



ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING

National Pensioners Convention Network Newsletter Summer 2019

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RCN UK Retired Members' Conference, 20 June 2019 RCN HQ London

Keynote Speaker - Loneliness

Zeba Arif gave the keynote speech on the subject of retirement, transition and change at the UK RCN retired members' conference. A key strand was the sense of loneliness that can result from the loss of workplace connections and camaraderie. Sadly there appears to be a stigma attached to admitting to or acknowledging loneliness, because our society prides itself on self-reliance.

Loneliness is a distressing experience that occurs when a person's social relationships are perceived by that person to be less in quantity, and especially in quality, than desired ([Hawkley, 2019](#)). Perceptions of social isolation, or loneliness, increase vigilance for threat and heighten feelings of vulnerability ([Hawkley, 2013](#)). 3.6 million people live alone in the UK of which 2 million are over 75 years of age. 1.9 million people often feel ignored or isolated ([Age UK, 2019](#)).

49% of people over 65, say that pets or television are their main source of company. 12% of this group of people never spend any time with friends. 9% of elderly people feel trapped in their own home ([Age UK, 2015](#)).

The problems of loneliness are beginning to be acknowledged more widely. A [loneliness strategy](#), launched in October 2018 by Teresa May (HM Government, 2018), outlined some positive initiatives including social prescribing. However, austerity has taken its toll with bus services being cut, resulting in elderly people being unable to get around. Day centres are also closing due to local government cuts, and now free TV licences for the over 75s are being scrapped.

RCN retired members attending the conference considered the ways and means of recognising and reducing loneliness, and the immense difficulties organisations such as the National Pensioners Convention face as they campaign for enhanced services to combat loneliness.

References

Age UK, (2015), [Evidence Review. Loneliness in later life](#)

Age UK, (2019), [Loneliness in figures](#)

Hawkley L, (2019), [Loneliness](#)

Hawkley I, Cacioppo J (2013), [Loneliness Matters: A theoretical and empirical review of consequences and mechanisms. Annals of Behavioural Medicine.](#)

David Briggs

The over 75s and television licences

There have been protests all over the UK as a result of the BBC withdrawing free TV licences from the over 75 year olds, unless they are on pension credit. These included a [protest outside the BBC offices in Glasgow](#).

[Age UK](#) is supporting the continuation of a free TV licence for this group of people.

National Pensioners Convention has made its position on the matter very clear and further information is on their [website](#).

Reports from your RCN NPC representatives

The Pensioners' Parliament

Joyce Forge and I, your elected members at the NPC, attended the 2019 NPC Pensioners' Parliament. This year's theme was growing inequality. Speakers lined up to give examples of how this inequality featured in contemporary society, including the large percentage increases in the salaries of already highly paid directors of large companies and the pay freezes faced by public sector workers. The issue of people selling their homes to pay for social care also featured.

The first day demonstrated very adequately the value of the Pensioners' Parliament in setting out the current context and issues affecting pensioners. A particular example is the removal of TV licences for the over 75s, unless in receipt

of pension credit. Delegates were generally appalled at this, due to the isolation it will cause to some of the poorest pensioners in Britain. The NPC arranged protests outside the offices of the BBC.

Unfortunately the mood at the conference was somewhat muted due to a perceived erosion of pensioner benefits, some resulting from government policy (e.g. austerity). An intergenerational report by the House of Lords was widely condemned. A largely acclaimed talk by Neil Duncan-Jordan, NPC Policy Officer, concluded that the problem was intra-generational and not inter-generational - so within generations and not across them.

The Pensioners Parliament always motivates me to reinforce the value that pensioners bring to communities and society as a whole. The experience and support they share with younger generations is important. Any benefits they receive have largely been earned through their previous years. All that many older people ask is that society responds to their issues in a reasonable and positive manner.

David Briggs

NPC working party nominations

RCN NPC network representatives have successfully put themselves forward for nomination on the following NPC working parties:

Digital inclusion: David Briggs

Health and Social Care: June Clark and David Vickers (job share)

Minority Elders: Cordelia Okwusogu

Pensions and Income: Kate Fitzsimmons attends this group for the network

Trade Union Working Party: David Briggs and Dougie Lockhart

News From RCN NPC Representatives

The NPC Executive Committee met on 16 July 2019. John McDonnell, Shadow Chancellor Labour Party, attended the meeting. He briefed the attendees on planned Labour policies relevant older people and answered questions. Our co-ordinator June Clark has been raising the profile of the RCN NPC network by writing to every RCN Council member. Remember all RCN members are entitled to [access and view a live stream](#) of open sessions of RCN Council. The next meeting is on 19 September. You can also watch recordings of previous meetings.

NPC Publications

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

RCN NPC Network Facebook Group

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

Contribute to the newsletter



If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please send your contribution (no more than about 100 – 200 words on anything to do with the RCN NPC Network the **Newsletter Editor, David Briggs** dbr5mod@talktalk.net