

Speaking out on social care

DELEGATES from the Eastern Region will be leading the way in speaking out on social care at this year's UNISON national retired members conference.

This is clearly a major issue for retired people, many of whom rely on social care.

It is also a major issue for UNISON as the main trade union representing social care workers, who continue to suffer low pay and job insecurity, leading to chronic staff shortages which is one of the main reasons the service is in such a crisis.

A conference motion from Norfolk County UNISON accuses the present government of "tinkering around the edges" while social care is falling apart, adding: "What is needed is a commitment to the creation of a National Care Service, free at the point of need in the tradition of the NHS. This would provide services for

older people both at home and in residential and nursing care if that represents the assessed need of individuals."

An amendment proposed by Norfolk and Norwich Acute Hospitals branch adds: "It would also ensure that staff were properly paid and trained, with full employment rights and protections as outlined in UNISON's Ethical Care Charter."

The motion concludes with a call for the union's national retired members committee, and the union as a whole, to take the lead in making representations on social care to governments and devolved administrations throughout the UK.

Hopefully the motion will be passed by the Conference, so watch this space for the next steps in this vital campaign!



Telford bound for conference

THE annual Retired Members Conference will take place in Telford on 18-19 October.

Each branch is entitled to send delegates according to the size of their membership and the region itself has one delegate. This year that will be James Porter from Norfolk County branch, who is also secretary to the regional committee.

We will provide a comprehensive report from conference which will appear in the next newsletter.

The region has two motions on the agenda on the pensions triple lock and on card-only transactions and access to cash.

There is also a motion from Norfolk County on social care with a possible amendment from Norfolk and Norwich Hospitals. These motions were prioritised by the regional committee on 6 September.

If you are a delegate, we

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hope you will enjoy the experience and remember that James will be available for help and advice throughout the two days of conference.

We intend to hold a very informal get together of delegates at 7pm on Monday 17 October at the Thomas Botfield pub, Telford Shopping Centre, TF3 4JL.

We've chosen this as it's relatively close to the International Centre and seems to be quite central to Telford. It would be useful if delegates wear their lanyards just so we can identify each other. There is no other purpose than a chance to meet together before Conference begins the following day.

We also want to take the opportunity to stress the importance of coming to the pre-conference meeting on the evening of 18 October which will be somewhere in the conference centre and detailed in the pack you receive from the conference arrangements team.

This is open to approved visitors as well as delegates and will be very helpful in preparing for full conference on the 19 October.

TV licence change won't stop the fight

IT'S OVER two years since over 75s lost the automatic right to a free TV licence, in that time since many organisations have been campaigning to reverse that decision.

From June this year it has been easier to claim a free licence if you claim pension credit due to reforms laid in Parliament.

Over-75s on pension credit no longer have to fill out paperwork when applying for, or renewing their licence.

While eligible older people currently have to fill in forms to prove they receive the benefit, the legislative change will allow the BBC to verify this automatically with the Department for

Work and Pensions without the need for paperwork.

This move will mean 7,000 people who apply for a free TV licence each month will be able to do so more quickly online or over the phone.

This small improvement will not stop campaigning to reinstate the free licence for all over 75s and it is interesting that in France, the licence fee has been scrapped to "increase the buying power of French households," to be replaced by a government grant for public broadcasting.



AGM date announced

THE EASTERN region retired members AGM will take place at the UNISON Centre, Euston Road, London on 16 January 2023 at 10am for 10.30am.

The AGM, which is open to all retired members, will elect the 2023 committee decide its priorities for the coming year.

We will hear from the regional secretary and regional convenor

as well as having the opportunity to determine future policy.

Any member can attend but if they wish to claim expenses, this can only be done with the approval of their branch.

Branches will also have the opportunity to nominate members of the committee and the programme for this will be announced in the coming months.



A Toothless rally in Bury St Edmunds



Long (queues) in the tooth

A BBC/Guardian report this month revealed that most dental practices in the East of England (and the rest of the country) are not taking new NHS patients.

In Luton, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk 100% of practices contacted were not taking new NHS patients.

It wasn't much better elsewhere in our region, with numbers all above 80%.

The survey of 7,000 NHS dental practices found that nine in 10 were not accepting new adult patients for any treatment paid for under the health service, with adult patients unable to register in a third of the UK's 200 local authority areas.

The reasons are several — not least needing to train up dentists but also the danger to those already working that they will make a financial loss as the cost of giving treatment goes up but the payment they get does not.

And of course there is the cost of paying technicians and other staff - many of whom may be UNISON members.

A campaign called Toothless in Suffolk may have been the first to raise the alarm about the situation when it was discovered that there were no practices in their area taking new patients.

Other Toothless campaigns have now sprung up elsewhere including in Norfolk and there is now a national campaign co-ordinating all the regional ones — you can find most of these on Facebook (you don't need a Facebook account to see them).

UNISON has not formally supported these campaigns but it can only be a matter of time.

This writer knows from experience that the older you get the more dental problems you may get and the more they cost.

Please support any campaigns near you.

You're never too old to do some exercise

IF YOU'VE avoided physical exercise, getting some strength back into your bones could be a good starting point.

Yoga and Pilates exercise are readily available at your local gym and there are free online videos on YouTube.

See also your local Age UK they may also run free exercise classes for seniors.

Age UK run chair-based exercises classes, where a trained instructor will take you through a series of fun, simple exercises to music.

Many local authorities offer free walking groups for you to join.

Walking for Health is a free walking programme offering supported walks across Pe-

terborough, while Cambridge City Council has developed a programme with the ramblers called Wellbeing Walks.

The walks are led by trained volunteers, and they are free to join and everybody is welcome.

These are just two local authorities offering free walks, and throughout the Eastern region there will be many more who offer these types of programmes.

Joining exercise classes you can meet new people many people come on their own to exercise, and leave with a group of new friends.

No matter what your age or ability, there will always be an exercise for you. In taking part you'll find you feel much better.

Ways to make exercise enjoyable and rewarding

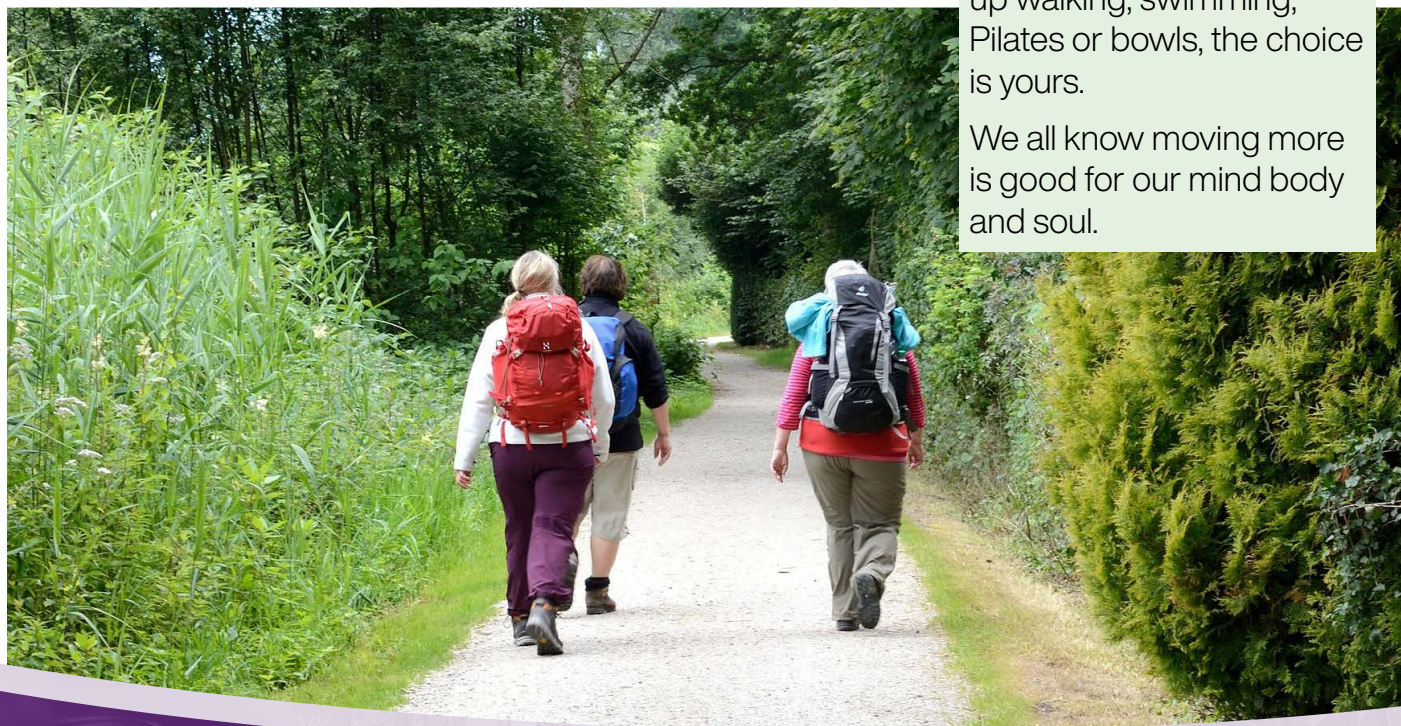
Make it sociable: exercise with your friend

Pair exercise with something you love: love music how about a dance class?

Reflect on your progress: You can keep a record of how you feel after exercise, and note down any changes to your health (if you want to)

Choose what's right for you: If you decide to take up walking, swimming, Pilates or bowls, the choice is yours.

We all know moving more is good for our mind body and soul.



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