



ZOOM Meeting – Northants Community Branch, Retired Members, 20 February, 7pm.

Dear Retired GMB Member,

We have decided as a branch to approach our retired members to directly ask their views as to their expectations from our union now that you have moved from paying membership to free membership. Your years of experience and commitment to the union is something we value, but more importantly, it is that knowledge and experience that we are keen to harness to make the branch and the union stronger going forward and we would like to hear from you.

As a retired member myself I know that there are many issues that we need to face in the coming years under this new Labour Government. Sadly, when I talk to retired people I hear them say nobody really cares about us and they fear for the future, especially in getting access to proper health care should they fall ill. Again, from my own recent experience of being in hospital, it's difficult not to notice that our health care system is in crisis and when it comes to social care we are even more despondent and anxious.

The truth is, that this new government inherited a system in crisis. As it stands, there are over 130,000 vacancies in adult social care today, GPs are taking collective action and 30 pharmacies are closing every month. It is truly heartbreaking that in the 21st century people are not getting the service they should, that health inequality is worsening and statutory duties have become harder to deliver. We clearly need a vision, a plan to build a better stronger future. I believe, that in order to do that, to shape a better future we have got to understand the past.

Nye Bevan built a National Health Service that was fit for 20th century and now together we must build a national care service that is fit for the 21st century. Unfortunately, we are a very long way from where we need to be to fix this broken system and we can't do that with sticking plaster's, we need fundamental reform. We have a voice; we have our union and we need them to shout out and be heard. They have the ear of the government and we need them to act strongly on our behalf. It is for that reason, that we need to hear what you have to say.

As the population ages, the needs and expectations of older people become increasingly significant in shaping the policies of any government. Older people, who have contributed to society throughout their lives, deserve a government that recognizes their contributions and addresses their specific needs. Hopefully, this informal meeting will explore what older people want from a Labour government, focusing on key areas such as healthcare, pensions, social care, and community engagement

As I said previously, one of the most critical issues for older people is access to quality healthcare. Older individuals often require more medical attention due to age-related health issues. They expect a Labour government to improve NHS services. Ensure that the NHS receives adequate funding to provide timely and efficient services. This includes reducing waiting times for appointments, procedures, and treatments.

We need to expand services that cater specifically to the needs of older patients, such as geriatricians, specialist nurses, and dedicated wards in hospitals. Mental health support with access to mental health services, recognizing the importance of addressing issues such as dementia, depression, and anxiety among older adults.

Promote and fund preventative healthcare measures to help older people maintain their health and well-being, including regular screenings, vaccinations, and health education programs.

Financial security is a major concern for older people, many of whom rely on pensions as their primary source of income. They expect a Labour Government to protect pension benefits, safeguard existing pension benefits and ensure that they keep pace with inflation, providing a stable and sufficient income for retirees. Is it too much to ask for increasing the State Pension? Raise the state pension to ensure that it provides a decent standard of living, reducing the risk of poverty among older people.

We now recognise and have been told, that public funds will be tight and that the incoming Government will have to make some difficult choices. Recently, Age UK was pressing the Government to grasp the challenges and opportunities of our rapidly ageing population. Unfortunately, after what has been a wasted decade since the Government in 2012 commissioned a House of Lords select committee to report on how we need to prepare for ageing, relatively little or nothing has been done to act on its conclusions. We need a change of direction!

As a trade union, I am acutely aware that we need to support those working in social care, without a dedicated workforce, the whole system will just collapse. On the important topic of social care, we need this government to take immediate action from the incoming government to improve the pay and conditions of staff working in social care. To pursue a commitment to identify a sustainable income stream to fund a process of thoroughgoing reform and for more support for unpaid carers, many of whom are older people themselves.

With that in mind, we are holding a **Zoom meeting on the 20th February 2025 (detail below)** to discuss the issues facing older people and their expectations from the incumbent government. We want to hear from you. The meeting is an informal chat to say hello and to welcome you to this new group and hopefully set an agenda for discussion going forward. Please drop by and say hello!

Alan Irwin

Branch Secretary

GMB Northants Community Branch

Meeting details:

Topic: **GMB Northants Retired Members Meeting**

Time: Thursday 20th February 2025 at 7:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83376190374?pwd=wPKV0EVtfsWS5pR77ahICgWlekKR5B.1>

Meeting ID: 833 7619 0374

Passcode: 525833