

Senior Reporter

News from the 60+ Council



The freelance pensions conundrum

February 2025

HOW CAN SOMEONE with an irregular and/or low income save for their old age? The 60+ Council and London Freelance Branch have tabled motions on the subject (numbers 54 and 63) to the Union's Delegate Meeting (April 25–27).

Both highlight the difficulty freelancers face if they try to set up ways to provide for themselves in later life. The issue was summarised last March, in a paper from Manchester University: *Precarious Work: The Consequences for Later Life Security*, which concluded that for many 'precarious' workers (the term includes freelancers) it is difficult – verging on impossible – to set up an adequate pension.

Private pension schemes, which usually demand regular, often difficult-to-meet payments, tend to be unsuitable for anyone whose income is low and inconsistent. What can we do?

It would help if the state pension offered something close to a living wage – hard to achieve while raising the level of the state pension often faces fierce opposition. But that's an essential step towards ending poverty among older workers and one which the NUJ must support. After all, for many workers, the state pension is all there is.

We should also commit to finding workable ways of setting up systems freelancers (around half our membership) can use: so the motion instructs the NEC to look at the ways in which other unions with freelance memberships deal with the problem.

If passed, the work of looking at possibilities will fall to the 60+ Council. We're ready. <https://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2024/03/precarious-work-the-consequences-for-later-life-security>

JENNY VAUGHAN

Fresh blow for WASPI

Payouts for women affected by the raising of the state pension age are not appropriate, a UK government minister told the Commons in early February.

WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) campaigners are calling for compensation for 1950s-born females, claiming they were not properly informed by the Department for Work and Pensions that their state pension age would increase from 60 to 65 and to 66. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman



NUJ president Natasha Hirst (right) seen here with Dame Caroline Dinéage MP, Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, was a speaker at a reception at the House of Commons hosted by the All Party Parliamentary Writers' Group. The event saw the launch of SCOOP – "a collaborative, cross-industry solution to sustain news journalism in the UK", which "aims to create a mechanism for freelance journalists and photojournalists to secure payment for the 'secondary use' of their works" (photocopying, and other forms of re-using material). Natasha took the opportunity to emphasise the financial pressures freelancers suffer which, she noted, follow them into old age when pension provision is often unaffordable. <https://scoop.uk.com/> Photograph © Adrian Pope

previously recommended payouts up to £2,950, but the Labour administration announced at the end of last year that there would be no compensation.

In parliament, work and pensions minister Sir Stephen Timms said: "We accepted the ombudsman's finding of maladministration and apologised for the delay in writing to the women affected. We have started working with the ombudsman to make sure that lessons are learnt, and we will develop a plan for effective and timely state pension communication."

In answer to a question by Labour MP Brian Leishman, he added: "We do not think that compensation is appropriate."

Sir Stephen went on: "The evidence is that 90 per cent of those affected did know that a change was coming, but we cannot work out now who did and who did not know. Among those investigated by the ombudsman, nobody lost out financially from not knowing, so we could not justify paying out up to £10 billion in compensation."

Meanwhile, MPs have voted in favour of bringing in a bill that would require the government to address the findings of the

ombudsman's report.

The bill, which has had its first reading, was presented by SNP MP Stephen Flynn. It called on the government to publish proposals for a compensation scheme for 1950s-born women who have been affected by the increase in state pension age and its communication.

At the presentation of the bill, 105 MPs from several parties voted in favour of bringing it to parliament, while none voted against.

The bill's second reading is scheduled for March 7.

DEREK FORREST

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

Welcome to the latest edition of the Senior Reporter, which has been produced by editorial team members Jenny Vaughan, Derek Forrest, Jenny Sims and Jim Symons.

We welcome articles (250 words max.) and letters (150 words max.) for publication. They should be sent to: derekcforrest@gmail.com

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

Putting a focus on older people's rights

A LEADING CHARITY BOSS has vowed to step up the fight to secure a senior citizen's champion for England.

Caroline Abrahams, director of Age UK, told Senior Reporter this month that the leading voluntary organisations for older people, including Age UK, have come together to reinforce the ongoing campaign for a Commissioner for older People in England set up during the run-up to the General Election last year.

She said: "In the event, the Liberal Democrats were supportive, but neither the Conservatives nor the Labour party committed to the policy.

"As things stand, there is no suggestion that this government wants to pursue this

issue, despite the good examples set by Wales and Northern Ireland."

Caroline continued: "Age UK thinks this is not good enough and, as a result, this year we intend to put a real focus on raising awareness about older people's rights and the need for policy and practice to take them seriously, and for a Commissioner role finally to be created in our country."

She said there were plans to mobilise thousands of campaigners behind this call: "We have a growing older population ... it's high time we put in place the infrastructure required for older people's voices to be heard by policymakers, with a Commissioner being an essential part of this."

DEREK FORREST

European travel

RETIREMENT OR SEMI-RETIREMENT often, if one can afford it, offers greater opportunity to travel abroad.

However, for British travellers heading for the EU, a visa-waiver to visit most countries – including France, Portugal and Spain – will be required from later this year. They may also need to provide fingerprints at the borders of 29 member states.

The European Travel Information and Authorisation Scheme (Etias) means holidaymakers must apply online and pay a fee of €7 (around £6) before travelling. The authorisation is expected to be valid for three years, or until your passport expires. However, there is good news for older readers – over-70s don't have to pay the visa-waiver.

Which? magazine advises: "There are already a number of non-official websites sharing information about Etias, which may offer you the opportunity to sign up for a notification when the scheme begins. But it's always best to get your information straight from the European Union website."

The European Commission expects the scheme to start in 2025, but the launch date has yet to be confirmed.

Etias visa-waivers will be needed for travel to all Schengen zone states (where you don't need to show your passport to cross borders) plus non-Schengen microstates such as Andorra and Monaco, along with Bulgaria, Romania and Cyprus, which are EU member states. A separate European Entry/Exit Scheme (EES) is to be up and running before Etias, with fingerprints and other biometric data being collected. It was supposed to begin in 2022, then put back to May 2023, then the end of 2023, then October 2024 and finally November 10, 2024. But there has been a further delay, with no launch date so far confirmed.

- If you are a British passport holder, but have EU residency, you are exempt from EES, reports Brussels-based journalist and NUJ member Martin Banks.

People of all ages will need to go through the EES checks, However, children under 12 will not need to provide fingerprints, but

they will need to have a facial scan taken. In most cases the EES checks will take place in Europe – when you arrive at your destination airport or port, and when you leave at the end of your trip.

However, if you are departing via the Port of Dover or by international train from the UK (London St Pancras and Folkestone), then these checks will happen when going through the passport control in the UK, on your departure. This is because there is a dual border – both British and French borders – at these locations.

However, you won't need to do these checks again when you arrive on the other side.

More information on EES can be found at EES – European Union (europa.eu) and EES GOV.UK . (Gov.uk)

DEREK FORREST

Raising ageism awareness

THE 60+ COUNCIL is reporting back to DM 2025 on implementation of its motion, adopted at DM 2023, combatting ageism in the workplace.

Awareness-raising among NUJ members has been key – they are directly impacted by employers' practices. As the motion states, non-discrimination on grounds of age should be included in workplace agreements, in recruitment procedures and in career support for older workers.

Since ageism is often under the radar, it is important that any of our members experiencing it can recognise it and seek support. On the NUJ website and via this newsletter, we encouraged members to get in touch, in confidence, with their personal experiences of ageism in the workplace.

We enlisted the support of the industrial councils, the Equality Council, NUJ Campaigns and other colleagues.

We backed initiatives of organisations such as Age UK, Independent Age, the Centre for Ageing Better, the International Longevity Centre UK, and the National Pensioners Convention. As well as participating in conferences on ageism, we followed the evidence-gathering sessions of the House of Commons Committee on Women

A grave matter

WOULD TRADE UNION LEADER Jack Jones, who founded the National Pensioners' Convention in 1979, be pleased that its executive council has voted for it to become a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee?

Or be turning in his grave?

NUJ delegates voted against the proposal because of the very brief notice given to affiliates to consult with members, and its lack of detail. But officials claimed the NPC's serious financial situation meant there was no time for alternatives.

They stressed if it were made bankrupt there would be no money to pay staff redundancies and the eight 'voluntary' officers would be held responsible for its debts.

Following the vote, articles were quickly drawn up for the new structure, and sent to affiliates at very short notice for comment. Many responded expressing concerns about democracy, the power to be given to directors and their lack of accountability to members – except at the company's annual general meeting.

The NUJ wrote describing the following clause as 'dangerous' and called for it to be withdrawn: "*Directors' discretion to make further rules: "Subject to the articles, the directors may make any rule which they think fit about how they take decisions, and about how such rules are to be recorded or communicated to directors. This clause will enable management of the period of transition, if any, from the old unincorporated National Pensioners Convention to the new limited company National Pensioners Convention."*

JENNY SIMS

and Equality in 2024. We have promoted the Age-friendly Employer Pledge.

We continue to monitor the output of our own industry, as well as the advertising industry, in order to draw attention to ageist stereotyping and negative reporting about older people. We have highlighted the published guidelines on this issue. In addition, we have noted the judgments of employment tribunals on age discrimination.

NICOLETTA FLESSATI

Good news, bad news or no news?

The need to trust mainstream journalism was stressed at Ofcom's Making Sense of Media's recent conference.

"There is little understanding of the norms of journalism," claimed Alison Preston, Ofcom's Head of Media Literacy Policy and Evaluation.

She said research showed that in the current era of misinformation the more something is understood to be "edited", "the less likely it is to be believed".

© 2025 Copyright in the words and images in Senior Reporter remains with the original authors. Senior Reporter is the newsletter of the 60+ Council of the National Union of Journalists, Headland House, 72 Acton Street, London WC1X 9NB