Old Grey Matter article for EADT – Saturday 24th April 2021

Doing the Right Thing

Two concerning items of injustice against senior citizens are highlighted in the Spring edition of Campaign, the monthly newsletter of the National Pensioners’ Convention (NPC) that can be found on the NPC website www.npcuk.org

Firstly is the scandal of elderly residents to be evicted from a London Care Home. The NPC has written to the council and ministers over our serious concerns at the closure of the home, which will see the residents, aged from 80 to 100 years old, being evicted by the new owner in the midst of the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, the home has remained COVID free by the monumental efforts of staff and residents themselves. Yet the NPC understands that relatives are still having difficulty visiting residents at this time when they must make major decisions about where they can move to following eviction.

Secondly, the NPC gave evidence to the People’s Covid Inquiry that years of funding cuts and neglect of the UK care sector meant it was tragically unprepared for the devastating impact of Covid-19. General Secretary Jan Shortt’s testimony at the second session of the Inquiry on 10 March was highly praised by Co-Chair Dr Tony O’Sullivan. He said Jan’s evidence on “the gross failures of the Government in letting down at risk groups, including so many people in care homes or receiving domiciliary care” was scathing and shocking.

Jan spoke about the blanket use of Do Not Resuscitate Orders (DNRs) and older people discharged from hospital to the care homes without corona-virus test clearance. Dr O’Sullivan said her testimony revealed “a total disregard for the safety and care of such a large section of the population. We know 38,000 care home residents died from Covid. Our Inquiry is exploring what mistakes were made and why. It is not too late to learn lessons that can save lives. It is too late sadly to avoid the carnage of the last 12 months.”

Jan told the Inquiry panel: “Before the pandemic hit, the NHS and care sector were really struggling. Our organisation and others, including academics, have been begging the government to properly reform and fund social care. But the government has not been listening. We cannot say none of this would have happened if they had, but they would have been in a lot better position to deal with it, had the health sector had enough staff, enough money and enough resources like Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). It is not true (as the Health Secretary recently said) that the sector had everything it needed.” The People's Covid Inquiry - under the auspices of Keep Our NHS Public - will examine the Government’s overall Covid-19 strategy, such as how it controlled the spread of infection, the timing and extent of ‘lockdowns’ and their impact on case numbers, as well as the implications for death rates.

This evidence will inform the Government's own Corona-virus inquiry – when it happens!

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