



SCOTTISH PENSIONERS FORUM: GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2019

Across the UK, older people are often assumed to be better off in comparison to those of working age.

Older people may be demonised and held responsible for many of the problems facing society today whereas in fact pensioners, along with lone parents, predominantly women, continue to be the poorest groups within society.

Of the almost 12 million people aged 65 or over living across the UK, statistics show that just over 1.9 million people of state pension age are living below the official UK poverty level. In addition to this, 7% of those aged 65+ are considered materially deprived meaning they can't afford things like warm clothes in winter, things which many people take for granted.

Pensioners have no real opportunity to increase their income like those of working age. This ultimately means that pensioners who are poor, remain poor.

The bulk of pensioner spending goes on such essentials as the cost of heating, food and clothing, representing approximately 58% of their expenditure. Factor into this the costs of rent and council tax and there isn't really very much left to spend. As heating and food costs continue to rise at a much higher rate than the overall rate of inflation, many older people are left with the decision of whether to eat or heat. Even if pensioners do have some modest savings these are being used up to pay for essentials.

It is often conveniently forgotten that society benefits from the contribution many older people make as unpaid carers, whether in looking after children, grandchildren or spouses. Along with their voluntary work many older people actually save the government in excess of £34 billion per year.

There remains a real continued threat to public services but rather than conveniently blaming those most in need, more must be done by the Westminster government to ensure that these needs are met.

Government and local authorities must stop looking at soft targets by pitting young against old, workers against the unemployed and most importantly they must stop trying to deflect the blame away from the real social issues that blight our society.

SPF, CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER DEAL FOR OLDER PEOPLE SINCE 1992

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What we at The Scottish Pensioners' Forum hope to secure is a fairer society, based on social justice and equality for all. We believe that older people should not have to suffer by bearing the brunt of the current economic crisis.

This manifesto calls for all candidates to support the concerns of older people, now and in the future.

- An immediate increase to the Basic State Pension to ensure ALL pensioners receive a living pension set above the UK's own official poverty level. The state pension age pegged at 66 years.
- Justice for WASPI women.
- A guarantee that the triple lock system be retained for the basic state pension and the protection of public sector pension schemes.
- An end to fuel poverty with an increase to the winter fuel allowance and removal of VAT on domestic fuel.
- The provision of affordable energy schemes, via social tariffs, from all energy suppliers.
- The retention of the free TV licences for pensioners over 75.
- Ending discrimination against older people in the workplace.
- Removing the threat of violence to older people because of their age or vulnerability.
- Introduce more community empowerment initiatives to allow older people to actively participate on issues affecting them.
- Safe and affordable housing for older people, to suit all their needs.
- The safeguarding of essential public services which many older people rely heavily upon.
- The Concessionary Travel Scheme to be retained and its validity extended to cover travel throughout the constituent parts of the United Kingdom as well as rail and ferry travel.
- Dedicated funding to improve accessibility to transport for older and disabled people and their carers.
- Positive initiatives to help combat loneliness and isolation for older people.
- Join with the SPF in campaigning for intergenerational fairness.
- Establish a sustainable funding basis for the provision of NHS services in the public sector.
- Ensure that the care workforce receive proper funding and training in order to develop the time and skills needed in delivering a quality service for older people's social care needs.
- Ensure digital exclusion does not deny any group full participation in any public consultation or commercial activity.