



Campaign!

Fighting for the rights of older people

Get Moving with Lady Mary!

NPC

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Olympic legend Mary Peters has joined forces with AGE NI to get us all moving after months in lockdown.

The 80 year old gold medallist is releasing a series of free, online fitness videos that are easy for all abilities to do. The exercises range from simple seated stretches, to balance, strength and gentle aerobics. The video launch comes after health experts warned of the dangers to older people from a lack of regular movement. Lady Mary, who won the pentathlon at the Munich Games in 1972, said: "To me, movement is life; it's so important as you get older to keep active. These exercises are nice and gentle, and trust me, they will help you to feel good during this difficult period. Hopefully we can create a little virtual community of what I'm calling my 'golden oldies' all doing these daily workouts together."

View the videos at www.ageNI/movewithmary



NPC calls for urgent meeting with Chancellor over Budget threat to pensions triple-lock

The NPC has written to Chancellor Rishi Sunak asking that he urgently commit to protecting the state pension 'triple-lock' after reports it may be under threat in his next Budget.

Introduced in 2011, the triple-lock guarantees that the basic state pension will rise by a minimum of either 2.5%, or the rate of inflation, or average earnings growth - whichever is greater. But speculation is rife that the Chancellor will get rid of it—or possibly freeze it for two years—to help cover the cost to the nation of the Covid-19 pandemic.

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt has asked the Chancellor for a meeting to discuss 'a way forward' that avoids axing the measure.

She said: "The triple lock was designed to bring the poorest section of our community out of poverty. Scrapping the triple lock will cause hardship now and to future generations of pensioners." Jan argued

that the use of percentage increases creates an inaccurate picture of how much money people actually receive in their pension, which already suffers from an unequal two tier-system depending on when you retire. For example, a 2.5% increase on £6,981 (pre-April 2016) and

'Scrapping the triple-lock will cause hardship'

£9,110 (post-April 2016) is obviously considerably less in monetary terms than the same increase on the average salary of £26,156. For millions of women this actually means an increase of just £1.95 a week on their state pension.

Currently the UK state pension is the least adequate in the economically developed world with a replacement rate of just 29%. There is also an inequality between the (two-tier) schemes with the old scheme having only the basic element triple

locked, whereas the whole of the new scheme receives the triple lock. Therefore, the oldest, most vulnerable pensioners have the least income and the gap widens every year.

Many NPC members have already expressed their fears and anger at any move to axe the triple-lock. Brian Allen from Somerset said: "I was deeply concerned to read that future pension rises are being threatened by the possible abolition of the Triple Lock. The Think Tank Brigade yet again aiming at the older generation.

"They don't fully appreciate the important part older people play in the country's economy" **Read the NPC letter to the Chancellor in full, here: www.npcuk.org.uk**

GET YOUR VIEWS HEARD & JOIN THE NPC TODAY!

The NPC is proud that our members are extremely active across the regions, successfully campaigning on local and national issues, such as the call to retain the free TV licence for all over 75's. In spite of the constraints of lockdown, we appreciate that you are all still making your voices heard, by writing to your MP's, business leaders and the press. During lockdown, NPC staff continue to work at home on your behalf. We would like to thank all our members and affiliates who have already paid their 2020 fees and for your continuing support! If you or your group would like to join the NPC please contact us for more information at info@npcuk.org.uk

NPC and RCPsych join forces on major new survey

The Royal College of Psychiatrists and the NPC are working together on a survey to gauge the mental health issues older people may be dealing with, particularly during the Coronavirus lockdown. The survey form is completely anonymised so you won't have to give your name. Dr. Amanda Thompsell, Chair of the Old Age faculty at RCPsych. Explained: "Talking about mental health can be challenging – especially if you're from an older generation. But since lockdown started there's been a rise in emergency cases of mental illness in older people. This means that a lot of people who need help aren't getting it early enough. Can you help us change this? We're trying to find new ways to support you, and ensure your mental wellbeing, in this difficult time. In order to do that, we need to understand how fear of the pandemic, the pressures of isolation and the disruption caused by Covid-19 are affecting you. Please take a few moments to complete our survey. Your views can help thousands of people access the right care and treatments now and in the future." **We hope you take part — see full details in the attached survey form.**

Medical chiefs warn of second Coronavirus wave—Page 2

Boris & BBC: 'Save over 75's TV licence before its too late!'

The NPC is appealing to the Prime Minister and the BBC to look beyond another extension of the free TV licence for over 75's and seek a permanent solution.

Everyone over 75 was due to start paying the £157.50 licence fee from 1st August – extended from 1st June - unless they can prove they are on Pension Credit. This is now set to be extended until at least October. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is on record as saying that it is "crucial" to retain the free licence, while dozens of Ministers and MP's on all sides have also voiced support for it. **The NPC has written to the Prime Minister and Department of Culture and Media Secretary, Oliver Dowden, urging them to negotiate a long term deal with the BBC, who were handed responsibility for it in 2015.** Every MP will also receive a letter from the NPC asking them to press for a solution to avoid our oldest and most vulnerable being forced to switch off, at a time when many - particularly those living alone - may still be fearful of going out because of Covid-19. **Jan Shortt, General Secretary of the NPC said members are already supporting the call to action by writing to their local MP's on the issue.** She commented: "Millions

Thousands will be 'pushed into poverty' to stay switched on

of pensioners may still face the decision on whether to eat, heat their homes or buy a TV licence. In the 21st century that choice should never have to be made. The NPC hopes that negotiations will take place which allow both the government and the BBC to show their support for vulnerable older people and put "bold words into positive action."

Jan said: "There are now 1.9 million pensioners living in poverty in the UK (Age UK). It is expected that a further 50,000 and possibly more, who are not on pension credit will be pushed into poverty. It is of no use to them to have access to a 'simple repayment scheme' for the TV licence fee if the money is not there in the first place. There are fundamental issues around the government abdicating its responsibilities for an element of universal entitlements that supplements the poorest state pension in the economically developed world. We believe that social welfare is the sole remit of the government in power, not an unelected, broadcasting company."

*** The full text of the letters to the Prime Minister, the Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, and all other Members of Parliament can be read here: www.npcuk.org.uk**

Ellen Speaks Up for BLM

NPC Vice President Ellen Lebethe gave a moving interview to the Daily Mirror after expressing solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd. Retired schoolteacher Ellen recalled being brought up in apartheid South Africa. She says while things have improved in Britain, there is still much to do. She told the Mirror: "The British pension is one of the lowest in the developed world. As far as black pensioners are concerned, not only are they affected by a very poor pension, many of us occupied jobs which were classified as low-skilled – we didn't earn an amount of money where we could put away for a rainy day or have savings, so we're less well off than others."



Goodnight Sweetheart: Dame Vera Lynn

We were all saddened to learn that Dame Vera Lynn, the Forces' Sweetheart whose songs helped raise morale in World War Two, has died aged 103. Best known for performing hits such as We'll Meet Again to troops on the front line in India, Burma and Egypt, Dame Vera was still lifting morale just six weeks ago. Ahead of the 75th anniversary of VE Day and during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, she said simple acts of bravery and sacrifice still define our nation. A week later, she became the oldest artist to get a top 40 album in the UK - beating her own record—when her greatest hits album re-entered the charts at number 30.

Medics fear Covid-19 second wave and advise wearing face masks as a 'matter of course'

If you have been shielding since lockdown started the Government has announced that you will be free to stop—if you live in England—1st August. From 6th July you can start meeting others in 'support bubbles' with other households. However many people remain nervous about the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions. Health leaders are calling for an urgent review to determine whether the UK is properly prepared for the "real risk" of a second wave of coronavirus. **In an open letter published in the British Medical Journal—and signed by the Royal Colleges of Surgeons, Nursing, Physicians, and GPs – Government ministers were warned that urgent action is needed to prevent further loss of life.** BMA chair Dr Chaand Nagpaul said that despite social distancing being reduced to one metre, and pubs and restaurants opening in England from 4th July, Coronavirus is still in circulation. He commented: "The crucial aspect of this reduction in distancing is the prime minister's acknowledgement that it comes with conditions attached – one of these is the wearing of face coverings. The BMA believes face

masks or coverings should be worn by the public now as a matter of course, in order to keep the risk of infection as low as possible." **Dr Nagpaul cited evidence that a Covid-19 infected person in close proximity with another, had a 70% chance of transmitting it - but the risk dropped to 5% if the infected person was wearing a mask, and to 1.5% if both wore one.** He added that while the course of the pandemic is hard to predict, evidence indicates local flare-ups are likely and a second wave a real risk. The Government took clinical advice on the new easing measures after infection rates fell. The new rules mean extremely vulnerable people will no longer receive free essential food box deliveries. But support from NHS volunteers and councils is still possible. They will still qualify for online shopping priority slots and be offered help with medicine deliveries and getting to medical appointments. ***Action Loss for Hearing has won the right from the Department of Transport for anyone travelling with a person who is deaf or has hearing loss on public transport, not to have to wear a facemask—allowing the hearing impaired person to lip-read.**

DLA & PIP inquiry delays

Since lockdown began in March there has been a huge drop in people applying for Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

There are concerns that people who need help in making a claim are unable to get the personal assistance normally offered by charities, who are closed or restricted due to the Covid-19 lockdown. Back in April, Disabilities Minister Justin Tomlinson told MPs that on average 5,000 people per week were claiming disability benefits, compared with around 13,000 per week in January - a drop of 62% PIP is the benefit that is gradually replacing Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and is paid to those who need help with daily living or getting around as a result of a long-term illness or disability. Existing claimants who were aged 65 or over on 20 June 2016 should continue to receive DLA, provided they can continue to meet the eligibility criteria. However NPC members have been in touch to say the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have been slow to sort out—and reassure—those over 65 who can remain on DLA. ***If you are having problems claiming PIP, or trying to remain on DLA, the Citizens Advice Bureau can help on:**

Adviceline (England): 03444 111 444 or Advicelink (Wales): 03444 77 20 20