

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AGM 2018

Looking back one year down the line, one cannot state definitively that the lives of communities and especially those of older people have been greatly enhanced by the laws, policies and practices of the government. We are told time after time that this a government for all, that employment has risen, that the economy is growing in real terms, that educational standards are improving, that more money has been pumped into the NHS and Social Care System, that the government is dealing with the Housing crisis and that Austerity measures are necessary and have to continue to maintain the markets. This rosy picture of the UK today does not match the day to day experiences of the majority of the population. We know that the Austerity measures have had a negative effect on the NHS, Social Care, our public services, and the police service and on education. Fuel and pensioner poverty remains at an all time high with ours one of the worst pensions in the developing world. The restructuring of the Welfare benefits has brought untold misery to the poor and disabled. Zero hour contracts, pay freezes, the Trade Union Bill, the lack of a living wage and pay differentials all fly in the face of workers rights. Public services have been privatised with serious job losses as a result of their profit motives. Privatisation has been punctuated by the excesses and mismanagement of water, energy and transport companies. How is a Government for all when the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer?

We believe that 'All pensioners have the right to choice, dignity, independence and security as integral members of society' (Jack Jones). It is clear that we need to turn rhetoric into action and reality in order to bring about real change and make a difference. Words are not enough.

LAMPAG is doing this by ensuring that we highlight issues concerning older people by holding regular Open Meetings with invited speakers on a range of topics and publishing the monthly newsletter. Furthermore, we have joined demonstrations and campaigns in solidarity with organisations coming out in defence of the Welfare State and Public Services, workers rights and social justice. As Chairman and Vice President of the NPC, I have not only addressed older people's groups, but I have ensured that the views of older people are heard on local and regional levels. Members have received the NPC Campaign Bulletin which covers current pensioner's issues every month.

At the open meeting in **April** we tackled the issue of the **Regeneration** of the Central Hill Estate, the lack of proper consultation and the impact of the regeneration proposals on residents' lives.

We were on the streets on **1 May** with thousands of other activists to celebrate **International Workers Day**. The call was for Trade Union Rights, Human Rights, equality, social justice and international solidarity. Digital Inclusion affects us all especially where the digital default is pushing more and more services on line. This makes it difficult for older people who are unable to access the internet to browse the information and services that should be available to them. Our meeting in May addressed this concern.

We held the **16th Health Conference** in the Governors Hall at St Thomas' Hospital in **June**. Again we had the chance to be addressed by consultants who would normally treat us in hospital and by the panel about projects and developments to improve patient, staff and visitors experiences. We had a presence at the Pensioners Parliament in Blackpool, the largest gathering of pensioners nationwide. Besides having the experience of listening to presentations by experts, we were able to take part in fringe meetings and to have an input into the discussions and report back to the membership

It is true that **disabled people** are often marginalised and experience differential and unequal treatment and discrimination because of their disabilities. The **July** meeting addressed this worrying concern and the impact of Austerity measures and welfare changes on their living standards. Their call is for an end to the attacks on their fundamental human rights. We joined nursing staff on Parliament Square at the launch of the **Scrap the Cap** campaign to put pressure on the government to scrap the cap on nurses pay. The pay cap has resulted in a shortage of 40,000 nurses putting pressures on the NHS services and nurses having to resort to food banks to feed their families and loan sharks to make ends meet. Thanks to the support of Lambeth Trade Union, we had a **stall** at the **Lambeth Country Show** where we disseminated information of the role of LAMPAG in the community.

After a well-earned August break we were ‘back in business’. It is important that we have access to a wide range of local services to support us in maintaining good health, independence, safety and wellbeing. We had a speaker from the Lambeth SAIL (**Safe and Independent Living**) project in **September** to inform the pensioners about the referral system and the additional support they can access. We recognise the contribution of research to facilitate making informed choices, so we also invited a researcher from Kings Hospital to address us on the research being undertaken to improve **the delivery of care for the frail elderly**.

October was a busy month for pensioners in the borough. It was **Celebrating Age and Black History Month** with activities around the borough. Our celebrating age was a special event where we had two speakers from within the groups and where we enjoyed the presence of the Mayor of Lambeth. One of the speakers rejected the current negative views of older people and highlighted their contributions to their families, communities and the economy as nurturers, carers, mentors, to their communities as the ‘social glue’, community leaders, volunteers activists, advocates and tax payers boosting government finances. The second speaker spoke about the contribution of airmen from the Caribbean in the Second World War with special reference and honours to two of the airmen. The Mayor was generous in her praise and acknowledgement of the role of LAMPAG in empowering older people to articulate their interest and concerns and of providing a platform for older people to have a voice. She thanked LAMPAG for its work and presented the officers with badges to mark the day.

Pensioners from all over the country attended the Lobby of Parliament in **October**. There was an opportunity for us to meet with our MPs and to tackle them over the issues that were contained in the NPC’s Pensioners manifesto. Speakers spoke on ‘**Social Care**’, the problems associated with ‘**Driver only Trains**’ and ‘**Uniting the Generations**’. The General Secretary thanked Kelvin Hopkins for hosting the meeting.

The Chairman spoke at the **Croydon Unite Retired Members Meeting** about the challenges facing older people in the present climate of Austerity and the importance of focusing on pensioners’ issues in retired members meetings. She talked about the actions LAMPAG was taking to confront and oppose the onslaughts. At the end of the presentation, the Unite Retired members group presented LAMPAG with a cheque of £250 help them to continue their important work
We had the opportunity to showcase the campaign and action activities of LAMPAG at a stall provided by the AGEUK Lambeth **at the Streatham Leisure Centre**.

On **15 November** LAMPAG and the NPC joined students in a demonstration organised by the **National Campaign against fees and cuts**. Students were calling for the abolition of tuition fees and for an education system that serves people and not profit. We were active again on **22 November** on the day when the figures the number of **additional deaths** of older people due to cold related illnesses was announced. The NPC released black balloons each representing 1000 deaths.

We joined in the festive cheer with the annual **Christmas Party in December**. Members upheld the tradition of ‘bring and share’ to spread the warmth and friendship which pervades the month.

The **January** meeting was a follow up on the meeting where members were invited to join **workshops on Fundraising, Campaigns, Events and Communications**. The idea was to involve members in the activities that would create a viable, forward looking group that will have the capacity to work effectively to make a real difference.

The **February Meeting** highlighted the scandal of the **deportation of a pensioner** classed as an Illegal Immigrant 50 years after living here and paying taxes. Hers is just one of the many stories of people who have suffered this injustice. LAMPAG has indicated that it would support measures that will address this troubling state of affairs. This issue will be raised at the NPC at Regional level. On a cold wet 3 **February** we joined thousands of NHS campaigners to call for increased funding and more staff. I would like to thank the outgoing committee for their commitment, support and guidance when needed. Thank you to members for your support, generosity and principled stand to uphold pensioners’ rights. Let us build the organisation and turn LAMPAG into the **action group** that it is.

