



## ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING

### National Pensioners Convention Network Newsletter Spring 2019

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#### The over 75s and television licences

The NPC is vigorously campaigning against potential plans to means-test, reduce or remove the over 75s TV licence. The NPC is concerned that Government has passed responsibility for the free TV licence scheme on to the BBC without the funding to sustain it. The NPC is asking people to sign the [Age-UK petition](#). This demands that the Government takes back responsibility for funding the free TV licence for this age group. It has also organised a letter writing campaign to MPs and a march outside the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

#### Reports from your RCN NPC representatives

One of your elected RCN NPC representatives, Dr Joyce Forge, was invited to talk to the Lewisham Pensioners Forum, She shared her views on the importance of improving the health and wellbeing of the older person and their quality of life in order to avoid over reliance on care services.

Joyce sits on the NPC Minority Elders working party. This working party identifies the issues of most concern to black and ethnic minority elders. It presents policies and strategies to the NPC's Executive Committee to ensure these concerns are recognised and addressed. It also advises on ways in which the participation and involvement of minority elders within the NPC may be improved.

In her talk, Joyce touched on the RCN's significant contribution to the diversity and equality debate on the management of long-term conditions, as well as the integration of health and social care services. Reflecting that the impact of the cuts to public services; changes to welfare benefits; the underfunding of the NHS, social care and education; and increasing prevalence of zero hours contracts; had hit groups such the young, women, people with a disability and black and minority ethnic (BME) elders the hardest. She voiced her concerns that this would inevitably lead to the further erosion of standards of living and quality of life, an increase in inequality in society, and disquiet among whole communities across the country. Resource pressures for the wider health and social care community were continually increasing.

Joyce also reflected that it was now more important than ever, for nurses to understand the best evidence based intervention in prevention, treatment and management of health and well-being of the older person.

## **Report: My first NPC Biennial Delegate Conference**

David Briggs, RCN elected NPC representative, shares his experience of attending his first NPC Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC).

**The Biennial Delegate Conference is the policy making body of the NPC, where 8 officers are elected and motions are debated. It takes place every two years.**

I was one of three RCN NPC representatives who attended the NPC BDC on the 12-13 March 2019. The BDC is the democratic policy-making forum for the NPC. There was a full and diverse agenda, with an excellent quality of debate.

I listened to reports by NPC officers such as their General Secretary and the Treasurer. I heard how the NPC had campaigned actively during last two years. Examples include the campaigns on TV licencing for over 75 year olds and issues related to pensions. The news from the Treasurer was more sobering to hear. The NPC needs to raise more money to sustain its activities, even though as an I consider it to be an organisation that is careful about how its resources are allocated and spent.

The RCN attendees discussed the elections of NPC officers and participated in those for the President and the Vice-President. Elections took place for members of the Standing Orders Committee - many of those standing were unknown to the RCN contingent.

I deliberated on the Constitutional motions put forward. I understood these to be around the length of time that an officer should be in post (i.e. how many times they can be re-elected). It was clear to me that there was no appetite to change the current position.

It was great to deliberate on the policy motions put before the conference. These were, as I say, diverse or wide-ranging. I heard debates on a range of topics such as the NHS and integrated care, the digital inclusion of older people, and the provision of public toilets. It was great to see the NPC representing minority groups.

I was left in no doubt about the passion of many speakers. The motion on national insurance and the amount of necessary years (in terms of the amount of contributions) was an example. On the one hand, the idea that people should pay national insurance contributions when past state pension age was frowned upon and on the other, people considered the concept of increasing the State Pension Age to be wrong. It occurred to me that on the surface what seemed to be a perfectly good motion could be defeated for acceptable reasons.

I have posted the minutes of the NPC BDC on the RCN NPC Network Facebook page together with the report so that members can see what occurred. The motions and the decisions taken are included. In short, for me, the event reflected the NPC in action and that policy arose directly from the views of its members.

### **Topic of the month: guest feature by Dr Dawne Garrett**

Our guest feature by Dr Dawne Garrett, RCN Professional Lead – Care of Older People and Dementia, gives an insight into her recent research on older people and sexual health.

There are some subjects we are all reticent about discussing, but those that impact on our wellbeing and quality of life should be raised. One of those subjects is sexual intimacy. Today's older people have seen and experienced many changes in social and cultural attitudes to sexual activity through their life. They have also seen changes in the availability, nature and effectiveness of contraception, treatment for sexually transmitted infections and sexual difficulties, as well as divorce, separation and new partnerships becoming increasingly common.

People are now engaging in intergenerational marriage and new relationships following the death of partners. There is increasing access to sexual paraphernalia and medication, which may be available online. The technological advances, which have changed social activities including the development of internet dating, have enabled older people to seek different relationships to those that they have previously experienced allowing them to express different elements of their sexuality.

Additionally older people are developing new models of living, such as living apart together and new ways of financing and managing their lives. This is often against a background of politics and media which sadly focuses on the burden of ageing, particularly in terms of the cost of health and social care.

For many older people health education was scant and often with little or no formal sex education; additionally sexual health campaigns are often aimed at young people. In consequence, some people can be unprepared for the sexual opportunities later life can bring. We know that older people are less likely to use condoms in new relationships as the risk of a pregnancy may not be an issue. Within the United Kingdom the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STI's) is increasing in later life which demonstrates a clear need for clinicians to discuss matters of sexuality with older people.

As a nurse I have been working with people in their own homes where people were more willing to discuss issues and I started to receive questions about sexual intimacy. It was these questions that stimulated my research.

It is recognised that sexuality and sexual health needs are an under-assessed component of health care practice but many older people say they have never had an opportunity to speak about sex before. Nurses are often the first healthcare professionals that older people talk to about this topic. Responses are important as attitudes to sexual health can play an influential and significant role in older people's sexual identity. It is crucial to allow and encourage a broad definition of a range of sexual behaviours and none; rather than concentrate on sexual intercourse which may not occur. Sexual wellbeing should include a respectful attitude between individuals and the World Health Organisation explains that for sexual relations to be healthy they should be free from disease, discrimination, violence and coercion.

Recommendations for professionals highlight a need for an increased understanding of older people's sexual intimacy. These include practical interventions to preserve sexual intimacy, as part of essential holistic care. For older people themselves, there are increasing opportunities to discuss any issues if they wish.

### **NPC working party nominations**

Following the Biennial Delegate Conference, the NPC has asked its affiliated bodies, including the RCN, for working party nominations. The RCN is submitting nominations for the following working parties:

Trade Union Working Party  
Pensions & Income Working Party  
Digital Inclusion Working Party  
Health & Social Care Working Party  
Minority Elders Working Party

Once the nomination process is complete the names of the successful nominations will be confirmed in a future issue of the newsletter.

## NPC Publications

Visit the [NPC website](#) to find a wide range of information and publications relating to the work of the NPC. These include campaigning activities, briefings and newsletters looking at various aspects of older people's lives.

Recent additions include:

- Report, motions and agenda from the NPC Biennial Delegate conference held on 12-13 March 2019 - the minutes of the BDC are also available on our RCN NPC Network Facebook page;
- The NPC National Council agenda for 2019 and last year's minutes;
- The NPC National Council meeting took place on 11 April 2019 and the minutes should be available in due course. The General Secretary's and National Officer's report for this year's National Council have been put on our network's Facebook page.

Make sure you join the [RCN NPC Facebook group](#). Regular updates are posted about NPC publications and activities.

## Events

19 June 2019:

Retired members' conference at RCN HQ (11.00-15.00). Please put the date in your diary. Contact Wendy Irwin, RCN Equalities and Diversity Lead, at [wendy.irwin@rcn.org.uk](mailto:wendy.irwin@rcn.org.uk) if you are interested in attending.

## RCN NPC Network Facebook Group

Go to the [RCN NPC Network Facebook](#) page for easy to follow instructions on how to join. You must be a network member to be eligible join.

## Contribute to the newsletter



If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please send your contribution (no more than about 100 words on anything to do with the RCN NPC Network to the **Newsletter Editor, David Briggs** ([dbr5mod@talktalk.net](mailto:dbr5mod@talktalk.net)).