**GENERAL SECRETARY REPORT**

**EC 25 NOVEMBER 2021**

**10.30 am ON ZOOM**

My apologies for being unable to attend this meeting. Please forward questions/comments by email and I will respond as soon as I am able.

1. **Office/Staff:**

The office will be closed for the Christmas period as follows:

Closes: end of working day 23 December 2021

Re-open: 4 January 2022

I am sure that everyone will wish to thank Bev, Jonathan and Mohammad for their hard work under difficult circumstances this year.

We wish you all the compliments of the season and hope for a much better 2022.

1. **NHS Reform Bill:**

A lot of lobbying has been going on with MPs and also in the House of Lords. Cross party opposition is growing against the Bill, but there is a huge majority in the House of Commons.

The NPC has made a written submission to the Public Bills Committee highlighting our concerns, raising questions and offering resolutions. The work of the Committee will end at the beginning of November (may be sooner) and a report sent to the Cabinet.

Two days into receiving verbal evidence, the Committee agreed that **"individuals with significant interests in private healthcare" should not be allowed to sit on NHS boards. This is a big concession but we need more.**

**On 26th October there was a demonstration in Westminster called by the We Own It! consortium of health campaigners/organisations. The NPC logo was on the main banner and members of Lambeth Pensioners Action Group attended.**

The Public Bills Committee has not accepted many amendments (not unexpected). The Bill is due its third reading shortly before going to the House of Lords. We will make sure we update our information to the House of Lords before the Bill reaches them for debate.

1. **NHS Digital Data:**

There still has been no communication from government departments to patients in regard to the intention to collect data; how that will be done; who has access to data and the security of information.

In the meantime, opting out is still the safest way to protect your data. Currently, over 3 million patients have opted out. Those who opted out previously are not part of those figures. As and when we are satisfied the criteria have been met to our satisfaction, patients can opt in if they so wish. The legal case is still in the background and will be used at the appropriate time if necessary.

A new body has just been launched – Patient Coalition for AI, Data and Digital Tech in Health. Its remit is:

* Examining inequalities – prioritise access to digital health
* Sharing best patient-centric practice in digital health
* Ensuring the patient perspective is embedded in policy and government strategies
* Promoting virtual self-referral and clinician communication support

We will contact them and ask critical questions around those with no digital access and their right to access health professionals and care.

1. **Triple Lock:**

NPC lobbied the House of Lords creating the longest debate on the triple lock so far with amendments being passed that would protect the triple lock or allow some form of ‘average’ increase higher than that proposed by government.

On Monday 15 November, the Social Security (Update) Bill was debated in the House of Commons. The record of that debate has been circulated and we want to thank everyone who wrote/spoke to; tweeted or face-booked their MP. It is clear a lot of pressure has been put on MPs from their constituents. The vote was slightly better than expected with the Bill being referred back to the House of Lords. We will lobby again and see what their intention is.

In the meantime, please continue to lobby your MP – particularly if you have one from the Conservative Party – we still need to change minds.

The President and myself have a meeting with Frances O’Grady and Jack Jones on 14 December where the major discussion will be around pensions issues. Following the lead of Lord Davies who spoke eloquently about the NPC and our policies, we want to get a feel from the TUC on how we can add a lot more voices to our campaign.

1. **Social Care:**

The Health & Social Care Working Party have written a document brief on ‘Fixing Care’ which shows that nothing much changes under the new system when it is implemented in 2023. The ‘integration’ of care into the 42 Integrated Care Services/Boards will see no new funding, but a restricted budget for each of the 42 areas. Local services will not be able to cover the needs of the population. This briefing is available on the NPC website

1. **Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC):**

The President and myself are visiting Yarnfield on 9 December to look at risk assessing the venue in order to ensure that delegates are as safe as possible. We also need to check last minute details of the conference with the venue.

1. **Review of NPC:**

It was agreed with Regional Secretaries that a questionnaire will be sent to them in December to enable all regional affiliates to participate in letting us know their experiences of lockdowns; how we can improve communication, and the barriers to participation. The closing date will be in April to allow contact with those groups who have not been able to meet at all during the last 18 months.

1. **Annual Convention:**

The Prince of Wales has been approached for a booking at the same time as our Annual Convention (7, 8, 9 June). They require confirmation by 10 December. I leave this in your capable hands along with officers to make an in principle decision for us to follow through nearer the time.

1. **Commissioner for Older People:**

We have been contacted by the Royal Society of Psychologists who are prepared to support our campaign and also generate more support through their contacts, families, carers etc. We are slowly adding to the list of supporters.

1. **Milk n More:**

The Royal National Institute for the Blind have met with Milk n More and managed to get them to agree to a telephone line for those not digitally connected. It seems they do not want to publicise it much and there is still the issue that Milk n More will need your bank details even though you are ordering by phone.

We will circulate the information shortly and ask for feedback from past Milk n More customers as well as those who still use them albeit with the help of family.

1. **GS Activities:**

Unfortunately, some meetings have had to be cancelled due to my unavailability, but these will be re-scheduled as soon as we can get convenient dates. However, between travel, I have:

* Attended Yorkshire/Humberside first meeting since lockdown
* Attended Merseyside Pensioners Association first meeting since lockdown
* Interviews with Daily Express, Telegraph and freelance journalists on the triple lock and pensions in general; Daily Mail on digital phones.
* Money Box programme 20 November.
1. **Future Meeting Dates:**

These are shown on the agenda. We would ask that the March meeting be set aside to enable the follow up work and staff time off after the BDC to take place.

**Jan Shortt**

**November 2021**

Thank you to everyone who has emailed, called, sent a card. Your kind thoughts are very much appreciated by our family.