



Charity No: 1043081

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

The voice of Islington's older community
May 2020 Newsletter

1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN
Telephone 0207 226 7687

Email: ipf@islingtonpensionersforum.org Website: www.islingtonpensionersforum.org
Office opens from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm Monday & Wednesday (but 'phone first)

Lockdown turns our attention to the natural world!



Blue Holly butterfly in Highbury View



Morning at Wakehurst National Trust



Squirrel on Wilderness Island, Carshalton



Heron in River Wandle Carshalton



Robin in Highbury View near Bronwen's back door



Ducks in River Wandle ignoring 2 metres rule!



Morning in Winterfold Wood

It took the lockdown to drag me into the 21st century! My sons gave me a "tablet" so that we could all keep in touch, and I am sharing with you some photos and the Pam Ayres ditty on page 2 that I have "magically" received on this, or rather through the modern technology which this entails. There is also ZOOM for meetings, exercise groups and IT classes! Love Dot

National Pensioners Convention: Soon to be published Care pamphlet

Delayed, by the non appearance of the promised Green Paper on Social Care, and then by the lockdown, this pamphlet is now being made ready for the printer. It has been preceded by years of campaigning for a National Care Service, paid for through general taxation, like the NHS, free at the point of delivery. see page five



A New Settlement For Care Services

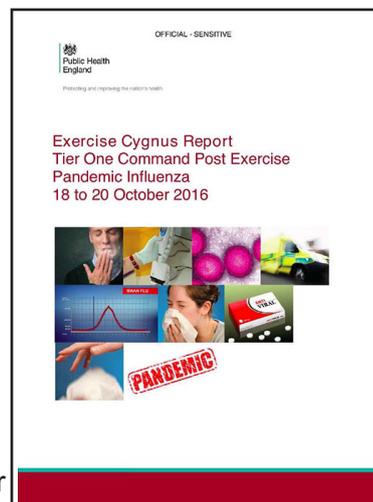
Moving Forward from the Pandemic

Marchmont Community Centre,
62 Marchmont Street,
London, WCC1N 1AB
Tel: 0207 838 7722
www.npcuk.org
Price £2



Secret Report says: Britain not adequately prepared

The government has kept the Exercise Cyngus Report secret since it was first circulated in Whitehall three years ago, and has resisted growing calls for transparency, which culminated in a legal case to force ministers to release its findings. The Guardian has now published the report: see page four



A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Dear IPF members and friends,

I hope you are all keeping safe and well. Where do we start?

Maybe with the way the government has handled this Covid-19 pandemic: No volume of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the NHS at the start of the crisis; government information most misleading and not too clear.

Then so many senior citizens dying in care homes, again the issue of no PPE and the return from hospital of patients infected with Covid-19 thus allowing the virus to spread within care homes for weeks with testing only started at the end of April.

What a kick in the teeth to the nurses, doctors and other NHS and care workers! Also it makes us scared to do the most ordinary things; it separates us from our families and friends and it is leaving many people to die alone.

And now, in the middle of this crisis, the government is considering freezing pay for frontline staff. The NHS and all front line staff from doctors to the binmen, all deserve the thanks and praise they have received. They should not be made to pay for the crisis!

There is a very clear message from Islington Council: the lockdown is not over, social distancing measures are still in place, we all need to do our bit to stop the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. That's why it's vital that we all stay at home as much as possible, and:

- *If you go outside, make sure you stay two metres from other people at all times,*
- *Do not use public transport for unnecessary travel,*
- *Wear a face covering in enclosed spaces, including shops and public transport,*
- *Continue to follow public health advice, including washing your hands regularly,*
- *Self-isolate if anyone in your household develops symptoms.*

Many journalists and political commentators say that this experience must mean that changes must be made. Well this is not new to those of us who have been campaigning for a very long time to take the profit motive out of our health and public services, to end the housing crisis, and to stand up for equality. Islington Pensioners Forum has a proud campaigning history. It didn't need a pandemic to tell us that there are deep-rooted wrongs around us. This newsletter shows that, despite the lockdown, IPF is "on the job", and we should be proud.

Best wishes, keep safe! Bob Collins IPF Chairman

When Donald Trump announced that injections with disinfectant could rid us of the virus, Pam Ayres, wrote this little ditty.

*At last, we have a cure for all!
Ailments large and ailments small,
Good health is not beyond my reach,
If I inject myself with bleach.*

*Radiant, I'll prance along,
Every trace of limescale gone,
With disinfectant as my friend,*

*Like him,
I'm clean around the bend!*

NHS surcharge is unfair

Home Secretary, Priti Patel is refusing to cut or axe the huge fees paid by foreign healthcare workers to help fund the NHS.

Just three weeks ago, having praised their "extraordinary contribution" Patel promised to "review" the controversial charges. However, we are now informed that ministers consider it to be an "important" principle that everyone coming to work in the UK contributes extra for the NHS.

Health groups had long protested the surcharge as unfair because migrants paying tax and national insurance are effectively paying twice, even before the acclaim for all health staff prompted by the pandemic.

/continued on page three

NHS MATTERS Pam Zinkin

Learn from other countries and States, such as New Zealand and Kerala (a state in India — population 38 million) that have lower mortality. Had our government been as alert as the leaders there we would not now have one of the highest number of deaths in the world.

How are you all? Like many of you I have been staying home for the past few weeks. Not too difficult since I had a heart valve replacement and a pacemaker followed by complications needing a real trial of our NHS! Thank goodness it's still there.

So after discharge it wasn't too hard to stay home. (And shopping and family able to help so far until anyone of them has to mix with others in the community). We all know what that means.

oooOooo

Last Sunday the prime minister said don't "Stay at home" "Stay alert".

Whatever does that mean in practical terms?

The government have allegedly been taking their advice and policies from 'Science'. This means from a selected (by them) group of scientists with Johnson's main adviser participating. There are some eminent scientists in the group but amazingly none with public health background or experience for what is the most important public health crisis in the last hundred years or more.

Why is public health important? The public health approach is as follows.

First identify the case person and the diagnosis of Covid 19.....TEST.....identify all contacts..... TRACE all contacts wherever they are..... and TEST.....ISOLATE and TREAT.....Trace.....TEST AND TREAT ALL THEIR CONTACTS...and support."

This will bring the "R" number down.

The "R" number is the number of people that one infected person can/does infect others. If that number is above 1, say 3, the disease will spread. If it is below 1 the disease will die out. The lower it is the faster the disease will be controlled.

For this to work well local knowledge is essential. Top

continued from page two/

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has written to the home secretary, but has received no reply. The RCN insists: "This charge must be stopped. It cannot be deferred, or paid annually, but is demanded in advance for the entire duration of an applicant's visa or residency permit. Meanwhile, nurses and junior doctors in training have starting salaries of only between £18,000 and £23,000".

down orders from remote people who don't know how local people live and interact just won't work. Apps might help (If you know how to download and use them) but they are no substitute for local neighbourly knowledge.

This is one of the areas in which we older people are important. We have a lot of local knowledge. And know how people react with each other. So we also know what data is likely to be reliable.

The government has awarded the contract for their Test and Trace trial on the Isle of Wight to the private company Serco. We have discussed the fact that there are profits to be made from illness many times in our Newsletter. I wonder how well SERCO knows the local community?

One of the most important lessons from this Covid19 outbreak is how important it is to value every member of society.

Old people like us and disabled people must be identified to show they need protection. Not to indicate they are expendable because they are going to die sooner than young people. Anyway why waste resources? Identifying and protecting vulnerable people and groups is not just right morally but also helps to control spread of the virus.

And if the data then shows that men have higher mortality rates than women, and that BAME (black Asian and multiethnic groups) also have high mortality, studying this and exploring the causes will teach us more about the virus and the social conditions in which it spreads.

Learn from other countries and States, such as New Zealand and Kerala, a state in India (population 38 million) that have lower mortality . Had our government been as alert as the leaders there we would not now have one of the highest number of deaths in the world.

The immigration health surcharge is still due to increase from £400 a year to £624 from this October and to be extended to all EU citizens from next January, when Brexit is completed.

Because it is also paid by spouses and children, the cost can reach a crippling £8,000 for a family of four on a five-year work permit, or with limited leave to remain in the UK.

This NHS surcharge is unfair and should be scrapped!

Cover-up of vital report aimed at preparing for pandemic

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/07/what-was-exercise-cygnus-and-what-did-it-find>

We now know that a secret government report, circulated in 2017 to all major government departments and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, stated as its “key learning” that “the UKs preparedness and response, in terms of its plans, policies and capability, is currently not sufficient to cope with the extreme demands of a severe pandemic that will have a nationwide impact across all sectors”.

It is a scandal and a disgrace that this report, *Exercise Cygnus*, was not only ignored, but covered up — marked as “Official - Sensitive”. It has now been published in full by *The Guardian* (although the names and email addresses of government officials have been redacted)

Its recommendations were ignored! Instead we have had ten years of austerity with government cuts to the NHS and local authorities. Politicians often tell us that it is the first duty of government to protect its people — this is interpreted as meaning the production of weapons of war. But WE see it as health and care, the environment, education and housing.

The Cygnus exercise co-ordinated 950 people, from the Department of Health ministers to teams of local emergency planners and prison officers, to test the UK’s response to a new global pandemic.

It included four dummy meetings of Cobra, the government’s emergency response system, over three days, as ministers and officials were tasked with

imagining that the UK was facing a peak of infections.

The final report recommended that a comprehensive “pandemic concept of operations” be created and that NHS England should conduct further work to prepare “surge capacity” in the health service.

It explicitly recommended that the social care system needed to be able to expand if it were to cope with a “worst case scenario pandemic”, and that money should be ringfenced to provide extra capacity and support to the NHS.

Concerns were raised about the ability of the social care system to “provide the level of support needed if the NHS implemented its proposed reverse triage plans, which would entail the movement of patients from hospitals into social care facilities”.

During the coronavirus crisis, care homes have been asked to take recovering Covid-19 patients, leading to concerns that they may spread the infection if not isolated and treated, which is not always possible in care settings.

Some say that ignoring the recommendations of this report and keeping it secret, renders the government guilty of gross negligence leading to the death of over 30,000 people, including key workers who have been left without adequate PPE (personal protection equipment).

There is an on-going crowdfunding legal case against the Department of Health and Social Care by Dr. Moose Querishi for the report’s release, but in the meantime, we thank the Guardian for bringing it into the public domain.



Coronavirus prompts 140 governments in the UN to call for respect of the rights and dignity of older people

On Monday 11th May, 140 member states represented at the United Nations issued a joint statement recognising the escalating ageism, neglect and discrimination affecting older people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The statement recognises the meaningful participation of older people in society and the importance of strengthening international and intergenerational solidarity during the crisis and the recovery process.

The press statement says that the time has come to adopt a new United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older People. It is this that the National Pensioners Convention has been calling for. In the UK where there is recognition in law of the rights of children, and of animals, but there is no legal recognition of the rights of older people.

DIVIDE AND RULE!

Threats to end state pension triple lock

So — right-wing think tanks are at it again! The Social Market Foundation says that state pensioners should pay for “the economic cost of the emergency measures” in the coronavirus crisis — i.e. pay for the anticipated government deficit by abandoning the triple lock guarantee on state pension rises.

As usual it is dressed up in WWII-type phraseology: “society is making sacrifices to protect its elderly”. . . “this spirit must be maintained when the dust settles”. . . “responding to the crisis shared fairly across the generations”. Don’t be taken in!

Future generations will be even more reliant on the state pension than their parents and grandparents. Scrapping the triple lock won’t help younger people. It will make their pensions worse in the future. They are set to work longer, pay more and receive less state pension!

Since 1980, when Mrs. Thatcher ended the link of the state pension with average earnings, over time state pensioners became worse off by around £80 a week. Gordon Brown brought in the link to the Retail Price Index (RPI) or 2.5%, whichever was higher and the Coalition government introduced the triple lock, adding average earnings and replacing RPI with the Consumer Price Index (CPI). They were presented by some as an attempt to catch up, as the UK state pension ranks fourth from bottom out of 27 European countries.

The call today for pensioners to pay for the economic crisis is an attempt at “divide and rule”. But we stand up for generations united — for decent jobs, a living wage and a living pension!



Moving Forward from the Pandemic

Announcing a new pamphlet

“Goodbye Cinderella A New Settlement for Care Services”

This pamphlet will be printed as soon as possible; it is dedicated to all those who have died in the coronavirus pandemic, and it is hoped that the NPC proposals for a new settlement for care services will be widely discussed and acted on to safeguard today’s and tomorrow’s pensioners. We will let you know as soon as it is ready for sale.

Government funding to Transport for London is a “sticking plaster”

London’s Mayor, Sadiq Khan says that Transport for London (TfL) has reached agreement with government on a funding package to allow public transport to be operated safely for the next four and a half months, but it is not the deal he wanted, and “the government is, in effect, making Londoners pay the cost for doing the right thing on Covid-19”.

The government wants fares to go up from next January, ending the four years’ fares freeze delivered after the last election. They have insisted that free travel is temporarily suspended for Freedom Pass and 60+ card holders at peak times.

Also the funding package is partly a loan; it includes adding £505 million of additional debt. This will undo the hard work put in to fix TfL’s finances over the last four years — when TfL’s operating deficit was reduced by 71%.

In the last few years London has been the only major city in western Europe that hasn’t received direct government funding to run day-to-day transport services since it was cut by the last government.

This means that TfL relies heavily on passenger fares to pay for the services, but fares income has fallen by 90% in the last two months because Londoners have done the right thing and stayed at home — so there simply isn’t enough money coming in to pay for the services.

Khan says “This deal is a sticking plaster. The old model for funding public transport in London simply does not work in this new reality — fares income will not cover the cost of running services, while so few people can safely use public transport. He explains that over the next few months a new funding model will have to be negotiated with government, and he promises to be as upfront and clear as possible with Londoners about the challenges facing the city.

WE ARE ISLINGTON

Islington Pensioners Forum Executive Committee sends our thanks to Islington Council, Council workers and all the volunteers who are ensuring that assistance is there for vulnerable people throughout the borough. We have campaigned long and hard against the austerity measures which the government imposed on local authorities since 2010, and we now demand that the government covers the costs of the important public services delivered in the coronavirus crisis.

Islington's community efforts to support residents affected by coronavirus reached a new milestone on Thursday 30 April, when the 1,000th support package was delivered through the We are Islington helpline.

It is organised in partnership with local charities, community organisations and mutual aid groups, and offers assistance to those in need with food drops, medicine and other practical support.

The landmark 1,000th delivery was made by a member of council staff to a resident who required a food parcel, and was grateful for the support.

Since the We are Islington helpline started operating on Saturday, 21 March, local volunteers and council staff – who have had to change their normal day-to-day work to help during the coronavirus crisis – have been working tirelessly to get parcels out to those in need.

All the organisations involved must ensure that proper advice is given on how to keep the volunteers and others safe.

Efforts to support the most vulnerable will continue throughout the coronavirus crisis.

If you or anyone you know needs help or support at this difficult time, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the We are Islington helpline.

- We are Islington dedicated phone line is 020 7527 8222, and is open every day, including weekends, from 9am to 5pm.

- Those with hearing or speech difficulties can use the Minicom line on 020 7527 1900, and

- residents can also email weareislington@islington.gov.uk for support.

- Anyone interested in assisting with Islington's volunteer efforts is asked to get in touch with a local organisation, go to the Voluntary Action Islington website and search "COVID19", or email volunteer@vai.org.uk.

The Islington Giving Crisis Fund, which is being run by the local charity Islington Giving, is also taking donations, with every penny received going to people who are isolated, anxious and in need of financial support during the public health crisis.

You can contact organisations directly or contact We are Islington — details above.

An urgent appeal from Richard Watts, Leader of Islington Council

You can see above the extent of Islington Council's support for our most vulnerable neighbours and we know most local councils are working along the same lines; we ask you to support Richard's appeal (below) as he leads in taking the concerns of local Councils and people to the government.

At the start of this crisis, the Tory Government told us to "spend whatever it takes" in response to the virus.

However, over two months later, we have been given only a fraction of the money we are spending and there is no sign of more on its way.

Despite ten years of austerity, where we have been forced to make £250m of savings, Islington Council has protected services for our most vulnerable residents.

If the Tory Government fails to honour its promise, they would be passing the burden onto those who need us most.

We see Ministers clap for our carers every Thursday evening, but the same Tory Ministers would be

delivering pay cuts and job losses for our key workers.

This is shameful

That's why I have been leading a national campaign to demand the Tories full fund councils' response to Coronavirus.

You may have read the story in *The Guardian*, or you may have seen my interview on ITV's *Good Morning Britain*, reiterating how difficult this situation is for councils across the country, and with social care making up half of local authority budgets, it is a dangerous situation for the Government to leave us in.

But I can't do it alone, I need your support to take the case to the Tories. Make sure you tell your family, neighbours and friends about the Tories' betrayal.

“Economic murder” followed by the pandemic already over 11,000 Covid-19 deaths in nursing homes

On page four of this newsletter there is a photograph of our demo in Whitehall in 2017 on the occasion of the national demonstration to save our NHS.

We were drawing attention to a report arising from a joint study by Oxford, Cambridge and University College London, which described the government’s NHS and social care cuts as “economic murder”. This was said to be the first time that such a report had linked increased deaths to the government’s austerity measures.

The squeeze on public spending and the drop in nurses since 2010 had put over-60s and care home residents most at risk, said the report.

Cambridge University’s Professor Lawrence King, who contributed to the study said: “Austerity does not promote growth or reduce deficits — it is bad economics. It is also a public health disaster. It is not an exaggeration to call it economic murder.”

This report was published in the same year as the government’s Cynus report (see page four) which

concluded that the UK was unprepared for a pandemic.

Between 2010 and 2014 the rise in the number of nurses rose by just 0.07% — 20 times lower than the previous decade. Over the same period funding for social care fell 1.9% every year.

The Royal College of Nursing chief (at that time Janet Davies) said: “All parts of the NHS and social care system do not have enough nurses, and vulnerable and older individuals pay the highest price.”

What was the response of government? The Department of Health spokesman said: “This study cannot be used to draw any firm conclusions about the cause of excess deaths”.

Today, there are over 11,000 covid-19 deaths in care homes and the government is belatedly putting some money into the system. But we will not forget the criminal negligence of the cuts.

Those responsible must be brought to book!

Our Secretary, Eric Hill has underlying health issues so he has been indoors 24/7 for seven weeks. Most days he writes down his thoughts and he has sent the latest for us to publish, with his best wishes to one & all.

No particular rant this morning, just facts:

- If any currently furloughed worker. refuses to go into work (when called back by their employer) because they are frightened of going into a possibly unsafe workplace, they could lose their job or have their furloughed pay stopped. This appears to be legal.

- During March as the coronavirus was claiming more and more victims, a number of local authorities instructed care homes to take in older people discharged from hospital without them being tested for the virus, or possibly confirmed as having the virus.

- If the care home manager refused, they were threatened with their uplift payment being withheld — a payment to compensate for the additional costs as a result of the virus. 40% of Covid-19 deaths are in care homes.

- In 2009 there was swineflu. It was thought there would be a high death toll, but it turned out to be just over 500. A letter accompanying a 2015/16 report on this said the government needed to prepare for a future virus as they probably wouldn’t get away with it twice.

- The report recommended testing and building up stores of PPE to reduce the number of deaths The report and its recommendations were consigned to the dustbin.

- it appears that the number of tests recorded does not reflect the number of people actually tested. A reported number of around 70,000 tests involved only just over 39,000 persons having been actually tested.

- The Chief Scientific Advisor and Chief Medical Officer knew of the possible slogan change, but were not consulted when it was actually changed from “Stay at Home” to “Stay Alert”.

Government using pandemic to assist its post-Brexit trade deal with US?

In a report in *The Guardian* (4 May) Juliette Garside and Rupert Neate tell us that doctors, campaign groups, academics and MPs are concerned that the coronavirus pandemic is being used to enable a “power grab” to transfer NHS duties to the private sector, without proper scrutiny.

In addition to SERCO being awarded the contract for the Test and Trace exercise on the Isle of Wight, it seems that Matt Hancock is accelerating the

dismantling of state healthcare and that the duty to keep the public safe was being “outsourced” to the private sector.

The journalists report that in recent weeks, ministers have used special powers to bypass normal tendering and to award a string of contracts to private companies and management consultants without open competition.

/continued on page eight

INFORMATION

Islington Pensioners Forum officers and committee 2019-2020

Chair: **Bob Collins,**

Secretary/Treasurer: **Eric Hill,**

Assistant Secretary, **Annette Thomas,**

Committee: **Frances Bradley, Luke Daniels, Dot Gibson, Irma Gomez, Eula Harrison, Joyce Herron, David Milner, Eddie Zissler, Pam Zinkin**

LOCAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD NOT BE MADE TO SHOULDER THE FINANCIAL BURDEN!

Islington Pensioners Forum Executive Committee sends our thanks to Islington Council, Council workers and all the volunteers who are ensuring that assistance is there for vulnerable people throughout the borough. We have campaigned long and hard against the austerity measures which the government imposed on local authorities since 2010, and we now demand that the government covers the costs of the important public services delivered in the coronavirus crisis.

See page 6 — the WE ARE ISLINGTON report and RICHARD WATTS' appeal, and please ask your family and friends to support this resolution. It simply isn't right that Councils, which have had their government grants cut, resulting in cuts in services, should now be made to shoulder the burden of their important public services in this pandemic.

continued from page seven/

Deloitte, KPMG, Serco, Sodexo, Mitie, Boots and the US data mining group Palantir have secured taxpayer-funded commissions to manage Covid-19 drive-in testing centres, the purchasing of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the building of Nightingale hospitals.

The Guardian has seen a letter from the Department of Health to NHS trusts instructing them to stop buying any of their own PPE and ventilators. From Monday, procurement of a list of 16 items must be handled centrally. Many of the items on the list, such as PPE, are in high demand during the pandemic, while others including CT scanners, mobile X-ray machines and ultrasounds are high-value machines that are used more widely in hospitals.

Centralising purchasing is likely to hand more responsibility to Deloitte. As well as co-ordinating Covid-19 test centres and logistics at three new "lighthouse" laboratories created to process samples, the accounting and management consultancy giant secured a contract several weeks ago to advise central government on PPE purchases. The firm said it was providing operational support for the procurement process of PPE from existing and new manufacturers, but declined to comment further.

We must ask: are these government moves to use the coronavirus crisis for further privatisation linked to its negotiations for a post-Brexit trade deal with the US?

Peter Crockett has been continuing the IT classes on line via the app — ZOOM. If you have a computer and/or have access to the internet, you could join the class.... Peter's email is.... crockettpeter@aol.com

NEW MEMBER RENEWING SUB

NAME:

ADDRESS:

.....

POST CODE:

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EMAIL:

ANNUAL SUB ENCLOSED.....£5.00

PLUS DONATION?.....

Cheque payable to: IPF Send to:

Islington Pensioners Forum,
1a Providence Court,
Providence Place, Islington N1 0RN

Or hand in at Forum meeting (see above)