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***NEWS – Immediate Release***

NPC Campaign for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing

**MPs and Peers join NPC at Westminster event to call for an older people’s champion**

**Politicians from all parties backed the NPC’s call for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing at a special briefing yesterday** (Mon, 17th) **in Westminster.**

MPs and Peers attended the drop-in event in Parliament’s Attlee Suite to find out more about our campaign to create an independent Commissioner in England to be a voice for older people’s issues.

More than 75 charities and organisations have now signed our Consensus Statement with Independent Age, Ageing Better, and Age UK to seek better representation for older people across government-policy making.

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They are backed by a number of older celebrities in a special video by national treasures such as DJ Tony Blackburn, World Cup hero Sir Geoff Hurst, actor Don Warrington, former Strictly Come Dancing judge Arlene Phillips and chef Rustie Lee. (see their comments below)

MPs from all parties attended the drop-in event, including former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith, former Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron, long-term Labour member Virendra Sharma, and Peer Lord George Foulkes.

The majority backed the proposal for a Commissioner, much as they have in Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Speaking in support, South Shields MP Emma Lewell-Buck said**: “"Our population is ageing and the Government is letting them down. The crises in social care, the NHS, and cost of living is hitting older people hard.

Having a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing to champion them would ensure those who feel let down have a voice and an advocate pressing for, and achieving, change."

**NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt said:** “It was extremely positive to see a mix of MPs from all parties attending the drop-in. It demonstrates the need to move our campaign forward for a Commissioner for Older People & Ageing in England. This role will ensure that older people are no longer invisible, have a strategic contribution to make to the future of our country, and are respected and valued for their lived experiences.”

**Jan spoke to a number of politicians and stakeholder supporters throughout the afternoon. She said:** “The conversations were animated, and a variety of questions were put to us. Mainly around the cost and the value of independence. My own personal conversation with Conservative grandee Sir Ian Duncan Smith brings the hope that local councils can identify those in their population who would be entitled to Pension Credit without having to go through the laborious application process. We hope he is successful.”

Baron Foulkes of Cumnock said: “It was a successful occasion, but this is only the beginning. A lot more needs to be done if we are to make progress.

In particular we need to determine who the relevant Ministers are (for establishing Commissioners) in both England and Scotland.”

The NPC thanks members and officers who came along to support the campaign, including Ellen Lebethe, Barry Todman, Ian Millington, Joel Kosminsky, Ian Millington, and NPC Wales chair Dereck Roberts. Dereck came to discuss the positive impact Welsh Older People’s Commissioner Helena Herklots is having. He also spoke personally with Ian Duncan Smith.

Currently 11 million people in England are aged 65 or over. In less than 20 years, over 17 million (1 in 4) people will be over 65. If appointed, a Commissioner would ensure that the long-term needs of people in later life and the challenges faced by the population as they age are considered in policy and practice across all government departments.

The call is also backed by the public. In a recent YouGov poll commissioned by Independent Age, nine in ten (89%) of people aged 65 and over said they would support the creation of a commissioner2.

The growth in pensioner poverty, the cost of living crisis, health and social care, and pensioners’ rights and inclusion - digital, social and economic – are all concerns that a Commissioner could flag to government and policy leaders.

**Tony Blackburn, 80, holds the title for being the longest serving radio DJ and hosts a Sunday show on BBC Radio 2. He said:**

“I personally am aware that in this country there is ageism. I luckily haven't come up against it, although I think sometimes it's forgotten that older people bring experience.

“Recently with the cost-of-living crisis and the price of electricity in particular, I've been really moved by watching the news and seeing older people not being able to heat their houses.

“Older people sitting there with blankets around themselves. It really, really shouldn't be like that in this country, there should be much more help. Something's got to be done about it.”

**Sir Geoff Hurst, 81, who scored the winning goal in the 1966 World Cup and has just finished ‘an audience with’ theatre tour, said:**

“I’m supporting the call for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing because from what I've seen and heard over the last few months, the impact of the cost of living is absolutely disastrous for older people. I hear stories of people eating just one meal a day or not having the heating on in their homes. These things are happening every day and it's absolutely unbelievably difficult for older people to survive under these circumstances.”

**Rustie Lee, 73, who can regularly be seen cooking up Caribbean dishes on TV, said:**

“It’s so important for everyone who is struggling at the moment to know that someone is looking out for them. It’s shocking that for so many older people in the UK a hot meal has become an unaffordable luxury. We all deserve the basics and more as we age, which is why I’m happy to support the call for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing.”

**To join our call for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing in England, visit:** [**https://www.independentage.org/COPA**](https://www.independentage.org/COPA)

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1. Office for National Statistics. National population projections: 2020-based interim. Available at: [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2020basedinterim#changing-age-structure](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ons.gov.uk%2Fpeoplepopulationandcommunity%2Fpopulationandmigration%2Fpopulationprojections%2Fbulletins%2Fnationalpopulationprojections%2F2020basedinterim%23changing-age-structure&data=05%7C01%7CAmy.Dodge%40independentage.org%7C8299868bdfbd4d5424be08db2626e4f1%7C61191ab0dcb3464cbaf495ae4e245da4%7C0%7C0%7C638145720858649481%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Tpm2j6fOxtQBtoblyYK5Kzmp%2B3pHa8HRvpar%2B00gG1k%3D&reserved=0)

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***\*The National Pensioners Convention*** *was set up in 1979 to champion the rights and welfare of the UK’s older people. It now represents more than 1.5 million people in over 1,000 different organisations across the UK and holds an Annual Convention – a pensioners’ parliament - to debate issues affecting older people****.*** [***www.npcuk.org***](http://www.npcuk.org)