

# Campaign!

The NPC's monthly bulletin for activists in the pensioners' movement

## Has Blunkett seen the light on means-test?

For years the NPC has been calling on the government to pay a universal state pension set above the official poverty level, as the best way of ensuring that it reaches everyone.

The government could then use the tax system to take back the money from those who were regarded as being well off.

Up till now ministers have instead preferred to use means-tested benefits - despite the fact that millions of eligible people don't claim them.

But on a recent edition of Radio 4's Today programme, former Secretary of State for Work and Pen-

sions David Blunkett said: "We should retain universal benefit delivery, but claw back money from those who don't need it, through tax."

Campaigners are hoping that his comments signal a change of direction for a government that has spent the last decade rolling out one of the most extensive systems of means-testing since WWII.

Frank Cooper, NPC president said: "Mr Blunkett appears to have caught up with the rest of us - and finally realised that means-testing is not only unpopular but ineffective at getting help to those who need it most."

**Means-testing fails to reach 2m pensioners who don't claim**

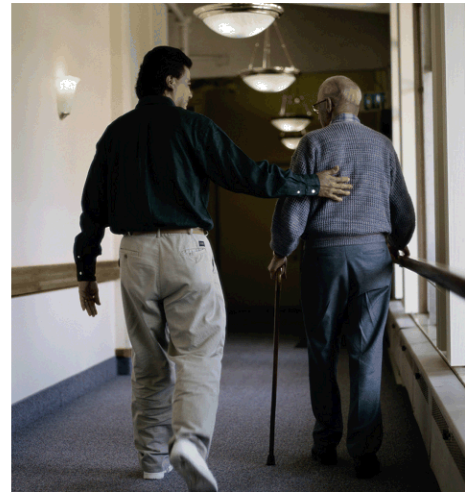
## Free care pledge doesn't add up

During his speech at the Labour Party conference, the Prime Minister announced that from next October those with the highest needs would receive free personal care in their own homes.

But the announcement has caused confusion amongst those in the care sector.

The estimated annual spending of £670m pledged by Mr Brown would work out at just £38 of care a week for each of the 350,000 people affected - far short of the estimated £165 cost of the average 11-hour package of domiciliary care provided in 2007.

The NPC has also warned that failing to also help those with less severe needs will ultimately lead to a worsening of their



condition and a subsequent greater demand on higher levels of care and support.

What is significant is that the PM's announcement comes in the middle of a government consultation on the future of care services.

At the heart of this consultation is how the services should be funded.

The NPC is calling for this to be done through general taxation, backed up with

stronger regulation of care staff and providers and opposition to individual budgets being forced onto vulnerable older people.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "Any new care proposals must end the post-code lottery of charges, scrap the unfair use of means-testing and improve the quality of services people receive."

"Anything less is just pre-election window dressing."

*An estimated 381,000 older people are currently going without home care services because of rationing by local authorities*  
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## National Pensioners Convention

19-23

Ironmonger Row,  
London EC1V 3QN  
T: 020-7553-6510  
www.npcuk.org



## Campaign Dates

Jack Jones

**Memorial 5 October**

The UNITE union is staging a memorial meeting to mark the work of Jack Jones, in the Royal Festival Hall, London. Free tickets are limited, but the NPC has been given an allocation. Please contact the NPC office to register your interest.

**Launch of the Pensioners' Manifesto 21 October**

The NPC will launch the Pensioners' Manifesto for the forthcoming general election on 21 October, 1-3pm, Committee Room 14, House of Commons.

**NPC Transport Conference 5 November**

11am-3pm, St Pancras Church Hall, London. Guest speakers and free lunch. Contact NPC to register.

# Pensioners in firing line for cuts

**P**lanned cuts in public spending could be damaging to pensioners, the NPC has warned.

In the run-up to the pre-budget report in November, political parties and think-tanks have begun publishing details of where any future cuts might fall.

A report from the Taxpayers Alliance calls for next year's increase in the basic state pension and Pen-

sion Credit to be frozen, along with ending the free TV licences for the over 75s and means-testing the bus pass.

Meanwhile, the Conservative party has stated that they are unlikely to restore the link between the state pension and earnings in 2012 - preferring to leave it for a further three years.

Such ideas will offer little comfort to millions of older people who have already seen the

return on their savings dwindle as a result of the recession.

Any pensioner with modest savings of £10,000 will have experienced a reduction of at least £25 in their monthly income.

Joe Harris, NPC vice president said: "It is completely unacceptable that pensioners are being asked to pay for a recession that was caused by greedy bankers and negligent politicians."

# NPC calls for housing inquiry

**T**he NPC is calling on the Communities and Local Government select committee to hold an inquiry into the issue of housing and older people.

Of particular concern is the loss of wardens from many sheltered housing complexes, the status and rights of older people living in mobile park homes, the position of older leaseholders in retire-

ment properties and the importance of independent advice to enable older residents to make an informed decision as to their housing needs.

Already over 50 cases have gone to court to contest housing providers' decisions to replace live-in wardens with 'floating support' in order to cut their costs.

The experience of people up and down the country is that this prac-

tice can leave vulnerable individuals without adequate support, putting their lives at risk.

Pat Healy, NPC vice president said: "The decision to remove in-house wardens is so short sighted, given that if people don't have this support, they will eventually need more help from social services which will end up costing more in the long run than a warden."

# Question Time campaign

**O**ver the last year the NPC has been calling on its supporters to write to the producer of the BBC's Question Time programme, to request that the Convention be asked to take part in the show.

Despite hundreds of letters little progress has been made.

They are reluctant to give the NPC a slot because they say we are not well known enough and our representative would find it difficult to cope under the pressure of a live broadcast.

However, following the BBC's recent

decision to invite the fascist British National Party to appear, the NPC's Executive now believes it is time to re-launch the campaign.

Supporters should therefore send polite requests to Gill Penlington, Producer, Question Time 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 4 Millbank, London SW1P 3JQ.

**If you know of anyone who would like to receive this bulletin please send their email address to the NPC**