

Senior Reporter

News from the 60+ Council

NUJ
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Mind the gap

THE OLDER-PEOPLE'S PRESSURE GROUP, Silver Voices, is to launch a campaign in November to publicise what it describes as a "scandal" – the almost £3,000-a-year gap between the full "basic" state pension system that applied until 2016 and the "new" (higher) pension dating from that year.

The majority of pensioners remain on the "basic" pension, and because both payments are raised annually by the same percentage (not the same sum), the gap between the two grows.

Dennis Reed, director of Silver Voices, says; "There may have been complex reasons for a gap to have been created when the new system was brought in, but there is absolutely no justification for the gap to grow each year in cash terms."

Caroline Abrahams, charity director at Age UK, describes the gap between the two pensions as "significant", adding; "Current discussions about the value and adequacy of the state pension completely fail to reflect the experiences of people who retired before 2016."

She points out that "around six in 10 pensioners still receive their pension under the old system".

Although the pre-2016 system, she says, has "considerable variability", for those trying to rely on it at its basic level, "managing financially can be extremely challenging ... There are too many older people living with the constant worry that their income is simply not enough to meet everyday costs, with little prospect of their situation improving."

2.9 million in the 'NETER' bracket

THERE HAVE BEEN PLENTY OF HEADLINES over the past few years about NETEs – young people Not in Education, Employment or Training.

Now the Centre for Ageing Better (CAB) has turned the spotlight on those at the other end of the age spectrum with the launch of NETER – people aged 50+ Not Employed in Training, Education or Retired.

"The NETER measure shines a light on a group that is largely invisible in existing labour market statistics. The government should adopt NETER as a headline measure for people aged 50 to state pension age and publish it regularly alongside other labour market indicators," said CAB's deputy director for work, transitions and retirement, Andrea Barry.



November will see the launch of a campaign by the Silver Voices (director Dennis Reed shown here) to highlight the difference between "basic" and "new" (post 2016) pensions. Photo: thanks to Dennis Reed

"... Of particular concern is the number of older women living in poverty. Many spent time out of the workforce ... and consequently built-up lower pension entitlements (and so) are disproportionately affected."

JENNY VAUGHAN

The future of the "triple lock"

The government has announced that the "triple lock" * mechanism used to decide increases in the state pension is to remain until 2030 when its current link to earnings will be adjusted. The proposal is seen by many as a potential cut in pensions.

* *The triple lock explained:* <https://hannahritchie.substack.com/p/uk-triple-lock-pension-explainer>

According to the Office for National Statistics' October-December 2025 labour force survey, 2.9 million in the UK aged between 50 to state pension age (SPA) and were in the NETER bracket.

Following the SPA rise to 66 and onset of Covid in 2020, the number of NETERs rose substantially, from 2.4 million in 2018 to 3 million in 2020. Since then it has remained largely consistent at just under 3 million.

There are currently over 500,000 more female NETERs than male. In the last 13 years a significant gender gap has formed between women and men, influenced by equalising the SPA between women and men between 2010 and 2018.

DEREK FORREST

WASPI – the next stage?

POET JOHN KEATS WROTE that autumn is the "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" – and WASPI campaigners are hoping that this time of year could see their efforts bear fruit.

WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) expects a fresh judicial review to be heard of the UK Government's decision to refuse compensation to 1950s-born women affected by rises in state pension age. Now there are hopes that recent changes at the top of government can open a new route to resolving this long-running injustice without further legal action.

WASPI chair Angela Madden has written to Prime Minister Andy Burnham and Chancellor John Healey, asking them to meet campaigners and hopes this will take place this autumn.

Angela told Senior Reporter: "We were grateful to receive personal assurances from Andy during the Makerfield by-election that addressing this injustice was something he was committed to carrying out... we are now asking him to make good on that promise, and to sit down with WASPI to determine what redress for 1950s-born women looks like."

"For far too long WASPI women have been let down by governments of all colours and are desperate to see this long-running injustice put right... with a new operation in Downing Street we are determined to find a solution that is fair to both affected women and the taxpayer."

(Earlier this year the government rejected the findings of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman which found the Department for Work and Pensions guilty of maladministration over a lack of notice regarding women's state pension age changes and recommended payouts of £1,000-£2,950)

DEREK FORREST

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Welcome to the latest edition of Senior Reporter, which has been produced by editorial team members Jenny Vaughan, Derek Forrest, Nicoletta Flessati, Jenny Sims and Jim Symons. We welcome articles (250 words max.) and letters (150 words max.) for publication. They should be sent to: dereckforrest@gmail.com

About the NUJ 60+ Council: <https://bit.ly/3021u5o>

Drive for Better Buses reaches Holyrood



Photograph: Gillian McFarland

60+ COUNCIL VICE-CHAIR Derek Forrest was among the campaigners at a Scotland Demands Better Buses rally held outside the Scottish Parliament on September 2.

Derek (fifth from the left) was in Edinburgh as part of a Scottish Pensioners' Forum delegation. The event was to call for bus services to be brought under public control, improvements in frequency and restoration of routes which had been cut.

The rally was joined by a number of MSPs, among them transport secretary Stephen Flynn, and heard speeches, including one delivered by Scottish TUC general secretary Roz Foyer.

Derek is with some of the campaigners gathering outside the parliament building shortly before the rally got under way.

In September the Scottish government announced a £2 cap on bus fares for the west of the country following a pilot

scheme in the Highlands and Islands, and hopes to roll the cap out across the whole of Scotland by 2031.

The SNP administration supports public control options via the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which allows local transport authorities to run municipal bus operations or implement franchising.

Mr Flynn has recently announced £55 million for bus service infrastructure improvement in 2026/27.

DEREK FORREST

Destination York for campaign

The Better Bus Campaign seeks to win increased funding for bus services and to end bus deregulation. The Campaign is holding a conference in York on October 24. See: <https://yorkenvironmentfestival.org.uk/event/better-buses-national-conference/>

individuals with motor disabilities.

Members of the NUJ's 60+ Council have been among those driving the campaign, launched seven years ago by the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC), to tackle digital exclusion. The union's council also supports and regularly reports on the work of the Digital Poverty Alliance. The Council's work with these organisations and the experiences of NUJ members show that many older and disabled people – as well as some living in rural areas with poor connectivity – will not be able to access or afford broadband. Freeview is and will remain essential for anyone digitally excluded.

The government should also be mindful of digital poverty beyond the UK. Many media organisations report – and are accessed by audiences – across the world. An IPTV transition risks deepening digital exclusion globally.

*The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) green paper, "Watch this space: a new strategic direction for UK media"

JENNY SIMS

This article was first published in the NPC's newsletter, Connections4All September issue

User-unfriendly technology

Elderly travellers to the European Union may have problems when they try to use the European Union's new biometric kiosks to pass through borders.

These may not recognise worn-away fingerprints and will send passengers to manual queues instead, adding delays to their journeys.

<https://etias.com/articles/biometric-kiosks-reject-elderly-britons,-trigger-hours-long-airport-queues>

THANK YOU!

In response to the "Have your say" invitation in our summer issue we are happy to publish the following readers' comments on Senior Reporter.

LETTERS

Volunteering and cultural opportunities

First of all, I find Senior Reporter really interesting, so well done to all concerned.

I have a couple of suggestions for items that may be of interest.

Volunteering as a charity trustee is a really good way of keeping active and at the same time helping a worthy cause. I think that most Senior Reporter readers will have skills and connections that many voluntary sector organisations would really benefit from.

Secondly, most big cities have a range of talks, concerts etc. in the afternoons which are often free or at a nominal cost. For example, BBC recordings or performances by music and drama students. Perhaps you could signpost readers towards these?

David Petrie, Glasgow

Lifelong learning

In my opinion, the content of Senior Reporter is pretty well balanced as it is.

However, I would like to suggest that, wherever possible, you give a bit of coverage to all and any lifelong learning opportunities, NUJ courses, local colleges, U3A etc.

I'm suggesting this because I feel it's very important to keep the brain active, as well as the body, as we get older.

Thanks for your continuing good work.

Dave Rennie, Dundee

DO OTHER READERS have ideas on how to improve Senior Reporter? What would you like to see in the newsletter? More articles about age discrimination, pensions or digital exclusion? Perhaps more signposting/links in stories so they can access further information about subjects which interest them.

Please send your suggestions to: derekcforrest@gmail.com

NUJ fights for Freeview

PROPOSALS TO SWITCH OFF Freeview have been strongly opposed by the NUJ in its response to the government's green paper on the future of Public Service Media*, particularly because it would "exacerbate digital exclusion".

The green paper outlines two options for digital terrestrial television (DTT) switch-off: December 31, 2034 or December 31, 2044. Asked which it would prefer, the NUJ has responded; "Neither!"

The NUJ said: "An estimated nearly four million UK households still rely exclusively on terrestrial TV. Of the households who rely solely on DTT without broadband, 93 per cent of viewers were aged 55 or over, and 42 per cent had a disability.

The end of terrestrial TV would exclude these demographics and would be a complete loss of access for marginalised communities. Internet Protocol Television (IPTV) can be accessed by a significant number of different third-party apps and platforms, which means standard accessibility protocols can often break down – i.e. one app might support screen reads or custom subtitle size while another may ignore them. Additionally, streaming remotes can be more challenging to use for

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