



Campaign!

Fighting for the rights of older people

WE'VE MOVED!

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JOIN THE NPC?

Do you care about issues affecting older people? Then join us as an individual, or as an affiliate group. We are the biggest UK campaign group run for and by older people. Contact us and get involved. Details above.

It's no joke – energy firms to charge us £1.3bn for bad debt from 1 April

We will all be paying energy firms £1.3bn in annual charges to help them recover bad debt from 1st April.

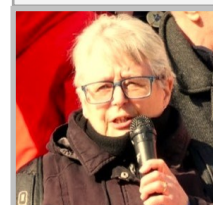
Despite billions of pounds in profits, the firms will bill each of us an average of £28 a year extra to pay for the cost of recovering bad debts. And a new report by the Warm This Winter (WTW) campaign also casts doubt on the effectiveness of the charges in actually offsetting customers' debt and helping those struggling with their bills.

Energy firms were already able to charge £842m a year on bills for bad debt administration. The industry regulator Ofgem has now ruled they can charge an extra £735m (on average £28 per household per year). WTW – members of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition, along with the NPC – say the combined impact of these charges varies depending on the bill type with prepayment meter customers paying £25.17 per household per year. Direct debit customers pay £38.96 a year, while standard credit customers are hit hardest paying £129.71. The report says it is unclear if the extra payments will help reduce the accounts of struggling customers, or if they will be writ-



BUDGET DAY DEMO—Page 2

NPC's Jan Shortt (above & below) addresses the protest across from Parliament.



ten off on supplier income statements while the remaining debt is sold to debt collection agencies. New polling from Opinium reports that over half (55%) of the public oppose the extra £28 per household being spent on debt administration. NPC's Jan Shortt said: "As always, it is the customer that pays, not the shareholders or energy industry who are currently making the biggest profits for years. Sustainable and affordable energy sources are a must and the regulator should consider how it can protect customers from this unacceptable level of levy when everyone is still struggling with high energy bills."

Click here to read the full report: [Energy customers set for £1.3bn bill for bad debt charges \(warmthiswinter.org.uk\)](https://www.warmthiswinter.org.uk)

INSIDE: New NPC President elected! + Ombudsman backs WASPI women

Annual Convention '24 set for September

The NPC's much anticipated Annual Convention is returning to Blackpool—with a fresh look and a new date for 2024! Last year's packed agenda attracted excellent feedback. And this year's promises to be even better with more opportunities for members to take part. Look out for dates and full details soon. See you there!

NPC 250 Club

1st 250 Club Easter draw!

Join the NPC per annum, you will be entered into the NPC 250 Club prize draw. Half of the income goes into the monthly prize draw, and the remaining 50% will go to the NPC to support our work for older people.

Sign up at: www.npcuk.org/post/npc-250-club *OR: Write to NPC address opposite.

Chancellor Leaves Older People Out in the Cold – despite Triple Lock pledge

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt has said the State Pension Triple Lock will be safe if the Conservatives win the General Election. Yet he offered little or nothing for older people in his Spring Budget earlier this month.

The Chancellor told the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg that he was 'confident' he could pay for the 'expensive' Triple Lock, which safeguards state pension rises, through economic growth. He also promised that the measure will be included in the Tory election manifesto, and would be kept

throughout the next parliament under the Conservatives. But Mr Hunt refused to commit in the same BBC interview to giving compensation for the so-called WASPI women (see page 3).

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt advises caution until we can analyse the detail in the Manifesto.

Jan said: "We are in an election year and still in an uncertain economic climate. Inflation may ap-

pear to be stabilising but the price of everything remains high, with millions still struggling to make ends meet. The devil will be in the detail of their Manifesto to pledge." The triple lock refers to the commitment to raise the state pension every year by wage growth, inflation or 2.5%; whichever is highest. In April the state pension will rise by 8.5% - however the percentage increase will mean different monetary rises for the 12 million who are on the largely two-tiered

Pensions gap

pension system. This will continue to widen the gap between the old and new pensions. Around three million who retired after 2016 will see their State Pension of £203.85 per week rise to £221.20, The other nine million on the old rate of £156.20 will rise to £169.50. The NPC continues to campaign for a review of the pensions system, to set it at 70% of the living wage, above the official poverty level, and paid to all. retirees.



Budget Day Cold Homes Demo

As the Chancellor stood up to deliver his Budget speech on 6th March the NPC joined a Cold Homes Kill fuel poverty protest near Parliament. Unite Energy for All, Fuel Poverty Action, End Fuel Poverty Coalition, the NPC and other organisations were joined by MPs at the demo. They all wanted to highlight our demand that every household be guaranteed adequate levels of affordable energy by redistributing fuel company profits, and other measures. NPC's Jan Shortt said: "A staggering 5.3million people are now in debt to their energy providers, We know thousands die each year in the UK from illnesses related to living in cold and damp conditions. The Chancellor did nothing to help."



Zahra Sultana MP

Budget— some key points at a glance

Taxation

National Insurance (NI) cut by 2p in the pound

Salary thresholds to start paying income tax frozen. The 'fiscal drag' will pull more pensioners into tax bracket.

Family

Full child benefits to be paid to households earns up £60,000.

Longer repayment period for people on benefits taking out emergency loans.

Fund for those struggling with costs continue.

£90 fee for debt relief

order scrapped.

Alcohol, Cigarettes & Vapes

Freeze on alcohol duty until Feb 2025.

New tax on vapes from October 2026.

Tobacco duty up £2 per 100 cigarettes

Transport & Energy

Fuel duty frozen with 5p cut in duty

Windfall tax on energy firms extended.

Housing

Stamp duty tax break on buying multiple properties to end.

Economy

Office for Budget Responsibility predicts UK economy to grow 0.8% this year

Breaking News!

Meet our new President!



Norman Jemison has just been elected as the new NPC President at our Biennial Delegates Conference at Yarnfield. Norman is seen being congratulated by outgoing President Rosie MacGregor. Full details coming soon.

WASPI women win Ombudsman ruling - but still face tough compensation battle

Parliament must honour its own Ombudsman's call to 'swiftly' compensate the 1950s-born women who were not adequately notified that their retirement age was rising from 60.

However the NPC fears the Women Against State Pension Increase (WASPI) campaigners face a tough battle to get what they are due in lost state pension—which could be as much as £45,000 each. We welcome news that the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)

Thousands have passed away since campaign began

found The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) did fail to adequately communicate about the changes to women's state pension age, and that those affected are owed compensation and an apology. With the DWP adamantly refusing to pay full compensation and both the Conservatives and Labour not committing to it either, the PHSO has uniquely called for Parliament to intervene with a compensation plan. **Jan Shortt, NPC General Sec-**

retary said: "The NPC is pleased the Ombudsman has concluded that the DWP must take responsibility for failing the women affected by the increase in the state pen-

sion age. The compensation required will never be enough in terms of the stress, distress and poverty the women have endured since the retirement age was changed. **In fact, thousands of women have passed away since the campaign began, saving the government billions in unclaimed pension payments. It is clear the DWP failed miserably and should be held to account in parliament for their lack of propriety. It now falls to parliament to make a sensible and reasonable compensation."**



W. Mids Better Buses petition

West Midlands Pensioners Convention have

been gathering signatures for the 'Better Buses' petition calling for affordable, reliable, and accessible services across the UK. They were at Wolverhampton Bus Station last week to add to the 1,000 signatures they already had. West Midlands PC's Brian Allbutt said: "A fully funded and accountable should be a fundamental human right. The current West Mids bus partnership is no longer fit for purpose. We need greater public control."



Women's and Pensions TUC

The TUC Women's Conference heard older

women caring for parents and partners contributes greatly to the pensions pay gap. Among those representing NPC were Pat Hughes (left) and Shelagh Hubbard. NPC members also heard Shadow Pensions Minister Liz Kendall tell the TUC Pensions conference that Labour will have a "relentless focus" on championing decent pensions for all, and is "determined once again to be the pensioners party." Both events were in March.



Remembering Former NPC President Frank Cooper (1924-2024)

The NPC was saddened to learn of the passing of our former President Frank Cooper.

Frank was President of the NPC from 2005 to 2013, and a member of the Finance Working Party until 2019. He recently turned 100 years old, when he was joined by family, friends and former colleagues for a celebration. Frank was a member of Unite and its predecessor unions for over 80 years.

General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "Frank was a genuine gentleman; generous to a fault and with a brilliant sense of humour. He was a 'big' man in every sense but never stopped campaigning for older people and others affected by poor policy mak-

ing. My personal tribute to Frank is to say thank you for all the support, encouragement and education that enabled me to be where I am in the NPC today. I will miss you." President

Rosie MacGregor said: "Frank was an inspiration to all those who knew him as well as to those within the wider trade union and pensioner movements. In my role as President of the NPC, I would wish to pay tribute to his hard work and the massive commitment he gave to our organisation during his terms of office as President."





**WE'VE MOVED TO
FINSBURY PARK**

The NPC has moved to new offices just two minutes from the upgraded Finsbury Park station which offers step-free access. Our new postal address is: NPC, Unit 2.4, 225-229 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DA

Welsh Commissioner backs call for updated digital strategy

A new report by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales says the UK government urgently needs to publish an updated digital inclusion strategy. Commissioner Heléna Herklots CBE, makes the calls after publishing the findings of the 'Access denied: Older people's experiences of digital exclusion in Wales.' The Commissioner says digital exclusion is common to older people wherever they live in the UK, and warns that a

growing number of older people are at risk of social exclusion and being left behind as the use of digital technology continues to play an even greater role in their everyday lives. She is concerned that older people's rights to access information and services, enshrined in legislation, are being undermined. Read the report in *NPC Connections for All* newsletter: www.npcuk.org OR write for a copy to NPC at address on Page 1.



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing

Petition For Our Own Commissioners

Thousands More Sign Up - Thanks to You!

Since the start of 2024 thousands more people have added their names to the petition calling for Commissioners to represent Older People's concerns in England, and Scotland. We are now on track with our campaign partners— Independent Age, Ageing Better and Age UK—to formally hand over the petition to Downing Street next month. The case for a Commissioner to sign the petition - follow the instructions below.

Cut Out, Sign & Send!



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing



Independent Age

Show your support for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing

Add your name to our petition by filling out your details below. Please write clearly in CAPITAL LETTERS, and check over your details before sending this form back to us.

First name	Surname	Postcode	If you're online and you'd like us to email you about Independent Age campaigns, please add your email address* here

*We will never sell your data and promise to keep your data safe and secure. Find our privacy policy at independentage.org/our-privacy-policy. You can change your mind by writing to our Freepost addressor emailing campaigns@independentage.org.

To send this form back to us, please scan it and email to campaigns@independentage.org or post to:
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