**OGM - 7th Jan 2023**

**Why are key Winter Deaths Stats delayed again?

Jan Shortt, Secretary of the National Pensioners’ Convention (NPC), addressed the End Fuel Poverty Coalition street rally in London in December. “With the government under fire for failing to adequately protect our oldest and most vulnerable from cold and hunger, we are rightly suspicious of the reasons that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – which needs government sign off to release the figures – has delayed the announcement yet again.
“We are writing to the ONS as a matter of urgency to ask them why?”
In ‘20-’21 there were 63,000 excess winter deaths driven by cold and covid - up two thirds on the previous year. The NPC fears the numbers dying from cold related illness in ‘21-22’ will be much higher.
Jan said: “As the largest campaigning organisation for older people in the UK, the NPC has a vested interest in challenging the causes of such excess winter deaths. The current cost of living crisis will not impact so much on this year’s figures, but may be an indicator for the year 2023 as older people struggle with extraordinarily high heating and other costs.
“No one should be dying from cold in this day and age. We know cold homes kill, and the effect of the cost-of-living crisis which has seen the worst drop in living standards since 1956, means millions cannot afford high heating bills. Older people need to heat their homes more than most because they are often at home more, or are in ill health. This means they generally have to pay more to keep their homes warm. The current Energy Price Guarentee will see the average household on a typical fuel bill pay £2,500 per year and is set to increase from April 2023 to £3,000. The measures the government are offering are simply not enough.”
Meanwhile, increasing deficiencies in the care ‘system’ are now exacerbating everybody’s general health and well-being to the point of unnecessary premature deaths being reported by the government inspectors at CQC. There are simply not enough carers employed and organised to support the needed managed discharge of patients declared medically fit after their acute hospital treatment. Newspapers report this is causing widespread life and death situations at home, clogging up hospital beds, the ambulance service and A&E particularly as sudden spikes in covid and flu cases add to the caseload of virtually 100% bed occupancy. This winter the hospital ‘spike’ is far more deadly with nigh on 500 deaths a month predicted and these figures quite apart from the ONS usual winter deaths figures still not published for last winter!
A happy new year to all - and please take care!

Christopher Brooks, Chair,
Suffolk & Anglia Region,
Pensioners Associations NPC.**