



## **NPC BIENNIAL REPORT 2019**

### **Introduction**

Austerity is in its 9th year. Unprecedented cuts to public services, local communities and attacks on universal benefits across the generations has seen a rise in food banks; a huge crisis in social care and the highest number of winter deaths in 30 years. The closure of community centres, libraries, youth clubs, further reductions in the provision of meals on wheels, schools struggling to provide the resources for education – are all taking place in the 6th richest country in the developed world.

A recent UN report on poverty in the UK stated: 'The UK government has inflicted great misery on its people with punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous austerity policies driven by a political desire to undertake social re-engineering rather than economic necessity.' There are 14 million people living in poverty, including 1.9 million pensioners and many more who are struggling just above the poverty line.

Uniting the generations is a crucial part of the work the NPC needs to do now and in the future. It is clear that trade unions in particular need to understand more about the state pension. Whilst their focus on occupational pensions is necessary, the majority of pensioners of the future (the workers of today) will increasingly rely on the basic state pension as the main source of their income in retirement. Many of the issues for older people are the same for working people and the TUC have agreed to look at ways in which we can work together.

The NPC is still the largest independent organisation run by pensioners for pensioners and we must continue to speak for those who cannot, for whatever reason, speak for themselves. We must challenge (and keep challenging) the misinformation and those policies that hurt pensioners because what we gain or lose now, will affect future pensioners as well. Our duty is to therefore protect the gains that we have made.

A note of caution - the budget for this year is again in deficit. We must collectively and individually work to ensure the sustainability of the NPC by being creative about recruitment of new members and retention of those who are our longest serving supporters.

This report shows a wealth of knowledge, experience and hard work by all our members. The essence of the NPC is the variety of backgrounds our members come from and the democratic structures through which we ensure our members can participate, and face the many challenges ahead – and there will be many!

**Jan Shortt**  
**General Secretary**

## **WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT**

### **Parliamentary Work**

Over the past two years, both Kelvin Hopkins MP and Sharon Hodgson MP have kindly booked us rooms in the House of Commons to stage our annual rally and lobby of Parliament. In addition to this, the NPC also regularly writes to ministers and officials on specific issues of concern, and where possible seeks to meet with them and their opposition counterparts. However, since the last BDC this has proved difficult:

- Despite numerous requests, Guy Opperman MP, Pensions Minister has declined to meet with the NPC
  - Similarly, the Minister of State for Care, Caroline Dinenage has also declined a meeting, as has Barbara Keeley MP; her opposite number in Labour
  - Meetings have been held with Labour's pensions spokesperson, Jack Dromey MP and his predecessor Alex Cunningham
  - Whilst there has been no meetings yet with the Transport Minister, Nusrat Ghani MP, Labour's Daniel Zeichner has asked questions on behalf of the NPC in Parliament and supported a delegation to Number 10 marking ten years of the bus pass
  - During 2018 we also met with a delegation of local government pension officials from South Korea who were on a fact finding tour regarding state pensions
- The Convention also regularly submits papers to Parliamentary consultations and reviews, and communicates directly with MPs on particular issues, such as the future of the over 75s' TV licence.

### **The General Election 2017**

The snap General Election in June 2017 took place on the last day of that year's Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool. Whilst it proved too difficult to get a hustings meeting arranged to enable the different parties to put forward their views, the NPC did collate a comparison of the different policies on offer and circulated the information to affiliates to distribute to their members. The NPC also produced and publicised its own six point Pensioners' Manifesto which called for:

- A state pension set above the official poverty level, at around £200 a week and linked to the triple lock of the higher of earnings, prices or 2.5%.
- Greater funding for the NHS, an end to privatisation in the health service and a national social care system funded from general taxation that is free at the point of delivery and without means-testing.
- Maintenance of universal pensioner benefits such as free bus travel, a £500 winter fuel allowance, free prescriptions and a free TV licence for the over 75s.
- More homes that are both affordable and suitable for everyone, whilst recognising the specific barriers to downsizing that older people face.
- New legal protection for older people from all forms of elder abuse, to ensure dignity and raise standards of care.
- A Brexit deal that safeguards the payment of pensions, the EU health insurance card and the rights of those UK pensioners living abroad.

### **NPC Annual Lobby of Parliament**

Since the last BDC in 2017, the NPC has staged two successful Autumn lobbies of Parliament; which have featured a range of excellent speakers including Alex Cunningham MP, Dr Lydia Hayes (Cardiff University), Sian Errington (UNITE), Mick

Newton (UK Mineworkers Pension Association), Roger McKenzie (UNISON), Jack Dromey MP, Ian Andexser (Canadian Alliance of British Pensioners) and Mark Serwotka (PCS). On both occasions a member of the government has been asked to speak, but has been unable to attend.

Discussions are now taking place as to whether the difficulties with getting into Parliament and the time it takes could be alleviated if the lobby was organised at Portcullis House and/or took place on a different day.

### **Pensioners' Parliament**

The annual Pensioners' Parliament in Blackpool remains one of the NPC's key events and activities of the year. The quality of the programme is always extremely high; attracting a range of first class speakers on various topics. In recent years, numbers have declined largely due to funding problems affecting many local groups, and cuts from Blackpool Council have put an additional £6000 charge on staging the event. However, last year the event attracted a rising number of delegates and increasing efforts are being made to target attendance from local pensioner groups. Following the last BDC, the Executive agreed to address the long-term future of the event by setting up a review committee to look at every aspect of the Parliament from 2020 onwards. The committee's report will be open to discussion and amendment at this year's BDC.

### **Intergenerational Fairness**

One of the major challenges facing the pensioner movement over the last two years has been the arguments put forward by think tanks such as the Resolution Foundation, Intergenerational Foundation and a host of other media commentators who have tried to re-draw our understanding of what solidarity between the generations actually means. The idea that each generation contributes to the welfare of the next – such as through our Pay As You Go state pension scheme is under threat because it is represented as benefiting the older population at the expense of the young. Furthermore, the cause of the pressures that younger people face – such as student debt, insecure employment and a lack of affordable housing are all attributed to those who have already retired.

The NPC has long argued that these lines of attack are not being pursued to benefit younger people – after all, the same groups have called for a higher retirement age – but are really there as a smokescreen for dismantling our welfare state. Put simply, if the concessionary bus pass is removed for today's pensioners, it is almost certainly not going to exist for future generations.

Our work on this issue has culminated in making a detailed submission to the House of Lords inquiry into this subject, followed by the publication of a new pamphlet entitled Exploring Intergenerational Fairness. Members of the NPC have also spoken at various meetings and events around the country, including at the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival in 2018, a debate at Birmingham University at the end of the year and a forthcoming academic conference in Liverpool in February 2019.

- Motion 3 called for the creation of an Older People's Commissioner, similar to that in Wales and N Ireland
- Motion 4 agreed the NPC should affiliate to the People's Assembly.

The NPC has been monitoring the work of the two existing commissioners, and in particular that of Eddie Lynch in N Ireland. He has kindly agreed to speak at the 2019 Pensioners' Parliament. Key to making our demand for a Commissioner for Older People in England a success is the need to ensure the post has the right terms of reference, responsibilities and powers. We intend to discuss this further with the two existing commissioners and consider how best to advance this policy.

Following the 2017 BDC the NPC affiliated to the People's Assembly at a cost of £50. The Convention has sent the national banner to a number of national demonstrations over the last two years, but has not played any further role in the organisation.

### **UN Day of Older Persons**

In the last few years the NPC has marked 1 October with a range of activities organised by regions across the country. The recent themes have focused on the state pension, universal benefits, care issues and intergenerational fairness. It proves to be a useful day for linking up with local authorities and other organisations to mark the rights of older people.

### **Brexit and older people**

- Motion 1 asked the NPC to write to the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU to seek assurances on a number of issues such as the protection of UK pensioners resident in the EU, staffing levels in social care and future funding for state pensions and benefits

A letter was written to the then minister, David Davies and a reply received. At the time, no specific information or guarantees were given, apart from an acknowledgement that all of our concerns would need to be addressed by the negotiated settlement and future arrangements. Since then, the Brexit debate has gathered pace and now consumes almost every aspect of parliamentary time. During this period, the NPC's national officer spoke about the issue in Dublin at the Retired Workers' Annual Conference and in Paris at the CGT-UCR meeting (retired trade unionists), and his speech was subsequently turned into the pamphlet entitled Brexit and Older People. The NPC Executive Committee previously decided not to adopt a position on the referendum, instead leaving it up to individual choice. Nevertheless, we are closely monitoring all the developments and will issue further guidance as appropriate.

### **PENSIONS**

- Motion 7 called for a retention of the Triple Lock indexation arrangements on the state pension
- Motions 8 and 9 were concerned with the issue of pension payments following the closure of a company and called for greater protection for employees
- Motion 10 called on the NPC to continue to argue for an indexation arrangement based on the greater of CPI, RPI, wages or 2.5%, alongside pursuing the case for a new Household Inflation Index
- Motion 11 opposed any plans to merge income tax with National Insurance

## **State Pension and the State Pension Age**

Back in 2015, the National Council approved a new policy on the state pension, to demand a Living State Pension, set above the official poverty level and based on 70% of the Living Wage (outside London). This would give a figure just over £200 a week. Throughout the last two years, the Convention has therefore sought to advance this campaign through written submissions to government, meetings with ministers and other politicians, issuing public media statements and the production of a considerable amount of campaign and briefing material. In addition, the NPC has representation on the Royal Statistical Society's User Group looking at the subject of indexation.

The government has already legislated for a State Pension Age of 68 by 2044 and a review by Sir John Cridland has recommended that this be brought forward by seven years. The NPC has produced detailed analysis and evidence to counter this claim, including a "68 is too late" leaflet which has been distributed at trade union conferences to younger workers.

The ongoing pension campaign centres on the following additional key demands:

- The inclusion of existing pensioners in the new State Pension on a no detriment basis
- Ensuring those women born between April 1951 and April 1953 who were adversely affected by the 2011 Pension Act are compensated for the changes in the state pension age
- Ensuring that fair indexation arrangements apply to all aspects of both the existing and new State Pension
- Opposition to any further increases in the SPA beyond 66 for men and women

## **Frozen Pensions**

The NPC and its Minority Elders Committee has been tireless in its pursuit of justice for those 500,000 UK state pensioners living abroad who are currently unable to receive an annual increase in their state pension. The Convention meets regularly with representatives of the International Consortium of British Pensioners who are leading this campaign, and continue to give them as much support as necessary. This has included giving them speaking opportunities at both the Pensioners' Parliament and the annual lobby. Later in 2019 we will also be working with them to seek a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss their campaign.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

- Motion 12 stated opposition to Sustainability and Transformation Plans in the NHS as they were viewed as being undemocratic. The motion was remitted to the EC and was passed to the Health and Social Care Working Party to consider
- Motion 13 called for the NPC to campaign for greater funding for health and care services
- Motion 14 restated the NPC's policy of calling for a National Care Service, funded through general taxation, free at the point of delivery and publicly provided
- Motion 15 on improving support for carers was remitted to the EC and was passed to the Health and Social Care Working Party to consider
- Motion 16 on Elder Abuse was remitted to the EC and was passed to the Health and Social Care Working Party to consider

- Motion 17 calling for new rights, especially for couples in care was remitted to the EC and was passed to the Health and Social Care Working Party to consider
- Motion 18 calling for early diagnosis of dementia and a campaign to ensure proper funding was remitted to the EC and was passed to the Health and Social Care Working Party to consider

Many of the motions in this section were not passed by the 2017 BDC, but nevertheless they were still referred to the Health and Social Care Working Party to consider what work could be done. The following action was taken on the specific points:

On STPs, a meeting was arranged with the Chair of LGA Community Well-Being Board. We found some common ground with the LGA, and maintain contact with them on the issue. Specific briefing material was also issued by the working party. On the treatment of carers we contacted the Royal College of GPs (RCGP) to ask if research had been done to identify gaps in the support carers receive. The RCGP agreed to circulate NPC regional contacts and inform GPs to contact them when local initiatives were coming up. We also contacted the Care Quality Commission, but they stated that their regulatory role was not to monitor Local Authority assessments, but nevertheless their local reviews may help in identifying any problems.

On the disturbing issue of couples being separated and put into different care homes, we wrote to NHS England asking them to ensure that a policy be in place for Clinical Commissioning Groups that enables older people the choice of where they are placed. We also asked that older people should not be placed apart from their partner and not die without that partner being present. We have received no reply from NHS England, although a follow-up letter was sent.

On dementia treatment, we contacted the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock asking for a meeting to discuss our concerns over dementia care and related issues. He replied that he was unable to meet, but suggested we contact the Care Minister, Caroline Dinenage. She too replied that she was unable to meet and a second request has now gone in. We await her response.

The main area of work however has centred on the demand for a National Care Service. The long awaited Green Paper on the future of social care funding has been delayed six times since it was first announced after the 2017 General Election, and now it seems unlikely to make an appearance until after the Brexit deadline in March.

The NPC has held a roundtable discussion with other pensioner organisations, charities, health trade unions and other professionals to look at this issue in detail and this has culminated in a draft policy entitled Goodbye Cinderella being presented to the Executive Committee at the end of 2018. Further work has to be done on the document, but it is likely to form a major piece of campaigning during the next two years.

## **Dignity Action Day**

Over the last few years, the NPC has set out to mark National Dignity Action Day on 1 February with a series of activities organised around the country by regions. These often prove to be very effective at raising the NPC's profile in the regions. The NPC also continues to promote the Dignity Code among local MPs, hospital trusts, local authorities and other care providers. The 2019 campaign leaflet will deal with the unfairness of social care funding.

Given the problems with the weather experienced by a number of groups this year, the NPC will be considering choosing a different date in 2020 to stage these events.

## **HOUSING**

- Motion 19 called on the NPC to oppose rules aligning housing benefit in social housing with the Local Housing Allowance. The motion was remitted to the EC to consider
- Motion 20 called on the NPC to campaign on housing poverty. The motion was remitted to the EC to consider

Despite many genuine concerns about housing and its impact on older people, the NPC has never had a detailed policy on the issue. Following the BDC's decision to remit the motions to the Executive Committee, it was agreed to set up an ad hoc housing working party to look at the issue and produce a draft policy, entitled Home, Sweet Home?. This went through various stages of discussion and amendment, and the final version will be debated at this year's conference.

## **TRANSPORT**

The Transport Working Party remains active on all issues relating to buses and trains, levels of service, accessibility, safety and ownership. This includes making submissions to government consultations and every year the working party organises a successful one-day conference to look at particular issues of concern, with a range of expert speakers.

This year also saw the 10th anniversary of the concessionary bus pass. Working party member and bus campaigner, Richard Worrall organised a hand-in at Number 10 of a giant birthday card celebrating the anniversary and calling for the concession to be maintained.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

### **Winter deaths**

Last winter an estimated 50,100 older people died in England and Wales between December 2017 and March 2018. This equates to 417 deaths a day or 17 deaths an hour. Whilst the NPC does not usually do so, given that the scale of the winter deaths was the highest figure since 1975/76 we publicly called on the Energy Minister, Claire Perry MP to resign. The figures also showed that excess winter mortality in 2017 to 2018 significantly increased from 2016 to 2017 in all English regions and Wales, and those affected the most were females and people aged 85 and over.

For the last few years, the NPC has publicly highlighted the scale of winter deaths amongst older people with the release of black balloons in London and the laying of

wreaths and candlelight vigils in other parts of the country. This has achieved some useful publicity in the regions. The campaign continues to call for a programme of home insulation, ending higher bills for those on prepayment meters and those who cannot pay online, scrapping standing charges, an increase in the winter fuel allowance and action to tackle the excessive profits of the big six energy companies.

### **TV Licences for the over 75s**

In 2015, the then Chancellor, George Osborne announced that the government would pass responsibility for the payment and administration of the free TV licence from the Department for Work and Pensions to the BBC. The NPC has objected strongly to this, both in the national media, to the minister responsible and the BBC. However, in the last few weeks the BBC has launched a public consultation which aims to scrap, means-test or reform the concession in some way. The Convention, along with Age UK and a range of other pensioner groups have set up a joint petition opposing any change and calling on the government to take back responsibility for the benefit.

In addition, the NPC has also published model answers for those taking part in the BBC consultation, along with a letter for MPs, and has called a demonstration for 7 March outside the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to highlight our concerns.

### **Meals on Wheels**

The NPC continues to work closely and support the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) in its campaign to make meals on wheels a statutory service that cannot be cut by local authorities. Their latest research found that just 42% of councils now provide a service compared with 66% only two years ago. Previously we have assisted the NACC with a parliamentary meeting, circulated campaign material and their chair, Neel Radia spoke at the 2017 Pensioners' Parliament.

### **Funeral Poverty**

Following communication with the Dundee Pensioners' Forum, it was agreed to begin looking at the issue of funeral poverty and how it affects older people. A special session was held at the 2018 Pensioners' Parliament and work is now ongoing to see how we can introduce into England, Wales and N Ireland a scheme similar to that in Scotland whereby the government is launching this summer a Funeral Poverty Action Plan which includes Funeral Expenses Assistance – a new benefit towards the costs of burials/cremations and other funeral expenses such as funeral director fees, a coffin, and flowers.

### **Elder Abuse**

The NPC believes there may have been a significant breakthrough in the campaign to secure separate legislation on the issue of elder abuse. An announcement in 2018 by the Law Commission to conduct a review into hate crimes, which would include age, offers the best opportunity so far to secure specific protection for older people in law. The NPC will be making a submission to the Commission's Review in due course.

## **Save Our Post Offices**

The NPC has been a longstanding support of the Post Office and the CWU's campaign to protect jobs and services. The Post Office recently announced the plan to 'franchise' 74 Crown Post Offices. Conservative estimates suggest that some 800 jobs will be affected by this move – with the 'franchising' equating to almost one-third of the whole Crown network going over the WHSmiths. The CWU believes that franchising is simply privatisation by the backdoor and opposes this move. The NPC has been mentioned in Parliament on this issue and you can support the campaign via: <http://www.saveourpostoffice.co.uk>.

## **COMMUNICATIONS, ORGANISATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **Communications**

The NPC's communications' strategy has a wide brief covering affiliates, members, potential members, the general public, politicians and other organisations. Our main methods of communication include the following:

- Publications: The NPC produces a wide range of material including The Message newspaper, the monthly Campaign! Bulletin, campaign leaflets, pamphlets and a catalogue of briefing papers and other material. Since the last BDC, this has included the following:

Age Audit 2018

Pensioners' Manifesto 2017

Pensioners' Parliament Reports 2017 and 2018

Dignity Action Day briefings 2018 and 2019

Dignity Action Day leaflets

Lobby of Parliament leaflets and briefings 2017 and 2018

UN Older People's Day leaflets

Budget Briefing Papers (3)

Campaign! Bulletins (22)

Guidance Notes for NPC Regional Information Meetings

Brexit and Older People pamphlet

Exploring Intergenerational Fairness pamphlet

Women's Working Party Newsletter Exchange

Minority Elders Newsletter Speaking Out!

Health and Social Care Newsletters

Transport Working Party Conference reports 2017 and 2018

Trade Union Working Party Advisory Conference report 2018

Intergenerational Fairness – NPC submission to the House of Lords

Dignity and Security in Older Age – NPC submission to the Labour Party

Health of the Bus Market – NPC submission to House of Commons

Human Rights and Older People – NPC submission to APPG

Community Transport – NPC submission to House of Commons

Assisted Travel – NPC submission to House of Commons

Fuel Poverty briefing paper

Intergenerational Commission briefing paper

Uniting the Generations briefing paper

Universal Credit and Older People briefing paper

PIP/DLA briefing paper

General Election analysis paper

Party Political Manifesto comparisons  
Understanding the Manifestos on social care briefing paper  
General Election briefing paper  
Energy Price Cap briefing paper  
TUC leaflet  
Brexit and older people briefing paper  
Human rights and older people briefing paper

- NPC website: The NPC website was re-designed in 2017/18 and is a popular place for people to find out about the NPC's policies and campaigning. It is regularly visited by journalists as a source of useful background information. Visit [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org) for more information.

- Mainstream media: The NPC regularly appears in the national media; on average about once a week. Over the last two years, the Convention has been quoted in all the national press, and appeared on numerous BBC Radio programmes as well as featuring in TV news.

- Social media: Over the last two years the NPC has been receiving some assistance from the Ron Todd Foundation to improve our social media presence through Facebook and Twitter. This is beginning to have some success. You can find and follow the NPC by searching for "NPCUK" on either Facebook or Twitter.

### **Working Parties**

The NPC benefits from having a number of specialist working parties that look at specific aspects of our internal organization and policy making. After this year's BDC the EC will be electing members to the working parties for the next two years. A brief overview of their activities is listed below:

**Finance:** Oversees the day-to-day financing of the NPC, considers fundraising possibilities and sets the broad budget for the year.

**Structure:** The main issue dealt with since the last BDC was the recommendation to formally close NPC Scotland. Whilst this was with some reluctance, the EC approved the action and since then greater efforts have been made to build up engagement and the number of Scottish affiliates.

**Women:** The working party continues to produce a regular newsletter, holds well attended fringe meetings at the Women's TUC and in 2018 held a very successful seminar in Liverpool.

**Minority Elders:** The working party continues to pursue the frozen pension campaign and produces a regular newsletter. Its work mainly focuses on building links with other groups of minority elders across the country.

**Trade Union:** The working party stages a biennial advisory conference, as well as coordinating exhibition stands at all major trade union conferences throughout the year. It acts as a voice inside the trade union movement.

**Health and Social Care:** With an expanded workload, the working party produces a regular newsletter alongside other briefing material on a range of issues. Its main focus has been to develop and refine the NPC's policy on care.

**Pensions and Income:** The working party has been engaged on a number of issues including pensioner poverty, state pensions, the state pension age, indexation

arrangements, universal benefits and intergenerational fairness. It regularly advises on policy issues.

Transport: The working party stages a popular annual conference and produces useful information on current issues and concerns, as well as making submissions to government and industry consultations.

### **NPC Regions**

The backbone of the day-to-day work promoting and developing the NPC across the country falls to the 16 NPC regions, and the many activists involved. Regional reps meet regular as a group throughout the year to share reports and to discuss issues of concern. This forum agreed to run a series of workshop type seminars throughout 2018 to inform new and would-be members of how the NPC works, its structure and policies as well as looking at some of the issues facing local pensioner groups.

### **The National Pensioners' Education and Welfare Centre**

The NPC's trustees continue to play a leading role in this charity. During the last two years the main activity has been to stage the Jack Jones' Lecture, which in 2017 was given by Dame June Clark on the future of care and in 2018 Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, on developing the UK's industrial policy.

### **Staff and premises**

Since the last BDC we have experienced considerable change within our staff. Around the time of our last BDC, our Office Manager unexpectedly handed in her notice. We were very fortunate that our longstanding office manager, Alison Purshouse kindly agreed to come out of retirement and return for a six month period to get us through the Pensioners' Parliament. We are extremely grateful to Alison for stepping in at what was a very challenging time.

In September 2017, we recruited Nina Byrd as an Assistant National Officer, with specific responsibility for research and managing social media. Nina was extremely capable, and in the summer of 2018 left for a job in the civil service. Our Office Administrator, Melek Maksudoglu also decided in the summer to return to Turkey to start a new career in academia. Melek had been a familiar and friendly face within the office for over ten years and we wished her well in her brand new life.

These unforeseen changes enabled the officers to re-think exactly what the staffing needs of the organisation should be, and during the end of 2018 Margaret Waterfield was recruited as a new Office Administrator and Jonathan Safir was appointed to a new role of Information Officer. Both have made excellent starts and are now well and truly part of the NPC team, alongside Mohammad Jameer our Finance Officer and Neil Duncan-Jordan, the National Officer.

In September 2017, the Convention was forced to move from Walkden House because of the HS2 development, but we were fortunate to find accommodation in the Marchmont Street Community Centre, in Bloomsbury. We have entered into a lease until the end of 2019.

### **Rodney Bickerstaffe**

In October 2017 we learned of the death of our former President, Rodney Bickerstaffe. Rodney served the NPC from 2001-2005, and did much to secure extra

funding for the organisation, as well as keeping the NPC in the public eye. Even after he stepped down as our President, he would still speak on our behalf at various events and meetings, and would use any opportunity to promote the work of the NPC. Rodney was a giant of the trade union movement and a worthy successor to our founder, Jack Jones.

### **Syd Ashby**

It was with great sadness that the Convention learned of the death of former Vice President, Syd Ashby in July 2017. Syd was a stalwart of the NPC, as well as serving the CSPA and the West Midlands Pensioners Convention at the highest level. Syd was involved almost at the beginning of the Convention with fellow campaigners, Cyril Marshall, Helen Grew and Joan Hall and will be remembered for his interest in international issues and the rights of all pensioners.

### **Paul Smith**

In 2018 the NPC learned of the death of Paul Smith, NASUWT. His involvement in the NPC Executive Committee on behalf of both his union and his region went back some twenty years, and he was an extremely popular member. Those who spent any time with him, before too long always ended up laughing, like the time on the annual Tolpuddle Martyrs' march in Dorset, when he went past a packed pub shouting "Free beer for pensioners". He got a huge cheer! One of his main interests throughout was the call for a citizen's pension paid to everyone. His passing leaves a huge gap in the movement.