

# THE MIDLAND PENSIONER

#COVIDINQUIRYNOW

## SPING2023



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THIS IS THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE WEST MIDLAND PENSIONERS CONVENTION



## ABOUT US

The West Midlands Pensioners Convention is the Regional Organisation of the National Pensioners Convention.

Our main objective is to promote the welfare and interests of pensioners, both now and in the future; securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement.

We have a number of very active committees, including a Transport Group which holds regular quarterly meetings with Transport for the Midlands (formerly CENTRO).

Regional Secretary:

Sandra Durkin: 07860576701

[thedurk@btinternet.com](mailto:thedurk@btinternet.com)

[wmpcec@gmx.co.uk](mailto:wmpcec@gmx.co.uk)

Assistant Regional Secretary:

David Humphreys: 07906264335

[dnhumphreys@gmail.com](mailto:dnhumphreys@gmail.com)

Campaign and Press Officer:

Brian Allbutt: 07342264482

[brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk)

## OUR ORGANISATION

We have local and Trade Union branches across our Region. Each Branch is entitled to send delegates to the Regional Council, which meets on the second Thursday of each month (except in January and August, when there are no meetings).

Although our Regional Council meetings are delegate based, visitors, friends and guests are very much welcome to attend. We also welcome applications for membership from non-party political organisations of pensioners and retired people from across our Region. Pensioners can also become individual members.

### LOCAL BRANCHES OF THE PENSIONERS CONVENTION

Walsall: Dave Lawrence: 07895979537

Halesowen: Tony Whitehouse: 07715314608

North Staffs: Owen Sloss 07582115742  
David Hampton 01782 201724

East Birmingham: Stan Simpson: 0121 783 0734

Solihull: Alan Thomas: 0121 705 3342

Sandwell & West Birmingham:

Brian Allbutt: 07342264482

Coventry and Warwickshire BTUAA:

Sandra Durkin :07860576701

email: [covbptuaa@gmail.com](mailto:covbptuaa@gmail.com)

Individual Members: Brian Allbutt 07342264482  
email: [brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk)

Visit the WMPC website for up to date information on the issues facing pensioners including: the latest "Midland Pensioner" activities and campaigns across our Region.

National Pensioners Convention:

Press Releases/ Bulletins/Newsletters and more

**Go to:** <https://wmpc.org.uk>

**WMPC Facebook Group**



The wide spread opposition to the plan by President Macron to increase the State Retirement Age in France from 62 to 64 may well have been a factor in the decision by the UK Government to delay making a decision on the rise in the State Pension Age to 68 between 2044 and 2046. With reports that ministers were considering bringing forward this increase to 2035, affecting people who are 54 and under today.

If there is one lesson that the demonstrations and riots in France in recent months have highlighted it is the expectation that as we come to the end of our working lives we can look forward to a new and reinvigorated life through our retirement years; as a fundamental bedrock of a society that is committed to looking after it's young and older workers and those who have already retired. State Retirement Age is an Intergenerational issue.

We may not be taking to the streets in our tens of thousands to demand a government rethink on State Pension Age increases; but we will be taking to the ballots box in a General Election that is now just over a year away.

We need to remind ourselves that it was the Coalition Government that brought forward the Pensions Bill 2011. The Women's state pension age would rise to 65 by November 2018 and then men and women's pension age would rise together to 66 by April 5 2020. Five million men and women would face a later state pension date. But while men would have to wait at most another year, 500,000 women would have to wait longer than a year, with 300,000 waiting 18 months or more and 33,000 waiting more than two years. While it is clear that the current Conservative Government would increase the state pension age to 68, if it was politically expedient to do so, and despite growing evidence that for many life expectancy is now actually in decline. It was a Labour Government in 2007 that passed a new law to raise pension age to 66 between April 2024 and April 2026, then to 67 between April 2034 and April 2036 and to 68 between April 2044 and April 2046.

Successive governments, in planning for an increase in the state pension age to 68, have argued that the increase is justified because of the improvement in life expectancy for at least 30 years. As the TUC, in their submission to the Second State Pension Review, point out "the significant slowdown in longevity make it impossible to continue with the timetable for increasing the state pension age to 68" adding "There are also wide and growing differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas and many people in low paying and manually intensive jobs are already facing difficulties working until State Retirement Age.

It is important that public pressure, intergenerational pressure, is exerted on all major political parties to commit to a review of UK State Pension Age, beginning with scrapping the increase to 68.

The National Pensioners Convention and the Trade Union UNITE have joined forces to campaign around the slogan "68 is TOO Late!" building a nationwide campaign against raising the state pension age.

Caren Evans, UNITE National Officer for retired members, said "Millions already have to wait until they are 68 to claim their state pension, despite falling life expectancy and rising numbers off work due to long-term sickness. Workers create the wealth in this society and we demand a share of that wealth in our old age."

Jan Shortt, National Pensioners Convention General Secretary, said "It's shameful that this government would even consider raising the state pension age for millions more people at this time. Many older people still in work struggle with health conditions that impact on their ability to remain productive."

"The Government likes to talk about intergenerational fairness, yet they fail to see that the pensioners of the future are our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Source Material: National Pensioners Convention, UNITE, TUC



## INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

April the 28<sup>th</sup> is traditionally “International Workers Memorial Day”. It’s the day we remember all those people who lost their lives going about their daily work.

In the UK, those workers in the Construction Industry are most at risk of losing their lives at work. Construction workers experience a high incidence of respiratory problems, and are continually exposed to dusts and specific dangerous materials such as asbestos and respirable crystalline silica (RCS). There are 12,000 lung disease deaths each year estimated to be linked to past exposures at work.

In addition, there are estimated to be 17,000 new cases of self-reported breathing or lung problems caused or made worse by work. Including: Mesothelioma 2,400 Asbestos-related lung cancer 2,400 Lung cancer due to other agents 2,800 COPD 4,000 Other (pneumoconiosis and allergic alveolitis).

Occupational cancer is higher in construction than any other sector. Over 40 per cent of occupational cancer deaths and cancer

registrations are in construction. Past exposures annually cause over 5,000 occupational cancer cases and 3,700 deaths.

There has also been some terrible loss of life in the mining industry over the years. But post the Covid-19 pandemic there is now another group of workers who have risked their lives going to work every day- Social Care workers and Health Care Workers. Statistics released by the Office for National Statistics of deaths between March 2020 and February 2022 registered for those working in Social Care and Health Care (aged between 20 and 64) where covid-19 is involved are: -

Social Care Workers: Men 319 Women 866 a total of 1,238

Health Care Workers: Men 319 Women 462 a total of 781

Over 2,000 people working in Health and Social Care lost their lives supporting our elderly, sick and disabled, where a significant factors in their death was the work environment they faced day in day out through the final phases of the covid-19 pandemic; including ofcourse inadequate or even non-existent Personal Protective Equipment. These figures do not include all those Care Workers and those working in the NHS who lost their lives through the first phase of the covid-19 pandemic, when NHS England on the instruction of the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Mat Hancock, were advising NHS Trusts that it was safe to discharge elderly and vulnerable patients into their own homes or Nursing and Residential Homes without taking the precaution to ensure they were not carrying the covid-19 virus.

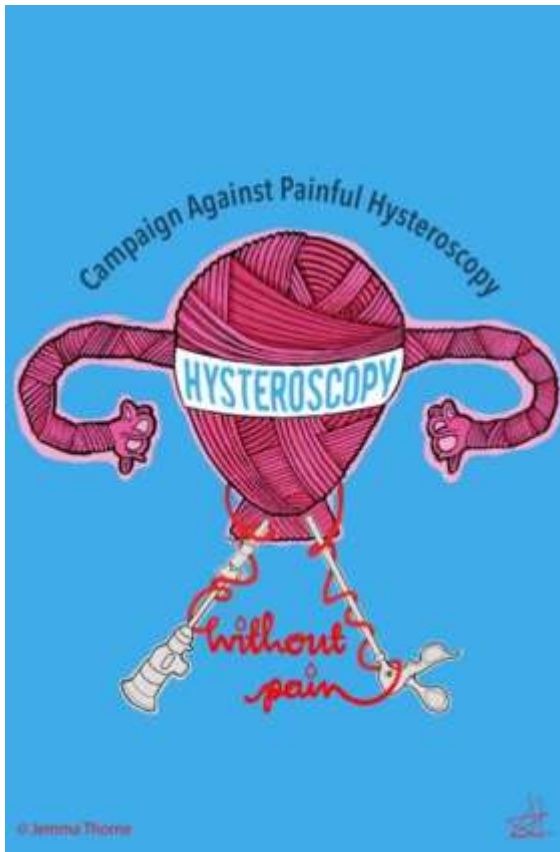
While the Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically highlighted the importance of health and safety in the workplace, the number of health and safety inspectors in the UK has actually fallen by 50% in the past 10 years; with average work places receiving a visit from a health and safety inspector once every fifty years! Successive Governments have underfunded the Health and Safety Executive, but it is over the past decade that the very principle of health and safety in the work place has been dismissed as pointless red tape, an unnecessary burden that holds our economy back, with David Cameron in his new years resolutions for 2012 committing to “kill off the health and safety culture for good.”

By 2019/20 the Government funding for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had decreased from £239.4 million in 2009/10 to just £141million and while there were 1,495 inspectors employed by the HSE in 2008/10 by 2016/17 there were only 978; there was also been a significant fall in the number of recorded convictions down from 735 in 2009/10 to just 185 convictions for 2019/20.

As the TUC has said, every year more people are killed at work than in war. Most do not die of mystery ailments, or in tragic freak “accidents”. They die because an employer or indeed the Government decided their safety was not that important a priority.”

Source: UNITE, Hazards Campaign, Morning Sta





Hysteroscopy is the examination of the womb by a miniature camera at the end of a very thin rigid metal tube: the Hysteroscopy is passed through the vagina and cervix into the womb, which is then pumped with water. This enables the surgical instruments to be passed through the tube to take the biopsy and, if necessary, to remove small polyps or small fibroids.

The NHS procedure is performed in Outpatients whilst the patient is awake. The patient is told they will only experience a mild discomfort, with some being told to take a paracetamol prior to the procedure.

Unlike NHS Colonoscopy or Gastrosocopy procedures, patients undergoing Hysteroscopy are NOT offered a safely monitored conscious sedation. Local anaesthetic is rarely used as injection into the cervix can cause fainting.

Women with a closed or narrowed cervix (i.e post-menopausal women and those having gone through a vaginal childbirth) are not informed that the procedure can be excruciatingly painful. Patients are instructed to take over the counter medicines before the procedure, no stronger medication is recommended and only seldom given. There is no separate appointment for a pre-operative assessment.

The campaign group Change.Org are currently circulating a petition to end the barbaric NHS Hysteroscopies carried out with inadequate or no offer of pain relief.

The Campaign Against Painful Hysteroscopy (CAPH) itself has amassed hundreds of stories from women who have experienced extremely painful outpatient Hysteroscopies – women of all ages, shapes and sizes. The CAPH reports that many women feel that the procedure is barbaric and like torture and they feel violated as a result. Many women have reported vomiting and fainting as a result of the procedure, the pain is that extreme.

According to NHS audits, none of the women treated were warned of the 25 % risk of pain associated with the procedure. Many women have subsequently experienced trauma and have gone on to develop PTSD.

As someone who has gone through this procedure, I would urge all women to sign the Change.Org petition, which states:

‘We ask the Secretary of State for Health to change the barbaric manner in which many NHS hysteroscopies are currently performed. Specifically, to ensure that:

1. All NHS hysteroscopists have advanced training in pain medicine.
2. All hysteroscopy patients receive full written information before the procedure, listing the risks and benefits and explaining that local anaesthetic may be painful and ineffective against the severe pain of cervical dilation, womb distension and biopsy.
3. All hysteroscopy services are adequately funded so that BEFORE their procedures patients may choose no anaesthesia/ local anaesthesia/ safely monitored conscious sedation/ epidural/ general anaesthetic.
4. The Best Practice Tariff financial incentive, which rewards NHS Trusts who perform a high percentage of hysteroscopies in outpatients without a trained anaesthetist, is abolished.’

To sign the petition, go to: [www.hysteroscopyaction.org.uk](http://www.hysteroscopyaction.org.uk)

## Communities cannot do without buses.



When Diamond announced the number 45 bus from Walsall to West Bromwich was going to be scrapped because it was 'no longer commercially viable'

we knew we had to act. It would have been devastating.

Together with my friend Stephanie, we hatched a campaign plan focussing on three Ps - petition, partners, and media pressure. We started with a petition on Change.org - a great platform to use as you can include the email addresses of decision makers, in our case, Andy Street and the Chief Executives of Diamond and Transport for West Midlands. This meant we couldn't be ignored. Each time one of the 1,400 signatories on the petition signed, these three people would all receive an email about saving the 45 bus. They were inundated.

We also made a paper petition and took it on the buses. Most of the passengers had no idea the service was going to be stopped. We got many shaky signatures as the bus was in transit from people dismayed at the thought of losing their bus forever.

For a campaign to really pick up steam, you need partners. We reached out to groups we knew would have an interest and asked them to share the petition. The West Midlands Pensioners convention, the Yew Tree Community centre, local schools and shops, Sandwell Councillors and more were all brilliant.

The final and important P was media pressure. The local Black Country newspaper the Express and Star covered our campaign as it grew and as people shared their personal stories. Dawn told us: "I've signed because the 45 bus is a lifeline for hundreds of people, young and old, to get out and about and not to be isolated and lonely. Please don't let Diamond take it away". We also managed to get national TV coverage, with Channel 5 News coming to film a piece about the 45 bus and the passengers who rely on it.

On 5 April - just ten days before the bus was due to be axed - we finally got the news we'd been hoping for. Thanks to our campaign, the 45 bus is safe for at least the next six months.

The three Ps came up trumps – petition, partners, media pressure. We will keep going until it's saved for good.

Sarah Coombes, organiser of the Save the 45 Bus petition.





The Transport Select committee has told the government they need to do more to improve bus services across the country. £1bn made available to local authorities for their Bus Service Improvement Plans 'is simply not enough money to produce real improvements in bus services across the whole country' and that 'allowing roughly half the country to miss out risks entrenching, and in some cases creating, a two-tier system in which bus services improve in one area while, across an invisible county border, they worsen or even disappear," the report found.

It highlights that the Government hasn't reviewed the ban on municipal bus companies, or issued new guidance on socially and economically necessary services and says 'we urge the government to put its promises into action' The report concludes: "post-pandemic, many people's lives have changed, and this has altered, perhaps permanently, when and where they wish to travel.

"So far, the Government has responded to this challenge with limited, albeit welcome, schemes such as the £2 fare cap. But it needs to do more. It would be absurd for the Government to spend billions of pounds to support the ailing bus sector through the pandemic and then allow it to wither away."

Responding to the report, bus workers union RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said: "This report underlines the reality that the government has failed to fund bus services properly and RMT believes there needs to be drastic overhaul in how we run our bus services in our towns villages and cities.

"Local bus services are a lifeline for many, providing access to employment, education and healthcare, but the decline experienced since the industry was deregulated means that few people have access to a reliable bus service. "Two years after its National Bus Strategy was published, the government has still not acted on its commitment to review the ban on municipal bus companies. "It is clear ministers are more interested in protecting bumper profits made by bus companies, than protecting and providing a vital service to passengers.

"Local authorities need sufficient ring-fenced national funding to run their bus services in public ownership as part of an integrated and publicly owned public transport network."

Source: RMT Press Office

# Yorkshire and Humber Pensioners Convention

## National Conference Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June

### ***“Campaigning for outstanding bus services”***

Early in 2020 the YHPC produced a manifesto, “Better Bus Services: Good for People, Good for the Planet” (<https://tinyurl.com/yhpctransport>) which we argued the case for radical change to end the decline in bus services. Many organisations from across the UK supported the manifesto.

Since Covid the crisis affecting bus services has deepened, with most areas outside London experiencing huge cuts. These have led to infrequent and unreliable services, higher fares and many areas facing no services at all, particularly in the evenings and at weekends. Even more severe cuts are feared as the government threatens to end Covid funding in March 2023.

The YHPC is hosting a national conference, “*Campaigning for outstanding bus services*”, to bring together people and organisations from across the UK who want to fight for better services – to demand both guaranteed funding and an end to the privatisation which has created the crisis we face. The conference will take place on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June (11am to 4pm) in York and will be hybrid to allow online participation.

The aim of the conference is to build a coalition of all those groups concerned about the impact of poor bus services. It will be an opportunity to share experiences and work together to develop powerful and effective campaigns both locally and nationally. We already have sponsors from as far afield as Glasgow, Bristol and Merseyside.

We would like to invite your organisation to register as a sponsor/supporter of the conference. You can do this without a financial commitment, but please consider making a contribution to the substantial costs of organising by donating to the YHPC. Account details are below.

The next planning meeting will be on 10<sup>th</sup> March (in Leeds and hybrid). All sponsors are invited to send a representative to the meeting and will of course be kept informed of details of speakers, workshops and registration details as they are agreed.

I hope you will join us in our endeavours to win a public transport system that meets the needs of our communities!

Yours

Fran Postlethwaite (Secretary, Yorkshire and Humber Pensioners Convention)

#### **Account details**

Name: Yorkshire & Humber Pensioners Convention

Sort code: 54-41-24

Account number: 54757401

Reference: bus conference

To register as a supporter or for further details email us on: [yandhpc@gmail.com](mailto:yandhpc@gmail.com)



# NPC

NATIONAL  
PENSIONERS  
CONVENTION



## NPC ANNUAL CONVENTION

WEDNESDAY 28 &  
THURSDAY 29  
JUNE 2023

AT  
THE IMPERIAL HOTEL  
BLACKPOOL

ADDRESS: PROMENADE, BLACKPOOL FY1 2HU

PHONE: 01253 623971

To register for the event,  
please contact the NPC using  
the details on the reverse side.



## Blackpool Parliament / Short Break

Mon 26th June— Fri 30th June 2023



This year GreyPower will once again be taking a group of people to Blackpool to coincide with the Pensioners' Parliament.

The trip will cost **£250** per person, this includes hotel with bed, breakfast and evening meal, return coach travel from Hanley or Newcastle-under-Lyme, and entry to the Pensioners' Parliament.

To book your place call the office on **01782 201724** (leave a message if no-one is there) or email us at **admin@greypowernorthstuffs.org.uk**

Organised by:  
North Staffs Pensioners' Convention, Suite 9A, The Forecourt,  
12 Albion Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 1QH  
Tel 01782 201724 Email admin@greypowernorthstuffs.org.uk



"Us today, you tomorrow"

# Campaign!



Commissioner  
for Older People  
& Ageing

## Health & Social Care News

National Pensioners Convention Health & Social Care Working Party

For electronic copies of the latest Newsletters from the National Pensioners Convention  
Open the link below

[www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org)

# WHAT'S ON



## West Midland Pensioners Convention

### WMPC Regional Council Meeting

Thursday May 11<sup>th</sup>

Speaker:

Bob Wade

Branch Secretary

Coventry and Birmingham NUJ

All WMPC Regional Council Meetings are held at the Birmingham UNISON Branch Office:

11.00 a.m. till 1.00 p.m.

19<sup>th</sup> Floor, McClaren Building, Priory Queensway

Refreshments available

## Halesowen Pensioners Convention

The Branch meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month in the Shenston Theatre in Halesowen Library from 10.30 to 12.30.

### Future Meetings

Thursday May 18<sup>th</sup>

Speaker

Dudley Trading Standards

Thursday June 15<sup>th</sup>

AGE Well Dudley

New members are always very welcome

Contact: Tony Whitehouse: 07715314608 or email [whitehousea970@gmail.com](mailto:whitehousea970@gmail.com)

## East Birmingham Pensioners Convention

The Branch meets on the second Tuesday of each month between 10.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. at :

Ward End Library  
Washwood Heath Road, B8 2HF

Speaker

Tuesday May 9<sup>th</sup>

Maureen Wade

The Women's Officer for the West Midland Pensioners Convention

For further details of East Birmingham Pensioners Convention

Contact: Branch Secretary: Stan Simpson

Email: [simpsogs@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:simpsogs@yahoo.co.uk)

Or call: 0121 783 0734 / 07930182269

## Sandwell and West Birmingham

### Pensioners Convention

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at West Bromwich Central Library from 11.00 a.m. till 12.45. New members are always very welcome to join our friendly and diverse group of pensioners. We also hold monthly social events.

Tuesday May 2<sup>nd</sup>

Melissa Elder

Community Outreach Lead  
Healthwatch Sandwell

Tuesday June 6

Eleanor Dixon

Welfare Officer

Birmingham UNISON Retired Members

“The 75th Anniversary of Windrush”

Contact: Brian Allbutt 07342264482 or email [brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk)