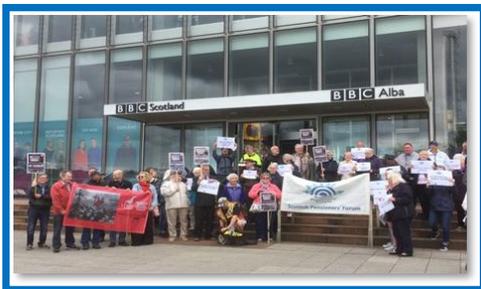


The Newsletter of the Scottish Pensioners' Forum

SPF Make Fresh Demands to the BBC over TV Licence Issue

In response to the BBC's recent announcement to increase the cost of the TV licence by £3 per year whilst cutting, amongst other things, vital news services, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum are once again calling on the BBC to rethink their decision to means test the TV licence for over 75's from June 2020.



Maureen Gardner, SPF Chair argued:-

“One of the main reasons

the BBC have given for reaching their decision on being forced to means test the TV licence for over 75's was the potential loss of jobs and services that maintaining the present system could bring. However, what we have seen in recent weeks is not only an increase to the cost of the TV licence but also the loss of 450 jobs. Many of the news services, which are often an essential lifeline in keeping older people connected with the outside world, have also been withdrawn – how is this fair?”

“Once again older people are being demonised as being the contributing factor behind potential cuts to jobs and services when this is clearly not the case”

The SPF have contacted the BBC to ask them to rethink their decision on means testing and to acknowledge the devastating impact the removal of this concession could have on many older people. Whilst the SPF

appreciates that the BBC's position is not ultimately one of their own choosing, the power to revoke the decision before the present scheme ends in May lies firmly with them.



“Up to 40,000 older people across Scotland, as well as many more over other parts of the UK, are now being forced to choose on whether to eat, heat or watch television, this is not factitious but a shocking reality and they deserve better.”

With levels of loneliness and isolation in older people reaching record heights, the decision of the Westminster Government to outsource the capacity to change social policy to third parties could not come at a worst time. The SPF demands that they retake ownership of the scheme and continue to offer the concession to all older people over 75 as is the case at the present time.

The SPF will continue to work with other older people's organisations across the UK in campaigning and demonstrating on this important issue and will keep our members updated on all future developments.



Once again older people are being demonised as being the contributing factor behind potential cuts to jobs and services when this is clearly not the case”

Maureen Gardner, SPF Chair

SPF Celebrate UN International Day of Older Persons 2019

On 1st October 2019, the SPF held their yearly demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament to mark United Nations International Day of Older Persons, Supported once again by our affiliates and friends, this year's theme "The Journey to Age Equality" drew attention to the existence of inequalities in old age, many of which are a result of accumulative disadvantages throughout a person's life.



Maureen Gardner, SPF Chair, gave a heartfelt speech on her own experiences growing up and the inequalities she faced throughout her life, speaking mainly on education, religious bias and the gender pay gap. (A full transcript of Maureen's speech is available upon request).



As well as Maureen's contribution, other speakers included Christine Grahame MSP; Claire Baker MSP; Tam Wilson from the STUC Better Than Zero Campaign; Tommy Brennan, North Lanarkshire Trades Council; Irene Graham, Unite Scotland Retired Members' Branch and campaigners from the WASPI campaign. As has been common practice over the years, Convenor of the Cross Party Group on Older People, Age and Ageing, Sandra White MSP put forward a motion to parliament on behalf of older people in Scotland

SPF General Election Hustings, STUC Centre, Glasgow

To coincide with the launch of our General Election Manifesto, the SPF held a hustings in Glasgow with representatives from all the main political parties in attendance: Tony Curtis, Conservative Party; Pam Duncan-Glancy, Labour Party; Marion Fellows, Scottish National



Party; Elaine Gallagher, Green Party and Susan Murray, Liberal Democrats. The lively debate was chaired by SPF Vice Chair and UNISON Scotland representative, Rose Jackson and issues put to the panel included the differing and unfair pensions systems; digital inclusion; post office and bank closures; universal credit changes and the free TV licence for over 75s.



Out and About

Since our last newsletter the SPF have been in attendance at several events including the STUC Black Workers' conference and the STUC Disabled Workers conference in Clydebank, Glasgow's Golden Generation AGM in Glasgow, as guest speaker at Dementia in the Workplace events in Inverness and Glasgow, Scottish Policy Conference on Older People's Wellbeing in Scotland: Next Steps following the Fairer Scotland Framework for Older People and the Scottish Older People's Assembly.

As well as this we have also held our yearly demonstration at the Scottish Parliament to celebrate UN International Day of Older Persons and engaged in talks with Transport Scotland on the National Transport Consultation through our work with the Scottish Government's Older People's Strategic Action Forum. We also continue to serve our members through our work on the Cross-Party Group on Older People Age and Ageing and the Cross Party Group on Funerals and Bereavement.

Remember if you have any forthcoming events scheduled and you would like us to bring our information stall, please get in touch. We'd be happy to come along!

Prescription Delivery Charges

As recently highlighted in *Pharmacy Business*, Boots have begun implementing a charge of £5 for new patients who opt to have their deliveries made from their stores. However, the pharmacy chain has indicated that they would continue to offer free delivery to those they deemed most vulnerable with exemptions from charges including end of life care patients and those with an urgent clinical need referred through their GP. Prescriptions ordered online and through the Boots app remain free of charge. Boots Pharmacy Director Richard Bradley said:



“Community pharmacy is unquestionably facing challenges and we need to adapt our offer to respond. As a result, we have invested heavily in digital technologies to offer a free, easy to use service for delivery of repeat prescriptions ordered online.”

As many older people do not have access to digital and online services, this may well be another charge they will have to face if they are unable to get out and about. The Scottish Pensioners' Forum will be keeping a close eye on developments and in the meantime ask Boots to include older people as a category within their exemption criteria.

Winter Fuel Allowance

At a meeting with then Cabinet Minister for Social Security and Older People, Jeanne Freeman MSP, the Scottish Pensioners' Forum raised the issue of the Winter Fuel Allowance. During our discussion, we pointed out that the Allowance had remained at the same level of £200 per household since it was first introduced, yet domestic heating charges had risen substantially since then. Ms. Freeman indicated that it was her intention to raise this allowance in line with inflation from 2020.



As the Winter Fuel Allowance, as well as other benefits, has recently become the responsibility of the Scottish Government, we have asked for assurances from the present Cabinet Minister for Social Security and Older People that this will still be the case. We will keep our members informed once we have received a satisfactory response.

SPF Annual Conference, Glasgow 2020

The 29th Annual Conference of the Scottish Pensioners Forum will take place on **Tuesday 2nd June 2020 at the City Chambers, George Square, Glasgow.**



This year's theme is “Wellbeing and Welfare” and we have a range of speakers coming along on the day. Our event is open to all SPF members and affiliated organisations and formal conference papers have already been circulated. If you or your organisation have any motions to conference, please return these to us by 7th April in order for these to be considered by our Standing Orders Committee.

All delegate forms and nominations to serve on our Executive Committee for the forthcoming term must be received by 15th May 2020

We hope that you can come along and celebrate another successful year for the SPF and we look forward to seeing you there.

Campaigning for a Better Deal for Older People since 1992

HAVE

YOUR

SAY

The Scottish Pensioners Forum are always keen to hear what our members are getting up to, so don't be shy, please get in touch. The more we know, the more we can help publicise your event and help get you the recognition (and audience) you deserve for your hard work and effort. So, whether it's an event in your local area or you are planning a campaign on a much larger scale we'd like to hear about what you're doing on behalf of older people.

If there is something you would like us to include in our next newsletter, for example a certain forthcoming event or a particular issue you are campaigning on, please get in touch with us to have your say.

We've Moved

The Scottish Pensioners Forum have recently left their home of the past 20 years in Woodlands Road, Glasgow and have moved to temporary accommodation in Rutherglen. We have updated our website and social media pages with our new contact details which can also be found at the bottom of this page. Even though we've moved premises, we'll still be continuing to campaign on your behalf and offer the same level of service you've come to expect from us.

We would like to thank our affiliate, PCS Scotland, for offering us meeting space, when available, for our Executive Committee meetings during our relocation.

**WE'VE
MOVED!**

Join the Scottish Pensioners' Forum



Campaigning for a better deal for older people since 1992

Application forms can be requested from:

**Scottish Pensioners' Forum,
Suite 11, First Floor
RedTree Business Centre
24 Stonelaw Road
Rutherglen
G73 3TW**

spf@stuc.org.uk

0141 337 8113

Twitter: @scotpensforum

Facebook: Scottish Pensioners' Forum