



# Campaign!

*Fighting for the rights of older people*

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**JOIN US at the NPC Annual Convention – 28th and 29th June 2023**

## Make your voice heard in Blackpool!

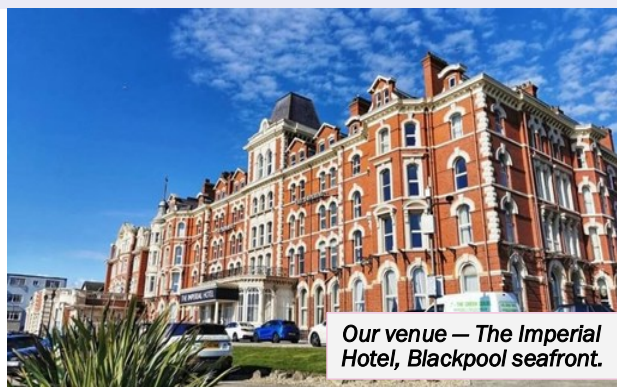
The NPC Annual Convention returns to Blackpool on Wednesday 28th and Thursday 29th June for two days of discussion and debate on the issues that matter most to older people.

It is the first time we have held our full Convention since before the pandemic – so there is a lot to talk about!

We will have a packed programme with expert speakers and policymakers leading six sessions covering everything from pensions and the cost of living crisis, to health and social care, housing and transport, as well as the impact of our increasingly digital-first world on older people.

As ever, the Convention is not all work and no play! There will be lots of opportunities to socialise with other NPC members. We are also hosting a fun evening of professional entertainment on the Wednesday.

The Convention—formerly know as the ‘pensioners’ parliament’ - will start with a Rally at 10.30am on the Wednesday, where the Mayor of Blackpool will welcome members to the event. The sessions will run from



Our venue – The Imperial Hotel, Blackpool seafront.

approximately 10.30am to 4pm on each day, and will cover a variety of topics.

***\*Tickets are just £10 for both days or £5 for a single day.*** To book places for the event, please complete this form: [www.npcuk.org/post/annual-convention-2023](http://www.npcuk.org/post/annual-convention-2023) Or write or email us at the addresses in the left hand column.

If you require accommodation, The Imperial Hotel is offering discounts for members quoting ‘NPC’ - or you can book one of the many B&Bs and hotels in the resort. Look forward to seeing you there!

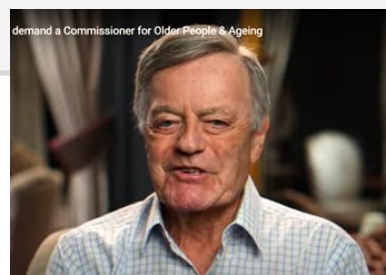
### **WANT TO JOIN THE NPC?**

Do you care about issues affecting older people? Want to do something about them? 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 to find out how to get involved. Details above.



## **MPs & celebrities back our call for a later life champion**

Politicians from all parties are backing the NPC’s call for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing after a special briefing in Westminster. MPs and Peers attended the drop-in event in Parliament’s Attlee Suite to find out more about our campaign to create an independent Commissioner in England to be a voice for older people’s issues. More than 80 national organisations, plus hundreds of NPC regional affiliates have now signed our Consensus Statement with partners Independent Age, Ageing Better, and Age UK to call for better representation for older people across government-policy making. *\*More details and pictures on Page 2.*



**D**J Tony Blackburn is one of the older celebrities calling for a Commissioner in a video by Independent Age. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=89kWr76WuHY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89kWr76WuHY)

# Calls grow for a Commissioner

## Westminster 'drop-in' event attracts cross-party support to find out why



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing



Jan Shortt, Emma Lewell-Buck MP & Jill Hardy

\*Continued from Page 1.

They are backed by a number of older celebrities in a special video featuring DJ Tony Blackburn, World Cup hero Sir Geoff Hurst, actor Don Warrington, former Strictly Come Dancing judge Arlene Phillips and chef Rusti Lee. MPs from all parties attended the drop-in event, including former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith, former Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron, Labour's Vi-



Left to right: Iain Duncan Smith MP; Caroline Abrahams, Director, Age UK, Carole Easton, Chief Executive, Ageing Better and Dereck Roberts, Chair, NPC Wales.

rendra Sharma, and Peer Lord George Foulkes. The majority backed the proposal for a Commissioner, much as they have in Wales and Northern Ireland. Speaking in support, South Shields MP Emma Lewell-Buck MP said: "Our population is ageing and the Government is letting them down. The crises in social care, the NHS, and cost of living is hitting older people hard. Having a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing to champion

**'Let's make the UK the best place to grow old'**



Virendra Sharma MP backs our call.

them would ensure those who feel let down have a voice and an advocate pressing for, and achieving, change." NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said: "It was extremely positive to see a mix of MPs from all parties attending the drop-in. It demonstrates the need to move our campaign forward for a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England. This role will ensure that older people are no longer invisible, have a strategic contribution to make to the future of our country, and are respected and valued for their lived experiences." Jan spoke with politicians and stakeholders throughout the afternoon. She said: "The conversations were ani-

mated, and a variety of questions were put to us. Mainly around the cost and the value of (a commissioner's) independence. My own personal conversation with senior Conservative Sir Ian Duncan Smith brings the hope that local councils can identify those in their population who would be entitled to Pension Credit without having to go through the laborious application process. We hope he is successful." Baron Foulkes of Cumnock said: "It was a successful occasion, but this is only the beginning. A lot more needs to be done if we are to make progress. In particular we need to determine who the relevant Ministers

are (for establishing Commissioners) in England and Scotland." The NPC thanks members and officers who came along to support the event, including Ellen Lebeth, Barry Todman, Jill Hardy, Ian Millington, Joel Kosminsky, and NPC Wales chair Dereck Roberts. Dereck was invited to discuss the positive impact of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, Heléna Herklots.



Tim Farron MP (2nd right), John Palmer, Director Policy & Comms, Independent Age (2nd left).

**Join the Campaign - Sign Up TODAY!**



Commissioner for Older People & Ageing



Independent Age



To support our joint campaign calling for a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England - and to write to your MP to ask for their backing - visit: [www.npcuk.org/commissioner](http://www.npcuk.org/commissioner) OR you can write to the NPC (address in left hand column on Page 1).

## Campaigners out in force to tell DWP '68 Is Too Late' to retire



**N**PC and Unite members and campaigners rallied in Westminster to demand the government bin for good their plans to raise the state pension retirement age to 68.

They were joined by MPs on College Green before delivering a 38,000-signature petition to the offices of the DWP amid fears that the government will ignore current life expectancy trends—and today's middle-aged workers—if they win the next election.

Co-campaigners, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum (SPF), also attended and held a parallel rally in Edinburgh.

**Jan Shortt, NPC general secretary said:** "Workers of today are the pensioners of tomorrow. Raising the retirement age when the health of the nation is at its worst is unacceptable. It would show a lack of commitment by Government to tackle issues that impact adversely on older people." The current retirement age of 66 will increase to 67 in 2028. But Ministers have been considering bring-



ing forward a further rise to 68, from 2046 to 2036. They have shelved the plans for two years until after the next election, fearing they would lose older voters. But NPC and Unite say that not only should the proposed rise be totally abandoned, the current retirement age should also be lowered. Supporting the rally, **John Trickett MP (above right)** said: "I am absolutely opposed to any



rise in the state pension age. People in my constituency are living shorter healthy lives, they should not be working longer." **Caren Evans, Unite National Officer for retired members commented:** "Unless Rishi Sunak completely rules out raising the State Pension age I believe the odds are firmly in favour of a nasty surprise for middle aged workers after the election if the Tories win. After 13 years of austerity and cuts they can't be trusted." **Life expectancy is no longer rising, with healthy life expectancy for men in England at 63.1 years, and for women it's 63.8 years.**

However right-wing think tank, the Institute of Fiscal Studies recently claimed the Government could raise the pension age to 70 by 2050.



## We ask Chief Magistrate why PPM warrants were signed off in bulk?

**G**eneral Secretary Jan Shortt has written to the Chief Magistrate over NPC concerns that judges bulk signed warrants to permit forced entry to people's home to fit PrePayment Meters.

In her letter, Jan told Senior District Judge Paul Goldspring we are particularly worried that warrants were signed off without any checks on the vulnerability of each householder in person.

Jan wrote that 'the impact on the lives of those whose homes were entered to force-fit a PPM – some of whom had not been previously informed or even spoken to' has been well-documented.

In the letter, copied to Ofgem Regulator Jonathan Brearley, she said: "Our understanding of the current system applied in Magistrates Courts is at odds with how individuals should be treated under

the justice system.

Every individual is entitled to be heard and the practice of bulk-signing warrants does not fit into that right. Reliance on an agent of an energy supplier (often a Collection Agency) is not appropriate." Jan said that while Ofgem has touched on new ways of engaging with customers, the NPC wants assurances that bulk signing will no longer take place. As regulator, Ofgem is responsible for the content of the licences for energy providers, ensuring there is an audit trail between provider and customer; while the Courts are responsible for the manner in which warrants are executed. Jan said the NPC wants to know how the handling of warrant applications in Magistrates Courts will change 'from the recent unacceptable practice.'



# Time to stop the bus crisis!

Yorks & Humber PC hosting UK conference

Yorkshire and Humber Pensioners Convention is organising a national conference on Campaigning for Outstanding Bus Services on Saturday 17th June 2023.

YHPC has an active transport group which campaigns around transport issues, particularly the crisis in bus services. They are bringing together activists, campaigners and trade unionists from across the UK to share experiences and develop plans for action to save and improve our bus services. Keynote speakers will include: Ellie Harrison, Get Glasgow Moving; Brad Taylor, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England; Matthew Topham, We Own It; and NPC



General Secretary Jan Shortt. Jan said: "YHPC are leading an important call for public transport policy-

## Climate Change

makers and providers to

work with us to improve bus services for the benefit of communities in Yorkshire, and across the country. Reliable public transport is particularly vital for older people, and improving bus services

will also contribute to the fight against climate change." YHPC have already published a transport manifesto, "Better Bus Services: good for people, good for the planet" which led to them working with other groups to organise the conference. **The conference is free to attend on Zoom, or go in person for £5 to cover buffet costs. The conference will be held in the Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York YO1 9RL from 11am to 4pm. Doors open from 10.30, conference begins at 11am. For more info or to register: <https://yhpctransportaction.wordpress.com> [ndhpc@gmail.com](mailto:ndhpc@gmail.com) OR email [yandhpc@gmail.com](mailto:yandhpc@gmail.com)**



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