



ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community
June 2019 Newsletter

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Office opens from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm Monday & Wednesday (but 'phone first)

Charity No: 1043081

Our Annual General Meeting is on Thursday 18 JULY — 10.30 am in Islington Town Hall

This is an important occasion, when we take stock of the past year and make our plans for the future. We also elect 12 committee members, who — at their first meeting — elect the officers (currently, chair, secretary, assistant secretary and treasurer). The EC proposes that we also have a vice chair. At the last AGM George Durack was elected and he was not replaced.

It is important for IPF to have continuity, but equally important is **renewal** to reflect the new pensioners joining us.

Therefore we ask members to come onto the committee with the option to be co-opted if they want to take a position on a trial basis to then decide whether they want to continue as a member of the committee.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a form for members to make nominations for the committee.

The current committee is:

- Frances Bradley
- Bob Collins (chair)
- Dot Gibson (secretary),
- Joyce Herron
- Eric Hill (treasurer)
- Supa Kusumratana,
- David Milner,
- Annette Thomas (assistant secretary),
- Blanche Woodbridge,
- Pam Zinkin,
- Eddie Zissler

Shocking stories of disabled and older people's experiences of accessing patient transport services

Paul, Chase Farm Hospital: Paul's transport was stopped because he has a Motability vehicle which he can drive. But Paul cannot walk more than a few steps and is unable to walk the distance from the car park to the hospital. When he tried, he collapsed in the hospital corridor. A member of staff at the hospital asked, "What are you doing trying to walk? I'll get a porter to take you in a wheelchair." But the hospital told him that the porters were only allowed to do this within the actual hospital building; they were not allowed to collect him from the car park and take him to the building. *Transport for All* rang the porters' office and they confirmed this was correct. Without door-to-door patient transport services to take him safely to his appointments, it became impossible for Paul to get to the hospital

John, Royal Free Hospital & Chase Farm Hospital: John is 86, has severe COPD and heart problems and is anaemic. He has a catheter due to prostate health problems and has his legs bandaged up. John's patient

transport has been stopped by the Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust on the basis that he can get in and out of a taxi. Simply saying that you can get into a taxi is enough for the Trust to say you are ineligible for patient transport. Although he can get in and out of one, John cannot walk to and from the taxi. The patient transport staff used to take him in a hospital wheelchair right from the transport to his appointment. He does not have his own wheelchair and can only walk a few steps and falls easily. If he did have a wheelchair, he would not be able to propel himself. His daughter works full-time and is not always available to support him. Since his patient transport has been stopped, he has cancelled some appointments, but as they are so important for his health care he has been forced to struggle by taxi to some. In these instances, he has had extreme difficulty walking from the taxi to the hospital. He holds onto the railings and finds it very dangerous.

Transport for All published the above patients' stories. read more on page two.

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Pension credit is an essential benefit for older people, who are struggling financially. But changes from May 15th could make some individuals ineligible.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is making changes to pension credit, which could mean that pensioners with younger partners can no longer receive pension credit. For example, if one is 70 and the other is 62 they could be as much as £140 a week worse off — a 50% reduction in benefit income

- Guaranteed (pension) credit tops up the weekly income of people who have reached state pension age to a minimum level of £167.25 if you're single and £255.25 if you're a couple.

- Savings (pension) credit is extra money that can be given to people who have saved up towards their retirement — This can only be claimed if the claimant reached state pension age before April 2016.

Until now pension credit has been available to couples on the basis that one partner has reached the qualifying state pension age and such mixed-age couples

who already claim pension credit will not be affected unless there is a change in circumstance. The NPC says that each individual pensioner should be assessed for benefits in their own right.

But the government says that the low-income pension-age partner will not receive pension credit and thus rely on his/her low-income younger partner to claim universal credit which is worth less. The government argues that the change will ensure that the same work incentives will apply to the younger partner as others of the same age.

The Government is accused of bringing in the changes on the sly. Labour MP. Stephen Timms slammed the Government for bringing in the new rules, without saying anything or including it in the budget. Labour MP Emma Lewell-Buck has raised the NPC's concerns in Parliament. Age UK is considering a legal challenge.

NOTE: from 2019 the State Pension Age will increase for both men and women to 66 by October 2020, and will raise from 66 to 67 between 2026 and 2028

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● Our Forum meeting on 20th June is in 'Windrush Week' and our speaker is ARTHUR TORRINGTON CBE
● is a community advocate, and co-founder (with the late Sam B. King MBE) of Windrush Foundation and The
● Equiano Society, which they established in 1995 in London. Through Windrush Foundation, a registered
● charity, Arthur promotes good race and community relations, and designs projects that promote the history
● and heritage of African people. Also, Arthur is a founder member and chairman of the African Heritage
● Forum, a community organisation.
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Deutsche DHL — the international parcel and logistics company — responsible for NHS hospital transport!

Throughout August 2018 *Transport for All* asked disabled and older people to complete a short survey about their experiences of trying to access patient transport services, how fair they thought this assessment process was, and ultimately whether those with genuine medical need were getting access to vital patient transport services.

They received 108 responses, and, whilst this is not enough to draw statistically significant conclusions about the overall state of patient transport services across London, their survey revealed that disabled and older people are left feeling "desperate", "a burden" and "humiliated" after being denied patient transport.

The two stories published on page one arose from this survey.

There were 24 different hospitals where respondents reported that they were denied patient transport. The top three (Royal Free, Barnet and Chase Farm) are all run by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation.

Elizabeth, an IPF member, who regularly has appointments at Royal Free has to complete a 20-page application form for transport every three months, even though her GP and the hospital consultant say that her treatment can only maintain a certain stability in her condition — not cure it. So her answers to the questions on the form do not change.

The last time Elizabeth was faced with this dreaded form, Bronwen (IPF co-ordinator) contacted Royal Free and found that the nurse in charge of transport is not employed by the NHS, but by the "Deutsche DHL Group", the international parcel and logistics company, and so we looked it up on the web and found that:

The NHS signed a 10-year contract with DHL worth £1.6 billion. Clearly it is profit that is at the heart of this multi-billion international corporation's activities in the NHS. So limiting the number of disabled and older people's access to hospital transport keeps its costs down and its profits up!

Dear Granny Smith : Chapter 10 — Tom and Jerry

Last month we published the second part of chapter 9, ending with: "It is those who hold the most shares who will make the most profit"

Tom was already working in the office when I started. He'd been here since 1970. He'd started off as a Telegram Boy at the age of fifteen. That was way back in the mid-fifties. Then he'd become a postman, and after that a driver, hauling the mail around the City in those big old Bedford vans. He did that for about twenty years before finally moving here.

Tom was a proper old postman. Totally dedicated to his customers. He got to know them like friends. He told me the story of the time he'd saved someone's life.

Her name was Mrs Brewer. Tom always used to knock on her door to see if she was alright. That was in the days when we had the time for such things. And then, one day, she didn't answer. He looked in through the letter box, but couldn't see her. He was a bit worried. So he looked through the window and he could see her through the net curtain. She was on the floor. He knew her sister, who lived just up the road. So Tom went to her sister's house, and then they both went back with the keys. Poor old Mrs. Brewer had fallen down and couldn't get back up. When the ambulance came they said that Tom had saved her life.

Mind you, it didn't last long. It was the second time she'd fallen down like this. They took her into hospital and later Tom went to see her. She told him they wanted to take her into a care home because she could no longer look after herself. She was very distressed. She said that she liked where she lived and she didn't want to move.

Then she said a puzzling thing: "Don't bother to come and see me again, Tom, 'cos I won't be here."

When he got home he told his wife. "What did she mean by that?" he said. "I know," said his wife.

She died that night. She died rather than move out of her home and into a care home.

Tom was full of stories like that.

But they were great times back then. We had a proper social life. Not just at work: we used to meet up after work too. Tom had a young family then. There were several posties' families with kids all about the same age and in the nearby town there was a social club. All of the families would meet up there a few times a year, especially at Christmas. There was one pub which was known as our pub. The posties' pub. We would all meet up there, the blokes and their wives. And on other occasions the wives and the kids would get together too. It was a proper community.

Tom's wife used to tell a funny story. Tom's round was adjacent to where he lived, which was also not far from

another postie's round: Phil. And they used to meet up for their morning break at Tom's place. Only, because of the different directions of their rounds, Phil used to come in through the back door and Tom used to come in through the front; and then, later on, they would both leave by their respective doors, looking happy and relaxed after their break.

"I don't know what the neighbours thought," said Tom's wife laughing.

Tom finally left the Royal Mail in 2005 after a lifetime of dedication to the service. The last fifteen years were spent on the same round. Everyone knew him by name, and when he left he had hundreds of cards and presents.

Jerry is a much younger man with a family, still working for the Royal Mail. He has three kids, two teenagers and a seven-year-old. One in college and two at school. Jerry lives on tax credits because his wages aren't enough to cover his costs. He does no overtime because this would impact on his benefits. He hasn't had a holiday in years. He has no social life — he can't afford it — and the job is so exhausting he hardly has a family life either. By 7.30 he's falling asleep, and by 9.00 he's in bed.

That's all his life consists of: work and sleep.

Jerry is a good man, but worn down with the job. He used to be much more light-hearted and funny, full of jokes and quips and a non-stop dialogue with his own quirky, comic-book sense of humour. He was like a character out of the *Beano*. He looks much more brooding of late. If you talk to him now he just sounds weary. He fully expects to be working for a private company before he retires.

You have to ask why this should be. What changed in the last 50 years? Why is Jerry's future so different from the one that Tom would have expected at the same age? How come Tom can rest in contented retirement, while Jerry only has a future full of hardship and uncertainty to look forward to?

Us posties haven't changed. Jerry is as committed to his customers as Tom ever was. He is as dedicated, as honest, as straightforward, as hard-working, as decent, as kind. The post hasn't changed. We still need the post. So why are workers suffering in this way?

I guess you might say, "It's the same for everyone. No one has any certainty any more."

I guess that's true. But you still have to ask: why? What is the driving force behind all these changes? Jerry says, "It's like the last days of the Roman Empire in here. Everyone's geared to change. It's intense; new

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managers all the time, new little ways of doing things. It's falling to bits, everyone can see it. We can't even deliver a proper service to our customers any more. It's like a baker's shop with no cakes: a postal service that can't deliver the mail

You can feel the Royal Mail crumbling all around you, he says, like a great edifice whose foundations are systematically weakened. The foundations of the Royal Mail are its postal workers, the postmen and women who deliver the mail on a daily basis. It is the postal workers who are being undermined.

Jerry says, "We build up a rapport with our customers. They trust you. They don't like agency workers. Agency

workers don't care and our customers don't know who they are. It's a case of caring. We are the face of Royal Mail, out on the streets every day, talking to the customers. We do care."

Jerry thinks it's sabotage. They want to wreck the Royal Mail, to run it into the ground so they can sell it off, he says. And they want to kill the Union.

"Divide and conquer," he says. "The managers are all on bonuses to come up with this stuff. They want us to modernise but they don't give us the tools to do it. We can't implement modernisation without the tools. Like, there aren't enough trolleys to go round. The hierarchy aren't concerned. They want it to fail."

Jerry is pessimistic about the future of Royal Mail.

GLOBAL WARMING: BOLD ACTION IS NEEDED NOW!

Oliver Hayes of Friends of the Earth spoke at our May Forum meeting.

Explaining that climate change is the biggest threat to humanity's existence, he gave examples of the results of this: the Arctic and Antarctic are heating up much faster than in the pre-industrial era; in 2017 some parts of the world were at the intolerable heat of 53.5 degrees; 2.2 million people were admitted to hospital A&E departments suffering from the effects of heat (100,000 more than the previous year); many children living and going to school in city centres have smaller lungs.

Last year 2,000 climate scientists presented a UN report (IPCC special report) pointing out that a 2 degree increase in global warming would be complete disaster; only if countries could keep the increase at 1.5 degrees was there a chance of taking the necessary and important actions to reverse the crisis. Even then the scientists are worried about the "tipping points", e.g. if the ice at the poles melts to the point at which it fails to deflect the heat of the sun.

At the time of the UN report it was not too late, — i.e. if by 2030 (12 years then and 11 years now) we have halved the emissions of CO₂ then we can be on track to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees. So the Paris Agreement signed by the governments of most countries was important. However, the actions promised by these countries are nowhere near enough to what is needed.

Bold action is needed! There must be a massive change NOW. Friends of the Earth have Six Pillars of Climate Emergency:

● **Transport:** stop selling diesel and petrol cars; have cheap public transport and encourage walking/cycling

● **Power:** get off fossil fuels, including fracking and aim for 100% clean energy: sun and sea (off-shore wind).

● **Buldings:** fix the problems of heating homes with green fuel.

● **Agriculture and land use:** stop using land in a harmful way – double the trees in the UK

● **Infra-structure:** stop backing projects which impact on the environment, e.g. unnecessary road building and the development of airports.

● **International justice:** Friends of the Earth are part of an international campaign involving 77 individual and autonomous groups.

There must be a complete overhaul of our economy with huge changes in industries; meaning the investment in training and re-skilling of workers to make a fair and just transition to cut global warming.

Oliver said that after campaigning for 10 years he was now very encouraged by recent developments which were moving at a faster pace to educate, enlighten and move to action through the school strikes and the Extinction Rebellion campaigners. People were expressing their agreement; there was the possibility of launching Climate Action Groups locally.

Young generations were now finding their feet politically by taking action in defence of their future, i.e. the future of the planet.

We have been working for our "generations united" initiative, and we should now join young people campaigning for the environment. It is therefore proposed that the North London contingent to Pensioners' Parliament (10-14 June) has a banner saying something like: NORTH LONDON PENSIONERS STAND UP WITH THE CHILDREN TO SAVE THE PLANET.

NHS News Pam Zinkin

There is such a lot, some new, some the same, going on in our NHS that it is very hard to keep up.

Advances — You may have heard of an unborn baby having its spina bifida closed whilst still in the womb. Last time I told you about a new drug for cystic fibrosis. It is now possible to operate on a heart valve by passing a special catheter through the femoral vessel (in the leg) rather than open heart surgery. Exciting — but all these have costs. It is obvious that we must agree that these advanced are of incalculable value so a higher percentage of our GDP should go to our health service. This is needed now.

Having said that, the way money is spent must be improved. We are 40,000 nurses short. The government cut their bursaries but at the same time more than 600 NHS quango chiefs are getting over £100,000/year. Several get twice that.

For example, Matthew Swindells who was NHS England's head of commissioning operations and information was getting £205,000. He has now decided to move to the private sector!

The Health Secretary Matt Hancock has launched a report by the right-wing Taxpayers' Alliance (TPA), calling for more automation in the Health Service. He said technology can "transform the way we deliver public services".

The British Medical Journal concluded that "over claiming about technology" is more likely to be "driven by industry lobbying, marketing [and] the financial bottom line" than by evidence.

The TPA's website calls for the NHS to move to an insurance-based model. So what would happen to our advances if our NHS was in the hands of medical insurance companies?

"Magnificent victory" says UNISON

Plans to change working patterns for home care workers in Birmingham have been dropped.

The proposed shift alterations would have seen enablement service care staff working part-time hours.

The scheme has been withdrawn by the city council following community care changes proposed by the NHS.

The workers' union: UNISON called it a "magnificent victory" for its members, some of whom would have lost up to £11,000 a year, it said.

The row over the council's £2m cuts to home care has been going on for about 18 months.

In July, the council withdrew a proposal for staff to work triple split-shifts and replaced it with a proposition for about 280 staff to go part-time.

Pensioners do pay their way!

Pensioners are paying around £4bn a year more in income tax than previously thought. HMRC figures reveal that a total of £17.9bn was raised by taxing retired people's private and workplace pensions in the financial year to April 2017. This has been revised up from an estimate of £13.5bn because HMRC has started using more reliable methods to calculate payments.

It highlights the contribution to the public finances made by pensioners and offers more evidence to support the claim that bus passes, winter fuel payments and TV licences are not free — because older people continue to make a substantial contribution towards their cost.

In addition, around £57bn worth of care is also provided every year by the UK's growing number of older carers.

NPC May Campaign News

Bus pass aids good health

New research from University College London has found that having a bus pass leads to a happier life.

According to the study, older people who receive concessionary travel are more likely to enjoy a better quality of life, have greater life satisfaction and fewer symptoms of depression than those who do not. The research also discovered that older people with bus passes are more physically active and less socially isolated than those without one.

The analysis comes after the House of Lords said that pensioners should be stripped of "outdated" perks such as free bus passes, to make Britain fairer for young people.

Lead author of the study Dr Sarah Jackson said: "Our research shows free bus travel offers clear benefits to older people's health and wellbeing. It helps them to stay active and facilitates better contact with friends and family, which has a positive impact on mental and physical health."

Other studies have also shown the economic benefit of the concessionary bus travel scheme, with every £1 spent generating at least £2.87 in benefits. These benefits accrue directly for the travellers themselves, other bus passengers and road users from transport network improvements, and the wider community as well as from wider economic and social impacts such as reductions in congestion and pollution.

NPC May Campaign News

Please do not hesitate to send us items of news or opinions for publication in our Newsletter. Send to address on front of Newsletter.

INFORMATION

BINGO	This is suspended for the time being. We will keep you informed.
Lunch and a chat on Wednesdays	1 pm in IPF Hall, 1a Providence Court, Providence Place N1 0RN
IT and Smart Phones on Wednesdays	3.30 p.m in the IPF Hall, address above
Saturday 1st June 1 p.m.	Highbury View Tenants GARDEN PARTY — Highbury Fields end of Ronalds Road, garden gate entrance: No. 87-89, N5 1XQ
Thursday 20th June	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. Arthur Torrington, chair of the Windrush Foundation will speak (see page two)
Thursday 18 July	10.30 a.m. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FORUM
No Forum in August, but 17th August	IPF GARDEN PARTY AT HIGHBURY VIEW details later
Thursday 19th September	10.30 a.m. Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall. Speaker GLA Councillor Jennette Arnold

GEORGE DURACK



As we get nearer to our Annual General Meeting in July, our thoughts go to our good friend George who sadly could not be with us at our AGM in July last year. He died just one month later.

There have been (and are) so many times since then when we remember his good humour and his kindness, his firm opinions and his principled stand for social justice.

At George's funeral, his daughter Elaine asked those who wished to make a financial donation to give this to Islington Pensioners Forum, and we agreed that this would be for a lasting memorial.

We have over £1,000, and we are consulting the Council about getting an appropriate place for a bench and a tree in memory of George — who was also a Freeman of the Borough of Islington.

When he came to the Forum meeting in the Town Hall on 17th May, committee member, Eddie Zissler contacted the Council leader's office with our request, and hopefully we will have definite news about the George Durack memorial bench and tree by the time we meet at this year's AGM.

**You are invited to the
ISLINGTON PATIENT GROUP
Wednesday, 19th June, 5.30 for
meeting 6 — 8 p.m.
ST. LUKE'S COMMUNITY CENTRE
90 Central Street, EC1V 8AJ**

NEW MEMBER

RENEWING SUB

NAME:

ADDRESS:

POST CODE:

TELE NO:

EMAIL:

ANNUAL SUB ENCLOSED.....£5.00

PLUS DONATION?.....

Cheque payable to: IPF Send to:

Islington Pensioners Forum,
1a Providence Court,
Providence Place, Islington N1 0RN

Or hand in at Forum meeting (see above)