

THE MIDLAND PENSIONER



HANDS OFF THE WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

Spring 26



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THIS IS THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE WEST MIDLAND PENSIONERS CONVENTION



ABOUT US

The West Midlands Pensioners Convention
Campaigns on behalf of Today's and
Tomorrows Pensioners.

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 several 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

wmpcec@gmx.co.uk

Assistant Regional Secretary:

Brian Allbutt: 07342264482

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:

Bulletins/Newsletters and more

Go to: <https://wmpc.org.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

Halesowen: Bob Davies

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

Individual Members: Brian Allbutt 07342264482

email: brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/7125023377569919>



WEST MIDLAND PENSIONERS CONVENTION



West Midlands Pensioners Convention Transport Group



“THIS IS one of the most worthwhile groups the West Midlands Pensioners Convention Organises” - Yvonne Washbourne (Wash) Regional Chair”.

We hold regular meetings with senior officers from Transport for the West Midlands (TfWM). For many years now, these consultation meetings have provided our Transport group with up-to-date information about the delivery of public transport services, bus, regional trains and more recently the Midland Metro Trams.

Importantly our voices on a range of transport issues including fares (we successfully negotiated the original Pre- 9.30 Concessionary fare of £1.00), the WMPC was one of the leading campaigning organisations, who in 2012 forced CENTRO to drop plans to severely cut funding to ring and ride, introduce unacceptable fare rises on the regions buses , and end the free Concessionary travel on the W..M. Regions Trains.

Over recent meetings we have discussed Bus Franchising, Bus Satisfaction Surveys, Safer Travel and Driver Training, changes to the delivery of Ring and Ride services and the planned.

additional Rail Stations on the Camp Hill Line and new Rail Stations in the Black Country, and our Transport Group members frequently raise concerns about bus service in their own localities, including recently the need to review the number 48 bus service from West Bromwich Bus Station to the Q.E.

In the run up to the W.M. Mayoral elections in 2024 our Transport Group played a leading role in successfully lobbying the Combined Authority Transport Board for the introduction of a Franchising model for the delivery of the Regions Bus Service. Raising thousands of signatures to the petition, across Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, Wolverhampton and West Bromwich, which we formally presented to the W.M. Mayor’s Office in Summer Lane.

As the role out of the new bus franchising model moves at a pace, we are also now pressing For the W.M. Combined Authority to create a Transport Board that includes representatives of bus users and campaigning organisations for better bus services, including our own WMPC Transport Group.

We also work closely with the Midlands TUC and the National Better Bus Campaign.

Currently the WMPC Transport Group does not represent all area of the TfWM.

We need more of our affiliates to get involved in the work of our Transport Group, by sending delegates along to our quarterly meetings with these key Officers from TfWM.

For more information about the Transport Group or add the names of your delegates to the group -contact our Assistant Regional Secretary Brian Allbutt: call 07342264482 Or email.

Brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk



By Perdeep Muthi

I attended the 'Powered by People' co-production summit in Birmingham on Thursday, 26th February 2026. The event aimed to gather feedback from people receiving care and support from Birmingham Adult Social Care, carers, and professional agencies.

The agenda included introductions, networking, and discussion tables focusing on specific topics.

The six discussion points were:

1. Social Work Needs Assessment 2. Working in Communities 3. Access, Equality, and Service Locations in Adult Social Care 4. Mental Health Service 5. Safeguarding Service 6. Waiting well Policy

I chose to discuss points 2, 4, and 5. Each discussion lasted 30 minutes, and I felt it was more of an information-gathering exercise. Some participants dominated the conversations, limiting others' input. There seemed to be more professionals than carers or clients present.

Key concerns raised: •

All adult initial assessments are conducted via telephone, with no face-to-face option • Children's assessments, however, are done face-to-face • Lack of face-to-face or telephone contact for ongoing support, with everything being digital/online.

• Poor communication, with some carers and clients only informed via email • Inability to contact professionals and long waiting times

• Agencies attending were unaware of one another's services, highlighting a need for better collaboration and communication

• Concern was expressed around services only being available Monday to Friday, with no 7-day provision. Similar issues were raised across all discussion points.

On a positive note, Birmingham Connect to Support is a great resource - it's a community directory that can be accessed by scanning a QR code, making it easy to find local support services.

I also connected with Lucy from Age Concern, who offered to attend one of our coffee mornings. Similarly, Homestead- a local organisation, provides free community wellbeing.

■ An overriding message was poor communication with clients and carers so feel free to get in touch if you'd like to borrow any. sessions, educational talks, exercise classes, and subsidised accredited training, and they're keen to engage with our community.

Overall, the event highlighted significant challenges, but also opportunities for improvement and

The Good the Bad – And the Ugly

For our Generations-Today's and Tomorrow's Pensioners- some of us will have a difficult choice to make in this forthcoming May elections.

You could consider voting for Reform UK- I am not one of those, but if you are considering voting for Nigel Farage's Reform UK Party-including now the former Conservative M.P.'s- including Robert Jenrick, Suella Braverman, Nadhim Zahawi, and Nadine Doris.

Beware! Success for Reform UK in the May Elections across our region, and that could well include Birmingham, Walsall, Sandwell, Dudley, and Wolverhampton; would pave the way for a future Farage lead Reform Government in just three-year time. Vote Reform UK now and you will be putting your Pension Triple Lock at risk- not to mention the end of the National Health Service as we know it with the introduction of an insurance based Health Service, further cuts to public services and benefits-including Pensions Credit and Attendance Allowance, undermine existing Public Sector Pension Schemes and would the English Concessionary Bus Pass survive a Reform UK Government -all done ,not in the interest of the 2 million pensioners living in poverty in the UK -But to introduce tax cuts for the wealthiest -including Farage and his former Tory cronies.

It should come as no surprise when those at the top of Reform UK consistently argue for cuts to the welfare system to fund tax cuts, that Reform UK was always going to be the next best option for those 18 + Conservative M.P.'s, including leading former Cabinet Ministers who have defected to Reform UK. And it comes as no surprise that none have accepted any responsibility or shown any remorse for the 14 years of economic Austerity – in fact many have clearly stated that one of the main reasons they defected to Reform UK was their belief that a future Reform UK government's economic policy would be firmly based on even further Austerity.

And what of Nigel Farage, the “great champion of the people, who enjoys a fag and a pint.”

This Privately educated millionaire, the son of a stockbroker, who attended Dulwich College, one of the most elite schools in the country. Nigel Farage M.P. whose latest entry in the Registry of Members Interests shows he earned £1.2 million last year on top of his M.P.s salary of £91,346-including a declaration of £81,607 played by GB News for 32 hours work Not a bad hourly rate of £2,500.

And if you are considering voting for a Reform UK Candidate in the Forthcoming May Local Elections, please reflect on the well documented links between Reform UK and some of the most extreme right-wing organisations and individuals, including Tommy Robinson, Britain First, Patriotic Alternative, and the Homeland Party all urged their supporters to vote Reform UK in the 2024 General Election. And Farage himself has a long history of right-wing and misogynistic comments. A great admirer of Enoch Powell and pal of Donald Trump, Farage has openly supported Marine Le Pen the leader of the far-right National Front (since renamed the National Assembly), he has praised Italy's far right leader Georgia Meloni. Nigel Farage addressed an event in Berlin in 2017 of the far-right AfD whose Beatrix von Storch (the granddaughter of Hitler's finance minister) Farage welcomed into his Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group in 2016.

So be careful who you vote for on Thursday May 7th, 2026.

Brian Allbutt: Writing in a personal capacity.

The Iron Ladies



To mark International Women's Day, members of Birmingham Unison Retired Members attended the recently released film *Iron Ladies*. The film, directed by Daniel Draper who has also produced films on Dennis Skinner and Jeremy Corbyn, is a documentary that focuses on the 'Women Against Pit Closures' group, both past and present.

This group of working-class women was forged from the events surrounding the yearlong Miners' Strike of 1984 to 1985. This film focuses on the experiences of the women – from Scotland to Kent - during this dispute who were forced out of necessity to organise and fight, to stop the destruction of their communities, and the industry upon which they were dependent. The film succeeds in presenting an emotional and moving oral history of their experiences. They explain how prior to the strike they were mainly viewed as housewives, whose responsibility was to cook and clean and raise the children.

The dispute however saw them become activists and organisers, standing on the picket lines with the Miners, experiencing verbal and physical abuse from the police. The women ensured their communities were fed by collecting food, making food parcels for individuals and families, and setting up canteens to ensure everyone could get a daily hot meal. They travelled the country to raise funds, speaking at labour and trade union meetings, and also internationally to the United States and across Europe. In the film one of the women tells how she was left stunned after she was given a cheque by Bruce Springsteen – for \$20,000!

The women explain how the dispute helped to raise their own political awareness and consciousness, and gave them the confidence to take on new challenges and experiences, whether further educational opportunities with some obtaining degrees and vocational qualifications, as well as political roles whether becoming Councillors or MPs, and activists for new battles: the current 'Period Poverty' for example has its roots in the struggle of the miners' wives.

The final defeat of the miners in 1985 was devastating for the industry and the former mining communities. It was a defeat for the wider labour movement as a whole, as the in the next decade, Thatcher and the Tories now felt confident to take on other industrial trade unions and impose draconian anti-trade union laws with the aim of destroying the power of trade unionism. The women however said they did not feel defeated, as the dispute had empowered them, and they continue to be active across the labour movement.

Many Thanks to Maureen Wade; Regional Chair WM UNISON Retired Members Committee.

GOOD LAW Project x just TREATMENT

- [Home](#)
- [Email your local trust](#)

Say no to Palantir in the NHS

NHS England is rolling out software to run our health records from Palantir – a US spy-tech firm that has supported mass deportation in the US and enabled genocide in Gaza.

One of Palantir's founders is also openly against the NHS. Peter Thiel claimed it "makes people sick" and said that the British people love the NHS because we're suffering from Stockholm syndrome.

We can't let a company like this take control of our healthcare system.

But we can fight back right now. We've set up a simple tool so you can find out if your local NHS trust has started using the software and then send an email demanding they say no to Palantir.

With the government putting NHS trusts under pressure to adopt the software, we need to act right now. If you want to keep Palantir out of our NHS, send an email to your local trust and Wes Streeting, secretary of state for health.

Is your local NHS Trust using Palantir's software?

Enter your postcode Is your local NHS Trust using Palantir's software?

Enter your postcode.

Find out now.

Go to [target/stop-palantir-in-the nhs](#).

Find out now



Just Treatment is a patient-led health justice group fighting to curb corporate power in our health system and win quality treatment for all.



The Civil Service Pensioners Alliance – Birmingham and District Group

If you are a retired Civil Servant, you might already belong to the CSPA. The CSPA has been campaigning on behalf of pensioners in the UK for over 70 years. They don't just work to protect the value of civil service and other pensions, they also partner with other organisations to fight for better social care, health care, transport provision and more. See www.cspa.co.uk

The CSPA also has local groups who meet to discuss relevant issues and enjoy the time chatting to other members. The Birmingham Group and District Group meets for a coffee morning most months and holds other meetings during the year. The coffee mornings are usually on the first Wednesday of the month (we don't meet in January or October) from 10.30 to 12.00 at St. Michaels Church, Moor Street, Birmingham B4 7UG.

See [St Michael's, Birmingham | Birmingham Diocesan Trust](#)

There is a small sub of £3.00 per person per meeting to cover costs, we make our own tea and coffee and have a raffle.

Last year we started a local social activities programme and so far, have had group visits to The Exchange, St. Phillips Cathedral, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, The West Midlands Police Museum, Wolverhampton Art Gallery (for the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibition) and a guided tour of Symphony Hall.

We have booked a tour of St. Chads Cathedral in April and The West Midlands Fire Service Heritage Museum in October.

If you'd like to join us our next coffee morning is on 1st April (an easy date to remember!) and then 6th May 3rd June 1st July , 5th August, 2nd September and 4th November. Our Christmas Lunch is at The Old Contemptibles on 2nd December.

For further information contact

Eileen Turner on eileenturner@blueyonder.co.uk 07778 744320

Fiona Scott on fms2015@hotmail.co.uk

07746 538062

John O: 1943 - 2026



Trade unionists, friends and family gave a sad but fond farewell to John O at his funeral in March, after his long but courageous battle against cancer and cognitive decline came to an end in February.

John was a National Union of Journalists activist and NUJ delegate to the WMPC for many years.

John had had a very tough childhood, son of a Catholic father and a Protestant mother from Belfast, who was marred by poverty, violence and sectarian prejudice. He was born in Birmingham in 1943, after his parents moved here for the war work.

He was only two weeks old when he encountered his first taste of institutional discrimination. It lay the basis of why he later changed his name by deed poll to simply 'John O'.

His parents attempted to register him under his Irish name, Seán Ó Raghallaigh, but the Birmingham registry office refused unless they anglicise his name to John O'Reilly, for the benefit of the English birth certificate.

It was a story that stuck with him, and during his later work with asylum seekers, he found that the authorities today too were often shortening, mispronouncing or even erasing the names of asylum seekers for the benefits of bureaucracy. His name change was a gesture of solidarity - by reducing his own name to a single letter, he made a statement: identity belongs to the individual, not to the state.

His family returned to Belfast where he faced the worst of both worlds in that sectarian environment, saying he was 'beaten by Protestant kids for being a Catholic, and beaten by Catholic kids for being British'.

He made his way back to Britain, eventually returning to Birmingham in 1966, the city where his life's work would truly begin. His trade unionism stretched from joining the mass picket at Saltley Gate in 1972 through to his work to defend those facing deportation.

John became coordinator for 'No Deportations – Residence Papers for All', a campaign dedicated to educating the public about immigration, asylum, and anti-deportation issues. He was central to the growth of the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign, which he helped grow into a national movement, the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), which still operates today.

In 1996, he founded 'Miscarriages of Justice UK' (MOJUK), a non-political, non-funded organisation dedicated to supporting people in prison who were campaigning against wrongful convictions.

RIP Comrade

West Midlands Pensioners Convention

WHAT'S ON



West Midland Pensioners Convention

Campaigning on behalf of Today's and Tomorrows Pensioners Across the Midland Region

We have a number of local branches of the West Midlands Pensioners Convention alongside Regional and local affiliates including Trade Unions.

We also have Individual Membership. Our Regional Council meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month between 11.00a.m and 1.00 p.m.

Although our Regional Council meetings are delegate-based Visitors and guests always very welcome.

For further information contact:

Sandra Durkin: 07860576701

Brian Allbutt: 07342264482

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 Invited Branch Speaker

April 16th : Kay Starkey : Air Ambulance

May 21st : John Billingham: "Life in the 50's"

June 18th: Carol Freer : Leesows Walled Garden

There are also regular social events and new members are always very welcome.

For more information contact Bob Davis:

Email : bobjdavies@hotmail.com or

Call: 07810185318

Sandwell and West Birmingham Pensioners Convention

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month. Between 11.00 a.m. and 1.00p.m.

At West Bromwich Central Library.

We are affiliated to the West Midlands Pensioners Convention and are involved in the Regional Transport Group and the Black Country Integrated Care Board.

We also hold monthly social events.

New members are always very welcome.

For more information contact:

Brian Allbuut on 07342264482 or email:

Brian.j.allbutt@hotmail.co.uk

North Staffordshire Pensioners Convention

Spring Fayre

10 a.m. till 2.00 p.m.

Saturday April 25th

Penkhull Village

Trent Valley Road

ST4 5JB



FOR PEACE AND SOVEREIGNTY

Say No to US intervention in Cuba and Latin Amer

Public Meeting

Saturday April 11th

2pm – 5pm

St Martins Cathedral