



Charity No: 1043081

# ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

## The voice of Islington's older community

### November 2019 Newsletter

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

## “Foodbanks have unknowingly taken on the role of emergency community support” — by Frances Bradley

Last year, Professor Philip Aston, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, reported his horror at finding that in the UK “the fifth largest economy in the world, 14 million people (one fifth of the population) live in poverty.”

“Four million of these are more than 50% below the poverty line, and 1.5m are destitute — unable to afford basic essentials”.

He said that the increase in homelessness and the handing out of nearly 1.6 million meals by the Trussell Trust was “a sign of widespread destitution”, and he blamed the rise in poverty on the 10% fall in the value of benefits and tax credits (with long delays in payments) to working families.

The Trussell Trust explains that the structural cause of poverty is “no longer political but moral” and foodbanks “have unknowingly taken on the role of emergency community support”.

Indeed, foodbanks are not equipped to address chronic destitution, and are still intended to be only a temporary solution to an acute economic crisis which will be resolved.

I visited the Trussell Trust Foodbank at the Roundhouse in Ronalds Road, N5. Vouchers issued by care professionals (e.g. doctors, health visitors, social workers, CAB) entitle clients (plus dependents) to a 3-5 day emergency food supply to tide them over, not to create dependency. A food parcel contains non-perishable food which requires heating-up not cooking and includes cereal, UHT or powdered milk, tea or coffee,

long-life juice, biscuits, tinned soup, baked beans, tomatoes, vegetables, fruit, sponge and rice pudding, instant mash and pasta or rice, and clients with particular dietary requirements are catered for. Also there might be an extra treat (e.g. chocolate, jam or custard,) in the run-up to Christmas – very important for morale. Also items such as nappies, sanitary products or men's razors, can be given alongside the food parcel.

People often feel ashamed of going to a foodbank so volunteers are keen to be welcoming, to show understanding and put people at ease as far as they can. They are very aware that the need to visit a foodbank is generally a symptom of a wider crisis and volunteers are able to give people a list of other organisations offering support in the area, for example agencies such as Shine Islington, which advises and supports people in difficulty with debt.



Volunteers at work in Ronalds Road  
More information on page 2

13 million people in the UK live below the poverty line and in the year to April 2019 the Trussell Trust gave out 1,583,668 three-day emergency food supplies to people in crisis. This number represents an increase of 19% over the year to 2018, and double the number of food parcels given out in 2013, by which time significant numbers of foodbanks had been established.

In Islington since April 2019, of the 2,727 people who have used the foodbank, 86 people were over 65 and almost 700 were dependent children.

**[Members are invited to bring donations \(food or money\) for the local Foodbank to the next Forum meeting on 21st November](#)**

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# A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

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## **Sebastian, Jill and Ben from Extinction Rebellion spoke at our October Forum meeting.**

Let me start at the end! Once again the Q&A session was a credit to our members — it was varied and knowledgeable and clear that Islington Pensioners Forum stands up for our intergenerational policy and we are keen to let it be known that to the multi-national corporations, profit is more important than people.

Sebastian explained that facing the climate emergency is no longer a question that is “up for grabs”. Fossil fuels have been the mainstay of power in this country since the industrial revolution — gases have been released having the effect of “putting a duvet around the planet”. The consequence is that temperatures on the surface of the earth rise.

The polar ice caps are melting at an extraordinary rate, the level of the seas rises and hundreds of thousands of people lose their homes in the global south. Scientists explain that underneath the ice is methane — 10-15 times more heating than carbon dioxide. It really is a climate emergency happening at an alarming rate and we don't hear a lot about it in the media despite warnings from the scientists.

Our speakers explained that each of them knew that although in Islington they have a reasonably civilised life, they had come to realise that they were “shielded”

from the actual world in which oceans are warming, forests are burning, climate is changing and already millions of people are suffering; habitat and species are being destroyed. They had to stand up and be counted for the sake of younger generations. A group of 15 in Islington had grown into 500 people in a matter of weeks. If the actions of Extinction Rebellion are considered by some to be drastic — then it has to be understood that this emergency requires swift, radical action.

We will keep in touch with Extinction Rebellion and publish regular reports from them in our newsletter.

oooOooo

As reported in my last column, I attended my union's — the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) — retired members' conference in Birmingham. The debate on defence of the free TV licence for over 75-year-olds was very passionate and I gave my view from the rostrum on our campaign on isolation and loneliness among older people .

The one motion going to the union's conference has my full support; it demands that society provides a National Care System that is publicly funded.

**The date of the General Election has now been decided; the National Pensioners Convention has a Pensioners' Manifesto (see page 5) — we will get copies to hand out in the weeks leading up to 12th December.**

### **UK Pensioners in the EU fear poverty**

Lisa O'Carroll, writing in *The Guardian* on 23 October, reports that retired Britons in Europe are struggling to make ends meet and fearing poverty because of Brexit. Jeremy Morgan QC told the House of Lords EU justice sub-committee that people in the EU living on British pensions had already suffered a drop in their income owing to sterling's depreciation since the referendum, and they were hit again when the government said that it would not give a lifetime guarantee to index-link pensions under a no-deal exit. Morgan said that many people had made a rational decision to move because they could make their pensions go further in countries like France and Spain. Lord Morris, Committee chair said that the problems were of fundamental concern to 220,000 UK pensioners living in EU countries especially now that the Department of Work and Pensions had said that they would guarantee their pension would rise in line with the state pensions for those living in the UK for the next three years — but what happens after that?

**Our Chair, Bob Collins will represent IPF at the Annual Remembrance wreath-laying ceremony on Sunday 10th November — 9.30 am at Union Chapel to the Town Hall at 10.00 am and then at Islington Memorial Green for the ceremony at 10.40 am.**

### **Foodbank information**

- A full list of voucher providers is on the Islington Directory website: [directory.islington.gov.uk](http://directory.islington.gov.uk)
- Roundhouse Foodbank, 71 Ronalds Road, N5 1XB — Monday to Saturday 1-4 pm
- Hackney Foodbank: St. John Hoxton Crypt, Pitfield Street, N1 6NP
- Information about the work of Trussell Trust — statistics, press releases, petitions and campaigns: [trusselltrust.org](http://trusselltrust.org)
- Community Fridge at St. Luke's in Central Street: information from Angela: 020 7549 8176 or email to [info@centralstreet.org](mailto:info@centralstreet.org)

▶▶ **WE DIDN'T HAVE THE 'GREEN THING' BACK THEN** ▶▶

Yesterday after shopping in our local supermarket, I was in the queue at the check-out, and heard when the young cashier suggested to the much older lady that she should bring her own grocery bags, because plastic bags are not good for the environment.

The woman apologised to the young girl & then sighed,

**"We didn't have this 'green thing' back in my earlier days."**

The young clerk responded, "That's our problem today. You folk didn't do enough to save our environment for future generations."

The older lady said "Ah yes you're right -- **our generation didn't have the "green thing" in its day.**" She sighed then continued:

▶▶ Back then, we returned milk bottles, lemonade bottles & beer bottles to the shops. The shops then sent them back to the plant to be washed, sterilised & refilled, so those same bottles were used over & over, thus REALLY were recycled.

**But we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.**

▶▶ Grocery stores put our groceries into brown paper bags that we reused for numerous things. Most memorable was the use of brown paper bags as book covers for our school books. This was to ensure that public property (the books provided for our use by the school) were not defaced by our scribbings. Then we were able to personalise our books on their brown paper bag/covers.

**But, too bad we didn't do the "green thing" back then.**

▶▶ I remember how we walked up stairs because we didn't have an escalator in every store or office building; walked to the grocery store & didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time we had to go 200 yards. . . .

**But she was right. We didn't have the "green thing" in our day.**

▶▶ Back then we washed the baby's nappies because we didn't have the throw-away kind. We dried clothes on a line, not in an energy-gobbling machine burning up 220 volts. Wind & solar power really did dry our clothes back in our days. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing. . . .

**But that young lady is right; we didn't have the "green thing" back in our day.**

▶▶ Back then we had one radio, in the house -- not a TV in every room. And if anyone did own a TV, it had a small screen the size of a handkerchief (remember them?), not a screen the size of a football pitch. When cooking we blended & stirred by hand coz we didn't have electric machines to do everything for us. When we packaged a fragile item to send by post, we used layers of old newspapers to cushion it, not styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap.

▶▶ Back then, we didn't fire up an engine and burn gasoline just to cut the lawn. We used a push mower that ran on human power. We exercised by walking so we didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity. . . .

**But she's right; we didn't have the "green thing" back then.**

▶▶ We drank from a tap or fountain when we were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time we had a drink of water. We refilled writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, & we replaced the razor blade in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull.

**But we didn't have the "green thing" back then.**

▶▶ Back then, people took the bus & kids rode bikes to school or walked instead of turning their mothers into a 24-hour taxi service in the family's expensive car or van, which cost what a whole house did **before the "green thing"**..

▶▶ Oh and we had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And we didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 23,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest leisure park. . . .

**But it is so sad this current generation laments how wasteful we old folks were just because we didn't have the "green thing" back then? . . .**



**NPC PENSIONERS' PARLIAMENT (NOW: CONVENTION)**  
**SOUTHPORT THIS YEAR! Monday 1st to Friday 5th June 2020**  
**£250**

Return journey by coach plus hotel with bed, breakfast and evening meal plus evening entertainment: If you want to book, please send a **£10 deposit** (cheques payable to IPS) with your name, address and telephone number/email address to:

**Dot Gibson PENSIONERS' CONVENTION, IPF office,  
1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN**

**Living in and using public services in Camden and Islington :**  
**Resident Survey: <https://survs.com/survey/591541ef4a>**

Dear Friends,

We would like to invite you to share your experiences of living in and using public services in Camden and Islington through the resident survey. The results of this survey will help inform and improve future services. **The survey will close on 15 November 2019.**

It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete online. Please read each question carefully and answer as honestly as you can. Your responses will be kept anonymous and all your information will be stored securely.

***You also have the option to enter your name into a prize draw. There are three high street shopping vouchers to be won, with first prize worth £75, second prize of £50 and third prize of £25.***

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Rosa Lau on:

[wing.lau@islington.gov.uk](mailto:wing.lau@islington.gov.uk) or call 07971 599385.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and we thank you for your time.

Camden & Islington Public Health

**WINTER WELLBEING by North London Cares: 020 7118 3838**

If you're over 65, we can help you stay WARM, ACTIVE, and CONNECTED during the winter. From October 2019 to March 2020 we can: ● Deliver hot water bottles, blankets or thermal socks to your door; ● Connect you to organisations who will help keep your home warm and safe, provide benefits advice, and help reduce bills; ● Connect you to brilliant social activities in your area; ● Help you to access health and services and advice on where to get a flu jab; ● Arrange small grants for people in difficult circumstances who are struggling to keep their homes warm

**ISLINGTON COUNCIL IS "DEMENTIA FRIENDLY"**

Islington Council is firmly committed to helping all residents lead healthy and independent lives, so public health campaigns about the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise are more important than ever. . . and working with the Alzheimer's Society help and support is provided for those with dementia and their family and friends. Cecelia's Cafe, St. Stephen's Community Centre, Canonbury Road, N1 2DF offers a fortnightly dementia cafe service on the second and fourth Saturday of the month 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm

**IF YOU HAVE ANY EXAMPLES OF DIGITAL EXCLUSION PLEASE LET US KNOW**

**An example:** Milk delivery firm *Milk & More* will put up its price for milk by 4p a pint for off-line customers and cease cash and cheque payments for goods and deliveries from the end of this year. Doorstep deliveries are a vital lifeline to those elderly and vulnerable people who are unable, for whatever reason, to leave their home. Isolation and loneliness is increasing and 67% of older people have no access to technology, either because they are unable to afford it, or do not want to engage with a computer, preferring face-to-face or telephone contact. For many cash (or cheque) is the preferred method to make their payments.

**The general election will take place on Thursday 12th December, and the National Pensioners Convention has produced a PENSIONERS' MANIFESTO. We will get copies for the campaign in Islington, but in the meantime here is the wording on what is a colourful A4 leaflet:**

In recent years, various politicians, think-tanks and media commentators have suggested that older people are the cause of many of the country's problems — from shortage of housing to the lack of hospital beds. Some argue that the older generation have escaped austerity whilst the young are taking the brunt. Such statements simply fund the generation divide. Older people are just as vulnerable to the effects of austerity as the young, and in addition they are concerned about the future of their children and grandchildren. Thus, plans to take away benefits such as the triple-lock (on the state pension) or the bus pass will not help younger people but would be used to roll back the welfare state for everyone. Today's generation is tomorrow's pensioner.

In reality, Britain is not a great place to grow old. Our state pension is among one of the least adequate in the western world, our social care system is in crisis with 1.8 million people no longer getting the help they need and in the last five years 170,370 pensioners have died from cold-related illnesses.

That is why at the General Election, we are calling on all candidates to support a manifesto that will put the concerns of today's and tomorrow's pensioners at the heart of the political process.

***All men and women shall be entitled to dignity and security in retirement. The NPC stands for intergenerational fairness preventing attacks on future pensioners and calls for:***

- A state pension set above the official poverty level, at around £220 a week and linked to the triple lock of the higher of earnings, prices or 2.5%.
- Greater funding for the NHS, an end to privatisation in the health service and a national care service funded from general taxation that is free at the point of delivery and without means-testing.
- Maintenance of universal pensioner benefits such as free bus travel, a £500 winter fuel allowance, free prescriptions and the reinstatement of the free TV licence for the over 75s, fully funded by government.
- A minimum of 85,000 homes need to be built each year, that are both affordable and suitable for older people, whilst recognising the specific barriers to rightsizing that older people face.
- It is now time for a Commissioner for Older People, independent from government, who can champion and safeguard the rights of older people and who has the legal powers and responsibilities to enact positive change.
- A Brexit deal that safeguards equality, the payment of uprated pensions, the EU health insurance card and the rights of those UK pensioners living abroad.

**NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION**  
 Marchmont Community Centre,  
 62 Marchmont Street.  
 London, WC1N 1AB

Email [info@npcuk.org](mailto:info@npcuk.org)  
 Web: [www.npcuk.org](http://www.npcuk.org)  
 Follow us on twitter @NPCuk  
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## “Audacious campaign” for our NHS

Already it looks as if our National Health Service is going to be at the heart of the general election campaign.

So it seems like a good idea to have a quick look into its founding:

The NHS was born out of the ideal that good healthcare should be available to all, regardless of wealth. Dr. Somerville Hastings, president of the Socialist Medical Association successfully proposed a resolution at the 1934 Labour Party Conference committing the Party to establish a State Health Service.



Aneurin Bevan

There had already been calls for a “unified medical service” in the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law in 1909, and then in 1942 the Beveridge Report recommended “comprehensive health and rehabilitation services for the prevention and cure of disease”

When Labour won the 1945 general election, Aneurin Bevan was appointed Health Minister; he embarked on what the official historian of the NHS, Charles Webster, called an “audacious campaign” to found and establish our NHS.

# INFORMATION

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

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	Every two weeks at 3.30 pm in the IPF Hall, address above
Thursday 21st November	10.30 am Forum meeting at Islington Town Hall, speaker to be arranged.

**There is no Forum meeting in December, but there will be a Newsletter and this will let you know about speakers at the January Forum meeting and the date and place of our "End the Winter Blues" party in the New Year.**

## OUR NHS..... Pam Zinkin

### Drug companies and trade deals with Trump's USA.

You may have seen a recent television programme, *Dispatches*, about the cost of drugs. It showed that there have been six trade meetings between our government and the US where the price of drugs in the UK was discussed. Drug companies want the UK's NHS to pay more. Trump supports them.

**First some basic information:** Medicines often have many trade names given by the pharmaceutical companies that produce them. If a new drug is developed by a pharmaceutical company it gives it a trade name and holds the patent for 20 years. After that other companies can produce it and call it any name and charge what they want.

A generic drug is a pharmaceutical drug that contains the same active chemical substance as a drug that is protected by patents. (for 20 years).

#### Why use a generic name when the trade name may be easier?.

The Thalidomide story shows why. This drug was known as Distaval and by 40 other commercial names. When it was shown that taking the drug in pregnancy caused limb damage in the newborn it was stopped. But the drug continued to be prescribed and used under many of the commercial names long after its dangers were known. **If the drug is known by its generic name this cannot happen.**

Pharma companies resist this as it reduces their profits but if we use the generic version we are saving the NHS a lot of money. **But we must not have a trade deal with the USA.**

● **We must protect our NHS from USA big pharma with or without a trade deal. Because our NHS can order large quantities of medicines we often get them at a lower price. But Trump has said that countries where a medicine is cheaper than in the USA must pay more — a subject of trade talks.**

● **We should support the use and development of generic medicines; manufacture here in a British pharmaceutical company would be a vital way of protecting our NHS.**

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)