



# Campaign!

Fighting for the rights of older people



**Wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!**

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**S**eason's Greetings and a sincere thank you to each and every one of our members and affiliates for all your hard work and support in this tough and unprecedented year!

The NPC remains committed to upholding the rights of older people, and will continue to do so in 2021. We are sending out a copy of this Christmas card (right), designed by Deputy General Secretary Dot Gibson's granddaughter Rowan. It shows our members determination to fight on despite Covid - 'masked but not silenced.' Well done Rowan! Merry Christmas!



## **Margaret gets world's first vaccine—but virus is still out there!**

**A** 90 year old grandmother from Coventry became the first person in the world to receive the approved Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine. Margaret Keenan was applauded by hospital staff after making history on 8th December. She said: "I feel so

privileged to be the first person vaccinated against Covid-19, It means I can finally look forward to spending time with my family and friends after being on my own for most of the year." It is hoped the roll-out of this first vaccine, starting with the oldest and most at risk, marks the beginning of the end of the pandemic which has cost more than 60,000 lives. **Despite this month's positive vaccine news, everyone is urged to continue to be careful and keep taking precautions while the virus is still out there.** NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "The Pfizer is hopefully the first of many, but it is not a one-jab cure. There is no data on how long the effects of the vaccine will last. In the meantime everyone must follow their GP's advice when offered a vaccine—and keep social distancing, wearing masks and following the rules!"



Picture: BBC

## **MPs must save universal entitlements after fears they'll be axed**

**T**he NPC has written to all MPs asking them to safeguard all of universal entitlements which supplement the UK's poor state pension.

In a letter, NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt calls for the government to start by reinstating the key entitlement of a free TV licence for over 75s which was scrapped this year. **This has led to fears that others, such as free bus travel, the winter fuel payments, and free prescriptions and eye tests will be next to be axed.** Jan wrote: "Universal entitlements are not 'benefits' or 'perks' - they exist to supplement the most inadequate state pension in the economically developed world. The benefits to the

health and well-being of older people and their contribution to the economy are well researched with the bus pass for example, generating £2.97 for every £1 invested. With 1.9 million older people living on or below the poverty line, and millions struggling with illness, isolation and loneliness in their retirement, we are sure our MPs, who represent thousands of older people will understand our concerns." The NPC will be campaigning on saving the triple lock and other entitlements.

### **NPC FESTIVE CLOSING DATES**

The NPC offices will close from 5pm on 23 December 2020 and re-open on 4 January 2021.



## **NPC calls for OP Commissioner at Human Rights webinar**

Leading advocates of older people's rights called for an inquiry into pandemic care failures and an end to endemic ageism at the NPC's second webinar on 3rd December. The NPC also led demands for a dedicated Commissioner for Older People in England, at the event on ageism and human rights.

### ***Heartbreaking***

Speakers told of multiple, long-term failures in social care policy – exacerbated by underlying ageist attitudes – which led to tragedy during the pandemic. **And there were warnings that the lessons from the first lockdown have not been learned.** Chair, NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "This was an important discussion on ageism in the UK, and its impact on human rights and hate crime against older people. Our speakers provided stark insights into what happened during the pandemic,

with evidence of the heart-breaking effects on our oldest and most vulnerable. We learned that the problems have been building for some time, and that the pandemic sadly served to highlight them. **We will be following up with all our speakers, and our campaign for an Older People's Commissioner for England, as they have in Northern Ireland and Wales, in the new year.** Many thanks to our guest speakers: Eddie Lynch, Older People's Commissioner for Northern Ireland; Jackie Killeen, Director of Compliance, Equality and Human Rights Commission; Holly Harrison-Mullane, Community Organiser, Amnesty International UK; Louise Ansari, Director of Communications, Centre for Ageing Better; and Dr Hannah Bows, Associate Professor of Criminal Law, Durham University. **Watch the webinar video at: [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org)**

### **Next NPC webinar – Connections For All**

**P**lans are underway for a webinar and the launch of a new NPC digital inclusion campaign on National Dignity Day, 1st February 2021. The event follows a report by the NPC Digital WP on the prevalence of digital exclusion among older people. Guest speakers will discuss how to bridge the digital gap that is leaving many older people behind. Details will be announced soon.

### **Public Transport may not recover unless action taken**

**The NPC wants government action to avert huge cuts in public transport services and concessionary fares in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.**

The National Council has backed a Transport Working Party Report which expressed fears that when things return to normality after the pandemic, public transport will have been decimated. This will lead to train services and staff cuts, impacting heavily on older people who most rely on bus and train services

NPC Vice President and Transport Expert Peter Rayner said: **"Public transport is vital for the physical economic and mental well-being of older people, many of whom for whatever reason do not drive and cannot afford taxis. It is a proven, researched fact that older people also value the presence of staff when travelling .**

**"It is my view that if you run a train with no Guard to an unstaffed station, it is then a 'Provision, Criterion, or Practice' that discriminates against disabled and older people who are persons of reduced mobility as defined by the Equality Act 2010"**

Furthermore research has many times established that older people if they can have inclusion in society, contribute to that society as well as benefitting themselves.

### **Pensions & Incomes WP meets**

#### **BBC Policy Director**

**T**he NPC Pensions and Income Working Party held a 'constructive' meeting with BBC Director, Policy, Clare Sumner.

The online discussion on 23rd November followed an earlier meeting between NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt, Ms Sumner, and BBC Director General Tim Davie. Both BBC leaders want to better understand the role of universal entitlements such as the free TV licence for over 75s. Further talks with BBC Diversity & Inclusion Officers & the NPC are planned for 2021, to discuss why BBC diversity and inclusion policy documents must reference older people as well as other groups.

**At the PIWP meeting, presentations were made by members on:**

- NPC policy on a universal state pension set at 70% of the National Living Wage, uprated by the triple lock; and inequalities between the two pension schemes (pre and post 2016).
- The gender pension gap; causes of pensioner poverty; intergenerational fairness.
- The contribution still being made by older people to the economy and their communities, such as supporting families
- The negative language around older people, which makes it easier to change policies, as society believes the myths about wealthy pensioners/house ownership etc.

Another meeting will be arranged in January 2021 after the PIWP has discussed the triple lock and the impact of COVID on older people. A full report on the talks will follow soon.