



Charity No: 10453081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

May 2015 Newsletter



SPRING HAS SPRUNG. . . so we need to check our garden and help is needed : ring Ann on 020 7226 7687

Hustings at the Forum



As this newsletter goes to press, there are just 17 days left before general election polling day, and it is possible that you will know the result before you read this report!

However, we want to place on record that our Forum meeting on 16 April was a general election hustings when members were able to question five Islington candidates; in picture above (from left to right):

Jeremy Corbyn - Labour, Terry Stacey - LibDem, Dr. Mark Lim - Conservative, George Durack - Forum Chair, Caroline Russell - Green, Pete Muswell - UKIP.

Most of us considered that the outcome of the general election would pose the question of another coalition government, and we were interested to hear Jeremy Corbyn say that he would prefer to see a minority government and not a coalition; such a government could put its own policies forward and involve the electorate in discussion and decisions.

A question on housing, arising from the proposal in the Conservative manifesto to give the right to buy to housing association tenants, was answered by Mark Lim saying that that the move could encourage local councils to build higher density social housing to solve the housing crisis.

However Terry Stacey, Jeremy Corbyn and Caroline Russell were opposed. Such a move would require a

major change in the law for housing associations are charities; it would be a hidden time-bomb meaning that the purchasers would be liable to massive service charges and works bills; it would hasten and speed up social cleansing; Islington had lost about 9,000 properties in Thatcher's right to buy council housing; extending this to housing associations would mean decent rented homes ending up in the hands of rich "buy to let" landlords putting these homes out of the reach of those with low incomes.

Pete Russell jeered at Labour for the support that party gets from the trade unions and then explained that UKIP is mainly funded by having a number of MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) who do not attend the parliament but do accept the expenses!

Questions and answers on the environment, the state pension, the NHS and social care showed us that right now there are more questions than answers. We have come to the end of one parliament and go into the next with no clear way forward.

We gathered at the back of the hall for a photograph with our banner. We will go on campaigning



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

The silence as been broken, the political wars are starting to rage leading up to 7 May; personal insults, accusations, half truths, and downright lies which often drive out the sensible discussion required if voters are to choose wisely, those who will govern us for the next five years,

Many of us can unravel most of the arguments, but thousands of possible voters watching and listening to the squabbles, are completely turned off and totally confused.

It is little wonder they do not know who to believe. There are times when our infant schools look far superior than the so-called adult learning dealing with our political progress. Perhaps if politics was a regular school subject we would not live in this mad political world every five years.

Taking a positive step about my own view on recent argument and events, the present government's last exposure of what they would do if elected, such as selling off housing associations houses and flats is totally wrong.

I live in a Peabody flat, and having always been

opposed to selling off council houses, I consider this to be a future home for someone without accommodation. The housing crisis is a massive explosive subject, along with interference and privatisation of our NHS.

Professor Allyson Pollock* had some very strong words about the gradual destruction of our NHS, where she points out that the UK cannot afford a market in health, and she draws our attention to the NHS bill to restore the NHS in England which was tabled with cross party support.

The bill would abolish the market and contracting out, a very serious matter to all of us. Allyson is a great campaigner and health researcher from Queen Mary University.

Also, not forgetting the ageing population and connecting to Care, this is another urgent and deeply worrying problem that no government wants to tackle. Any Government that could deal with the above three subjects deserves the public support.

"WE LIVE IN HOPE".

* The National Health Service has been one of the UK's greatest achievements. For 65 years it has provided a cost effective, universal health service, free at the point of need to all people irrespective of their background, circumstance or ability to pay. Yet over the last 25 years, this founding vision has been slowly but surely eroded. The final blow was the Health and Social Care Act 2012, forcing a commercialised model on the NHS in England. We are campaigning to reinstate the founding vision. We want the Queen's Speech after the next General Election on 7th May 2015 to include a Bill to do just that.

CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF JOE HARRIS

Joe Harris, who died, aged 90, in March this year, brought the experiences of his long and interesting life to the pensioners movement. He was well known and well respected as chair of the Islington Pensioners Forum, the Greater London Pensioners Association and the London Older Peoples Strategies Group and then as General Secretary of the National Pensioners Convention from 2001 to 2009. You are invited to join his family and friends to share memories and celebrate his life:

3 pm, Sunday 10 May 2015
Italian Advice Centre, 124
Canonbury Road, N1 2UT

OLDEN GARDEN 49 Whistler Street Highbury, N5 1NJ

Islington's Olden Garden is a treasure and we are afraid that there are those who do not know of its existence. Spring is now in full flow. Soon the tulips will really start to show themselves, and there are lots of flowers, shrubs and trees making this a really pleasant and restful place. So please come and visit.

Sunday 10 May we are open from 2-5 pm for the National Garden Scheme, raising money for much needed funds for NGS cancer charities and the hospice movement.

Entry £2 for members and £3 for non members. Children free. Cakes, biscuits and other delicious refreshments will be available.

Keeping going with limiting long-term illnesses

I was sitting with a GP on each side of me! This, I thought, was a good beginning, for surely if the medical profession takes these meetings seriously, so should the patients. In fact I made up my mind to go along to the South Islington Locality Patient Group meeting as soon as I heard about it and it was well worth going.

In the last issue of our Newsletter we saw the resolution on self-management put forward by the Royal College of Nursing and carried at the National Pensioners Convention conference in March. Well, at this meeting Julie Atkins of Whittington hospital explained in detail how self-management works in Islington, and although there were other issues dealt with at the meeting (e.g. out of hours and 111 services) I am concentrating on this.

Julie explained that in Islington 30,000 people live with limiting long-term illnesses and they are more

likely to see their GP (in fact these are 80% of consultations) and be admitted as inpatients (they take up 60% of hospital bed days). So it is really important that they are given help to manage their illnesses, their symptoms and the stress these give them, and also get advice about how to continue their daily activities.

And on this last point, I know from personal experience how important it is to “keep going”!

There is a six-week course in self-management skills for people with long-term conditions (two and a half hours a week) and Julie gave some examples of people who had found the course of great benefit. So I would definitely advise anybody to take the plunge! If you or a friend/neighbour are living with long-term conditions and are fed up with it, ask your GP if you can sign up to the course.

Joe Hagland

Just the normal workings of the market?

Although the Daily Mail is not a paper I normally read, when I picked up a discarded copy on April Fool's Day, I realised that the information published by the paper's Investigation Unit was no joke!

Under the heading: “Your Secrets For Sale: Now NHS In The Dock” the investigators revealed that “thousands of users of an NHS-approved online prescription service have had their data sold without their knowledge”. It seems many of the patients that use the Pharmacy 2U service because they are disabled or too ill to travel to their nearest surgery or chemist have had their names and addresses handed to companies that target the sick.

The same thing has happened to others using the firm's online doctor consultations. The Investigation Unit listed the other sales of sensitive information to “conmen and criminals”:

- Schools buying information on teenagers' parents;
- The Department for Business paying a data firm up to £15,000 to help them target small business owners;
- Payday Loan brokers passing on the financial

details of vulnerable people who have been refused cash – meaning they are targeted by conmen.

Information, also included in TV news broadcasts, showed that undercover reporters were able to buy, for just 19p each, private medical details – including names of people suffering from arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure and even bladder problems.

Pharmacy 2U (with an annual turnover of £17m a year) has NHS accreditation, but MPs say that its activities are putting thousands at risk and the company should face a police probe.

The investigation, which has sparked a major inquiry, has been praised by the Information Commissioner, Christopher Graham. But Michael Smith, the spokesman for Alchemy Direct Media (UK) Ltd which works for Pharmacy 2U said: “We are an ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) registered company and are satisfied that the information held on this database complies with current data protection and ICO regulation.”

Just the normal workings of the market then?!

Dot Gibson

FROM MAISIE HEATHER.

I attended the first session of Playtime for Seniors on 8 April and had a very pleasant afternoon. I saw some old friends, made some new friends and had a laugh with George and Joe.

You can have a game of scrabble, cards and drafts etc. and there was plenty of paint, glue and design equipment to



People's Convention for the NHS

building on the 300-mile March for the NHS

Arising from the People's (300 mile) March for the NHS, which ended in London last September, the People's Convention for the NHS was launched in the Emanuel Centre, London on Saturday 11 April by NHS campaign representatives from all over the country.

John Hilary, Director of War on Want called on everybody to build the fightback on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. If this trade deal goes through, not only could it make the privatisation of our NHS almost impossible to reverse, it would give corporations control over many aspects of our lives.

- Demonstrate, Saturday 18th April, Shepherds Bush Green 12 noon

Dr. John Lister, London Health Emergency explained Private Finance Initiatives (PFI). One of the examples he gave was the internationally known Bart's hospital. It's financial problem has been a ticking time bomb ever since Bart's and the London Hospital Trust was given the go-ahead in 2006 to sign up for the costly £1.1 billion redevelopment scheme financed under a PFI. To reduce the cost (the original PFI proposal was £1.9 billion) 250 beds, three floors of the new building were to be left empty). The agreement meant that the Trust would pay nearly seven times more than the loan, i.e. with inflation-linked instalments, starting at £109m a year and rising every year for 35 years! John set out the main demands to be put to general election candidates and the future government:

- No more PFI! Open the books to public scrutiny! Prosecute where fraud is proved! Build campaigns in defence of services being cut by PFI! Centralise PFI debts in the Treasury and re-negotiate the repayments on the basis of their value! (Many PFI deals

have been sold on to companies in tax havens!)

Professor Allyson Pollock and Peter Roderick introduced the NHS Reinstatement Bill. This was presented as a Private Member's Bill by Green Party MP, Caroline Lucas. It was supported by 11 Liberal Democrat, Labour, SNP and Plaid Cymru MPs in the last parliament. Also, following scrutiny by a large working party of the British Medical Association (BMA) that organisation agreed to support those points in the bill which seek to implement BMA policies on the NHS. The Bill is based on the founding principle of the NHS that government has a "duty to provide" a health service to the people.

- It was proposed that all general election candidates be asked whether they support the Bill and to campaign for it to be put in the next parliament.

Paul Novack, Assistant General Secretary of the TUC brought greetings and support, explaining that the trade union movement was fully opposed to privatisation and gave wholehearted support to all the campaigns in defence of the NHS.

Campaigners from *Keep our NHS Public*, *Staffordshire's Walk for Life*, *Hammersmith and Charing Cross Save Our Hospitals*, *Stop the Sell-Off in Cambridge*, *London Socialist Health Campaign*, *OpenDemocracy/our NHS*, *National Assembly Against Austerity*, and a representative of nurses at *Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital* spoke, reporting on their campaigns saying "WE CAN WIN!".

- 30th April : Guy's and St. Thomas' Hospital nurses, 5.30 St. Thomas' Hospital main entrance (South Side Westminster Bridge) HANDS OFF OUR PAY!

- 1-4 May : Walk for Life, Burton to Stoke

- 20th June : End Austerity Now national demonstration, assemble 12 noon Bank of England (Queen Victoria Street) City of London

NOTE: congratulations were sent to Charlotte Monro. In the summer of 2013, Charlotte, with 26 years of unblemished service to the NHS, was suspended and then sacked on trumped-up allegations after speaking out over her fears for older people's services to the local council's scrutiny committee. Just before the end of a long-running tribunal case, the Trust has finally offered to reinstate her, with undisclosed compensation.

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make greetings cards etc.

As usual our lovely Ann was there to look after us; when we arrived there were hot cross buns and tea. Then at lunchtime she served us with a bowl of hot stew and crusty bread, which she had prepared and cooked for us.

Some of the things we are making are for our fund-

raising stall at Christmas and Dot has already made quite a few garments, but for success we need more help. If you have any wool or knitting needles you no longer need, please pass them on to us, or better still come and join us – you will be very welcome

Next session:

Wednesday 4 May, 1 o'clock at Pensioners' Centre
1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

Report of National Pensioners Convention London Region AGM

I represented our Forum at the NPC's London Region annual general meeting on 26 March. With 56 in attendance plus five visitors, it is pretty clear this is an active and well represented group.

The guest speaker was from *Care and Repair England*, **Jayne Minter**. She covered a number of important issues on the subject: Housing and Ageing in London, explaining that housing in London is not keeping pace with a rising population:

- "affordable" house prices are 61% higher than the rest of the country.
- older people make up 20% of households in London
- 63% of people over 55 own their own homes, 26% are in social housing and 10% in private rented housing.
- older people spend on average 80% of their time at home and the number of older disabled people is set to double to 5.6 million by 2041.

Although many older people consider down-sizing, they are afraid of losing comfort and security, their own front door and their memories and happiness. Therefore it is difficult to make the decision, and there is a shortage of options and help with moving.

Jayne outlined the agenda for action in London, calling for access to affordable help with home repairs and adaptations; impartial, independent advice and information; more new housing for older people as part of local strategies; and better links between housing and social care. She explained that all this means there must be better engagement with older peoples groups to develop policy.

Following this presentation the meeting went on to discuss the motions and resolved to:

- Continue support for the principles upon which the NHS was founded and called for social care to be fully integrated with the NHS and funded on the same basis – through taxation;
- Reject the growing clamour for the state pension to be means-tested;
- Actively support the NPC's campaign to defend universal pensioner benefits;
- Encourage all affiliates to write to their MPs in favour of a government grant (similar to that provided for primary school meals) for meals-on-wheels for older people;
- Publicise the deficiencies in the Pensions Act, especially warning younger generations.

George Durack

LETTER

These are the facts. . . .

The government is paid for by our taxes to look after us and protect the more vulnerable. They are clearly not doing this. They are looking after the bankers (still) and the rich avoiding taxes.

- They blame the unemployed for not having work, instead of paying benefits and opposing job cuts.
- They blame the sick for being unwell, instead of supporting the national health service.
- They blame the old for not being greedy enough when younger, instead of providing a pension you can live on.
- They blame the homeless for living on the street, instead of helping councils build more housing.
- They waste billions on four nuclear submarines which will not protect us but are merely a symbol of a bygone superpower.
- They subsidise the sale of arms abroad, instead of trying to promote peace.
- MPs vote themselves large pay rises while lining their pockets with expenses.

Isn't this a corrupt system?

David Milner

LETTER

Save £79 with IPF!

Islington Pensioners Forum has weekly problem-solving IT lessons.

These save a pensioner £79 paid to Amazon!

Our IT tutor showed me how to find out why I had paid £79 to Amazon prime video which I did not want.

We checked the web site but later our tutor found a 'phone number.

I found out that when buying a book from them on line I had clicked "next day delivery". This meant that I was on a month's free trial after which Amazon would take £79 a year from my account!

Amazon accepted that I had not been aware of this and had never used Amazon prime video and other services so they refunded the money!

Pam Zinkin

INFORMATION

Every Monday BINGO	At the IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN Ring Ann for more information 020 7226 7687
Every Wednesday Meditation	Meditation with Marie 11.30 am to 12.30 pm
Saturday 9th May Celebrate anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day	Highbury View Sheltered Housing: Garden Gate, 87-89 Ronalds Road, N5 1XQ.... food, drink, music -- Entertainment: The Andrews Sisters and The Pearly King and Prince. information ring Graham 020 7354 9000
Wednesday 4th May PLAY-TIME FOR SENIORS	1 pm to 3 pm "Play-time" at Islington Pensioners Forum Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place (next to the Screen on the Green cinema) -- come and chat, give us your ideas, knit, crochet and have tea and biscuits .. for more information call Ann on 020 7226 7687
Thursday 21st May FORUM MEETING	10.30 am to 12.30 pm Islington Town Hall. Speaker, Kristina Glenn from the Cripplegate Foundation

We want to hear from you.

- Write to Islington Pensioners Forum, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN
- Call us on: 020 7226 7687 Email us at: ipf@talktalkbusiness.net
- Our office is open from 10.30 a.m. -- 2.30 p.m., Tuesday to Thursday, but please call first.
- Sign up for our online newsletter on our website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.co.uk

Presidents: Jeremy Corbyn MP & Lord Smith of Finsbury **Chair:** George Durack **Secretary:** Dot Gibson
Charity No: 10453081 We are supported by the Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Council

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