



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community
SPECIAL March/April 2020 Newsletter

1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

Telephone 0207 226 7687

Email: ipf@islingtonpensionersforum.org Website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.org

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



Spring has sprung

BUT SO HAS CORONAVIRUS

Islington Pensioners Forum will not hold its monthly Forum meetings, Wednesday lunches, IT classes and film afternoons until further notice and our "END THE WINTER BLUES" PARTY on 23rd March is cancelled.

- we are told that the government might soon tell all older people to self-isolate;
- ending the free TV licence for over-75s has been postponed from 1st June to 1st. August 2020;
- many foodbanks are closing and/or will only serve those who are medically referred;
- over 80 mutual aid groups have been set up so far all over the country;
- there are mutual aid groups in Islington — we are in touch with them;
- some supermarkets will not take any more home-delivery requests until the first week in April;
- many nursing and extra-care homes are ending or rationing visits from family and friends;

Members of IPF who are isolated and have no help can contact us on 0207 226 7687 and we will do everything we can to assist you. If you get the answer'phone, please leave your name and home telephone number as clearly as you can.



Knit these Easter Ducks for grandchildren or small neighbours. Pattern on page 5 >>>

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

We haven't taken the decision to cancel our meetings and activities lightly. Like most other campaigning and charity groups, we see this as protecting our members in this coronavirus emergency, and we send greetings to all our comrades and friends around the country, affiliated to the National Pensioners Convention (NPC). We are like one family, and all of us will be concerned for our members and do all we can to help them through this difficult time.

So let us remind ourselves of the history and purpose of the NPC:

Nearly 41 years ago on 14th June 1979 the first National Pensioners' Convention was held at the Central Hall, Westminster, attended by 2,500 older people, who discussed and then adopted a Declaration of Intent. It stated:

"This Convention declares that every pensioner has the right to choice, dignity, independence and security as an integral and valued member of society."

When Jack Jones retired as the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union (now Unite the union) in March 1978 he was well aware that there was no single organisation which represented and campaigned on behalf of pensioners. Although some trade unions had retired members' sections, and there were various pensioners organisations and charities in existence, there was no umbrella body that could coordinate and lead the campaign.

With the initial support of the TUC, in 1979 Jack Jones worked on a blueprint for an umbrella organisation, made up of affiliated groups, and came up with the Chartist-inspired name, National Pensioners Convention and the 2,500 older people who gathered in Central Hall Westminster on 14th June adopted the above Declaration of Intent.

Over the years, the NPC acquired premises and staff, and grew in size to cover around 1.5 million older people in over 1,000 different organisations across the UK.'

The NPC's main objective is to promote the welfare and interests of all pensioners, as a way of securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement.

The NPC organises rallies and lobbies of MPs, leads

delegations to parliament and makes submissions to government on policies affecting older people. The Convention also stages an annual three-day Pensioners' Convention (this year in Southport) where representatives discuss issues of concern and share ideas in an atmosphere of genuine friendship.

In our relatively short history, through our campaigning and influencing work we have achieved some significant benefits for older people.

- Restoration of the link of the state pension with earnings — 30 years after the Thatcher government took it away
- Introduction of the free concessionary bus pass from the Labour government when John Prescott was Transport Minister
- Introduction of the winter fuel allowance when Gordon Brown was Chancellor
- A change in the rules so that someone in hospital no longer has their state pension stopped until after 52 weeks, rather than the original 6 weeks
- Led the successful campaign to reduce VAT on fuel to 5%

The real strength of the organisation comes from the work of our many local affiliated Forums, Action Groups and our Regions promoting these campaigns. This makes the Convention unique, as the only national campaign group in the country which is run by pensioners for pensioners.

With more support the NPC will be able to continue to develop its organisation and strengthen its influence as the campaigning voice of both today's and tomorrow's pensioners.

We will ensure that our Newsletter is produced throughout what is going to be a very difficult period so that we can keep you informed of developments.

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CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY

Government must safeguard the health and care workers

The coronavirus emergency is on the news, in the papers — everywhere we look and listen. Emergency actions are being taken, directed and advised by government. We are told that the elderly, particularly those over 80, are more at risk than other generations, especially if they have “underlying health issues”.

Many are looked after at home by regular care workers, others are in extra care, residential or nursing homes, and many are regularly, either attending hospital appointments or are hospitalized.

So what about their carers? Many of these low paid

workers do not have the right to sick pay, so they often go into work despite sickness, and there are those who are restricted by government legislation. The government cannot say, on the one hand that there is a need to recognise the particular needs of frail elderly people, they must recognise and deal with the problems of their carers.

Therefore the IPF committee, having seen the resolution of doctors organised in Unite the Union, sent the following emergency motion to the Annual General Meeting of the National Pensioners Convention London

This AGM of the National Pensioners Convention, London Region fully understands the government’s warning of the danger of the coronavirus to elderly people. In this connection, we recognise the importance of NHS and social care staff to the protection and care of frail elderly people and therefore we call on the government to take steps to safeguard those who are employed by the NHS and private healthcare companies. This means:

- Ensuring that all such staff, including those who provide cleaning, catering and portering services, receive full compensation for time off when they are sick or “self-isolating” to avoid the risk that they will lose wages and feel that they have no alternative but to report for work;
- Recognising that the acute level of staff shortages throughout the NHS requires all restrictions, both residential and financial, on non-resident health and care workers need to be immediately lifted in order to urgently fill the almost 100,000 NHS vacancies (including some 44,000 nurses) in the NHS, and many more in social care;
- Agreeing that the lifting of these restrictions includes the entire “points-based” system for migrant workers from EU and non-EU countries, namely the minimum pay/salary threshold, the so-called ‘reduced’ visa of £464 for medical professionals and the annual £400 compulsory health insurance charge for each family member using the NHS;
- Understanding that coronavirus makes it essential that everyone who may have been exposed has access to the NHS if medically appropriate. However charges on patients unable to prove their entitlement to free NHS care and DHSC sharing of personal data with the Home office for the purpose of immigration enforcement have a major deterrent effect (i.e. these patients may avoid contact with the healthcare system for fear of debt or adverse impact on their immigration status). Therefore in order to safeguard the whole community, the government must suspend the charging regime and end Home office data-sharing immediately pending a full independent review of the impact of these policies on public health, human rights, health workers’ professional ethics and the functioning of the NHS.

Ending the free TV licence for over 75s (except for those on pension credit) is now delayed from 1st June to 1st August

Because of the coronavirus crisis, the BBC has decided to delay cancellation of the free TV licence for over 75s (except those on Pension Credit) from 1st June to 1st August. It means that those on Pension Credit do not have to produce a copy of their Department of Work and Pensions letter confirming their Pension Credit at this time.

The House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee chair, Julian Knight MP said:

"We welcome this news at what will be a time of great

anxiety, particularly for those over 75. Television and radio broadcasts will offer comfort as well as being a vital means for accessing public information.

"However, this delay seems to offer a short-term fix to a much wider problem. What we want to see is renewed efforts from the Government and the BBC to sit down and resolve this issue once and for all."

He is right! And the government is responsible for breaking agreement on this universal benefit! We continue the campaign to reverse this policy.

London Mayoral Election has been postponed for a year because of the coronavirus emergency, but we still need to consider our policies for London's older people and put these to the parties and candidates. Therefore we publish here:

The London Mayoral manifesto on behalf of the London Region National Pensioners Convention

The London Region of the National Pensioners Convention is the biggest of the 16 regions with affiliated local pensioners' forums and action groups in most London boroughs and trade union retired members' associations.

We campaign to protect and enhance the interests of older people in the capital. We therefore have a special interest in the forthcoming Mayoral election.

Having examined the wide remit of the Mayor of London we have produced this manifesto on what our members consider to be their priorities over the coming years. Below are the headings together with a small sample of the relevant related issues.

- The appointment of a specific Deputy Mayor for Older People.
- **Safety:** Adequate manning for policing and Fire Station services, safe travel and road crossing.
- **Transport:** Sufficient bus routes, accessible buses and underground/main line stations, assisted transport, including 'dial a ride'
- **Housed in comfort:** affordable, safe & warm

homes, option of sheltered accommodation. Mayor to promote adequate home services and home adaptations for independent healthy living.

● **Age Friendly London:** Cultural Venues, accessible libraries, day centres, green spaces, places to sit, public toilets, and clean air.

● **Community and communications:** Equal life chances for all-(age, gender, ethnicity and disability equality): no discrimination against those without IT expertise or accesses to broadband, inclusive publicity options for telephone access and the right to paper bills without financial penalty.

● **Living Costs in London** to be affordable for public sector workers. Young people and all the workers we rely on need to be able to rent/live in London.

Finally whilst the Mayor is not responsible for the provision of NHS services, we expect him/her to oppose any further changes which would reduce or dismantle health services in London.

Candidates are invited to endorse these proposals or should they disagree, to explain their reasons.

******IslingtonLife IslingtonLife IslingtonLife IslingtonLife IslingtonLife******

The Spring edition of Islington Life (the local magazine from Islington Council) is now circulating. This can be viewed online at issue.com/islingtonlifemag

Be the first to hear about the latest news: visit islingtonlife.london

For Council news see Twitter: [@IslingtonLife](https://twitter.com/IslingtonLife) and [@IslingtonBC](https://twitter.com/IslingtonBC)

If you would like Islington Life in other formats, e.g. in large print, audiotape or another format, please call 020 7527 3416

PENSIONERS CONVENTION 1-5 JUNE 2020 — SOUTHPORT

Jan Shortt, the general secretary of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) has issued a statement saying that, unless the Southport Local Authority cancels the Convention, it will go ahead. Right now 30 people have signed up to be on our delegation (from Islington and Tottenham) and I will keep you informed of developments.

Dot Gibson

Knitting pattern for Easter ducks

Materials: Yellow double knitting yarn and no. 4 knitting needles

Cast on 25 stitches

1. Knit one row in plain knitting (it is plain knitting throughout)
2. Increase one stitch in the first stitch, knit 7 stitches, increase one in the next stitch, knit 7 stitches, increase one in next stitch, knit 7 stitches, increase one in the last stitch (29 stitches)
3. Knit
4. Increase one stitch in the first stitch, knit 10 stitches, increase one in the next stitch, knit 5 stitches, increase one in the next stitch, knit 10 stitches, increase one in the last stitch (33 stitches)
5. Knit
6. Increase one stitch in the first stitch, knit 13 stitches, increase one in the next stitch, knit 3 stitches, increase one in the next stitch, knit 13 stitches, increase one in the last stitch (37 stitches)
7. Knit
8. Increase one stitch in the first stitch, knit 16 stitches, increase one in the next stitch, knit 1 stitch, increase one in the next stitch, knit 16 stitches, increase one in the last stitch (41 stitches)
9. — 17. Knit (9 rows)
18. — 20. Increase one stitch at each end of these **three** rows (47 stitches)
21. Cast off 13 stitches and knit the following 34 stitches
22. Cast off 13 stitches and knit the following 21 stitches
- 23 — 34. Knit these 12 rows on these 21 stitches
- 35.— 37 Knit two together along these 3 rows until 3 stitches remain
- 38 Knit three together and cut the yarn, leaving about 12 inches for sewing

Sew together, leaving the bottom (cast-on end) open.

Stuff the head (if you haven't got proper stuffing, then roll up some spare wool for this); tie ribbon or wool round the neck; add eyes and a beak — eyes can be sewn on and beak: a 1.5 centimetres square of orange felt, folded into a triangle and sewn on along the fold, with the cotton slightly stretched so that the felt shapes into an open beak. Finally, insert a Cadburys cream egg or a small bag of chocolate buttons or smarties (or a more healthy option, e.g. raisins) into the body.

HAPPY KNITTING!

Coronavirus and Housing: Protect tenants and homes STATEMENT BY ISLINGTON AXE THE HOUSING ACT

Facing this viral pandemic, Government must act urgently to ensure no-one is left on the street homeless, and that no-one loses their home due to the virus. Therefore we must have urgent action to:

- Immediately open up hotels and other empty buildings to house all the homeless;
- Ensure no evictions or repossession action during this crisis: suspend rent and mortgage liability for anyone whose income is cut due to the virus;
- Scrap the five-week wait for Universal Credit/housing benefit and suspend all benefit sanctions.

And as millions are living in overcrowded, unsuitable and unaffordable homes, we need immediate action with grant funding to:

- Build 100,000 council homes a year at social rent with secure tenancies.

We stand united - we won't blame each other, we need action by Government now.

You can add your name, respond to: info@axethehousingact.org.uk

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 Place N1 0RN
IT and Smart Phones on Wednesdays	3.30 pm in the hall above
Thursday 19th March 2020	10.30 am in Islington Town Hall Speaker: Councillor Leader of Islington Council and Peter Crockett on Is- lington Community Centres and activities
Monday 23rd March	AND THE WINTER BLUES PARTY (see page 2 advert)
Wednesday 25th March	FILM SHOW — buffet from 1 p.m. film at 2 p.m.

Cancelled because of the coronavirus emergency

Islington Pensioners Forum officers and committee 2019-2020
 Chair: **Bob Collins**,
 Secretary/Treasurer: **Eric Hill**,
 Assistant Secretary, **Annette Thomas**,
 Committee: **Frances Bradley, Luke Daniels, Dot Gibson, Irma Gomez, Eula Harrison, Joyce Herron, David Milner, Eddie Zissler, Pam Zinkin**

A message about Coronavirus from the Leader of Islington Council, Richard Watts

I know everyone is feeling concerned about the current outbreak and spread of coronavirus. Islington Council is doing everything we can to keep vital services running and to protect our residents.

In the coming weeks and months, our priority will be to ensure that our most vulnerable residents continue to get the support they need. All of our services, including adult social care and children's services, have plans in place to ensure they can continue to support residents during this difficult time.

In line with Government advice, the vast majority of Islington schools are still open, though obviously this might change. If you are a parent you will already have received information from your child's school keeping you up to date.

We are also working together with our partners including those in health, policing and the voluntary and community sector to ensure that Islington is as well equipped to respond as possible.

coronavirus.web.page
@IslingtonBC
NHS website

NEW MEMBER RENEWING SUB

NAME:

ADDRESS:

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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)