

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

October/November Newsletter

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WINTER FUEL PAYMENT SCANDAL:

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM GET READY TO JOIN MASS PROTEST LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT



The protest outside Islington Town Hall

Thank you *Islington Tribune* for putting us on your front page!

In the 20 September issue our banner and your report by Isabel Loubser was there for all your readers to see that Islington Pensioners Forum is: "THE VOICE OF ISLINGTON'S OLDER COMMUNITY!"

That's why we chose to make clear on our banner that we are opposed to means testing.

For all their working life, men and women and the employers pay into the National Insurance fund, and this entitles them to the state pension when they reach retirement age, an also other allowances

agreed by Parliament, like the Triple Lock annual state pension increase, the Winter Fuel Allowance, and the free bus pass (in London the "Freedom Pass").

So, when we see that some pensioners, who have also paid in for a private pension during their working lives, are being denied the Winter Fuel Allowance, we prick up our ears! Is this government planning further means testing?

That "other" pension does not mean that those which receive one are rich. Far from it Nowadays the private and work-related, final salary pensions have greatly diminished and women are often the ones on a low income being out of work looking after children and then frail elderly relatives. Age UK reports that 2.5 million pensioners will lose the Winter Fuel Allowance ... so it's "heat or eat".

In the *Tribune* article Jeremy Corbyn, Independent MP for Islington North, and our Forum's President, poses just that question. He says he believes in the "principle of universalism".

He adds "a universal system of welfare reduces the stigma attached to those who rely on it, and removes barriers for those who find it difficult to apply, What next for means testing? The state pension? The NHS?"

In the final stages of its government, the Tory Party cut the sum paid in by workers for National Insurance and dressed it up as a wage increase. But we all rely on National Insurance payments for our state pension, so was this cut in NI payments a warning of things to come? Will this

government follow the cut in Winter Fuel Allowance with adverse changes in the state pension system?

That is why being the VOICE OF ISLINGTON'S OLDER COMMUNITY is important and why being a part of the NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION (NPC) is important as well.

We are asking our members to join pensioners from other parts of the country on 7th October for the NPC Rally and Lobby of Parliament (see box below for arrangements for members to meeting and travel together.

**National Pensioners
Convention Lobby of
Parliament: Room10**

**Meet at Highbury & Islington
Station 12.45 pm.**

**(travel to Vauxhall the take 77 or
87 bus)**

Monday 7th October 2pm to 4 pm

Assemble George V Statue
Abbingdon Street
SW1P 3JY 12.30 pm

**Statement on Parliament's Vote to
Cut Universal Winter Fuel
Payments**

**The National Pensioner's Convention
pledges to continue pressing the
government for measures to help older
people afford their energy bills**

**"It's not the end - NPC will continue to
campaign for energy bill help"**

The UK's largest campaign organisation, run for and by older people, is urging members to invite their MPs to attend the planned Lobby of Parliament on Monday, 7th October. The meeting in the House of Commons Room 4, from 2pm to 4pm will hear why the Government's decision to axe universal winter fuel payments is the latest policy to unfairly target our oldest and most vulnerable.

In a press statement by Jan Shortt, the General Secretary of the NPC states:

It is an understatement for the NPC to say that the proposal to restrict the winter fuel payment to those on pension credit came as a shock. Not only that, the speed at which it was announced after the General Election left us breathless.

So, while the NPC is disappointed, it is no surprise that Parliament voted - by 348 to 228, with 53 abstentions (52 were Labour MPs) to proceed with the government's plan and severely restrict payments to those on pension credit, and a few other entitlements. A move that was **not in the Labour Party Manifesto**, was not consulted upon, and for which no impact assessment has been delivered.

Above all, we are deeply worried by the devastating impact this decision is set to have upon millions of older people who are already struggling to make ends meet. Because make no mistake, lives will be lost as our oldest and most vulnerable turn off their heating and miss making hot meals to save the money they are losing.

Let there be no doubt, the NPC or their affiliates like the Islington Pensioners Forum will not stay quiet about this betrayal of older people who still contribute over £160 billion to the Treasury in direct taxation, VAT, volunteering, unpaid childcare and save the government around £162 billion a year in unpaid caring duties.

Every loss of life to cold-related illnesses is an avoidable loss. We know cold homes kill and we will lay the accountability for winter deaths firmly on the doorsteps of No. 10 and 11 Downing Street.

Shamefully, this attack on older people comes at a time when over £420 billion in profits are being raked in by energy suppliers when the richest 1% hold more wealth than 70% of the population. The UK economy may have a large deficit but it is still the 5th largest economy in the world.

In the 21st century to treat elderly people in this manner is unforgiveable and will not be forgotten.

*Paul Lewis - @paullewisenergy

The basic state pension - which most (9.2m) get – is going up by £6.80 a week, £353.60 a year, and the new state pension which a minority (3.4m) get - up by £8.85 a week or £460.20 a year. So, it is wrong to say state pension will rise by £460 a year - most will not get that.'

Pension Credit Concerns???

Islington Councils Income Maximisation team will help. The team will assist by making the claim on your behalf if needed. If you are concerned in any way

Telephone 020 7527 8600 Mon-Fri 9.30- 4.30

E-mail Claimit@islington.gov.uk

Website [Islington Council Universal Credit page](#)

Friendly positive guidance and assistance

“PROFITS”

The god that callous energy company managers worship.

The following truly appalling figures were reported on LBC this week.

British Gas: profits up 10 times over in the last year - £751 million

BP: in the first 3 months of this year £4 billion profit

Shell: £22 billion profit

And the government looks at those figures and says “let’s leave that aside – where are we going to recoup some money”?

Answer:

From the nations’ pensioners!



“I’ve crunched the numbers in your retirement account. It’s time to figure out who will be wearing the mask and who will be driving the getaway car.”

Winter Fuel Allowance Hell Continues:

In his article in the Radio Times Money column, Paul Lewis reports that Rachel Reeves has taken £4 billion from people over the age of 66.

The winter fuel payment of £200 (£300 if over 80) paid to everyone over a certain age since 1997, will now only be paid to around 1.5 million households who get pension credit and other means-tested benefits.

That will take it away from around 10 million pensioners. And the £300 cost of living payment added to the winter fuel payment for the past two winters will not continue. So even households still entitled to winter fuel payments will get £300 less than previously. The chancellor says she needs to save money to fill the black hole in the UK finances left by the previous government.

Single people or couples who receive pension credit or couples where one is aged 66 or over but the other is under 66. They are not entitled to pension credit but

will qualify if the younger one gets universal credit, income support or means-tested job seekers allowance.

To qualify this year for winter fuel payment, people must have been born before 23/9/58 and receive or be entitled to pension credit.



More than 600,000 people entitled to pension credit do not claim it. The income levels to qualify are as follows:

- Reached state pension age before April 2016
- Single income below £260.68 per week
- Couple income below £380.55 per week
- Reached state pension age 6th April 2016 or later
- Single income below £218.15 per week
- Couple income below £332.95 per week

Pension Credit could give you extra money if you are on a low income. You might get extra help if you are a carer or severely disabled. Pension Credit is separate from your State Pension. You can get Pension Credit even if you have other income, savings or own your own home.

Apply online: <https://apply-for-pension-credit.service.gov.uk>

Apply by phone: **0800 99 1234**

FILM CLUB

Held on the last Wednesday of the month at the IPF Hall (address on front page)

The October (29th) film is **The Kite Runner** – follows the journey of Amir, a young boy from Kabul, and is set against the tumultuous background of Afghanistan's history from the fall through the rise of the Taliban

Film 12.30 pm followed by lunch at 2.30 pm: £5



REPORT OF THE ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM AT THE TOWN HALL 19TH SEPTEMBER 2024

Frances Bradley (assistant secretary) chaired the meeting as the most senior officer present.

The September speak was Mike Higgins, who gave an insightful talk on disability rights, shining a light on the ways disability is perceived by able-bodied people and society in general, and how that impacts on the ability of people with disabilities to integrate into ordinary daily life.

Mike highlighted the difference between the medical model and the social model. The medical model aims to fix problems, making disabled person feel there is something wrong with them that needs fixing. Or that they are vulnerable and must rely on others to do things for them. By contrast, the social model asks "What in the way society is organised disables us, and how can this problem with society be overcome?". A typical answer is to reduce physical obstacles that restrict access, a difficulty that unites wheelchair users and babies in buggies. The social model was developed by the Disabled People's Movement in London. Mike said Manchester has benefitted from a strong social approach, making streets by far the most accessible in the UK and that this illustrates the role local councils can play at helping everyone to participate in "normal" everyday society.

Mike stressed that a disability should never define you, or what you need. Media portrayals are based on the medical model, presenting people as either heroes or tragic figures. The Equality Act (2010) is also based on the medical model. Challenging the medical model, there is an annual Disability History month, which this year is 14th November to 12th December. Also the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation works to empower individuals and campaign for the removal of barriers of all types. Mike finished on a positive note, saying that the social model is gaining traction and has already had a very positive influence.

It was noted that October is Black History Month

After the meeting pensioners gathered outside the Town Hall with a banner protesting again the winter fuel payment. The demo was reported on the front page of the Islington Tribune, with a photo and quotes from Dot, Bronwen and Frances (see front page of the newsletter).

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

Officers:

Bob Collins: Chair
Luke Daniels: Vice Chair
Elaine Durack: Secretary
Frances Bradley: Asst. Secretary
Mike Sanderson: Treasurer
David Milner: Members List

Committee Members:

Dot Gibson
Annette Thomas
David Milner
Margaret Diffy
Alan McDonald
Philip Richards
Cornelius McAfee
Jan Pollock
Pam Zinkin
Irma Gomez

Delegates for NPC London Region

Elaine Durack
Frances Bradley

Staff:

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

Committee Meetings on the first Monday of the month at 10.30am at the IPF hall

Forum Meetings on the third Thursday on the month at 10.30 am in the Town Hall



Islington North People's Forum

What a great event. Wonderful to see our community come together to discuss and organise. Thanks to Jeremy Corbyn and team for putting this together. We look forward to the next one.



DAY TRIP TO EASTBOURNE!

Oh what a lovely day we had in Eastbourne. A full coach; the weather was beautiful; the fish and chips were excellent; a lovely stroll along the seafront; a little walk down the pier; followed by ice cream and doughnuts – what a treat!



THE ANNUAL GARDEN PARTY



We had a beautiful sunny day. Miss Julie provided the music. Our lovely Mayor danced with party-goers, who were encouraged by Anna (one of Healthy Generation's dance and exercise teachers) to "get up on the dance floor and thrown some shapes"! Watch out Strictly – you have competition!

A big thank you to IPF members and residents of the Highbury Views who **donated** cakes.