

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community

DECEMBER/JANUARY Newsletter

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Dear Newsletter Reader

We at the Islington Pensioners Forum hope you enjoy reading our Newsletter. We always aim to give you interesting and informative articles about issues that affect older people. We strongly campaign on your behalf about issues such as state pensions, winter fuel allowance, digital exclusion of pensioners, lack of toilet facilities in the borough. As well as informing you of about events and outings like day trips to the seaside, film afternoons, canal trips, visits to gardens centres, games afternoons.

As you know, we are a charity and rely on grants from Islington Council and subscription fees. Our Newsletter costs a lot of money to produce, photocopy and send out. Therefore, can we please ask you to ensure that you pay your membership subscription fee of £10 per annum. This works out at only 83p per month! Cheap at half the price!

It is very important that the IPF receives these fees to keep going. So, if you haven't paid your £10, please fill in the mandate on the last page or send a cheque to the above address. Our future depends on your continuing membership and support

Many thanks, Elaine Durack (Secretary)



Defending the rights of pensioners



Reparation is for Everyone



Black History Month came to a close with Prime Minister Starmer insisting that Reparations for transatlantic slavery were not on the agenda for the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Samoa. His attempts to stifle discussion on reparations backfired with the meeting ending with a declaration “the time has come for a meaningful, truthful and respectful conversation towards forging a future based on equity”. Successive British governments have refused to even acknowledge the request for a conversation about restorative justice from Caribbean governments. But the pressure for talks is mounting and it is hard to see how the government can keep refusing to have that “conversation” with public opinion for information on the “slave trade” growing.

It was reported in The Guardian that 53% of the population believe “that a permanent display about Britain’s role in the trade of enslaved African people would be appropriate while two thirds believe the British Museum has a role in educating the public about the UK’s history in the slave trade”. There is much more awareness of the issue now than 30 years ago when the late Bernie Grant MP for Tottenham tabled a House of Commons motion based on the Abuja Proclamation at the First Pan-African Conference on Reparations, calling on the international community “to recognise that the unprecedented moral debt owed to African people has yet to be paid”, urging the countries enriched by enslavement and colonisation to acknowledge “the continuing painful economic and personal consequences of the exploitation of Africa and Africans in the diaspora and the racism it has generated”. Among 63 supporting Labour MP signatories in May 1993 were Tony Benn and Jeremy Corbyn. At the Abuja conference, Lord Tony Gifford KC spoke on “The legal basis of the claim for reparations”, and raised the issue in a debate in the House of Lords in March 1996.

Black History is for everyone, and we need to be reminded that The Slavery Abolition Act 1833 by the British Parliament enabled slave owners to be paid £20 million, while the formerly enslaved received not a penny. What an injustice! A crime was committed – millions of Africans were kidnapped from their homeland, trafficked and brutally worked to death in the Americas for profit. Criminals should not benefit from their wrongdoing and laws have been instituted enabling the seizure of the profits of crime.

Education is key to defeating racism, and reparations are key to the fight to end racism, It is a fight for both black and white, to prevent racism continuing to haunt us

in miscarriages of justice, such as the “Windrush Scandal”. The Church of England and some of the descendants who have benefited from enslavement have begun to take steps, showing the way by offering apology and paying some reparation. It’s time for Europeans to follow suit.

Luke Daniels

President Caribbean Labour Solidarity
Vice-Chair Islington Pensioners Forum



Assisted Dying Debate.



There are many strong held views on both sides of the debate. We outline here some of the key arguments who both support and oppose Assisted Dying. These are not meant to be comprehensive and people may have other reasons for their views. Like the British Medical Association, the IPF takes a neutral view.

Those who oppose Assisted Dying often use the following arguments:

1. Assisted Dying law, however well intended, would alter society’s attitude towards the elderly, seriously ill and disabled, and send the subliminal message that assisted dying is an option they “ought” to consider.
2. So-called “safeguards” are simply statements of what should happen in an ideal world. They do not reflect the real-world stresses of clinical practice, terminal illness and family dynamics. It is impossible to ensure that decisions are truly voluntary, and that any coercion or family pressure is detected.
3. For most patients, high-quality palliative care can effectively alleviate distressing symptoms associated with the dying process.. We should be calling for universal access to high quality palliative care rather than legalising assisted dying.
4. The role of doctors is to support patients to live as well and as comfortably as possible until they die, not deliberately bring about their deaths.
5. Some patients (particularly those who are elderly, disabled or see themselves as a “burden”) already feel that their lives are undervalued and would fear that

health professionals will simply “give up” their efforts to relieve distress, seeing death as an easy solution.

6. Once the principle of assisted dying has become accepted, the process becomes normalised and it becomes easier to accept wider eligibility criteria through the use of anti-discrimination legislation.

And those who support assisted dying may use the following arguments.

1. Even with access to specialist palliative care, some dying people will still experience severe, unbearable physical or emotional distress that cannot be relieved.
2. Assisted dying is a legal option for over 150 million people around the world. In jurisdictions where it is lawful, there are eligibility criteria, safeguards and regulations in place to protect patients.
3. The guidance for end of life practices – such as withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment – already contains safeguards to ensure decisions are voluntarily made. There is no reason why these safeguards could not be used effectively in assisted dying legislation.
4. UK citizens travel to Switzerland to facilities like Dignitas, to avail themselves of assisted dying, assuming they have a funds. Anyone who provides assistance – doctors, family or friends – is breaking the law.
5. Some people, knowing that they are dying, want to be able to exercise their autonomy and determine for themselves when and how they die, but need medical advice and support to achieve this. Legislation would contain a conscientious objection clause to protect those healthcare professionals who did not want to participate.

Thanks to the BMA for this article.

The Assisted Dying Bill

Eligible: Adults with terminal illness who are expected to die within 6 months will be eligible. They must have mental capacity to make a choice and express a “clear, settled and formed” wish, free from coercion or pressure. The Bill excludes disability and mental illness as eligibility criteria.

Process: The person must make 2 separate declarations of their wishes, which must be signed and witnessed. They can change their mind at any time. Two independent doctors must be satisfied that the person is eligible, and if necessary, consult a specialist or expert in mental capacity. The application will then be heard by a High Court Judge. The assisted death cannot take place for a further 14 days – unless the person’s death is imminent. Life-ending medication must be self-administered by the patient. It cannot be administered by a doctor or anyone else. It will be illegal to coerce or pressure somebody to choose assisted death – punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

The Bill, which was debated on 29th November did get through. However there is a long way to go before it becomes law – going through both the Commons and the Lords.

□ Mac's Opinion: It's all in a name!



Politicians are a funny bunch, from the rumbustious John Prescott who earned the nickname 'Two Jags' to the eccentric Jacob Rees-Mogg whose sobriquet is 'Lord Snooty'. Each sobriquet tells us something about the character of the person. In America, Abraham Lincoln, the Republican President who abolished Slavery, was known as 'Honest Abe' for his down to earth, straightforward character. Bill Clinton, two terms Democratic President, was known as 'Slick Willie' for his congenial and slippery relationship with truth.

Let me take you down memory lane a little ways. Margaret Hilda Thatcher abolished milk for 7-11 year olds and was given the sobriquet 'Milk Snatcher!'. Funnily enough the former Headteacher, Edward Short, had abolished milk for 18-11 year olds under Labour and that went unnoticed. Between you and me the kids generally hated the warm and congealed beverage - not me though, I'm still a stalwart of the 'Drinka Pinta Milka Day' generation. Good old Cows' milk not squashed oats, nuts or beans.

'Teflon Tony', 'Bambi' or 'Bliar' you can take your pick of the nicknames our youngest Prime Minister, Tony Blair, got, none I must hasten to add for forcing our children to stay on at school until they are 18 and lumbering them with enormous debts for devalued University Education. Before 1998, full-time students in England could attend public universities for free. The Education Act 1962 required Local Education Authorities to pay tuition fees and provide a maintenance grant for living costs. This effectively resulted in free higher education. As a married Hospital Porter, if it wasn't for the maintenance grant I would never have managed to qualify as a teacher and have had a lively, enjoyable and varied career. My youngest son, a recent Graduate from Bristol University, has a debt the size of a small mortgage!

Well now we come to Sir Keir Starmer. Tony Benn renounced his title, Viscount Stansgate, and was a campaigning and well-loved Labour politician.

I find it odd that the Conservative Party has had four women leaders and also leaders drawn from the ethnic minorities, yet Labour has been less diverse. Surely our leader, who flaunts his antiquated title, deserves a sobriquet for penalising the pensioners by taking away their winter fuel allowance. This after a Labour report had suggested 4000 lives could be lost by the withdrawal of the allowance. I am open to suggestions, I've already been given some. 'Keir Starmer Granny Harmer' scans quite well but Granddads and the single are also consigned to fuel poverty. 'Keir Starmer the Elder Harmer' is more inclusive.

A modicum of good news North of the Border! Social Justice Secretary Shirley-Anne Somerville has announced that all pensioners in Scotland will receive a winter fuel payment in 2025/26. The Scottish Government is presenting a bill that if passed, is expected to come into force by next winter and will help the estimated 900,000 people north of the border who were cut off from accessing the winter fuel payment which used to be universal. Under the plans, those in receipt of pension credit or other benefits will receive a £200 or £300 payment, depending on their age. All other pensioners will receive a reduced payment of £100.

'Cur' Keir Starmer should hide his head in shame at this brutal measure: condemning the nation's elder citizens to fuel poverty.

Cornelius McAfee
IPF Committee

Mental Health Speaker for our April Forum

When people have a physical health emergency they know they can go to A&E. When people have a mental health emergency, they can go voluntarily to a Mental Health A&E, but - if they have been sectioned for their safety or the safety of others under section 136 of the Mental Health Act - they have no choice but to be taken by the police to the Health place of Safety. In Islington, this is at Highgate West.

The Head Nurse for Islington's Health place of Safety has been invited to speak at our April Forum meeting, to lift the lid on what happens there



Between 2015 and 2019 the Government of India built over 110 million toilets to ensure that the citizens of India, the most populous country in the world, had access to clean sanitation facilities. Islington Council please take note. My most recent audit of our public lavatories shows that one new automated toilet is functioning, one temporary toilet is functioning and of course the attended toilet in White Conduit Street off Chapel Street is functioning. This in a borough with a population of a quarter of a million. Add to the tens of thousands of workers, students and visitors who arrive daily and who should have welcoming and clean facilities. Since the establishment of our campaigning group, Loos for Islington, in October 2022, we have presented to the London Assembly among other public forums and have had local and national media coverage. Recently we joined with 13 other local and national organisations by the closed toilets in Broadwick Street, Soho for World Toilet day.

Remember the Victorian Loos? Multi Booth, polished mahogany doors, gleaming copper piping, clean ceramics, the whiff of dettol and an attendant to maintain standards. In one of our meetings with the council we were told that the defunct automated loos were old. I pointed out that they were only 20 years old and the functioning Victorian Loos that were closed were over a century old! Unmaintained automated loos are prey to a variety of anti-social behaviours. In January 2023 the Council in a letter to the Tribune said within two years they would replace the 'old' automated loos. It is very unlikely the deadline will be met.

The one new automated Loo is at Newington Green. It is well worth a visit and since September has had over 7000 satisfied customers. That means thousands of people are no longer sprinkling on the shrubbery where the statue of Mary Wollstonecraft stands proud. Remember, dogs can urinate almost anywhere but a needy human would be fined and humiliated if caught. I don't wish to be churlish but automated loos are only single use, are prey to anti-social behaviour, can have mechanical and electronic difficulties and deprive someone of a job. The previous automated loos became broken, unhygienic and filthy. We have campaigned for the Council to engage with Islingtonians to see what we need and where we need it. We hope to

have a full debate in Council about what the people of Islington need. We don't want people reluctant to go out and take part in life because of fears about the lack of clean available facilities.



HELP AND ADVICE ON ADULT ABUSE

What is adult abuse?

Adult abuse is when someone hurts an adult at risk.

There are many different types of abuse: some examples are:

- **Physical**
- **Neglect**
- **Sexual**
- **Discriminatory**
- **Emotional**
- **Financial**
- **Domestic abuse**
- **Modern slavery**
- **Self neglect**

Lots of different people may abuse adults at risk; some examples are:

- **Friends and family**
- **Professionals and volunteers**
- **Strangers who may “groom” vulnerable adults for abuse.**

Who are at risk?

People who need more help than others to stay safe. They are people who might need help to live a normal life. They are:

- **With disabilities**
- **With mental health problems**
- **Who are ill for a long time**
- **Who are old**

What are the signs of abuse?

There are many signs of abuse. For example, when the person:

- **Looks dirty or is not dressed properly**
- **Has an injury that is difficult to explain**
- **Seems frightened around certain people**
- **Seems unusually down or withdrawn**
- **Finds money missing**

Even if you are not sure whether these signs mean abuse, you should still report them to Adult Social Services

What should I do?

If you are worried about an adult at risk in Islington please contact Adult Social Services. You can report your concern anonymously but please give as much information as possible so they can follow it up.

Adult Social Services Access Team

Telephone: 0207 527 2299

Email: access.service@islington.gov.uk

You can also contact the

Community Safety Unit

Which is part of the police
Telephone 0207 410 0174

What happens next?

They will look into your concerns and where necessary, work with the adult at risk to put a plan in place that helps keep them safe,



January Outings

There are two outings being put together especially for IPF members in January.

- The British Library exhibition Medieval Women and Power + workshop.

Medieval Women and Power Exhibition

The British Library's current exhibition highlights the important roles women played in medieval life, using their own words to give insight into how they shaped society, culture, politics and religion. It reveals how women worked as labourers, business owners, artisans, and skilled medical practitioners at a time when healthcare was largely informal.

Women authors wrote influential works in poetry, philosophy, history and instruction, while royal and some aristocratic women adopted key political roles, despite living in a male-dominated world.

This exhibition offers a fascinating glimpse into the power and impact women had in medieval times.

- A 1.5hr poster making workshop at the Cubitt Gallery, Angel Mews. Dates yet to be confirmed, so keep an eye on IPF's website for details for when and where to meet. <http://www.islingtonpensionersforum.org/>



Future Forum speakers for 2025

16 January ~ Assisted Dying: Dr Yannis

20 February ~ Safeguarding Adults: Rachel Adelson-Kettle (Islington Council)

20 March ~ Climate Crisis/Green News: Caroline Russell/Benali Hamdichi (Green Party Councillors, Islington) and Anna Hyde (Islington Climate Centre)

17 April ~ Islington Health Place of Safety: Denisha Palmer (Highgate West [mental health hospital])



ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

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Frances Bradley: Asst. Secretary
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Lydia Batchelor: Outings/events organiser

Committee Members:

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

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 PENSIONERS FORUM
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

PENSIONERS CAMPAIGNING FOR PENSIONERS

JOIN US TODAY!

All you have to join is to fill out the form and pay a small yearly fee and you are a member! We will send you our regular newsletter keeping you up to date with issues that affect you and give you the opportunity to join us at all the social events we organise - day trips to interesting places, our fund-raising events, and film club.

Membership is just £10 per year. We don't wish to exclude anyone, so for those who may find it difficult to afford the membership fee, just contact us. Of course, if you can afford more – please do – as this helps us fund the newsletter and events.!

Come along to Islington Town Hall on the 3rd Thursday of every month between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm. and hear our speakers and give your opinions!

www.islingtonpensionersforum.org

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