

OLD GREY MATTER ARTICLE

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Social Care Still a Priority

The first headline in this month's edition of the National Pensioners Convention's Campaign Bulletin states 'Time for a Brand New Care System'. The report continues: 'Despite numerous independent reviews, commissions, White Papers and Acts of Parliament over the past two decades, the social care system in England remains in crisis and under increasing financial pressure. Recent proposals allowing local authorities to raise an additional 2% towards social care only raised £380m - yet since 2010 budgets have been reduced by £4.6bn - and more cuts are expected. Every week there are examples of poor quality care, flying 15-minute visits, low pay and a distinct lack of dignity for both staff and residents. Successive governments have been reluctant to even talk to the public on this subject - let alone ask them how they think it could be run. But in a British Social Attitudes survey last year, 48% said the government should meet the costs of care through taxation, with a further 22% saying there should be a cap on charges beyond which individuals shouldn't have to pay.'

The call for a new national health and social care service will be the main theme for this year's United Nations Day of the Elder Person's Rallies on 1st October. Although we may have voted to leave the European Union this does not include the United Nations so we should celebrate their international days around the calendar. Anglia Region NPC celebrated this day in 2013 and 2014 in Suffolk at Lowestoft and last year in Essex at Colchester so this year are going to Norfolk. We are planning jointly for this with Age Concern and the North Norfolk Older People's Forum when our stall highlighting the social care issue will feature in an event entitled 'Age is Just a Number – Let's Celebrate' at the Community Centre, Holworthy Road, Sheringham, Norfolk, NR26 8NP . The event with free admission is open to all seniors anytime between 10 am and 3 pm. It will be a good day out of fun and celebration with music, dance, intergenerational activities and refreshments. The event will be detailed in a poster from September on our website www.anglianpc.com.

The second headline states 'All Change for Pensions and Care Ministers'. Following the unprecedented rate of change in the UK's political establishment in the last few weeks, PM Teresa May has appointed a number of new ministers. David Mowat, the Warrington South MP replaces Alistair Burt as care minister and Watford MP Richard Harrington becomes the new minister for pensions, succeeding Baroness Ros Altmann. In her resignation letter, Ms Altmann called for reform of pensions tax relief, a review of final salary defined benefit occupational pension schemes and better notification of changes to future state pension ages. Over the last 9 months the NPC has had difficulty meeting the previous ministers, but now hopes to make more progress with the two new appointees. Labour on the other hand has yet to appoint either a care or pension minister, and campaigners are still waiting for more details of their plans to set up an Older People's Commission.

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