

AOPF

ANDOVER & DISTRICT
OLDER PEOPLE'S FORUM

The Voice of Experience

A Message from our Vice Chairman

As former Chairman and now the Forum's Vice Chairman I have steadfastly believed in actively campaigning for a society which values its elderly citizens. Our generation has contributed so much to the prosperity, wellbeing and often to the very defence of the nation to which we all belong.

It therefore saddens me to witness that, in the world's fifth richest country, one in six of our fellow senior citizens are living below the official poverty level. It is all too significant that, in a recent 37 nation survey by the O.E.C.D., Britain is now at the very bottom of the state pension league table. It is recognised as inevitable that the elderly are more reliant upon medical and care services than their younger brethren. It is therefore of great concern that in our local hospitals at Andover, Basingstoke and Winchester we are short of over 300 medical and care staff. Whilst we gladly sing the praises of our dedicated medical professionals, we willingly acquiesce in the fact that, during a period of government imposed austerity; the very same dedicated professionals have had their salaries pegged below the rate of inflation. We are thus rewarding those responsible for providing our vital life support services with an ever decreasing standard of living. Foreign staff, upon whom much of our health service depends, is uncertain about their status and job security in 'Brexit Britain'. Similarly all staff are understandably apprehensive about their future salary and career prospects under a government dedicated to reducing expenditure on public services. Such policies have led, and are still leading, to the severe difficulties experienced by the hospitals in retaining and recruiting qualified and experienced medical staff. The ideas currently under discussion to abolish or means-test free t.v. licences for the over 75's indicates all too starkly the poverty of care and compassion within the nation's decision making bodies. I have frequently pointed out that the root of many problems facing the elderly are political in origin. I must emphasise that this is not a narrow party political viewpoint. No political party is immune from accusations of neglecting the social fabric of our nation. Consequently every political party must be held to account for its actions. We should play an active part in that process.

We must never forget that, as today's elderly, any social injustice that we continue to passively tolerate is the injustice that will be inherited by our children and grandchildren. They and we surely deserve better.

Haydn Watkins ~ Vice Chairman of AOPF