

Senior Reporter

News from the 60+ Council

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Support at DM 2023 to combat workplace ageism

Nicoletta Flessati reports from the NUJ's Delegate Meeting

The 60+ Council is pleased to report that the NUJ Delegate Meeting on 28/29 April voted to support our late notice motion on combatting ageism in employment. The motion was carried with 90 votes in favour and only 3 against.

Moving the motion, Jenny Sims, Co-Chair of the 60+ Council, said: "60+ has been gathering evidence for the last two years on ageism in journalism and have created an ageism 'lead' on the council. There is a need for this campaign."

Seconding the motion, Sara Lewis, Chair of Brussels Branch, added: "Ageism is rife in our industry, where age and experience are viewed with disdain by bean-counters who only see the costs, not the benefits, of employing somebody with years of valuable experience."

Recalling the NUJ's recent workshop on gendered ageism she quipped; "Heard the one about the 60-year-old woman who was promoted to news anchor on the main evening news bulletin? No, I didn't either. Of course, older men experience ageism too."

The last paragraph of the motion states: "This DM instructs the NEC to institute a campaign to combat ageist discrimination in the workplace, to seek to ensure that the protected characteristic of age is included in employers' equality,



'Our campaign has been reinvigorated' ... at the NUJ's 2023 Delegate Meeting held at the TUC on 28/29 April. Photo © NUJ

diversity and inclusion policies, in their recruitment procedures, and in career support for older workers."

Without continued awareness-raising and action from all of us, ageism is not likely to go away by itself.

With support from so many of our NUJ colleagues, our campaign has been reinvigorated.

Instead of binning valuable workers, let's bin the discriminatory 'isms'.

Note: The following members of the 60+ Council were elected at DM: Mary Brodwin, Ann Coltart, Nicoletta Flessati, Alan Gibson, Jenny Sims, and Jenny Vaughan, Industrial Councils are reminded to nominate the remaining members of the 60+ Council.

The 'Food Train' seeks funding

SINCE WE REPORTED on the financial plight of a Glasgow older people's charity in our February newsletter, a crowdfunding campaign has been launched as part of efforts to save Food Train, which supports more than 400 over-65s across the city.

A fight to save the organisation began after city councillors decided to withdraw financial support from April 1 this year.

A petition calling for the charity to be saved has now attracted more than 5,000 signatures. It can be signed via <https://www.change.org/p/save-glasgow-food-train-from-closure>

DEREK FORREST

Pensions 'dashboard'

THE GOVERNMENT'S Pension's Dashboard Programme is to be 'reset'.

The programme, designed to give people access to information about their various pensions, needs to be 'reset' to deal with unexpected complexities in connecting a range of IT systems. See: <https://www.ukauthority.com/articles/pensions-dashboard-programme-sent-for-reset/>

Blackpool in June

The National Pensioners Convention (NPC) will hold its Annual Convention in Blackpool this June, preceded by a Special Delegate Conference to change its constitution. NUJ delegates are: Jenny Vaughan, Jenny Sims, Mary Brodwin and Alan Gibson.

FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM, Derek Forrest, Jenny Vaughan, Jenny Sims

Welcome to the latest edition of the Senior Reporter which leads on our coverage of DM and the 60+ Council's successful Delegate Meeting motion on tackling ageism in employment.

We're delighted that it was overwhelmingly carried, but there's still much to do when it comes to both highlighting and campaigning against the hurdles our older members face. Please help us with this cause - tell us your stories, give us your ideas.

Contributions (no longer than 250 words, please) and suggestions should be sent to derekforrest@gmail.com

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



Local radio dispute

Leeds and West Yorkshire branch life member Derek Ralphs offers a senior perspective on BBC local radio dispute.

FOR ME, an 80-year-old, joining a journalists' picket line at the BBC Radio York in March took me back almost 45 years.

Then, provincial newspaper journalists were on strike – for six weeks over Christmas and the 1978–79 new year.

This year, local radio journalists, serving their communities, were protesting against ruthless management cuts to their jobs and output.

Radio York breakfast show presenter Georgey Spanswick, pictured centre with glasses, said: “Many of our older listeners are not ‘online’, or even have access to the internet or broadband in the scattered villages and rural communities of north Yorkshire.

“And look too, how many people relied on local radio news and vital information during the 2015 Boxing Day floods in York. Telephone lines and broadband internet were down for several days ... it was only Radio York’s 24/7 coverage, with reporter Jules Bellerby, based at the North Yorkshire Police gold command control in York, that kept residents supplied with regular situation reports during the floods.”

DEREK RALPHS

TUC Pensions Conference

The conference, on 1 March, at Congress House, examined the problems, possibilities and pitfalls around pensions. Noting, for example, that the Defined Benefits system (in which pensions are based on final salaries) is falling out of use, possible alternatives were described.

Other points made included the limited success of auto-enrolment – limited because it doesn’t work for lower earners, or for people with several low-earning jobs, to whom the system does not apply.

Picketing at Radio York © NUJ

From NewsLeeds – the Leeds Branch newsletter

In April, the industrial action was suspended as proposals were put to a consultative ballot, and rejected. Two more 24-hour strikes have been called for Wednesday and Thursday June 7–8.

Support has come from, among other sources, Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood (75) who has appeared on social media with a sign saying “Keep BBC local radio local.”

Radio Humberside presenter Andy Comfort, whose own job is threatened, has told members: “Local radio is not all about news,” Andy stressed. “It’s about communities and it’s about company. It’s more than being a multimedia news factory.”

He said the changes were “the beginning of the end of local radio” as 110 hours a week of local programming from Hull was being reduced to just 48 hours, with similar cuts elsewhere.

“Experience is being thrown out,” he continued, “as no one else does journalism and speech. MPs are concerned because they know they need to speak to their constituents. Local democracy is under threat.”

- Picket line details will be on the NUJ website and the 60-Plus Council encourages all members to back their younger colleagues, either in-person or with messages.

The discussion did not really address the self-employed which, for the NUJ, with nearly half its members in that category, this seemed like an important omission.

Other thoughts: many attendees seemed to find the whole topic challenging: as a union of communicators, surely we could step in with an easy-to-read guidance to pensions? And what a shame that most attendees were old, like me. For us, the ship has probably sailed: we have to encourage the the young to be pensions-aware.

JENNY VAUGHAN

Campaign for Older People and Ageing

The NUJ is among 70 affiliates signed up to support the National Pensioners’ Convention (NPC) campaign for a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing (in England). The campaign is a partnership involving the NPC, Age UK, Independent Age and the Centre for Ageing Better.

Wales has had an independent Older People’s Commissioner since 2008 (the first country in the world to appoint one) and Northern Ireland since 2012.

Meanwhile, in Scotland, pressure is mounting on Scotland’s First Minister, Humza Yousaf, to reinstate a named minister for older people. Until March this year, there was an equalities and older people’s minister, but these matters now come under the expanded remit of a new minister (Emma Roddick) for equalities, migration and refugees. Sixteen charities and other organisations supporting older people have written to Mr Yousaf, calling on him to reverse this decision. Since then, other groups have joined the campaign.

About 40 per cent of Scotland’s population is over 50.

JENNY SIMS AND DEREK FORREST

Reporting on age

The charity the Ageing Better is taking forward a campaign launched by the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales (supported by the NUJ) on ageist reporting. It is calling for IPSO, the independent body that regulates most UK newspapers, to add age to Clause 12 of its Editors Code of Practice (on avoiding discrimination). This would prohibit the press from making prejudicial references to an individual’s age, or from giving details of an individual’s age when it is irrelevant to the story. Details of an individual’s race, colour, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant cannot be mentioned in a pejorative or prejudicial manner. These standards must be applied to age too.

WASPI update

THE WOMEN AGAINST STATE PENSION INEQUALITY (WASPI) campaign has greeted a “major victory” the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)’s decision to look again at the stage two report in its investigation into the way the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) communicated changes to women’s state pension age. See: <https://www.pensionsage.com/pa/PHSO-agrees-to-look-again-at-women-state-pension-investigation-report.php>

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