

RCN National Pensioners Convention Network Newsletter

Winter 2023

In this issue

This newsletter is produced by RCN National Pensioners Convention (NPC) network members, including those RCN members elected to sit on the NPC National Executive Council who between them also have roles across a range of NPC working parties. Views expressed are those of the individual contributors.

This issue includes contributions from the following:

- Jenny Janes, RCN NPC network member, looks back on the network's achievements, current activities, and future direction.
- Professor Ben Thomas shares inspiring work being undertaken by the Open Doors UK charity to challenge discrimination and improve the care and safety of older LGBTQ+ people in care homes.
- David Vickers, RCN NPC elected member, reflects on delays to reforming Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and the impact on those awaiting assessment.
- David Vickers, RCN NPC elected member, shows the power of activism to protect local bus services.
- Liz Curr, Chair of the NPC LGBTQI+ working party, gives an update on her recent activity.

What have we done, what do we do, what next?

Jenny Janes, RCN NPC network member, reflects on the network's achievements, current activities, and future direction.

The RCN became affiliated to the NPC in 2012 and an RCN NPC Network for retired members was established. This body of retired members periodically elects four of its members to sit on the NPC governing National Executive Council. By harnessing the talents of our retired members, we aim to make the voice of nursing heard in the NPC. Your elected members, along with other network members, participate in NPC campaign activities and sit on a range of working parties. These include housing, trade unions, women's, health and social care, minority elders, LGBTQI+, pensions and income, and digital inclusion working parties. We also put forward motions to the NPC biennial policy-making delegate conference to determine its policy and campaigning priorities. As a group, we meet regularly to plan activities, discuss older people's issues, and seek opportunities to collaborate with the RCN Older People's Forum.

Within the RCN, network representatives regularly lobby submitting entities to put forward Congress agenda items promoting the interests of members who have retired, whether by age or disability. Recent successes have tackled intergenerational fairness and digital exclusion. At Congress 2022, we held a joint educational event with students and are working to explore the mutual benefits of intergenerational support. We are promoting the notion of legacy mentoring whereby experienced nurses and support workers provide coaching, mentoring and pastoral support to those who are at the start of their careers or who are newly appointed into the NHS. In 2023, a resolution we submitted through the RCN Eastern Region and seconded by the Older People's Forum, called for a commissioner for older people in England and Scotland, as already in place in Wales and Northern Ireland. It was supported nearly 100% and is now being taken forward by Council.

We are excited by the RCN 5-year Strategy whose goals, for the first time, highlight that retired members are recognised as activists and the vision for: "providing retired members with a clear route into campaigning and activism." Also, the opportunities offered by the new RCN Institute of Excellence, shortly to be launched, and particularly our place in its Activist Academy.

In 2017, RCN Council agreed to an Annual Conference for retired members which has been online for the past three years. This year's conference presented a packed programme with inspiring speakers, Eddie Lynch, on his role as Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland; Nesta Williams, Diversity and Equalities Consultant, on the *RCN Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*; and Ben Thomas, Professor of Mental Health Nursing, London South Bank University, with a heart-rending account of discrimination against LGBTQI+ older people in care homes. You can hear more from Ben in his contribution to this newsletter.

Once a month we host a Retired Members' Chat, an informal chat by Zoom at 7pm on the third Tuesday in the month and open to all pre- peri- and retired members. An opportunity to raise pertinent issues for the NPC and shape the network. Into 2024, once a quarter, we are planning to enhance the Chat with a brief talk by a range of topical speakers. Details of the Zoom link are posted on the [RCN NPC Network Facebook group](#) page. Do join us!

Time to celebrate the diversity and inclusion of older LGBTQ+ people

Professor Ben Thomas, Mental Health and Learning Disability Adviser, RCN Wales and Policy Manager at Opening Doors UK, shares inspiring work to challenge discrimination and improve the care and safety of older LGBTQ+ people in care homes.

There are approximately 1.5 million LGBTQ+ older people in the UK. Many of them grew up at a time when homosexuality was illegal, and some have faced a lifetime of prejudice and abuse. They are less likely to have a partner than their straight peers, unlikely to have children and many live alone. Experiencing poorer physical and mental health outcomes, they are more likely to require statutory health and social care services as they age. Unfortunately, older LGBTQ+ people are often reluctant to access these services for fear of discrimination.

For Noel Glynn, a gay man with dementia, discrimination became a horrific reality when he was admitted to a care home. In this place, where he was supposed to be looked after, he was physically abused and attacked by his carers in the years before his death. The scandal of Noel's experience has been the subject of a campaign for justice and improvement -- led by his lifelong partner, Ted Brown -- which has attracted [national media attention](#) and resulted in a parliamentary debate.

Noel's abuse is not an isolated event. Eileen Chubb, founder of the charity Compassion in Care, has written a [report](#) documenting 486 incidents of care home abuse reported by a total of 287 whistle-blowers. Often the latter suggest that the abusers had a personal or religious or cultural belief that LGBTQ+ people are evil -- and needed to be converted -- or criminal. Several of the services where the abuse had occurred had received a rating of good or outstanding by the CQC.

To improve the care and safety of older LGBTQ+ people in care homes the charity Opening Doors has developed the Pride in Care standard, a nationally recognised accreditation for LGBTQ+ inclusive and affirming care. The quality standard is attained through a process that includes policy reviews, staff surveys and site visits. Care home staff are encouraged to have the confidence to discuss issues of sexual and gender identity in a sensitive and affirming manner. More information about the standard can be found [here](#).

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards – time for a campaign?

David Vickers, RCN NPC elected member, highlights frustrations with the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and delays to their proposed replacement, reflecting on what this means for those who are part of the huge backlog awaiting assessment.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) was enacted in 2009 as an amendment to the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA). The MCA has been in force since 2007 and applies to England and Wales only.

DoLS was introduced to provide legal authority (under Article 5 of Human Rights Act) to care for people in care homes and hospitals who lacked the mental capacity to consent to their arrangements. Article 5 states that 'everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be deprived of his or her liberty [unless] in accordance with a procedure prescribed in law'. This is based on Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

However well-meaning DoLS was when introduced, there were two main sources of criticism. These came from a variety of stakeholders including patient groups, mental health professionals, lawyers and others in the judicial system, human rights activists, health care providers and, indirectly, the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The criticisms focussed on the cumbersome and time-consuming procedures for ensuring conformity with the safeguards. This stretches from initial assessment to reviews and appeals; and, on balance, the needs of healthcare authorities were given more emphasis than those of patients/residents.

In 2018, AgeUK wrote, “It is of particular significance to older people, as DoLS is most often used in relation to people receiving care. There is now a backlog of over 100,000 people waiting for their DoLS assessments to take place, many who may be unlawfully having their freedom restricted and receiving inappropriate care”.

The growing criticism led to the setting up of a Law Commission in 2016. This was chaired by Lord Bean and recommended amendments to the Mental Capacity Act.

In July 2018, the government published a Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill which would see DoLS replaced by the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS). This passed into law in May 2019. The amendments were set to be introduced in April 2022.

When the Bill was published, The Local Government Association published its response with the following key messages.

Local government has long called for an overhaul of the current Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) process to:

- ensure more effective protection of human rights
- create a simpler and less bureaucratic scheme
- reduce the resource impacts on councils

They welcome the opportunity that the Bill presents to replace a system that is widely agreed not to be fit for purpose. They also support the aim of the Bill to improve the lives of local people and the people that provide care and support for them, including:

- the application to any setting, including domestic provisions
- ensuring all referrals are subject to independent oversight, including the strengthening of the current Best Interests Assessor role to the new Approved Mental Capacity Professional (AMCP)
- developing a whole system approach focussing on protecting people’s liberty and ensuring all staff are trained and supported to do this
- reducing the risk of people being unlawfully deprived of their liberty by tackling the current backlog of over 125,000 people

They welcome the aim to reduce the current burden on councils, particularly within the context of increasing pressures on the adult social care, including:

- the commitment to a revised impact assessment
- the recognition of hospitals and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) as separate Responsible Bodies
- developing clearer links between existing duties under the Care Act 2015 and the new Liberty Protection Safeguards
- extending the safeguards to 16-17-year-olds to create a consistent approach across social care that supports vulnerable people of all ages, aligns with the Mental Capacity Act and reduces the need to apply to the Court of Protection
- mainstreaming the protection of some of the most vulnerable people in our society into social work practice.

However, the Government decided to delay their implementation beyond the April 2022 date. On 4 April 2023 the Government issued a White Paper, “Next Steps to put People at the Centre of Care”. This looked promising for the introduction of the people-centred Liberty Protection Standards. However, on the next day, the Department of Health and Social Care announced that the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) would be delayed “beyond the life of this Parliament” which is therefore likely beyond Autumn 2024.

On the following day, the Deka Chambers group of barristers, experienced in DoLS cases, issued a paper, “Liberty Protection Safeguards: delayed or doomed?” Deka goes on, “This delay is disappointing for all concerned, not only for lawyers and campaigners in this field who recognise the current system is not suitable, but crucially for those individuals waiting for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments who remain deprived of their liberty but without the necessary protection under the law”.

The question remains – why the continued delay in implantation of the amendments which replace legislation deemed not-fit-for-purpose, which have passed through Parliament over three years ago and which are consistent with the Government’s aspiration for “putting people at the centre of care”?

What are the implications within the context of Article 5 of Human Rights Act? Are we assured that the right to liberty has safeguards which are included in appropriate legislation when that legislation is considered as not fit for purpose.

A growing number of people and organisations are asking these questions. I feel a campaign is in the offing.

Better buses campaign

David Vickers, RCN NPC elected member, shares how people power is working to improve bus services for older people.

In June 2023 a meeting was held in York to discuss what action could be taken to improve the bus services in Yorkshire. This was organised by the Yorkshire Regional Pensioners' Council, one of the many NPC affiliates around the country. It was a hybrid meeting attended by over 110 people from all corners of UK. The meeting shared success stories, action in progress and a guide to skills as activists in this area. Because of the wide interest and participation, a national campaign has developed.

Bus services were de-regulated some years ago based on the ideology that private competition between providers would improve the quality of provision. Now, much evidence shows that this was not the consequent outcome. The number of bus routes has dramatically reduced, along with punctuality and reliability. This has been felt especially in rural and suburban communities. The isolation felt by many older people has increased in those who no longer have the independence of driving their own transport.

Another issue that developed was the slowness in bus providers switching to cleaner forms of fuel and the impact on air pollution and climate change.

The City of Manchester was the first city in which its council have re-taken control of buses/trams. Glasgow is due to follow suit. Others will follow in response to this and other campaigns.

This also shows the value of older people/pensioners in initiating and mounting campaigns around issues which affect other age groups. What we start soon attracts others so that all benefit from our activism.

For more information and to get involved in the campaign, go to:
<https://betterbusescampaign.uk/>

Utilising the skills of retired health care professionals

Nicky Wilson from the organisation CareRooms shares an interesting initiative to utilise the skills of retired health professionals to support people who require step up or step down care following an illness or hospital stay.

As we all grow older, how will we afford to pay for our care and as we live longer but with poor health, who will look after us? Around 600 people a day leave their jobs to look after a loved one. As nursing professionals, we often feel under pressure to be ‘that person’.

My journey as a Registered Manager and Registered General Nurse with specialised experience in cardiac, cardiothoracic and ophthalmology, led me to an amazing group of health and care professionals who have set up a new “sharing economy” care model. It’s like a carebnb model. Utilising their empty granny annexes and spare rooms to support a local person on their recovery journey.

CareRooms was founded by carers, nurses, doctors and surgeons with the aim of providing much needed extra bed capacity in communities and support for a transition back to health. I joined three years ago to help them to grow the “Host” network to care for as many lonely and socially isolated people as possible who require step up care following an illness or step down care following a hospital stay.

The idea is simple. The rooms are set up and managed by CareRooms. Each room is safeguarded with remote patient monitoring for vital signs and linked to a video GP service. CareRooms then support the Host and the patient/Guest, to ensure that everyone is safe, protected and happy. Food is provided, so the Host’s role is to provide some TLC and a cup of tea or coffee.

If one of the Hosts wants to provide personal care, this is done under a separate agreement. They don’t have to be there all the time, as CareRooms have a remote care concierge service to take calls from Guests when they are out of the house. When the Guest is ready to go home, we settle them in and invite them to a coffee morning where we encourage them to meet others like them and where they can get involved in helping their community. This grows a community that

cares for each other and reduces social isolation and loneliness. It also creates a network of like-minded people to support each Host.

As I see patients come through their recovery, they are empowered to become strong, healthy and independent, which in turn, produces an amazing group of people who can help others, like them, in their community. The opportunity for lonely, recovered patients to have a new purpose and to avoid social isolation, brings happiness to everyone involved, including the wider families. There are also benefits for the Hosts. They can continue to play a role in providing care, support and companionship to those in need, with the added benefit of supplementing their income.

Further information about CareRooms can be found on our [website](#) or scan the QR code below.



For more info,
scan the QR code

Chair's update from the NPC LGBTQI+ Working Party

Network member Liz Curr, Chair of the NPC LGBTQI+ working party, gives an update on work she is contributing to in her NPC role and as LGBTQI+ link for the network.

I have an ongoing working relationship the Nursing Times – stemming from my speech at Congress 2022 and subsequent interview with the Nursing Times on gender care issues. I have been clinically reviewing several articles so far, with my equality, diversity and inclusion hat on, especially on topics that cross into the sphere of LGBTQI+. I've also had a piece published on unconscious bias and unseen/unheard micro aggression harassment.

I am currently working with RCN staff to produce an information resource about

hate crime.

As chair of the NPC LGBTQI+ Working Group, I am leading work in relation to the mental health of older LGBTQI+ people, with the hope that direct comparisons and can made to non-LGBTQI+ older people, exploring links to mental health issues.

The NPC has set up a dedicated email so that anyone can contact the NPC LGBTQI+ working party which will be overseen by myself. It is part of trying to be more open and accessible for retired people to contact the group direct. The email is npcuk.lgbt@gmail.com.

NPC information and resources

Visit the NPC [website](#) for its latest publications, webinars, policy briefings and campaign newsletters.

RCN NPC Network Facebook group

Join the RCN NPC Network Facebook group and receive regular updates and information on a range of pensioner issues. Go to the [RCN NPC Network Facebook](#) page for easy instructions on how to join. Only members of the RCN NPC Network are eligible to join.

Getting in touch

If you'd like to contact any of the RCN elected members representing the network at the NPC, please contact Jenny Lillywhite 0207 647 3855/ jenny.lillywhite@rcn.org.uk.

Contributing to the newsletter

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please contact the jenny.lillywhite@rcn.org.uk.