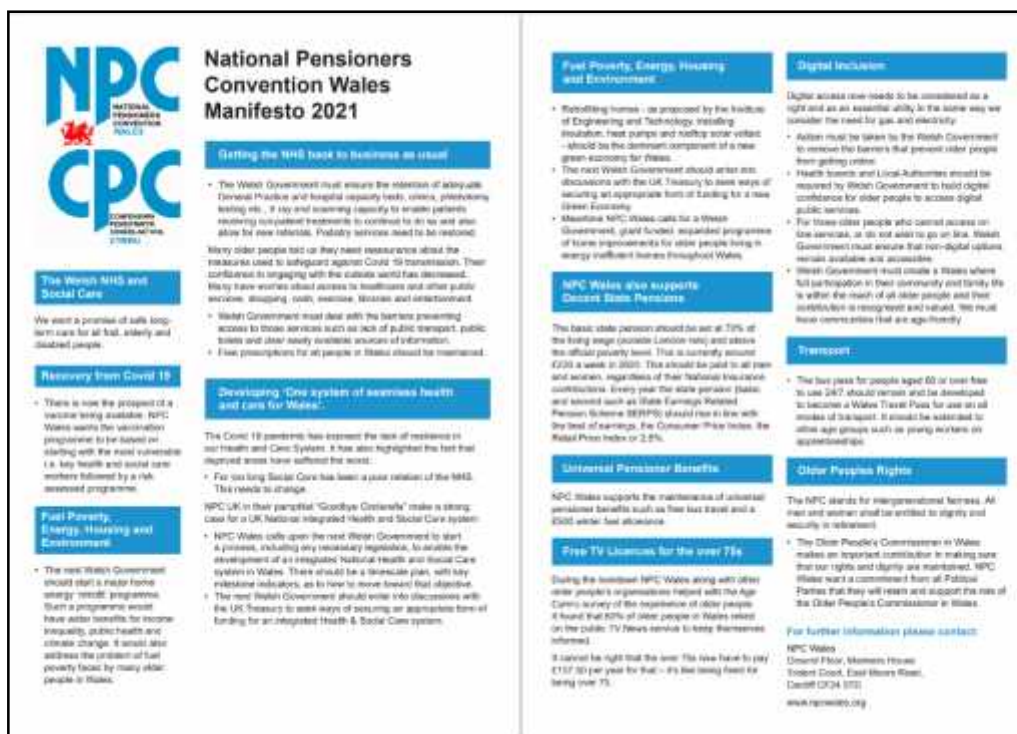


NPC Wales Pensioners' Manifesto



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On 1 March, NPC Wales launched its Pensioners' Manifesto for the upcoming Senedd elections.

The manifesto was developed using the issues that members have told us are important to them, including health and social care, fuel poverty, TV licences, universal pensioner benefits, public transport and older people's rights. It has been sent to all Members of the Senedd, the main parties in Wales, local council leaders and all candidates standing in the elections.

We hope that it will attract attention to the policies and practices that will make life better for older people in Wales.

If you would like copies to distribute to your members, please get in touch for the electronic version by emailing kathy.lye@agecymru.org.uk or in hard copy by calling 029 2043 1570.

2021 meeting dates

Although we don't know when the restrictions will be lifted, we hope that future NPC Wales Full Council meetings will be able to take place in person later this year. Until then, meetings will be held online and we will continue to stay in touch by post.

20 May (AGM)
16 September

TV licence

NPC UK has written to the new Chair of the BBC Board regarding the BBC TV licence.

On 2 February Richard Sharp, Chairman of the BBC Board confirmed that he does not favour a subscription model for the BBC.

The TV licence will increase to £159 per year from April. The licence fee is set by the government following negotiations with the BBC.

NPC's position remains: "As you will be aware, the older generation are the largest audience the BBC has and

we are still campaigning for the government to take back responsibility for the full funding of the free TV licence for over 75s. We strongly believe that it is the government who are responsible for funding social welfare not your broadcasting corporation. We hope you agree and that there is a force for change in your forthcoming negotiations."

The Government is not going ahead with plans to decriminalise non-payment of the licence fee but will keep the issue under 'active consideration'. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden

said switching to a civil enforcement system risked being seen as an 'invitation' to evade the fee and could ultimately reward those who declined to pay. Approximately 750,000 over 75s have so far refused to pay.

NPC UK has also written a rebuttal letter to the Daily Mail. A letter in the Daily Mail mentioned Jan Shortt and NPC UK and commented that the increase in licence fees was affordable so why complain? The Daily Mail, with the avid support of the Tax Payers Alliance, is strongly anti-BBC.

Post Office Card Account

NPC Wales recently brought a new issue to the attention of the Cross Party Working Group on Ageing.

The Westminster Government Minister for Works and Pensions has decided not to renew the contract between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Post Office Ltd for the Post Office Card Account (POCA) after November 2021. The POCA is used by many older people to receive their pensions.

DWP is writing to card holders requesting that they supply alternative

bank account or building society account details to receive payment of their state pension going forward. All major high street banks are obliged to provide a basic, fee-free, no overdraft facility bank account when one is requested with no credit checks required. Alternatively, the Post Office has an Instant Savings Account, which can be opened online or in branch.

If alternate account details are not received, there is an Exceptional Service Payment option available for payment of pensions

and benefits. This involves a payment card and a voucher code that is sent via email or text.

NPC Wales feels that this is another example of discrimination against older people, particularly in Wales where we have a large older population and poor transport links. It is part of the downside of moving to a cashless society and an over-reliance on the finance industry and banks – they are closing branches in both rural and urban areas so they cannot fill the void. Pay Points and ATMs are also disappearing fast.

Covid-19 survey

Age Cymru, in partnership with NPC Wales, Active Wales, Pensioners Forum Wales and the Welsh Senate of Older People, have launched another

questionnaire asking for older people's views about the effects of the continuing lockdowns in Wales.

If you would like to take

part, electronic and hard copies are available by contacting Kathy Lye at kathy.lye@agecymru.org.uk or 029 2042 1570.

Connections for All/Cysylltiadau i Bawb



One in ten people in Wales are not online; this can mean missing out financially, socially and in accessing services and information. NPC Wales launched our Connections For All/Cysylltiadau i Bawb campaign on 1 February. We are joining NPC UK in calling for an end to digital poverty and we will be running a series of events around this topic over the next year.

Our first event as part of the Connections For All/Cysylltiadau i Bawb campaign was a webinar called Safer Connections on Safer Internet Day. With more older people isolating at home and apart from friends, family and support networks, their need to use the internet safely has never been greater. Much

good is already happening in Wales, but more can be done to overcome the barriers that discourage older people from embracing the online world.

The webinar brought together a panel of experts to discuss the need to keep Wales's oldest and most vulnerable people connected:

Glyn Jones, Chief Digital Officer at the Welsh Government

Dereck Roberts, Chairman of the National Pensioners Convention Wales

Derek Walker, CEO of the Wales Co-operative Centre which delivers Digital Communities Wales

George Jones, who leads on community services and

inclusion for the Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Jo Galazka, representing UNITE Community Members and UNITE Retired Members

Jenny Sims, NPC Wales Executive Member, Chair of NPC's Digital Inclusion/Exclusion Working Party and co-chair of the NUJ's 60+ Council

A recording of the Safer Connections webinar can be found on the campaign page on our website www.npcwales.org

You can get more information about digital learning resources in your area by visiting www.onlinecentresnetwork.org or by calling 0114 349 1666.

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The National Pensioners Convention Wales is an organisation which comprises of delegates from affiliated organisations. The membership is made up of pensioner groups, retired associations of trade unions and charities related to older people.

The objective of NPC Wales is to promote and campaign for the National Pensioners Convention's policies in Wales as a non-party political campaigning organisation that seeks to improve the living standards and welfare of all pensioners.

Affiliation

Older people's organisations and individuals can affiliate to NPC Wales at any time. Organisations can send up to four delegates to Full Council meetings, which take place four times a year. Individual members can also attend the meetings.

If you would like to affiliate, you can go to our website and download an affiliation form. Or you can call our secretariat on 029 20431570.

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