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# THE LINK



THE MAGAZINE OF THE RETIRED MEMBER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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## FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

How the union addresses  
challenges for workers



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# CHANGE NEEDED

**DAVE WARD**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**

Looking at the political and industrial situation facing us at the start of 2017, it is clear that we need fundamental change to address the problems workers face in their daily lives.

The CWU is demanding those changes – and at the core of this is the need for a new deal for working people, a radical programme on housing and a new solution on pensions.

While they aren't affected by them, I am sure our retired members will fully appreciate the importance of the pension changes that the Post Office is imposing on staff and Royal Mail is now consulting on for its employees.

It is clear, however, that the future of pensions cannot simply involve putting the burden onto workers – companies and the state have a responsibility to ensure people are looked after in

retirement that they cannot dodge.

We are increasingly hearing companies saying their past promises are unaffordable. But many of these same companies have taken pension holidays over the years creating deficits they now say are a problem.

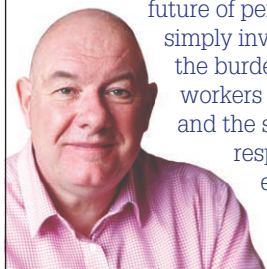
In many cases meeting these promises is simply a question of priorities.

Some 94 companies in the FTSE 100 pay more on dividends than on pension contributions. And recent research has shown that more than half of the biggest companies in the UK could clear their pension deficits in just two years, by paying these down rather than paying money out in dividends.

In terms of the government's responsibility, as we have long campaigned for, the triple lock guarantee must be maintained and built upon. There is no reasonable rationale in the fifth largest economy to be looking to cut the state pension.

So there are solutions out there – and as pensions rise up the agenda in 2017, the CWU will be making the case for the alternative.

*Dave Ward.*



## SEASON'S GREETINGS TO MEMBERS

**BRIAN LEE**  
**EDITOR & RMAC MEMBER**

I would like to wish you all a very happy and healthy New Year and thank you all for taking the time to read the Link. I would also like to remind you that the purpose of the Link is to keep you informed and for you to keep us informed of what is happening in CWU regions and branches to which you are members.

Again, we are short of letters or articles from retired members, which we would like to publish for all to read. So please send them in to the Communications Department, c/o The Editor  
 Many thanks

*Brian Lee*



# COMMON GOOD

**TONY KEARNS: SENIOR DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY**

Defending the rights of the elderly is in the interests of all generations. However the pensions' triple lock is under attack and the government is fuelling intergenerational conflict to gain support



The approach to the elderly population has increasingly come to reflect the race to the bottom approach adopted in so many other parts of society.

So in a country that boasts to be one of the five largest economies in the world, pensions apparently cannot be afforded.

The triple lock on pensions is under attack from a number of places, including most recently the Parliamentary Work and Pensions Committee. (We won't go looking at the lavish pensions that MPS enjoy at this juncture).

Nor, according to the Work and Pensions Committee, can universal benefits like the winter fuel allowance be afforded. Yet, we learn that 25,000 elderly people a year continue to die from cold related illnesses – a national disgrace.

A report from AgeUK shows increasing numbers of the elderly being forced to live in "squalor and distress" in private rented housing.

So the story continues, of the elderly, as with many other in our society, being quite deliberately forced to live in poverty.

Not that much of this will be found in the media, which continues to contextualise elderly peoples human rights against a background of intergenerational conflict. So we are told, the baby boomer generation had it all, which is why the young are so badly off.

The WPC report tells how those born between 1981 and 2000 are going to be the first to be financially worse off than the previous generation.

It is sad that a Parliamentary committee can so easily buy into the lie that the young are being forced to go without because the elderly have it all.

It is the distribution of wealth that has led to the young and old being penalised in this way – the creation of the 1% holding so much of the wealth whilst the 99% struggle by on what is left.

The intergenerational conflict argument needs to be exposed for the deception that it represents, another example of seeking to turn one part of society against another and away from the

big picture of an increasingly unequal society.

It is our duty as trade unionists to continue to campaign for a fairer distribution of wealth in society. The postal and telecom worker, the students and elderly – all deserve a just share of what their labours have created.

It is in the interests of all to defend the triple lock on pensions, universal benefits and rights to care provision. None of these issues are for the old or young – they impact on all from cradle to grave, so must be safeguarded for the common good of everyone.





# Ageing in squalor and distress

## HOUSING

The charity, Age UK, has found that many older private tenants are living in appalling conditions with uninterested landlords and negligent letting agents

The report, titled Ageing in Squalor and Distress – based on calls to Age UK's

telephone advice line – found problems like damp, mould and cold going



unchecked, causing or exacerbating chronic illnesses

There were repeated failures to carry out repairs to essential services such as heating and cookers

Landlords were found imposing over the top rent rises, following necessary improvements

The landlords were also found to be refusing to allow the installation of aids and adaptations that older people need, like ramps or handrails.

Elderly tenants have also felt harassed and bullied into leaving because their landlord wants to sell.

The report found that elderly people are deterred from challenging issues due to insecure tenancies and fear of eviction.

**1/3** of over 60s could be living in private rented by 2040

The revelations come at a time when the number of older people renting in the private sector is set to soar in coming years.

At present, households aged over 65, account for fewer than one in ten of all those living in the private rented sector.

This though is a rapidly increasing housing option for older people, with 200,000 joining the rental market in the last four

years. Estimates suggest a third of over 60s could be living in private rented accommodation by 2040.

Age UK is demanding more resources for local environmental health services, so the law is properly enforced; better access to aids and adaptations for older people; and more comprehensive and available local housing advice, so older people understand their options. The charity hopes to work with the government and private landlords to implement these changes.

● Age UK's advice line for housing and tenancy rights – 0800 169 2081

# Councils at risk of legal action over care cuts

## ELDERLY CARE

Council cuts to care in England are so severe that there is a real risk families may take legal action.

In a joint plea to ministers, the Nuffield Trust, King's Fund and Health Foundation, said the sector was facing a major funding shortage.

The think tanks said cuts were so deep; councils may no longer be meeting their duties to the elderly and disabled.

The government says it is investing in the care system, with £5bn set aside for the NHS to work with the care system.

An additional £1.5bn is being added to that by 2019, while councils have been allowed to increase council tax by 2% a year to invest in care services.

Councils complain they do not have enough cash. Recently, the regulator, the Care Quality Commission, said: council care cuts were one of the major factors behind the growing demands on A&E units.

The think tanks, which made a joint submission to ministers, highlighted figures showing how councils had started reducing the amount of support they provided to older people.

## Signs of the times

### The incomes of older people aged 75 and over

■ Older pensioners' incomes are on average £59 a week lower than younger pensioners, and £112 a week lower than working age adults – this equates to an annual income almost £6,000 lower than a working age adult.

■ The numbers getting help from their council with care had fallen by 26% to 850,000 in the four years to 2014

■ Spending on care by councils had fallen by 25% in real terms in the five years to 2015, to £5.1bn

■ Additional money from the NHS and increased contributions from individuals had topped this up to £7.2bn. but that still represented a cut of 9%

■ More than 40% of money paid to care homes came from people paying for themselves

■ One million people with care needs now receive no formal or informal help – a rise of 10% in a year



## Black balloon release highlights 200 winter deaths every day

### WINTER DEATHS

The National Pensioners Convention released 26 black balloons outside Parliament to mark the number of winter deaths.

The Office for National Statistics figures for December 2015 to March 2016 show 24,300 people died of cold related illnesses, equivalent to over 202 a day. Those affected the most were older women, who make up 53% of all winter deaths.

Last year, there were 43,900 winter deaths between December 2014 and March 2015 – the highest for 15 years. The ONS believes the lower figures for this year has been due to the absence of a flu strain that affected older people more than other groups.

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "The fact that flu

hasn't killed off tens of thousands of Britain's pensioners, only goes to show that issues such as poorly insulated housing, low incomes and rising fuel bills are to blame.

**23%** of winter deaths were older women

Successive governments have simply ignored the problem of winter deaths amongst the older population and seem to have a policy of crossing their fingers and hoping things will improve.

Government needs to meet the legally binding fuel poverty target on insulating homes, end higher bills for those on prepayment meters and those who cannot pay online, raise the winter fuel allowance and tackle the excessive profits of the big six energy companies."

## Timing your walk after meals is better for diabetes

### HEALTH

A short stroll after meals is better for blood sugar than walks at other times.

The findings are based on a study, conducted by the University of Otago in New Zealand, which looked at whether taking a 10 minute walk after a main meal resulted in lower blood glucose levels than a single 30 minute walk each day for people with type 2 diabetes.

The study, which involved 41 adults, found that taking short, more frequent walks immediately after

meals reduced blood glucose by around 12% compared with a single 30 minute walk.

The greatest benefit was seen after the evening meal when carbohydrate consumption was high and participants tended to be less active.

The researchers did not explain why a post-meal walk was more effective at lowering glucose in the blood. However, they believe a short stroll after every meal could reduce the need for insulin injections which can help people better manage their weight.

Researchers say current physical activity guidelines should be changed to specifically include post-meal activity, especially after meals with lots of carbohydrate, such as bread, rice, potatoes and pasta.

There are 4 million people living with diabetes in the UK and 90% of those have type 2 diabetes, according to Diabetes UK. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin to function properly, or the body's cells don't react to insulin.



# TRIPLE LOCK ON PENSIONS UNDER THREAT

Brian Lee looks at the growing threat to the triple lock on pensions and other universal benefits



**T**he Work and Pensions Committee (WPC) has claimed that the triple lock on pensions is “unsustainable” and should be ditched after 2020.

Previously, former Work and pensions minister Iain Duncan Smith and former pensions minister Baroness Ros Altmann had questioned the affordability of the triple lock arrangements going forward.

The WPC also said cutting pensioner benefits such as winter fuel allowances should be considered, adding that the payments should not be “sacrosanct”.

The triple lock was introduced in 2012 and

guarantees the state pension rises each year by whichever is highest of price inflation, average earnings or 2.5%.

The WPC claim the triple lock will worsen an economy, which is already heavily “skewed” towards baby boomers and against the younger millennial generation.

## Committee proposals

The report states that millennials, born between 1981 and 2000, face being the first generation in modern times to be financially worse off than their predecessors.

Final salary pension schemes, which were “commonplace” during the working lives of baby

**2.5%**  
is the current  
minimum increase  
per year of state  
pension.

boomers, are now all but completely phased out.

The WPC report said: “The triple-lock is inherently unsustainable. In the absence of reform the state pension would inevitably grow at a faster rate than the rewards of work and would account for an ever-greater share of national income. In particular, we find no objective justification for the 2.5% minimum increase.”

It said all parties should seek political consensus on a new earnings link for the state pension before the next general election.

Instead of the triple lock, the committee proposes the new state pension could be linked to a minimum





proportion of average earnings.

### Dying from the cold

Pensioners would also get protection against high inflation reducing their spending power, under the proposed changes.

WPC chair Frank Field said: "Millennials face being the first generation to be poorer than their forebears. No party has been immune from chasing the pensioners' vote – but at what cost to future generations? Politicians of all stripes must accept some responsibility for these trends, and we must act together now to address them." National Pensioners Convention general secretary, Dot Gibson,

criticised the attack on the triple lock, pointing out that the state pension will increase by just £3 a week from April based on the arrangement. "In a country that is supposed to have the fifth highest strongest economy in the world, are we really saying that we cannot afford to give pensioners a £3 a week increase? Future generations are going to become ever more reliant on the state pension for their income in retirement – but if we scrap the triple lock the state pension will wither on the vine like it did in the 1980s and they will be left with nothing," said Dot, who also refuted the attack on the winter fuel allowance:

"Last winter, a staggering 43,900 older people died from cold related illnesses. Energy bills continue to rise, and spells of prolonged cold weather and poor housing stock mean that older people are particularly vulnerable. When it was first introduced, the winter fuel allowance covered around a third of the average fuel bill. Now it hardly covers an eighth. But the real reason why we have so many additional benefits for pensioners is because our state pension is so low. It currently ranks as 32nd out of 34 OECD countries. Cutting the winter fuel allowance might save money, but it will make the problem of winter deaths worse."

### Divide and rule

The NPC general secretary also attacked the phoney intergenerational conflict being fanned by the likes of the WPC. "Whilst the report makes it clear that no single generation has stolen the future of their successors, there is little doubt that today's pensioners are still being blamed for the problems faced by today's younger generations," said Dot. "This phoney conflict is being used as a smokescreen in order to cut back on the welfare state. The housing crisis hasn't been caused by pensioners, but because in Britain we sold off council houses, we haven't been building enough affordable homes, wages and employment are low and insecure and an economy built on house-price inflation simply cannot be sustained. This is what needs to be addressed."

**43.9k**  
older people died  
from cold related  
illnesses last year.



# FUTURE CHANGE

The retired members' conference was a chance to discuss new ways in which the union could address the challenges of defending workers

**G**eneral Secretary **Dave Ward** told the retired members conference in Manchester to prepare for "fundamental change" to the way in which the union addresses challenges in a world, where the odds are being stacked against workers.

Dave highlighted how the UK voted to leave the EU, while the US elected Donald Trump as president. "We have an absolute explosion of low wages. It is a low wage economy and there is growing inequality in that

**Above:**  
Many elderly in the UK live below the poverty line.

economy," said Dave, who predicted the next generation will not see decent homes, jobs or retirement "unless we can bring about fundamental change."

The GS gave his full backing to Jeremy Corbyn, highlighting three demands central to bring fundamental change under Labour. These comprise a new deal for workers, a radical programme on housing and a new solution on pensions. "We need a new solution on pensions that shifts the burden away from employees to companies and the state," said Dave.

Turning to the structure of the CWU, Dave declared: "Our approach and contact with workers has to improve. We have to look at what we do and build a stronger union." The GS then addressed the issue which caused the most heated debate of the conference, namely the decision of the NEC that retired members will no longer be allowed to vote for branch officers.

Dave told how the issue had arisen out of a disagreement in one particular branch and that it was felt that a legal opinion should be obtained. The



Dave Ward



Debbie Abrahams



Rod Downing



opinion was that under the rule book the interests of working members were served differently to those of retired members.

Dave confirmed that he was committed to defend that position, though it could have been communicated better to members. He committed to delivering “an enhanced role for retired members.”

In a heated debate on the issue of the new ruling, Phil Duffy of Greater Mersey and South West Lancs, felt the decision amounted to age discrimination. “The decision of the NEC to abolish our rights is not consistent with

**25%**  
Rise in care home  
fees in the past year

what is in the rule book,” said Phil, who highlighted the inconsistency, with retired members still able to vote in elections for the general secretary, treasurer, health and safety and equalities officers.

Mick Jones, retired members’ secretary for the Midlands pointed out that the legal advice was paid for with union funds, so the members had every right to see it. “We’re not stupid, we’re not children,” said Mick.

Tony Kearns, Senior Deputy General Secretary, responded to the passing of the motion calling for a reversal of the ruling, explaining how

the lawyers had looked at the rule book which classifies retired members as ex-members. “The rule book lists what members can do but it can’t apply to retired members because they are ex-members,” said Tony, who countered the arguments that the union wasn’t doing much for retired members.

He pointed out how the number of retired members’ secretaries had risen from 35 some 15 years ago to 82% of all branches today. The CWU had also taken 12 motions to the TUC in that period which became policy.

He called for the passions of the debate to be redirected to the real enemy which was a Tory government, predicting that when Chancellor Philip Hammond talks about making Britain more competitive, what he means is attacking workers’ rights and the poorest in society. The orchestrated attack on the triple lock on pensions fell within this ambit. “The enemies are outside, not in this room,” said Tony.

There was also passionate support for motions calling on government to address problems in social care and the NHS.

Peter Robinson of South and East Thames Amal proposed the motion to get the 2014 care act working properly. “We need a much updated version of this care act,” said Peter, who highlighted the rising cost of care, with care home fees rising by 25% in the past year.

Ken Ward for the RMAC proposed a motion calling for an end to the closure of local accident and emergency centres and hospitals. He

“I don't believe in a trade off between young and old living in poverty”



► quoted one person waiting 15 hours on a trolley.

Jan Zablocki of Midland No 1 pointed out that the UK only spends 8% of GDP on the health service compared to 10% in other European countries. “It is not old people blocking beds that is the problem but the underfunding,” said Jan.

Rod Downing for the RMAC highlighted how the Housing and Planning Act 2016 councils and housing association landlords can sell properties off to private landlords. “Many older people are living in housing association properties. If they go to private landlords then the rents will go so high they will have to

go somewhere else,” said Rod. “At present those in social housing have secure tenancies.”

There was strong support for a motion calling for a united defence of the triple lock arrangements on pensions.

Brian Lee for the RMAC refuted claims that the triple lock – which sees the highest of rises in earnings, prices or 2.5% being awarded for the state pension each year – is too generous.

Brian pointed out that twice in the six years it has been operating pensioners would have received a better rise under the previous arrangement – which saw the price index used for the

**8%**  
of the UK GDP  
is spent on the  
health service

rise linked to RPI rather than CPI.

Guest speaker, Shadow Work and Pensions Minister, Debbie Abrahams declared herself proud of what the previous Labour Government did on pensioner poverty. “One million pensioners were lifted out of poverty,” said Debbie, who also attacked the efforts to foster intergenerational conflict between young and old. “I don't believe in a trade off between young and old living in poverty. They are choices the government makes,” she said.

“We're committed to the triple lock beyond 2020 – the same for everyone, not the privileged few,” said Debbie.

## LONDON

Many London Region retired members took part in the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) organised lobby of Parliament on 2 November 2016. They met on the green, opposite the House of Lords, known as Storey's Gate for a photo shoot and display of banners.

This was followed by a meeting in committee room 14. The room was packed out with supporters of the NPC.

On the day of the autumn budget, 23 November 2016, it was announced that over 25,000 elderly people died of cold related illnesses in the winter 2015/16.

The NPC released 26 black balloons (1 balloon per thousand deaths) opposite the House of Lords. Again this was attended by retired CWU members.

London Region retired members held their annual general meeting on 12 January.

● Brian Lee reports





# GETTING A CARE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

**Brian Lee** looks at the process of getting a care needs assessment

**I**f you need help to look after yourself, then a care needs assessment from the local council could help. An assessment enables an individual to work out what help they need and how to get it.

Care needs assessments are usually provided by the social services department of the local council. The council has to give an assessment if someone appears to need care and support, regardless of income or savings or whether the council thinks they qualify. The aim is to work out what help is needed with care, and think about how to get it.

The assessment will be carried out by a trained care specialist. They'll involve you throughout the assessment. There will be a chance to discuss any difficulties in

looking after yourself and the impact of this on your wellbeing. For example, you might want to continue living independently in your home, but you are finding it difficult to wash and get dressed.

If you have a friend or family member looking after you as an unpaid carer, they can get a carer's assessment to see if they need support to carry on their caring role.

After the assessment the council will give you a copy of the care assessment, explaining your care needs. If you're not given this, ask.

You will also be told whether or not your needs are high enough to qualify for help from the council. There are various types of help and support the assessment may suggest could help you, including:

Above: Care assessment is carried out by a trained care specialist in the home.

- Disability equipment or adaptations to the home, such as a stair lift
- Telecare, such as a bed sensor or wearable alarm
- Help from a carer, with tasks like washing, dressing or taking medication
- Meals on wheels
- Residential care in a care home

## Who pays?

The financial assessment, or means test, establishes how much you'll have to pay towards the cost of care. It's carried out by the council, after they've given a care needs assessment to establish what care you require. Nearly everyone will have to contribute something towards their care home fees.

The assessment will look at income, savings and capital, certain benefits, and ►





► sometimes the value of your home if you own it.

Most people will have to contribute all their income, minus a small Personal Expenses Allowance. This is currently £24.90 in England. You might also receive £5.75 a week through Pension Savings Disregard.

Some amounts are ignored when calculating income, including:

- Certain benefits, such as the mobility components of Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance
- Half of private pensions or retirement annuities, if you're giving them to a partner who is living at home
- The income and savings of your partner
- Regular savings from a charity

### Savings and capital

If savings and capital are over £23,250, then all care home fees have to be paid.

If savings and capital amounts to £14,250 - £23,250, then individuals have to pay some of the care home

## 23k

in savings and capital requires all care home fees to be paid

fees. The council will also contribute something. You'll also have to contribute most of your weekly income.

If you have savings and capital of under £14,250 – You won't have to use this to pay your care home fees. You'll still have to contribute most of your weekly income.

The value of your home isn't always taken into consideration

### Giving away money

There are fairly strict rules on this. If you've recently given away a lot of money, for example, the council might decide you've deliberately deprived yourself of capital to avoid paying care fees, and may still count the amount given away as part of your income in the final assessment.

### Help from the NHS

If you're assessed as having nursing or medical needs, the NHS may pay for some or all of your nursing care, through NHS Continuing Healthcare or NHS-funded nursing care.

### The assessment

Your council will tell you if they will pay some of your care costs, and if so how much. The total amount they think your care should cost – including their contribution and yours – is called your personal budget. It is based on your assessed needs and factors like the market rate for care in your area. If you want to move to a care home that costs more than your personal budget, you or a third party will probably have to pay top-up fees to cover the difference.

### The care cap

The government plans to introduce a cap on care costs, so that no one pays more than a fixed maximum amount towards their care costs in their lifetime. This plan was due to be introduced in 2016, but has now been postponed until April 2020.

● There will be an article in the next Link that looks at what you have to do to get a carers assessment.

# MEALS ON WHEELS PROVISION DROPS BY 50%

The number of councils providing meals on wheels to vulnerable older people has dropped below 50% for the first time



**R**esearch for the National Association of Care Catering (NACC) reveals just 48% of authorities provide a service compared with 66% only two years ago.

The NACC say this under-investment puts the elderly at risk and will place unnecessary pressure on the NHS because meals services help prevent hospital admissions and extend the time residents can live at home.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has previously identified better nutritional care as the third largest

source of cost savings to the NHS.

The study, carried out by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) on behalf of NACC for Meals on Wheels Week, revealed:

- The North West of England is doing the least, with only 17% of authorities providing a meals on wheels service (regional breakdown overleaf)

- 91% of providers expect there to be further reductions in service over the next 12 months.

- Only half of those providing meals on wheels services do so 365 days a year.

**48%**  
of authorities  
provide the meals  
on wheels service.

- £4.30 is the average cost of a two-course lunch which could prevent unnecessary 'bed blocking' hospital stays (the cost of keeping someone in hospital is an estimated £400 per day – Department of Health, 2015).

- The best region is Northern Ireland where there is still 100% provision of meals on wheels.

## Vital service

The average meals on wheels service supplies around 60,000 meals per year but it is not statutory so councils can remove the service to save money even though malnutrition accounts for

► nearly £20bn of health and social care spending in England (BAPEN, 2015).

NACC chairman Neel Radia fears continued cuts endanger vulnerable residents and places a huge strain on the NHS.

“This is a very worrying trend. Meals on wheels is so much more than just a meal – it’s a vital preventative service, and prevention is better than cure. It helps reduce unnecessary malnutrition and malnutrition-related illnesses and is a lifeline to those who are alone and isolated with no support,” said Neel. “Meals on wheels services can include well-being and safety checks. It’s about looking out for people in our communities who have contributed throughout their lives, and doing it in a humane and caring way.

“We understand that local authorities have a problem with social care funding and we are not placing the blame solely with them. Council budgets are under immense pressure but withdrawing a service that can help keep someone out of hospital is a false economy in the long run because unnecessary hospital stays and bed blocking are a huge problem for the NHS.

### Nutrition matters

“Some authorities do not take the nutritional side to meals on wheels seriously enough and we have even seen instances in the past where councils have stopped providing the service and directed people to fast food outlets on their website which is appalling.

“Nationally, budgets for health and social care have begun to be merged so that



money can be spent more effectively. In Northern Ireland, where health and social care budgets have already been merged, the service coverage is 100 per cent. Clearly in Northern Ireland, the benefits of hot food delivered to those in need of a little help to

## 60k

Meals per year are provided through the meals on wheels service.

continue living in their own home is rightly recognised.

“We want to see meals on wheels services expand across the UK as more authorities are empowered to spend health and social care budgets in a coordinated way for the best long-term solution for taxpayers and customers.”

Meals on wheels coverage by region	2014	2016
North West	48%	17%
North East	25%	17%
South East	67%	17%
Yorkshire & Humber	50%	38%
East Midlands	88%	50%
South West	71%	41%
London	69%	47%
East of England	64%	45%
Northern Ireland	100%	100%
Scotland	94%	59%
Wales	59%	45%

(The APSE research covered higher tier authorities in the UK. Councils were deemed to be providing meals on wheels if they are actively providing the service, whether contracted or in-house. Councils not considered to be providing the service may still be signposting members of the public to providers, who would not be monitored by the council. The 2014 study reflects those councils who said they were providing meals on wheels without making this distinction.)



# TRIBUTE TO LEN TRACE

★ 31/01/1930 - † 15/09/2016

Len joined the Post Office as a telegram boy in Portsmouth in 1944.

At age 18, he was called up for National Service, serving in Germany until 1951. He returned and became involved in the union. He became the Portsmouth Uniform branch secretary from 1964 until 1985, when he retired on ill health grounds.

He was an active participant at annual conference and was elected chair of South East No 1 District council.

Len was presented with a certificate of commendation at his final meeting on 20 June 1970. Our own branch presented him with honorary membership on 14 June 1985, and the South East No 4 District Council also recognised him with honorary membership after 17 years of service as Assistant Distant Organiser and then District Organiser posts.

His membership included the UPW, UCW and CWU where he remained a Class C member. He was also awarded the Imperial Service Medal.

In 1998, when the Post Office Sports & Social Club moved from the Post Office premises to their current home, there could be only one person to open the new club which Len did on the 5 December.

The opening is commemorated with a wooden plaque in a prominent position that reads opened by a "trusted friend".

This sums up who Len was – one of the best!

Len will be remembered fondly by us all as a true gentleman and honest union rep – a true working class hero!

The representatives and members of Portsmouth & District Branch would like to express their condolences to Len's wife Dianne, family and friends at this sad time

**Ruth Harris**  
CWU Branch Secretary  
Portsmouth & District, Postal Branch



## Recent sad passing

It was as Link went to press that we learned of the sad passing of **Ernie Purkis**.

Ernie passed away at home on the same day as the retired members conference (19/1) in Manchester.

"He was a stalwart of the CWU Retired Members and will be sadly missed by us all," said Brian Lee, of the Retired Members Committee.

A full obituary will appear in the next edition of the Link.



## LEFT SHORT OVER FUNERAL COSTS

Having just received 'The Link' and going through it I thought that I would drop you a line.

On 1 January, my wife died of cancer thus I am now on my own. Being a member of the Rowland Hill Fund I made an application for some possible assistance re: the cost of my wife's funeral - which was £3,476.

With regret I did not and have not got sufficient funds to pay this, so my eldest daughter, to save owing, paid it in full herself.

On contacting Rowland Hill Fund by telephone, having filled in the forms sent to me, I had a severe shock when they asked about payment and cost etc. Upon telling them that to settle the account my daughter had paid it, I was told that because it had been paid by her they could not do anything.

Having been a member and having entered the Post Office in 1958. I do think this seems a let-down.

I did inform my daughter before she paid that maybe I would get a little help from a fund I pay into.

How let-down I feel.

Thank you so much

**Ken Maskell**

PS There is still no headstone (more cost).

## WHY HAVE I BECOME AN EX?

I joined the Post Office on the 8 August 1966 and accepted redundancy on the 31 August 2016. I joined the union on the 8 August 1966 and joined the retired members as I left that employ.

I now find out that I am described as an ex-member, ex of what? (Rule 3.1.b Retired Members i.e. Ex-members....)

I was employed by BT, I am an ex-employee of BT. I joined the union voluntarily and remained in it all my working life, and voluntarily joined the retired members. Why have I become an ex?

Is this accidental policy?

I think not (Rule 6.4.8 states that as a retired member (i.e. ex) "the retired members shall be entitled to elect a section committee.... the branch shall appoint an officer or (branch) committee member to service the retired members section...."

This is disgraceful; we in our dotage have not the ability to elect a colleague to represent us, to hold rank on the branch committee to speak on our behalf. Of course we are only tolerated as ex-members.

This is national policy; the President has ruled that no retired member can hold a union post and that they cannot vote for any officer. The National Executive has voted unanimously in favour of this policy based on secret legal advice.

We believe that retirement is not death, we are not coffin dodgers, we can continue making a contribution to the union and to society.

Fraternally yours,

**John Magee**  
**NITB retired**



### SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:

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We reserve the right to edit letters, sent anonymously, but will withhold names and addresses if asked. Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editor or the CWU.