



Campaign!

Fighting for the rights of older people

NPC
Marchmont
Community
Centre, 62
Marchmont
St, London
WC1N 1AB.

Tel: 020-7837-6622
Email: info@npcuk.org
Web: npcuk.org
Facebook: @NPCUK
Twitter: @NPCUK

WANT TO JOIN THE NPC?

Do you care about issues affecting older people? Want to do something about them? Then join us as an individual, or as an affiliate group. We are the biggest UK campaign group run for and by older people. Contact us to find out how to get involved. Details above.

UK's four biggest older people's groups launch joint campaign

Give us a Champion!

More than 70 organisations are supporting a new joint campaign for better representation for older people across government policy-making. The NPC and charities Independent Age, Age UK, and the Centre for Ageing Better have come together to lead a call for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing in England, as they have in Wales and Northern Ireland. Our Consensus Statement on page 2 outlines why we believe this role is now vital. **Currently 11 million people in England are aged 65 or over. In less than 20 years, over 17 million (1 in 4) people will**



Independent Age



be over 65. Despite this rapidly ageing population, older people in our society are often tarred with ageist stereotypes which can stop them from getting the support they need. That is why we are calling on the government to appoint a commissioner to act as an *independent* champion, to ensure the long-term needs of today's and tomorrow's older people—and the challenges we face as we age—are considered in policy and practice across all government departments. **Jan Shortt, NPC General Secretary said:** "This is a unique and important collaboration between the four biggest organisations representing older people in the UK. We have all witnessed a decline in the quality of life of older people in recent years. with their issues and needs seemingly side-lined. It's a common misconception that all retired people are comfortably off and don't need help. Yet more than two million UK pensioners now live in poverty, and many more struggle just to get by. The pandemic brought the situation to a head, with older



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing

'Let's make the UK the best place to grow old'

people bearing the brunt of the crises in health and social care, the rising cost of living, the decline in essential services such as transport and decent housing, not to mention the push towards online-only public and corporate communications. We believe older people have the right to choice, digni-

ty, respect, independence and security as integral and valued members of society. That's why it's time for a serious change of perception and culture around the older generation – and an independent Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England—is a vital step towards this goal."



Commissioners: Wales OPCW Helena Herklots. NI COPNI Eddie Lynch.

Our call is backed by the public—a recent YouGov poll commissioned by Independent Age, found nine in ten (89%) of people aged 65 and over would support the creation of a commissioner.

Join Our Call – Sign Up TODAY!

To SUPPORT the call for a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England - & write to your MP to ask for their backing - Visit: www.npcuk.org/commissioner OR write to the NPC—address top left of page 1.

**SUPPORT FROM
ACROSS
THE REGIONS***
Thank You!

- *At time of publication.
- ASLEF District Council No.5
 - ASLEF Stratford Branch
 - Barnsley Older People's Community Forum
 - Chelmsford & District Trades Union Council
 - Ealing Trades Union Council
 - GMB - Milton Keynes City Branch
 - Knowsley Older People's Voice Steering Group
 - Lloyds TSB Retired Staff Association (North West)
 - NPC Anglia Region
 - NPC Eastern Region
 - NPC London Region
 - NPC North West Region
 - NPC Northern Region
 - NPC Yorkshire & Humber Region
 - Preston & District 50+ Forum
 - Redbridge Pensioners Forum
 - RMT London Transport Retired Branch
 - RMT Wessex Retired Members' Branch
 - Rotherham Pensioners Action Group
 - Scarborough & District Older Persons' Forum
 - Slough 50+ Forum
 - South Glos Over 50's Forum
 - Suffolk Pensioners Association
 - Unison - Devon County RM
 - Unison - Lancashire RMS
 - Unison - Portsmouth
 - Unison - West Northamptonshire RMS
 - Unite - Burnley Brach
 - Unite - Fylde Coast Branch NW/0520M
 - Wirral Older People's Parliament

We all get older—so let's make retirement better for everyone



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing

Organisations—big and small—have signed up in support of our call for a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England, similar to the roles that have been so successful in Wales and Northern Ireland. Within a couple of hours of launch, several hundred people visited www.npcuk.org/commissioner And more are signing up all the time. Why not join them to secure a better retirement for you, your children & your grandchildren—call for a Commissioner.



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing

Consensus statement on a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing in England

We call on the UK government to establish a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing in England to act as an independent champion for older people and ensure that policy and practice across government considers the long-term needs of people in later life and the implications of our ageing population on society.

Our society is ageing, and policymakers should embrace this demographic shift. Currently 11 million people are aged 65 or over, and in less than 20 years over 17 million (1 in 4) of us will be over 65. Growing older is a privilege, but an ageing population will require collaboration and joined-up thinking to deliver innovative policy solutions and meet the needs of the future, including alternatives to accessing information and services other than online.

The support people need in later life from institutions like the NHS and social care, and social security systems are critical, but no single government department can respond to these issues alone. A commissioner would

facilitate the long-term planning that is needed to ensure our economy and public services are adapting to demographic shifts, while also enabling more people to age well. This would not just benefit older people, but our country as a whole.

A sharper focus on the range of experiences in later life is required. Not everyone enjoys a financially secure retirement – indeed an alarming proportion are struggling to make ends meet – and too often, older people's rights and interests are forgotten by decision-makers, particularly as we face unprecedented crises.

But there is an opportunity to fix this. Older people want to be part of the country's vision, now, and in the future. As our older population becomes increasingly diverse, we believe that older people urgently need a champion at the heart of the government, working alongside the Older People's Commissioners for Wales and Northern Ireland, to help make the UK the best place in the world to grow old.

The supporters of this statement include:



Time to plan for an ageing population



Commissioner
for Older People
& Ageing

Across the UK, not everyone is having the retirement they had hoped for. Many people face challenges - these could be worries about money, trouble accessing the right care and support, or experiencing ageist attitudes. We need solutions to these problems now to help plan for our ageing population. Independent Age, Centre for Ageing Better, Age UK and NPC have brought together over 70 organisations to call for a Commissioner to raise awareness of the issues and bring together government departments to resolve and deliver solutions for today's and tomorrow's older people. The leaders of each organisation tell us why this is important.

Why we are campaigning together for a Commissioner



**Independent
Age**

Morgan Vine, Head of Policy and Influencing at Independent Age, said: "Despite our ageing population, Independent Age often hears from people in later life who tell us they feel invisible and that their views are not represented. "There is a dangerous stereotype that all older people are living a comfortable and financially secure retirement when the reality is that many struggle to make ends meet. Too often, older people are not given the opportunity to voice their experience or determine what they need, including better financial support. This cannot continue. We all hope to grow older and we all need a champion at the heart of government to stand up for everyone in later life. We urge the government to appoint a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing, so no one feels left out of the conversation as they age." www.independentage.org



**Centre for
Ageing Better**

Carole Easton, Chief Executive at the Centre for Ageing Better, said: "In 2021, 200,000 more people celebrated their 50th birthday than their 18th in the UK. In 20 years' time, one in four will be over 65.

Planning

At present, we are not prepared for the complex social and policy challenges this demographic change will bring. As a result, the growing inequality in older age groups we are currently seeing will only get worse. To meet the needs of older people both now and in the future to ensure we can all be supported to age well, we need a much more ambitious and strategic response. We believe a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing will help deliver the long-term planning needed to reshape our economy and public services for the future and for the benefit of the whole country." www.ageing-better.org.uk



Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director at Age UK said: "One of the big lessons from the pandemic was how easily older people's views and interests were overlooked in the corridors of power, at a time of crisis. If there had been a Commissioner for Older People in place this might not have happened, and perhaps fewer older people would have lost their lives in care homes.

Evidence

"It would be wonderful to think that something good could come out of such a traumatic time for our country, for older people especially, as they accounted for the vast majority of all those who died. All the evidence is that the Commissioners for Older People in Wales and Northern Ireland play valuable and constructive roles, so it's about time all the older people in England benefited too." www.ageuk.org.uk



Jan Shortt, General Secretary, National Pensioners' Convention said: "We believe that older people have the right to choice, dignity, respect, independence and security as integral and valued members of society. "All too often the value of our experience and knowledge gained throughout our lives is ignored. We are not seen to contribute to society because we are no longer working or viewed as productive. Yet tomorrow's older people will be today's young people - our children and grandchildren. That's why we believe it is time for a serious change of perception and culture around the older generation." www.npcuk.org

JOIN US & SIGN UP

to call for a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England at - www.npcuk.org/commissioner
OR write to the NPC at our address on page 1.

Urgent reasons why we want a champion for this older generation... and the next!



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing

Financial hardship - pensioner poverty has risen with 2.1 million over 65s living in poverty. One in five people aged 50-70 say they will be unable to meet future financial needs in old age.

The cost-of-living crisis – is having a devastating impact said rising costs have made their physical health worse and 35% their mental health worse.

Older workers dropping out of the workforce – two thirds of people in their 50s and 60s report a long-

term health condition, and a third say their health impacts their ability to work.

Health and social care - many older people suffer from diminishing health and mobility. Yet the delivery of health & social care to older people so often fails.

Inclusion - digital, social and economic. Many older people feel excluded and isolated for many reasons today. For example, some can't access the internet, either due to cost or lack of knowledge.

Health & Care: Ian Millington, 75. 'Until a year ago my partner, was an active person. But a suspected TIA (transient ischaemic attack) and difficulty in obtaining medical help has exacerbated her health problems. Her mobility deteriorated and she wasn't assessed until January. She has been promised physiotherapy and a home assessment but it's yet to materialise. Keeping up the pressure for help has been wearing. Someone in this situation without the help of another person would find it impossible. I strongly believe a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing with legal powers would lead to more joined-up thinking on care, and flag the kind of issues we faced.'

Age Discrimination: Clare Wilkins, 65. 'Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, but I know from experience that ageism and discrimination are still rife. Getting older people to return or stay in work without dealing with discrimination from employers will not encourage them to remain. Without flexible working and help to deal with health issues, disabilities and caring responsibilities, then those who can and want to work will not be able to do so.'

Social Care & Fairness: Jean Hariman-Smith, 70s. 'Jean has multiple life threatening conditions: 'Campaigning for people worse than myself is what keeps

me going. I struggle with bills, and can't even afford my home care, despite being eligible. It's a stain on our country, one of the world's richest, that older people struggle to feed, clothe and heat themselves.

Just a snapshot of our personal stories

Read the full text of comments here: www.npcuk.org
More in the next Campaign!

Transport: Peter Rayner, 85. 'Older people have the fundamental problem with modern transport of accessibility— whether it is with the purchase of a ticket, or timetable information, or getting to their chosen mode of transport. The fall in frequency of services is a huge issue. We are also less nimble and our hearing is often less effective. We need an older peoples champion to highlight our problems.'

Pensioner Poverty: Rosie MacGregor, 70s, NPC President. Poverty and financial insecurity in retirement harms quality of life and contributes to loneliness, isolation, and a deterioration in mental and physical health. It is stressful and degrading. Everyone should have a right to dignity in retirement. We know that women are badly let down by the pension system and the income for women pensioners is disproportionate to that of men - al-

most half by some estimates - because of the disparity in earnings, and in part to breaks in employment for maternity leave and caring responsibilities. There are many low paid women who cannot afford to make contributions to occupational pensions and are forced to rely on their lower state pension when they retire.'

Gender Pensions Gap: Shelagh Hubbard, 70. 'I know Commissioners are a force for good in Wales and Northern Ireland so why can't we have one in England? It might add extra weight to the WASPI demand for compensation for those women whose pensions were delayed with so little notice. It seems scandalous that girls born in the late 1950s, were possibly working since they were 15 and paying NI for 50 years before being eligible for a state pension. That's the ones who haven't had to give up work due to ill health.'

Digital: Jenny Sims, 60s: 'Society has gone digital and many older people are being left behind because they do not have digital skills or cannot afford to get online. A Commissioner is needed to support our calls for government funding for skills' training and affordable or free broadband for older people, and to act against public and private sector organisations which fail to offer alternatives to online information and services.'