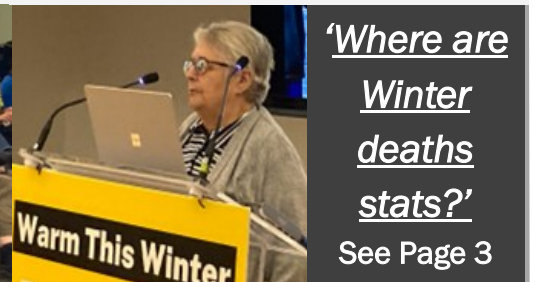
Warm This Winter protests by the End Fuel Poverty Coalition were held across the UK on Saturday 3rd December. NPC members joined fellow coalition members in demanding urgent action to offer cheaper, more sustainable fuels to the 7 million, and rising who need it. General Secretary Jan Shortt spoke at the rally (below). See page 2 report & pictures of our London Winter Deaths demo on 8th December.



NPC members join the Westminster demo.



NPC's Barry Todman & Jan Shortt



'Where are Winter deaths stats?'

See Page 3

Triple lock saved - 2023 pensions up 10.1% But fight to survive cost of living crisis goes on!

NPC members have won our fight to reinstate the triple lock to guarantee state pensions rise by 10.1% in 2023.

But as the increase—announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement—does not kick in until April, older people already having to choose between eating or heating, still face a Winter of rampant fuel and food price* rises (*up 16.4% in October). The NPC is also concerned that the Statement unveiled a further rise in the energy price cap next Spring (taking the average fuel bill from £2,500 to £3,000 a year). Just as importantly we are worried that the introduction of a social care cap as well as other care reforms, have been delayed for a further two years. (The cap would limit how much the government can claim from a person's property to pay for the cost of their care). The NPC is also disappointed that the

Chancellor didn't mention a major house insulation programme to reduce heating bills.

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "We welcome the news that the triple lock and benefits such as Pension Credit will rise by 10.1% - a true victory for people power, and a huge relief after months of worry. But it's still not enough to cover the horrendous cost of living for millions. That's why the NPC will continue to press for an equal state pension for all that is 70% of the living wage."

*From next April, the top rate state pension of £185.15 a week will rise to £203.85. The basic rate (for those who reached pension age before 2016) of £141.85 a week, will go up to £156.20.

A 'people-power' victory for our brilliant NPC members'



NPC FESTIVE CLOSING DATES

The NPC offices will close at 5pm on 22nd December 2022 & re-open on 3rd January 2023.



NPC London rally to protest at Winter Deaths delay

NPC London Region protested outside Parliament on the coldest day of the winter so far over the shocking cost of food and fuel—and demanded to know why the Winter Deaths statistics have been delayed for a second time.

As the mercury hovered just above zero at Westminster’s Old Palace Yard (Thursday, 8th December) we demanded to know why important ‘excess winter mortality’ rates – due to be announced on the same day – have been delayed until 19th January 2023. The Office of National Statistics had already pushed back publication of the annual ‘winter deaths’ figures from November to 8th December. They have now quietly moved the announcement again for the 2021-2022 (provisional) &

2020-2021 (final) figures. **Addressing the rally, London Region Secretary Barry Todman said:** “The Government knows the reasons for these unnecessary deaths—poor housing conditions, cold damp homes and inadequate insulation, and of course the worst state pension when compared to many other countries in Western Europe. We are all suffering from the massive increase in both food and energy costs, yet at the same time the energy companies are making massive profits - this is totally unacceptable.”

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt commented: “In the middle of a devastating cost of living crisis which is forcing millions of older people to choose between eating and heating, it is vitally important that we know how many are falling victim to cold



Thanks to End Fuel Poverty Coalition for their support.



living conditions caused by fuel poverty in England and Wales. With the government under fire for failing to adequately protect our oldest and most vulnerable from cold and hunger, we are rightly suspicious of the reasons that the ONS has delayed the announcement yet again. We are writing to the Head of the ONS, Sir Ian Diamond as a matter of urgency to ask why?” In ‘20-’21 there were 63,000 excess winter deaths driven by cold and covid - up two thirds on the previous year. The NPC fears the new numbers dying from cold related illness will be much higher. Jan said: “As the largest campaigning organisation for older people in the UK, the NPC has a vested interest in challenging the causes of excess winter deaths. The current cost of living crisis will not impact so much on this year’s figures, but may be an indicator for 2023. We know cold homes kill, and the worst drop in living standards since 1956, means millions cannot afford high heating bills.” **Read more at: www.npcuk.org**

HEAT OR EAT

THE DECISION FACING PENSIONERS THIS WINTER

2.8 MILLION
three in ten (30%) older households in England

Get your Heat or Eat leaflet: www.npcuk.org

Send your MP a ‘Warm This Winter’ Christmas Card wishlist



Card design by @Chrissy_Hazel_Holmes

Why not send a Christmas Card to your MP asking what gift you would like this holiday season? Maybe it’s a decent State Pension for all; a National Care Service free at the point of use; a Commissioner for Older People (England); or one of these from Warm This Winter’ Campaign?

- *Emergency support now - more government help with energy bills to stop people falling into poverty this winter.
- *Help to upgrade homes - Government funding to help people cut their bills through better insulation and new heating systems.
- *Access to cheaper energy - rapidly expand cheap renewable energy.
- *Free us from oil and gas - stop opening up new developments locking us into expensive energy.

To find out who your MP is, visit: <https://members.parliament.uk/members/commons>

You can download the ‘Warm This Winter’ Christmas Card’ from www.npcuk.org

Festive Season Message from the NPC General Secretary



NPC's Jan Shortt

The current energy and inflation crisis is the worst in decades and demands every scrap of our life experience to help us survive another tough year. In 2022 the NPC worked tirelessly to ensure our members voices are heard, their concerns raised, and solutions sought at the highest levels. A highlight of the year was our first post-pandemic, face to face Convention in Birmingham, which was a big success. Since the summer, the NPC set two major priorities: the restoration of the triple lock; and highlighting the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on pensioner poverty. We also believe the time is right to accelerate our cam-

paign for a Commissioner for Older People in England - a much needed role to ensure the rights, dignity and respect of older people are upheld, and ageism and inequality are challenged. We are now working with members, other 'age' organisations and supporters like Lord George Foulkes, to make this happen. Finally, I want to personally thank every NPC member, our officers and our hard-working staff for all you do. Stay safe and warm and I look forward to seeing you all in 2023. **Jan Shortt**



The Big Smart Meters Scandal

People being switched to pre-payment meters without notice – are you among them? Let us know!

Ofgem must step in urgently to stop energy companies from forcibly switching smart meter customers to pre-payment meters.

Research has found that suppliers are obtaining court warrants to switch thousands of people who are behind on their bills to prepayment meters (PPMs). Once on PPMs firms can then turn off customers' supply without consultation.

The NPC, along with the End Fuel Poverty Coalition is calling on Ofgem, as the energy industry regulator to immediately halt the court actions and allow customers to discuss with their energy company the best way to resolve any debt.

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "Customers must be the first to know, not the last and must be protected from such unscrupulous energy companies. We urge the Regulator to immediately intervene to ensure this is happens. To override this option is in breach of the protocol for energy companies."

Debt collectors

An investigation by the 'I' newspaper found nearly half a million court warrants have been granted by magistrates to allow suppliers to switch clients to PPMs since July 2021. Debt-collecting agents acting on behalf of some of the nation's biggest gas and electricity companies have obtained more than 490,000 warrants to enter properties to make the switch by force. **Not only are customers not the first to know about it, they will**

most likely be unaware that pre-payment is more expensive and may push them further into debt.

That's largely because pre-payment meters have a higher daily standing charge than standard meters. The unit cost of energy you buy on your prepayment card is also higher than a smart meter. Jan said; "Where customers do not see pre-payment as an option for them, they must immediately be returned to their smart meter plan."

Vulnerable

YouGov data for the Warm This Winter campaign shows that 64 per cent of prepayment meter customers are vulnerable, with 51 per cent having health conditions or disabilities. The findings suggest one in ten (13 per cent) prepayment meter customers have self-disconnected their supply by massively reducing their energy use.

Another third (31 per cent) now live in cold, damp homes, according to the survey. Among those classed as vulnerable, 14 per cent have self-disconnected and 36 per cent are living in a cold, damp home.

The government is also being pressed to act on the PPMs switch, and Labour MP Rachael Maskell has already submitted 20 written questions to Parliament following the I newspaper investigation.

If you have been forcibly switched from a smart meter to a pre-payment meter, let us know.

Email: info@npcuk.org

Back to Blackpool in 2023

Join us at the Imperial Hotel in June for the next NPC Annual Convention

We are delighted to announce that the NPC's hugely popular Annual Convention will be returning to Blackpool in 2023. After almost three year's absence because of the pandemic, we are happy to be able to hold next year's event on Wednesday, 28th and Thursday, 29th June in the prestigious Imperial Hotel on the Blackpool seafront (right). It will be preceded on Tuesday, 27th by a Special Delegates Conference. Full details of the event, which will feature leading



speakers and an entertainment programme will be announced in the New Year.

General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "It will be fantastic to return to Blackpool to discuss the many pressing issues affecting older people today. Everyone will be very welcome."

King's Fund report finds 10 years of neglect behind NHS crisis

A report commissioned by the government has found that a "decade of neglect" by successive Conservative administrations has weakened the NHS so much it will not be able to tackle the backlog of 7 million patients waiting for care.

The 81 page paper to be published this week by the King's Fund thinktank, says denying funding to the health service and failing to deal with massive workforce vacancies have led to the crisis.

'Managed decline'

A preview of the report in The Guardian said it found that the NHS now has too few staff, too little equipment and too many outdated buildings to deal with backlogs. The findings are based on a review of evidence around waiting times, as well as interviews with 14 experts, one of whom said: "We have essentially had 10 years of managed decline." The report comes just days after the latest official figures showed that the waiting list

in England for non-urgent care in hospitals had reached a new record high of 7.2 million people. Of those, 410,983 had been waiting for more than a year for treatment that should take a maximum of 18 weeks. A&E and NHS leaders in England have voiced concerns about patients coming to harm, and even dying, as a direct result of waiting for an ambulance to arrive, or to get treatment, or to then get a hospital bed. The lack of resources, combined with today's political, financial and economic circumstances mean that recent promises on, for example the reduction in waiting times are unlikely to be met. The government has promised to put £8bn into tackling waiting times and NHS England has set up dozens of community diagnostic centres to deal with delays. NPC's Jan Shortt said: "The King's Fund has confirmed what we all know. It's a damning indictment of the government's neglect of the NHS."

Rising costs widen Digital Divide

New research warns that another one million working families are at risk of falling on the wrong side of the digital divide thanks to the rocketing cost of living. More than 1.7 million UK households are still not online, and the study commissioned by Vodafone says the financial crisis is making it even harder for families to afford broadband and computer tech. The report calls for more action from government and businesses. Based on YouGov survey results, another report found families miss out on savings of up to £286 a month by not being able to go online to access cheaper prices.

DON'T MISS OUT! Claim Pension Credit by 18th Dec to qualify for extra £324

There is still time to claim Pension Credit before 18th December and get £324 more help this year. The DWP says £1.7 billion is left unclaimed by older people who are missing out on this 'passport' benefit to unlock other discounts. Successful Pension Credit claims can be backdated for up to 3 months, and even a small award can access other benefits, like help with housing costs, council tax and heating bills, or even social tariffs for phone and broadband services – all in addition to the extra cost of living payments. Call 0800 99 1234 (or text 0800 169 0133) - they'll even fill in the application for you over the phone.