

GIVING A VOICE TO YOUR EXPERIENCE

Voice
of
Experience
Forum

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VOICE OF EXPERIENCE FORUM NEWSLETTER



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Contact us at

Airdrie Business Centre,
1 Chapel Lane,
Airdrie
ML6 6GX

Tel: 01236 439550

Email:
info@voef.org.uk

Web:
www.voef.org.uk

WE HOPE YOU ARE SAFE & WELL



Welcome to this, the second edition of the Voice of Experience Forum newsletter for 2021. We hope that you all continue to be safe and well during this time of restrictions easing. We are all looking forward to seeing our friends and family again.

Staff continue to work from home and can 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 planning of our AGM which takes place in August each year.

DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR OUR MEMBERS

VoEF has continued to develop partnerships and resources designed to combat social isolation and loneliness among its members during the pandemic. We continue to hold our monthly board meetings, and conduct our regular business via the Zoom platform. In addition to this, we are now in a position to resume the delivery of information sessions via Zoom to those who have access to, and are able to use, a digital resource such as a smart phone, tablet or PC. VoEF has a number of devices available which can be loaned, on a short term basis, to those without a device. A temporary internet connection can also be provided.

For those members who are not connected and would like to learn the skills required to use a digital device, we can also arrange remote training, where a trained worker can support you without the need to visit your home. Upcoming sessions will include Social Security Scotland Benefits for Older Adults and a session about Pension Credit entitlement.

If you would like more information please call us on **01236 439550** or email us at either info@voef.org.uk or denis@voef.org.uk and we will get back to you as quickly as possible.

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE FORUM — IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

AGM

VOEF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

Due to the success of our previous online AGM, coupled with the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and the uncertainty surrounding it, we have taken the decision to plan Voice of Experience Forum's 2021 AGM as a "hybrid" meeting. This means that we will plan for a traditional meeting supplemented by an online version to allow a wider audience to attend.

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 25th August at St. Margaret's Church in Airdrie and also via the Zoom platform.

Further information will follow in due course.

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY SURVEY



Voice of Experience Forum invited members to participate in an online Question and Answer session with Tom Hester (Community Care Strategy Officer) in March. The main topic of discussion centred around specialist and adapted housing, with a particular focus on the views and opinions of older adults. There were some excellent issues raised and we await feedback on these.

This stage of the survey has closed however, we would wish to continue being involved in the process and will continue to invite members to participate in this going forward.



STAY ALERT TO SCAMS

There are still unscrupulous people trying to scam people out of money in a number of ways. These include:

Automated phone calls

Amazon Prime phone call scam where customers are called and advised of a security breach and asked to download Team viewer. This can be used to access your bank account.

Calls from supposed Broadband providers saying that you will be cut off.

If you receive any calls asking for bank details – hang up immediately

Many also ask to press 1 to opt out. **DO NOT** do this. End the call immediately.

Texts

Royal Mail - customers are receiving texts advising that a parcel is due for collection with an outstanding amount to be paid first. If you receive these, ask your postman to check this for you.

Emails – TV Licensing send emails from **donotreply@tvlicensing.co.uk** (or **donotreply@spp.tvlicensing.co.uk**). Scammers often hide the true email address they are using, **check the email address**. On your device, select the sender's name (or email address) to show the actual email address.

Other scams include those purporting to be from: Pension, Census 2021, National Insurance and HMRC. These can be checked and reported to the Action Fraud website using the link <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/> 0300 123 2040.

NPC CAMPAIGNS—FREE TV LICENCE FOR OVER 75's (What happens next?)

NO BBC 'ENFORCEMENT LETTERS' - but what happens in 2022?



© Can Stock Photo

The National Pensioners' Convention is to ask the BBC to clarify if its stance on not sending TV licence fee enforcement letters to over 75s will continue into next year.

The NPC welcomes fresh confirmation from BBC Director General Tim Davie that the corporation won't send 'enforcement letters' for non-payment - which could see older people in court - to those who have previously held a free TV licence.

But NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt wants the Director General to explain what happens when the BBC negotiates the new TV licence fee level with the government in 2022?

In a letter to Mr Davie, she will also ask if he accepts that continuing to send frequent reminder letters to over 75s who haven't paid, makes them feel worried and intimidated. Jan Shortt said:

"I would like to think that our contact with the BBC and the information we were able to share with them about the hardships faced by many older people who now have to find an extra £157.40 has had something to do with their current stance. But this is only a temporary reprieve. We need to know as soon as possible what people will be faced with in 2022."

BBC Director General Tim Davie first signalled that he would not pursue enforcement or prosecution against older people at a meeting with the NPC last October. In his email to Lord Botham, Mr Davie wrote: 'There are no visits taking place in relation to over-75 licences at this time. We have been very clear that we are giving people time to transition which has been extended further because of Covid. We are continuing with that policy.'

Pensioners over 75 had to start paying the TV licence fee last year and only those in receipt of pension credit were exempt. The BBC has now transitioned 3.6million households to paying, with the majority of over 75s households paying in one go. More than 770,000 have applied for free TV licences.

The corporation took on responsibility for funding TV licences for over-75s as part of the charter agreement with the Government in 2015, but has since said it cannot afford to continue. In January, the Government said it was not going ahead with plans to decriminalise non-payment of the fee.

Jan Shortt said: "The NPC is very clear that the government has responsibility and accountability for social welfare. The free TV licence is one element of universal pensioner entitlements in lieu of the most inadequate state pension in the economically developed world. However, the government are not responsive to our argument which in turn shows a desperate lack of understanding of the financial constraints under which older people live. They are dismissing the fact that their actions are responsible for over 75's just above pension credit limit falling into poverty whilst juggling a fixed income to cover increasing bills and living costs and having to pay for a TV licence."

INFORMATION FROM ACROSS 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!**

LIFTING FAMILIES OUT OF FUEL POVERTY



NLC has reduced the number of households living in fuel poverty in North Lanarkshire by 4,000 over the past year, improving the lives of its tenants and residents and reducing carbon emissions. This year's Scottish House Condition Survey results show the significant progress being made in tackling fuel poverty and NLC's commitment to meeting the Scottish Government's 2040 Fuel Poverty target.

Fuel poverty is when a household cannot afford to heat their home to a comfortable level. This can be because of low income, poor insulation and the cost of the energy being used. Just one of these factors, or a combination, can affect people's ability to heat their homes. NLC are now delivering results and having a positive impact across homes, lifting people and families out of fuel poverty.

NLC's Financial Inclusion Team can offer practical help and advice to households experiencing fuel poverty and can be contacted on 01698 332551 or at FIT@northlan.gov.uk.



BOOTS ADVANTAGE CARD—EXTRA POINTS FOR OVER 60's

If you already hold an Advantage card, once you turn 60, you can join the over 60's Rewards Club. To do this, ring 0345 070 8090 and someone will link your account to the over 60's Rewards Club. Once linked, take ID into your local Boots to activate your account.

Among the benefits of joining the club include 8 points per £1 spent (normally 4 points for under 60's). Collect extra points when you shop, access more discounts and receive invites to exclusive events

THANK YOU

Local Activities Programme Fund -

We would like to say a great big 'Thank You' to the Local Activities Programme Fund for awarding us £2364.68 via the Airdrie consortium. This will contribute towards the cost of producing the 2022 calendar. The calendar will be used to provide information and promote community supports and events in line with our aims.

Carol Wallace—

A big thank you also to one of our members, Carol Wallace, who has raised £3421.22 for the Beatson Cancer Charity over the last 4 years. Well done Carol.

