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## FIGHT GOES ON OVER STANDARDS OF CARE

The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) continues to campaign on the dire need for better social care. The government's decision to allow local authorities to increase council tax in order to fund social care has been described by the NPC as “a drop in the ocean.” The announcement by ministers came after weeks of pressure following the Chancellor’s failure to offer any additional funding in his Autumn Statement. Under the revised plans published in the middle of December, councils will be able to raise an extra 3% from their local population for the next two years. However, in 2016 when local authorities were able to raise an additional 2% through the so-called “council tax precept”, the measure raised just £360m out of a possible £2bn and poorer areas, where income from council tax was lowest, found themselves in a postcode lottery. Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: “Given that council spending on care has fallen by 9% in real terms over the past five years because of a £4.6bn cut to funding from central government, this latest announcement is just a drop in the ocean.”

Services for older people have been particularly badly hit, as the number of people getting help with care from their council fell by 26% to 850,000 in the four years to 2014. More than 1.2m people with care needs now receive no formal or informal help - close to a 50% rise since 2010. Care firms, which provide the services for councils, are pulling out of home care contracts and the number of care home and nursing home places has fallen by 1,500 in the past six years to 16,600. Regulators have warned that these cuts add to pressures in the NHS with A&E units said to be bearing the brunt. Even Brits living in Europe are now being recruited to fly back for two weeks at a time to work as home carers, as the system shows all the signs of collapsing.

However, the crisis in social care is allowing some to use it as another way of attacking older people. The latest comes from NHS chief Simon Stevens who has told MPs that the triple lock on pensions and the free bus pass should be scrapped to pay for care services. It's our concern that the head of the NHS doesn't seem to realise the value of the bus pass in keeping people mobile and active, reducing stress, isolation and loneliness thus relieving pressure on health and care services.

“More of the same simply won't work, and it's time we had a combined National Health and Social Care Service that is funded by us all through general taxation,” said Ms Gibson. The issue now has national prominence as the media has been highlighting the issue through the lack of care available for patients ready to leave hospital. The NPC was making the case for better social care as part of Dignity Action Day on 1 February through the distribution of leaflets and obtaining signatures from local representatives to support their Dignity Code and will highlight the issue at the Health Campaigns Together march and rally in central London on 4 March.

See [healthcampaignstogether.com](http://healthcampaignstogether.com) for details of this and [npcuk.org](http://npcuk.org) to sign up your general support.

Christopher J. Brooks, Chair,  
Suffolk, and Anglia Region,  
Pensioner Associations.