

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

September 2023 Newsletter

1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN Telephone 0207 226 7687
email: ipf@islingtonpensionersforum.org web www.islingtonpensionersforum.org
charity no: 1043081



Pictures of the front of the 1,000-strong march from the Ministry of Transport to Downing Street on Thursday evening, 31st August campaigning against the closure of railway ticket offices.

Below, IPF took our banner and handed out leaflets at Finsbury Park station on 17th August 2023.

Railway unions rally community organisations, including representatives of disabled people and pensioners, to join the protest at the proposed closure of railway ticket offices

The consultation into the plan to close hundreds of railway ticket offices in England was extended to 1st September, and this gave the campaign the chance to gather more people to send in their opposition and to have more demonstrations.

On page three we have included the letter sent by Jeremy Corbyn to Thameslink following him joining the IPF picket at Finsbury Park Station on 17th August

On 31st August the RMT called upon people to join them at the Ministry of Transport in Horseferry Road, and to then march to Downing Street, where speakers addressed the 1,000 strong crowd on the issue.



We are proud to say that our Committee member Jan Pollock was one of the speakers. She has done a tremendous job picketing and leafleting in the campaign.

Jan was a good example of the people from many community campaigns who took part in the demo. There were many people from disabled groups as well as pensioners from other forums and pensioners action groups around London. There can be no doubt that communities are supporting

pickets, petitions and demonstrations around the country to stand side-by-side with striking workers standing up for their rights and in defence of the services they provide.

Bob is away, so we are sneaking his page to show off these photos from the 30th August boat trip. Sorry about those who could not go..... but Lydia is on the job sorting out new adventures!



FILM CLUB... Before the lockdowns, our regular film afternoons were well attended; members were keen and interested, but so far the numbers coming along have been low, and so let's have this on the agenda for our next Forum meeting on Thursday 21st September

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

Officers

Bob Collins — Chair
Luke Daniels — Vice Chair
Elaine Durack — Secretary
Frances Bradley — Assistant Secretary
Eric Hill — Treasurer

Committee Members

Margaret Diffey
Hannah Fagbesa
Dot Gibson — Newsletter editor
Irma Gomez
Alan McDonald
David Milner — Members list
Jan Pollock
Philip Richard
Juliana Simon
Annette Thomas
Pam Zinkin — NHS Information

Delegates to the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) London Region

Elaine Durack and Frances Bradley

Staff:

Bronwen Handyside — Co-ordinator
Lydia Batchelor — Outings/events organiser

First Monday of the month: Committee meeting at IPF office (address on page 1)

First Tuesday of the month: Newsletter printing and dispatch at IPF office (address page 1)

Third Thursday of the month: Town Hall meeting of Forum, 10.30 a.m.

FILM CLUB.....let's discuss this at the above Forum meeting to see what members think about how it should continue.....



Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP
Member of Parliament for Islington North

Patrick Verwer
CEO, Govia Thameslink
24 Monument Street
London
EC2R 8AJ

18 August 2023

Dear Mr Verwer,

I am writing this letter just one day after I stood in solidarity with an Islington Pensioner Forum (IPF) group protesting the **proposed ticket office closures at Finsbury Park Station**. As you will be aware, they are just a few of the very many people all around the country who are anxious about this proposed change.

Closing railway ticket offices is clearly a very bad mistake for so many reasons. I'm sure you would agree with many of the objections that have been made, such as problems for the disabled, non-English speaking people, elderly, women travelling alone, tourists, the list goes on and on. Significantly, in Finsbury Park, it is a cost cutting exercise that will have a huge impact on the very many users, local and all around the country, who pass through such a busy station. I have yet to meet one person who does not feel these closures will backfire enormously.

There are so many risks associated with this plan and they vary in significance, from the possibility of a serious incident occurring that can be shown to have been a result of no staff on a railway station, to the sheer inconvenience and frustration users will feel when they need travel information. The vulnerable as always will be affected worse.

I am keen to hear that whichever way this bigger decision goes, and I believe consultations are ongoing, and I am in no doubt that you will be hearing from MPs and travellers all around the country, that you'll seriously considering making Finsbury Park exempt from these closures due to the horrendous impact such a move would have.

Last but not least, in my view, the public image that users will have of rail companies should this move go ahead will be as bad as it can get.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Rt Hon Jeremy Corbyn MP | Islington North

corbynj@parliament.uk;

twitter: [@jeremycorbyn](https://twitter.com/jeremycorbyn) ; facebook: [JeremyCorbynMP](https://www.facebook.com/JeremyCorbynMP); website: www.jeremycorbyn.org.uk

Housing crisis affects estimated 8.4 million in England

3.6 million people are living in an overcrowded home
 2.5 million are unable to afford their rent or mortgage
 2.5 million are in “hidden households” they cannot afford to move out of, including housing shares, adults living with their parents, or people living with an ex-partner
 1.7 million are in unsuitable housing such as older people stuck in homes they cannot move around and families in properties which have no outside space
 1.4 million are in poor quality homes
 400,000 are homeless or at risk of homelessness — including people sleeping rough, living in homeless shelters, temporary accommodation or “sofa-surfing”

Above information is from the National Housing Federation research using data from the annual “Understanding Society” survey by the University of Essex

15,000 families on the Islington Housing list, and 1,000 living in temporary accommodation but the government has kept 28 family homes on the Pentonville Prison site empty for ten years!



Housing campaigners occupied the 28 3-4 bedroom homes in the grounds of HMP Pentonville for a day to protest that these family-sized flats (previously occupied by prison wardens) had been left empty for ten years, whilst local councils had massive waiting lists for homes for families.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ), which owns the homes, says it is "looking for the best way to use the property"(!) Meanwhile the MoJ has paid £600,000 in council tax on the flats over the past seven years, and under government rules, it must now pay 300% council tax, the rate charged for homes vacant for a decade or more.

The MoJ said an application to build new homes on the site had been turned down by Islington Council in 2021 — a decision later upheld by the planning inspector.

But Islington Council say that the MoJ had not made another application and Councillor Diarmaid Ward, executive member for finance, planning and performance, told reporter Julia Gregory of the Local Democracy Reporting Service that the council had been "fighting" for many years to get the flats into use for local families. "If the MoJ want to talk about how we can work together to get these desperately needed homes back into use, my door is always open. I will happily meet with them as early as this afternoon".

A petition has been launched calling on the MoJ to hand over these homes. . . . information at:

www.axethehousingact.org.uk

St. Mungo’s workers’ strike ends

Unite-the-union said its members had accepted an inflation-beating pay increase worth 10.74% following three months of industrial action. There will also be a one-off payment of £700 for most workers.

The workers took action because they were under huge financial and mental pressure and they weren’t being listened to by management. Sharon Graham, Unite general secretary said: **“This was a hard-fought battle resulting in victory for St Mungo’s workers who are dedicated to helping the homeless.** Unite will continue to defend workers in the fight for better jobs, pay and conditions .”

OUR NHS — report from workers' unions

We have just received the news that there will be a strike of NHS workers in London at:

- **Barts Health NHS Trust on 13—14 September and 16—22 September**
- **Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Trust and Guys and St. Thomas' NHS Trust on 13—14 September**
- **East London Foundation Trust on 13 September**

The 2,800 workers' are members of Unite the Union in a dispute over safe staffing and pay — they include nurses, pathologists, cleaners, caterers, porters and ancillary roles.

The union's announcement explains that these workers are experiencing staff shortages, which have reached such a dangerous level that they risk the health of patients and threaten staff welfare. A recent survey of Unite NHS members revealed that 48 per cent said during the past year staffing levels in their areas regularly reached a point where "patient care has been compromised

The British Medical Association (BMA) has announced that for the first time NHS consultants and junior doctors will take joint strike action over four days in September and October.

The consultants will strike on 19 and 20 September with Christmas Day levels of cover, while junior doctors will also walk out on 20 September with similar levels of cover, followed by further strikes on 21 and 22 September. Both consultants and junior doctors will strike again on 2, 3 and 4 October, again with Christmas Day levels of cover in what the union said was the first joint strike between consultants and junior doctors in

and unsafe". For workers in frontline roles these figures rose to 57 per cent.

Allied to the staffing crisis, the workers are also striking about low pay. Unite members voted to reject the government's pay deal, as it "amounted to yet another real terms pay cut"

In addition over 1,000 workers at Barts are in dispute as they failed to receive the £1,655 lump sum payment, which was part of the NHS pay settlement for 2022/23, due to previously being outsourced to private company SERCO and only in recent months have been brought back into the NHS.

Unite general secretary, Sharon Graham said: "NHS employers must stop sweeping the staffing crisis under the carpet. Hospitals are so short of staff that patients are frequently being put at risk.

"Until the fundamental causes of low pay and impossible working conditions are resolved, the problem is only going to get worse".

NHS history. The strike days also coincide with the prime minister's first Tory party conference. BMA junior doctor co-chairs, Dr. Rob Laurenson and Dr. Vivek Trivedi said: "Today junior doctors across England are sending a single message, loud and clear to the government: we are not going anywhere.

"We are prepared to continue our industrial action, but we don't have to — the prime minister has the power to halt any further action by making us a credible offer that we can put to our members.

"Refusing to negotiate with us and with our consultant colleagues is not the way ahead."

and breaking news about US Corporation, Centene

On 29th August the Financial Times reported that US health insurer Centene is selling its chain of GP clinics and the largest private hospital group in the UK as it drops plans to make inroads into Britain's healthcare system.

The company has launched a sale process for its chain of nearly 60 Operose surgeries in the UK. The deal is expected before Christmas. On Monday 28 August Centene announced a \$1.2 billion sale of its British operator, Circle Health Group to United Arab Emirates-based PureHealth. The FT report further said that the sales signal an abandonment of Centene's UK strategy, meant to create a seamless pathway to private healthcare by buying up taxpayer-funded GP services and encouraging doctors to refer patients to its chain of 53 Circle or BMI hospitals in England. The New York Stock Exchange-listed Centene has decided to focus on the US market after facing increasing operating costs in the UK the report added.

Letter. . . .

People Friendly Streets

You may have read about opposition to Sadiq Kahn's ULEZ expansion in the media, but addressing the wider public health problem of pollution by reducing the amount of traffic on our streets makes a significant contribution towards cleaning the air we breathe. Locally, Islington Council's "People Friendly Streets" programme is committed to prioritising residents' health over motorists' convenience. The programme includes expanding the roll out of "school streets" to secondary schools on main roads, and making 70% of Islington into "liveable neighbourhoods" by 2030 by restricting through traffic.

Frances Bradley

NOTE:

Every time I go through the "saved pictures" file on my laptop, I see Ella Kissi Debrah, who suffered from asthma and died as a result of breathing traffic-polluted air — a legal decision following a loving and hard-won campaign by her Mum.

This letter from Frances is a reminder of that sad loss, and our duty to stand up for this little girl. That is what "PEOPLE FRIENDLY STREETS" are all about! Let us keep reminding ourselves. . . . *Dot Gibson*



TRADES UNION CONGRESS — PAPERS ON SOCIAL CARE

September 2021 — A new deal for Social Care: A new deal for the workforce

May 2022 — Lifting the veil — removing the invisibility of adult social care

August 2023 — A Strategy for the Care Workforce

Looking up the TUC's recent social care paper on my laptop, I found the above reports had been issued over the last few years. These underline the care crisis, and reveal the devastating affect on local councils of the cuts in funding and the enormous extra pressure on health and care services by the covid pandemic.

I have not had the chance to read these, but according to their titles, the TUC has now reached the point where it is saying to social care workers — you too can have a strategy. We talk about OUR NHS, and we support the NHS staff standing up for their jjobs, their wages and the NHS itself. So why not support OUR CARE SERVICE and the people who deliver it?

I suggest that some of us study this latest TUC paper, and write a report for our newsletter to help take forward a strategy for our care workers.