

# GIVING A VOICE TO YOUR EXPERIENCE

**Voice  
of  
Experience  
Forum**



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## VOICE OF EXPERIENCE FORUM NEWSLETTER

### WE HOPE YOU ARE SAFE & WELL



Welcome to this, the third, edition of the Voice of Experience Forum newsletter for 2020. We hope that you all continue to be safe and well.

Staff are currently working from home but can still be contacted during working hours on the details provided in the blue panel on the left hand side of this page.

Please read our message on page 2 regarding the rescheduling of our AGM which normally takes place in August each year. Given the fluidity of the current pandemic, we felt it best to push the date back to give us the best opportunity to see you all in person. We look forward to a time when we can all meet again without social distancing.

### OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Voice of Experience continues to develop its own community response to the pandemic. With the easing of lockdown restrictions continuing, we have once again contacted our members to see how they have been coping during this difficult time and also issued a mini newsletter in June. We have now undertaken the following:

- ◆ 237 Individual members contacted by phone or letter
- ◆ 57 registered Group members, with 38 confirmed contacts
- ◆ 37 Organisation members, with 31 confirmed contacts
- ◆ 17 welfare/befriending checks per week resulting in 467 of these calls to date.

As a result of the above work, we have referred members who require support, to local anchor organisations and support organisations across North Lanarkshire relating to various enquiries including medication collections/drop offs, grocery shopping/delivery, Pension Credit checks, Befriending and Mental Health Befriending services.

# VOICE OF EXPERIENCE FORUM — IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

## RESCHEDULE OF OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Due to the current Covid-19 outbreak, we have taken the difficult decision to reschedule Voice of Experience Forum's AGM, which is normally held at the end of August. This year's Annual General Meeting will now take place on [Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November](#) in **St Margaret's Church Hall, Airdrie**, subject to current restrictions being lifted to allow attendance.

We hope to have our members, key speaker, stallholders and other local organisations present, to permit the normal AGM business to take place before attendees are provided with lunch.

Alternative arrangements are also being considered to allow us to hold the meeting via Zoom should restrictions remain in place or be reintroduced. The organisation will be guided by government guidelines to ensure that the health and wellbeing of attendees will be our highest priority at all times.

## WEBSITE RE-LAUNCH

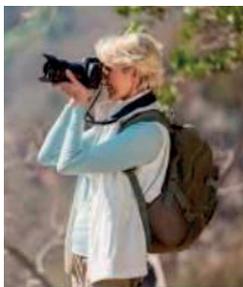
We are pleased to announce the re-launch of the Voice of Experience Forum website! Please search for [www.voef.org.uk](http://www.voef.org.uk) in your browser and see what information is available.



We are always looking to improve, so if you have any ideas or suggestions on what else you would like us to include, just complete the contact us form and we will see what we can do.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Douglas Milne from VANL for the help and support he has provided with this project—Douglas you've been amazing!

## PHOTOGRAPHIC SUBMISSION FOR OUR 2021 CALENDAR



We know how much it has been missed, so we are delighted to announce that, with help from funding provided by NLC Discretionary Funding to support Voluntary and Community Organisations, we are currently in the process of compiling our 2021 Voice of Experience Forum calendar.

With this in mind, we are inviting people to submit photographs or images which they or family members may have taken during the Covid-19 period which could have been taken on walks or drives, in their gardens or when seeing friends or family. The image should show what Voice of Experience means to you—community spirit, companionship, hobbies, activities, information, support etc. The image selected will become the front cover of our 2021 Calendar. ***The deadline date for submissions is Monday 3rd August 2020—so get snapping!***

**Please email your images to [info@voef.org.uk](mailto:info@voef.org.uk)**



# NPC CAMPAIGNS—FREE TV LICENCE FOR OVER 75'S & PENSION TRIPLE LOCK

## FREE TV LICENCE FOR OVER 75'S—UPDATE



On Thursday 9th July 2020, the BBC announced that it is to go ahead with a plan to end free TV licences for most over-75s, after a two-month delay because of the coronavirus pandemic. That means more than three million households will be asked to start paying the £157.50 fee from 1 August. Only those who receive the Pension Credit benefit will be exempt.

The NPC are bitterly disappointed by this announcement, but will be continuing to campaign for this universal credit to be administered by the government. In a press release NPC General Secretary, Jan Shortt, has said: “The news that the free TV licence for over 75s is to end from 1<sup>st</sup> August is absolutely devastating for the millions of pensioners who rely on their television for information, entertainment and company.”

The majority of over 75s are not online - so forcing them to switch off unless they pay for a licence is depriving them of their only means of obtaining key messages and, for many, their only companionship. This may well have a profound impact on their health and well-being in general, particularly if, as predicted, the coronavirus spikes again this winter.

Over 75s will now have to choose between switching off permanently or finding the money for the licence to stay switched on - which could leave many having to decide between their TV or eating and heating. It is a choice that they should never have to make in the 21st century.

## THE STATE PENSION ‘TRIPLE LOCK’

The NPC has also written to Chancellor Rishi Sunak asking that he urgently commit to protecting the state pension ‘triplelock’ after reports it may be under threat in his next Budget. Introduced in 2011, the triple-lock guarantees that the basic state pension will rise by a minimum of either 2.5%, or the rate of inflation, or average earnings growth - whichever is greater. But speculation is rife that the Chancellor will get rid of it—or possibly freeze it for two years—to help cover the cost to the nation of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Currently the UK state pension is the least adequate in the economically developed world with a replacement rate of just 29%. There is also an inequality between the (two-tier) schemes with the old scheme having only the basic element triple locked, whereas the whole of the new scheme receives the triple lock. Therefore, the oldest, most vulnerable pensioners have the least income and the gap widens every year. Many NPC members have already expressed their fears and anger at any move to axe the triple-lock. Brian Allen from Somerset said: “I was deeply concerned to read that future pension rises are being threatened by the possible abolition of the Triple Lock. The Think Tank Brigade yet again aiming at the older generation. “They don’t fully appreciate the important part older people play in the country’s economy” Read the NPC letter to the Chancellor in full, at: [www.npcuk.org.uk](http://www.npcuk.org.uk)

*NPC Campaign Bulletin 155—June 2020 (abridged)*

# MAKING LIFE EASIER IN NORTH LANARKSHIRE

## VoEF Membership

**FREE** Membership of Voice of Experience Forum is open to anyone over the age of 60 and organisations representing older people in North Lanarkshire.

Benefits of becoming a member include:

- Regular Newsletters
- Invitations to events
- Involvement in consultations
- Your views & opinions being heard by other agencies
- Influence in the planning of service provision for older people

VoEF also deliver presentations throughout North Lanarkshire.

If you run a group or attend a group for individuals over the age of 60 and would like to book VoEF for a presentation, please get in touch with Denis O'Keefe using the details on page 1.

Remember, Membership is **FREE!**



Making Life Easier is Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire's quick and easy online tool to guide you to the support you need. It was developed with assistance from health professionals, carers groups, local support groups and our partnership organisations. If someone is having difficulty with everyday activities or any other aspect of their health and wellbeing, this service is for them.

It is available 24 hours a day and 365 days a year and provides local information where you can find support groups and activities in your community, professional advice which covers a wide variety of conditions and gives people the information to make an informed decision. Just visit the website and access the Local Information or General Health Information areas.

People can get direct access to services by completing an online assessment. To do this, you, your family or a friend need to create an account. A completed assessment will give you personalised solutions and direct access to support such as equipment available for long term loan or services including further assessment with our Occupational Therapy Team when you are not matched to suitable equipment. Your further assessment can be arranged through Making Life Easier, using the online booking system with a choice of area and appointment availability to suit. No call to Social Work is necessary as a confirmation letter will follow.



Visit the website: <https://www.makinglifeeasier.org.uk>

If you require further information, support to access the website or wish to make a general enquiry about their services, please contact the Disability Information Officer; Carole Blades on **07815521899** or by email at [makinglifeeasier@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:makinglifeeasier@northlan.gov.uk).



### FOUNDATION SCOTLAND—THANK YOU!

We would like to say a great big 'Thank You' to Foundation Scotland's Covid-19 Response Recovery Resilience Fund for awarding us a grant to purchase computer equipment to allow staff to work more productively from home during the current pandemic and beyond. Their support for our organisation will also allow us improve our digital connection with our members via online platforms.

