

THE MIDLAND PENSIONER



SEPTEMBER 18



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THIS IS THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE WEST MIDLAND PENSIONERS CONVENTION



ABOUT US

The West Midlands Pensioners Convention is the Regional Organisation of the National Pensioners Convention.

Our main objective is to promote the welfare and interests of pensioners, both now and in the future; securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement.

We have a number of very active committees, including a Transport Group which holds regular quarterly meetings with Transport for the Midlands (formerly CENTRO).

For more information about our local branches, trade union retired members sections and affiliated organisations: Contact Trevor Eames our Membership Secretary either by phone on: 0121 733 8081 or e mail: solihullratepayers@hotmail.co.uk

For General Enquiries about the West Midland Pensioners Convention: Contact Brian Allbutt our Assistant Regional Secretary by phone on: 07342264482 or e mail: wmpconvention@gmx.com

OUR ORGANISATION

We have local and Trade Union branches across our Region. Each Branch is entitled to send delegates to the Regional Council, which meets on the second Thursday of each month (except in January and August, when there are no meetings).

The Regional Council meetings are held at Birmingham UNISON Offices, 19th floor, The McLaren Building, 46 Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 7LR . 11.00 A.M. TILL 1.00 P.M.

Although our Regional Council meetings are delegate based, visitors, friends and guests are very much welcome to attend.

We also welcome applications for membership from non-party political organisations of pensioners and retired people from across our Region. Pensioners can also become individual members.

LOCAL BRANCHES

Walsall: Andrea Stanton: 01922448331

Wolverhampton: barryhodge@yahoo.com

Halesowen: Tony Whitehouse: 07715314608

North Staffs: Owen Sloss 07582115742

kingstanding: Ken Smith: 0121 624 6981

East Birmingham: Stan Simpson: 0121 783 0734

B'ham South Central: 07342264482

Northfield: Richard Phillips: 0121 477 3594

Solihull: Mike Wragg: 0121 242 2416

Sandwell & West Birmingham: Andrea Stanton 07809565454

WE NEED TO MAKE AN APOLOGY TO CYRIL RANDLE. CYRIL WAS KIND ENOUGH TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE FOR OUR LAST ISSUE OF THE MIDLAND PENSIONER, UNFORTUNATELY DURING TRANSLATION SOME ERRORS WERE MADE. WE WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT NONE OF THESE ERRORS WERE MADE BY CYRIL IN THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE. WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK CYRIL FOR HIS KIND OFFER TO CHECK FUTURE EDITIONS OF THE MIDLAND PENSIONER TO HELP PREVENT FURTHER ERRORS.



IT LOOKS LIKE WE'VE WON OUR CAMPAIGN!

Keep Our NHS Public Birmingham says, "A cautious welcome for a publicly-funded (non-PFI) Midland Metropolitan Hospital in Smethwick."

The construction of the Midland Metropolitan Hospital in Smethwick collapsed after the construction firm Carillion crashed spectacularly in Jan 2018 leaving the hospital half built. Then, in June, the bankers behind the 'private finance initiative' pulled the plug on the deal, so KONP Birmingham immediately organised a protest outside the hospital site demanding that the Treasury, health ministers and the Government should FULLY FUND THE MIDLAND MET HOSPITAL AND RUN IT PROPERLY UNDER GOVERNMENT AND NHS CONTROL!

The protest, held on the NHS's 70th Birthday on the 5th July, was a major success with 100-120 people from diverse communities, when we'd had only expected 30-40 in attendance. We had fantastic support from organisations such as Birmingham TUC (BTUC), Unite the Union West Midlands, Unite the Community Birmingham, West Midlands Pensioners Convention and Birmingham Against the Cuts.

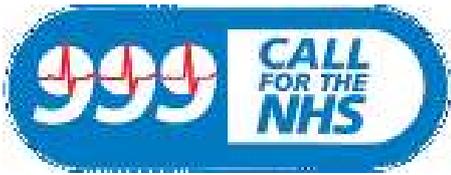
A month later, the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust Board voted to tell the Government that the only viable option for the completion was direct government funding, a full vindication of the KONP Birmingham campaign argument. 2 weeks later, the Government and Hospital Trust reached an agreement to finish construction work with the Government providing funding for the remainder of the building work at Midland Metropolitan Hospital – which will see the new hospital built by 2022.

It's a very cautious welcome to the news. Firstly, there is a delay in starting completion until early summer 2019, partly because the half built hospital was rotting away without any protection for 6 months and an additional £20m worth of work will have to be done from this September. Additionally, the Hospital's Trust Board Chief Executive has been dropping in phrases to his announcements such as "making cost improvement programmes above national norms", "limited reconfigurations", etc, which reflect the concern in Dr John Lister's 2016 review of the privately financed hospital published by KONPB and BTUC when the Midland Met was first mooted.

Notwithstanding our continuing concerns, we believe that the Midland Met fiasco is a final nail in the coffin of successive governments' love affair with PFI /2 (you'll note that a number of "the great and the good" pictured in local press articles celebrating the decision were originally opposed to our position on a publicly funded solution to the construction of the new hospital!).

However, it's a long time till 2022, so we will keep you updated and we'll keep campaigning where necessary. In the meantime, we would like to thank those of you who came to the July protest and also those of you who signed petitions on street stalls, online, and all of you who've supported us in whatever way possible

THIS ARTICLE IS DEDICATED TO THE LATE, GREAT AND FANTASTIC JOLYON JONES, WHO STARTED THIS CAMPAIGN IN 2015



SAY NO



TO NHS ENGLANDS'S PLAN TO CUT 17 ELECTIVE PROCEDURES

As hospital beds and services are being axed, NHS England is “consulting” on cuts to 17 elective surgical treatments that it plans to stop funding from April 2019 – except in exceptional circumstances when a patient’s GP has to ask the Clinical Commissioning Group for prior approval or an “individual funding request.”

Their aim is to **cut NHS spending by £200 million this financial year**, by:

- Preventing payments to hospitals that give patients these 17 treatments – unless the commissioners have approved specific exceptions in advance.
- Replacing the current referral and decision making process – based on informed, individual discussions between GP, patient and specialist – with a national set of algorithms in a standardised electronic referral system.

This rules out any consideration of patient’s individual circumstances, needs and values. It reduces clinician to technicians and wastes their hard earned skills and knowledge.

This is how private health insurance schemes work.

A comprehensive NHS provides the full range of authorised, appropriate treatments to everyone with a clinical need – it does NOT restrict or deny treatments on the basis of financial considerations.

These 17 treatments are only the first batch of cuts to elective care – NHS England plans to rapidly expand the number of elective treatments it will outlaw.

NHS England’s spin is that the 17 procedures are ineffective. They are not.

They are effective for certain patients in certain situations. They should continue to be routinely funded, and clinicians and patients should be trusted to make appropriate decisions, based on existing clinical guidelines, about referral and treatment. Anything else would undermine a core NHS principle – NHS4ALL

The industrial action Birmingham City 18th month. In weeks of selective



by Home Care workers at Council has entered its August, they began two strike action.

The dispute began when the City Council brought in plans to cut the service by 40 per cent, and then bring in a 'three shifts in one day' rota. They are now trying to impose on all Home Care workers – 60 per cent of whom work full time or over 30 hours – a shift contract for 22.75, 21 or 14 hours only. They are forcing many full time workers into part time positions. Some Home Care workers face pay cuts of up to £11,000 a year.

Following both sides going to ACAS, it was ruled that the Home Care workers could work with management to agree shift hours suitable to both parties. But Birmingham City Council then reneged on this deal.

To make matters worse, the working hours being imposed make it virtually impossible for the Home Care workers to supplement the cut to their wages by obtaining other part-time work (if they can find any such jobs). The new contract would see them working 7 days out of 14 opposite days, on the following hours:

- For those on 14 hours: 7 – 11am
- For those on 21 hours: 4 – 10 pm
- For those on 22.75 hours: two shifts of 7 – 11am & 12 – 2.30pm

All this at a time when Birmingham City Council is finding up to £1,400 a day to pay external consultants.

Birmingham City Council are being particularly belligerent, saying that any Home Care worker who refuses to fit into the new shift structure will go.

The Home Care service has already seen 48 per cent of its workforce go through VR. Birmingham City Council then outsourced the Enablement services left uncovered by the hole they had created to the private sector.

It is clear the City Council is capitulating to the Tory government's long-term agenda of local authorities becoming mere commissioners of essential services, rather than providers – all at the altar of increasing profits for the private sector while quality and service provision suffers. The continued assault on the remaining in-house Home Care workers shows the City Council is hell-bent on driving out the in-house providers to clear the decks for outsourcing to the private sector.

In the ballot for industrial action, in a 58 per cent turnout, 97.3 per cent voted for action, and there has been enthusiastic turn-outs for picket duties and protests. There has been good support from the public, as well as local trade unions – already £32,000 has been raised for the strikers' hardship fund.

As senior union rep Mandy Buckley explained: "Most of the staff have been with the service for many years, caring for the most vulnerable people in our city. We don't earn high wages but we love the job we do. We are fighting for the very future of our service and we know the public support us as its their service being cut."

Thanks to recently retired Social Worker and longstanding UNISON Activist Maureen Wade for this article.

GENERATIONS UNITED AGAINST AUSTERITY



What has ten years of Austerity Economic policies done for millions of pensioners

- There are 1.4 million older people in the UK living in fuel poverty.
- Britain's Bus Network has shrunk to levels not seen in the 1980s, with 500 bus routes cut or withdrawn in 2016/17.
- The UK State Pension is one of the worst in the Developed world.
- Every year tens of thousands of older people die from cold related illnesses.
- The number of people over 60 whose primary diagnosis was malnutrition has more than trebled in the last decade.
- 18% of over 75's lives in poverty compared to 11% of the population as a whole.
- 1.2 million people struggle without the care they need.
- The number of single pensioners who rely completely on the state for financial support has increased by 26% to 1.1million over the last five years.
- There has been a cut of £6billion in Adult Social Care budgets since 2011.
- There are over 2million older people today who are providing unpaid care.
- Between 500,000 and 800,000 older people are subject to abuse and or neglect in the UK each year.
- In 2016/2017, 31,800 people over 65 died as a result of cold related illnesses.
- Nearly one in three of the oldest households in Britain (where the oldest person is aged 75+) live in housing which has failed the official decent homes standard.
- The cost of cold homes to the NHS in England arising from the increase in hospital admissions and additional GP consultations is around £1.36 billion a year.
- Meals on wheels services have been reduced by 63% over the last eight years. At the same time, the average price of a meal has increased by 22%.
- Two fifths of older people (about 3.9 million people) say the television is their main source of company. SOURCE: NPC: AGE AUDIT: 2018

PENSIONERS PROTEST IN BIRMINGHAM ON SATURDAY 29TH OCTOBER

West Midlands Pensioners Convention Summer Family Raffle



Cllr Mike Bird with Graham Garbett
(Chair :Walsall Pensioners Convention)
Drawing the winning Raffle Tickets.



Dorothy Lamb (Secretary of Birmingham UNISON RMS)
and Owen Sloss(West Midlands Pensioners Convention)
with two lucky winners, Eleanor Dixon and Susan McNeill

Some of our readers may remember that for nearly 30 years, WMPC received a substantial grant from Birmingham City Council. Unfortunately, in 2008 because of financial constraints, BCC withdrew this grant, since then our finances have been under some pressure. Although our reserves are reasonably sound, year on year since 2008, we have spent more than we have received. Our income from branches and affiliates has fallen as our membership network has reduced so in order to attempt to halt this decline in income, we decided in 2018 to hold a Family Summer Raffle.

From May to July, our delegates and friends sold 749 tickets, raising £700 for our funds. Many thanks to you all for this great effort. We are indebted to Unite and Unison for donations enabling us to purchase entrance to attractions in the West Midlands. Dudley Zoo donated 2 child admissions. Many thanks to Dudley Zoo.

The raffle was drawn by Mike Bird (Leader of Walsall Council) on the 3rd August 2018 at Walsall PC meeting. The winners were:

1st prize £100 Cash Sheila Bailey

2nd prize Family ticket Black Country Museum Michael Lamb

3rd prize Family ticket Severn-Valley Railway Eleanor

4th prize 2 child admissions Dudley Zoo Susan McNeill

David Williams (Treasurer West Midlands Pensioners Convention)

WHAT'S ON

WMPC REGIONAL COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER 13TH

MAIN SPEAKERS

BORN IN THE 1950's

**WOMEN AGAINST STATE PENSION
INEQUALITY**

ALSO

**THE STRIKING BIRMINGHAM HOME
CARE WORKERS**

**11.00 A.M. TILL 1.00 P.M.
BIRMINGHAM UNISON**

**19THFLOOR MACLAREN BUILDING
PRIORY QUEENS WAY B4 7LR**

Visitors, Guests and Friends -welcome
Hot drinks will be available (£1.00)



ON MONDAY OCTOBER 1ST

**THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IS HOLDING ITS
ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN BIRMINGHAM**

**COME AND JOIN THE MIDLAND TUC
RALLY AGAINST AUSTERITY**

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 29TH

**VICTORIA SQUARE
BIRMINGHAM**

11.00 A.M.

WALSALL PENSIONERS CONVENTION

COFFEE MORNING

**SATURDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER
RICHARD HOUSE, BURROWES STREET
WALSALL WS2 8NN
10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.
Tea ,Coffee-Cakes-Bottle Stall –
Raffle
ALL WELCOME**

WASPI BIRMINGHAM BRANCH

NEXT MEETING

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 9TH

12.00 NOON

AT

EDMUNDS BREWHOUSE

**EDMUND STREET
BIRMINGHAM B3 2ES**

***KEEP OUR NHS PUBLIC BIRMINGHAM
TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH
CAMPAIGNS TO DEFEND OUR NHS
OUR NEXT MEETING (AND AGM)***

***WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER 5TH***

19.30 P.M.

***UPPER/MIDDLE MEETING ROOM
THE WELLINGTON
37 BENNETTS HILL***

HALESOWEN PENSIONERS CONVENTION

SEPTEMBER 20TH BRANCH MEETING

VICKY RYAN

HEARING DOGS FOR THE DEAF

**SHENSTONE THEATRE
HALESOWEN LIBRARY**