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Issue 149

# Campaign!

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

## The race to Downing Street



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**W**ith the General Election campaign in full swing, Political Parties are setting out their policies and plans to get voters to elect them into power.

Key issues such as the Brexit, the NHS, social care, pensions, housing, energy and transport remain high on the agenda, but new and wider concerns around climate change and the environment and digital infrastructure, literacy and digital rights are also coming to the fore.

All the main parties have stated that they would maintain the triple lock, but the Green Party would replace the State Pension with a Universal Basic Income of £178 which would increase in line with inflation.

One of the big deciding issues for older voters will be universal pensioner benefits. All parties will seek to keep the Winter Fuel Payment and free bus passes, but on the issue of the over 75s free TV licence, whilst Labour, the Lib Dems, SNP, Greens, DUP would seek the re-instatement of TV licence concession the Conservatives would leave the funding of this to the BBC and the Brexit Party would phase out the licence altogether

The Conservatives have set out a plan to get cross-party support on social care whilst adding £1 billion of extra funding. Labour have stated they will create a National Care Service and social care will be free,

The NHS is another area being hotly contested, with the Con-

servatives reintroducing maintenance grants to drive the recruitment of GPs and nurses and Labour abolishing prescription charges increasing yearly expenditure by 4.3%

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that neither the Conservative nor Labour spending plans are 'properly credible'.

Further criticism of the tax plans comes after Labour pledged to spend an extra £83bn a year by the end of the next parliament, while the Tories said spending would rise by only £3bn. The IFS further stated that "neither Labour nor the Conservatives is being honest with the electorate."

Read the NPC's manifesto comparison and the NPC's Pensioners' Manifesto' on [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org)



### NPC

Marchmont  
Community Centre,  
62 Marchmont St,  
London WC1N 1AB.  
T: 020-7837-6622  
E: info@npcuk.org  
W: npcuk.org  
Facebook: @NPCUK  
Twitter: @NPCUK

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### National Council Announcement

Due to the upcoming General Election and a number of transport strikes, the National Council meeting originally scheduled for Wednesday 11th December 2019 has been postponed. The new meeting date has been rescheduled for the 20th January 2020. This will take the date and venue already arranged for the Executive Council

Agenda and further details will follow.

## 3 Older People per Hour

**S**hocking figures from research released by Age UK show that since the last general election in 2017, at least 74,000 older people in England every day are dying not getting the care they need. An estimated 1,725,000 unanswered calls for help for care and support will have been made by older people. Around 1.5 million older people in England have an unmet need for social care. By 2030, some 2.1 million could be in need of help but will not be receiving it, if governments do not act, The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee said in July that the Government must immediately spend £8 billion to restore social care to acceptable standards and then introduce free personal care over a five-year period.

## Is 70 The New 65?

**T**he Office for National Statistics has released a report called Living Longer: Is Age 70 The New Age 65?

Traditionally, 65 has been taken as the entry point into old age, as for decades it has been the official retirement age for men and when they can start drawing their state pension.

Working patterns are shifting and the pension age is rising for both men and women - it will reach 66 in 2020 and 67 by 2028. The report also suggests that people are healthier now than 65-year-olds from four decades ago, but even if health is good it does not mean that other normal ageing processes do not grind on. People with manual jobs, whether removal men or school cooks, carrying huge tureens cannot always continue their jobs, even if healthy. Other studies of course, have found that progress on life expectancy and number of healthy years people are living in later life have stalled in recent times. It is feared that the report is simplistic and could persuade governments to raise the state pension age further.

## Airlines discriminating against older people

**R**esearch by the consumer group Which? has found that airlines are 'discriminating' against older travellers by charging extra to book over the phone. Holidaymakers were being hit with surcharges of up to £20 for not booking flights online. Which? called the practice a "subtle form of discrimination" against older people, who are travelling more than previous generations.

For bookings made over the phone, Ryanair and TUI added a £20 surcharge, easyJet £15 and British Airways £10. Which? also found that older holidaymakers were being hit with increasing travel insurance costs, even when they had no health issues to declare. Researchers found that for typical 15-day stay, premiums leap from £30 for a 64-year-old to more than £60 for someone aged 70 in good health, meaning that perfectly healthy older people are missing out on travelling in their older years due to spiralling premiums.

## Winter Deaths

**F**igures released show that excess winter deaths in 2018/19 reached 23,200 in all England and Wales. Respiratory diseases, remain the leading cause of death with rates higher in women than men. Jan Shortt NPC General Secretary said: "The next government must make a commitment to end fuel poverty and ensure that energy companies do not abuse the implementation of the next cap on prices"

## Winter Fuel Payments

**I**f you were born on or before 5 April 1954 you could get between £100 and £300 to help you pay your heating bills. You usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you are eligible.

Most payments are made automatically between November and December. You should get your money by 13 January 2020. If you do not get your payment, call the office that pays your benefits - their details are on any letters they sent you.

Some people may need to apply for the payment. Eligibility criteria and further information can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment>

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