



Party Conferences 2025: Putting older people at the heart of public policy

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Introduction

Meeting the challenges of an ageing society is one of the most pressing challenges facing UK society and politics, and will leave no aspect of public life unaffected. It needs collective commitment and energy to address, and we all need to be thinking deeply about the future and how age-friendly services can best be designed and delivered.

This brochure has been designed to support you to consider the needs of older people through your work in Parliament, by detailing the key challenges facing older constituents, and providing pragmatic solutions across a range of policy issues.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the experience of ageing is considered in policymaking across Government, and is made comfortable and safe for both this generation and those to come.

Meet the team



Paul Farmer CBE
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Caroline Abrahams CBE
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Putting older people at the heart of public policy

Work with us

Become an Age Champion

Our Age Champion MPs are at the forefront of our mission to ensure that every older person is included and valued.

They commit to championing their older constituents by:

- speaking up in parliamentary debates
- tabling written and oral questions
- writing to ministers
- sharing Age UK's information and advice with constituents
- engaging with their local Age UK.

We support our Age Champions to speak up for older people by sharing bespoke policy analysis, constituency data and supporting with parliamentary work. We are building an exciting programme of exclusive events, including receptions and briefing events, and would love to have you on board.

Join the APPG on Ageing and Older People

The APPG on Ageing and Older People engages with political and legislative issues affecting people in later life.

Following the completion of a year-long programme on 'inequality', in 2025-26 the cross-party group will be focusing on older people's agency through sessions on energy, social care, and communities.

The first meeting will be a joint session with the charity Age International, looking at older people's human rights, the UN Convention on the rights of older people, and the benefits of an Older Person's Commissioner in England.

To become an Age Champion or join the APPG for Ageing and Older People, please contact publicaffairs@ageuk.org.uk

An older Black woman with glasses and a younger white woman are sitting at a table, looking at a laptop. The older woman is wearing an orange shirt and the younger woman is wearing a light blue shirt. The background is a kitchen with a kettle and some dishes on a counter.

Digital **exclusion**

Technology is set to transform many aspects of our lives for the better over the next decade. It's essential that during that transformation, the significant number of offline older people aren't left behind.

19% of older people in the UK – equivalent to 2.4 million people – use the internet less than once a month or not at all. This is more common among:

- older Black (32%) and older Asian people (26%)
- older people who live alone (30%), older women (22%) and older people struggling financially (22%).

For many people who are offline, everyday tasks – such as booking a health appointment, banking, and applying for benefits – are becoming increasingly challenging and, at times, impossible.

The Government's approach to digital transformation must be truly inclusive and innovative. This should include preserving offline access to services, and making the most of assisted digital support (e.g. supported Zoom calls with GPs), which can help realise the benefits of digital tools for those lacking the skills to use them independently.

At the same time, older people who want to get online should be supported to do so.

The Government should:

1. ensure that all public services offer and promote an affordable, easy-to-access, offline way of reaching and using them
2. develop the Digital Inclusion Action Plan into a fully funded strategy with meaningful actions to protect offline access and support older people who want to get online to do so
3. protect access to cash and banking by (a) changing legal requirements to ensure that banks maintain face-to-face services and (b) working with the banking industry, retailers and local governments to ensure that consumers can continue to use cash.



Energy

The Government's plan to transition to a renewable energy system must deliver for all parts of society – and that means it must be one that people can afford and believe in. A fair deal for financially vulnerable households is key to that.

Putting older people at the heart of public policy

Millions of households either have to pay more than they can afford just to stay warm or are forced to live in cold houses during winter. This presents particular risks to older people and those living with disabilities and long-term health conditions. High energy prices and a fall in the relative value of government support are leaving many in real hardship:

- the percentage of the average bill covered by a Warm Home Discount rebate has halved since the beginning of the crisis
- only 3-8% of the average annual bill is now covered by government energy support, a drop from 12-14% since 2022.

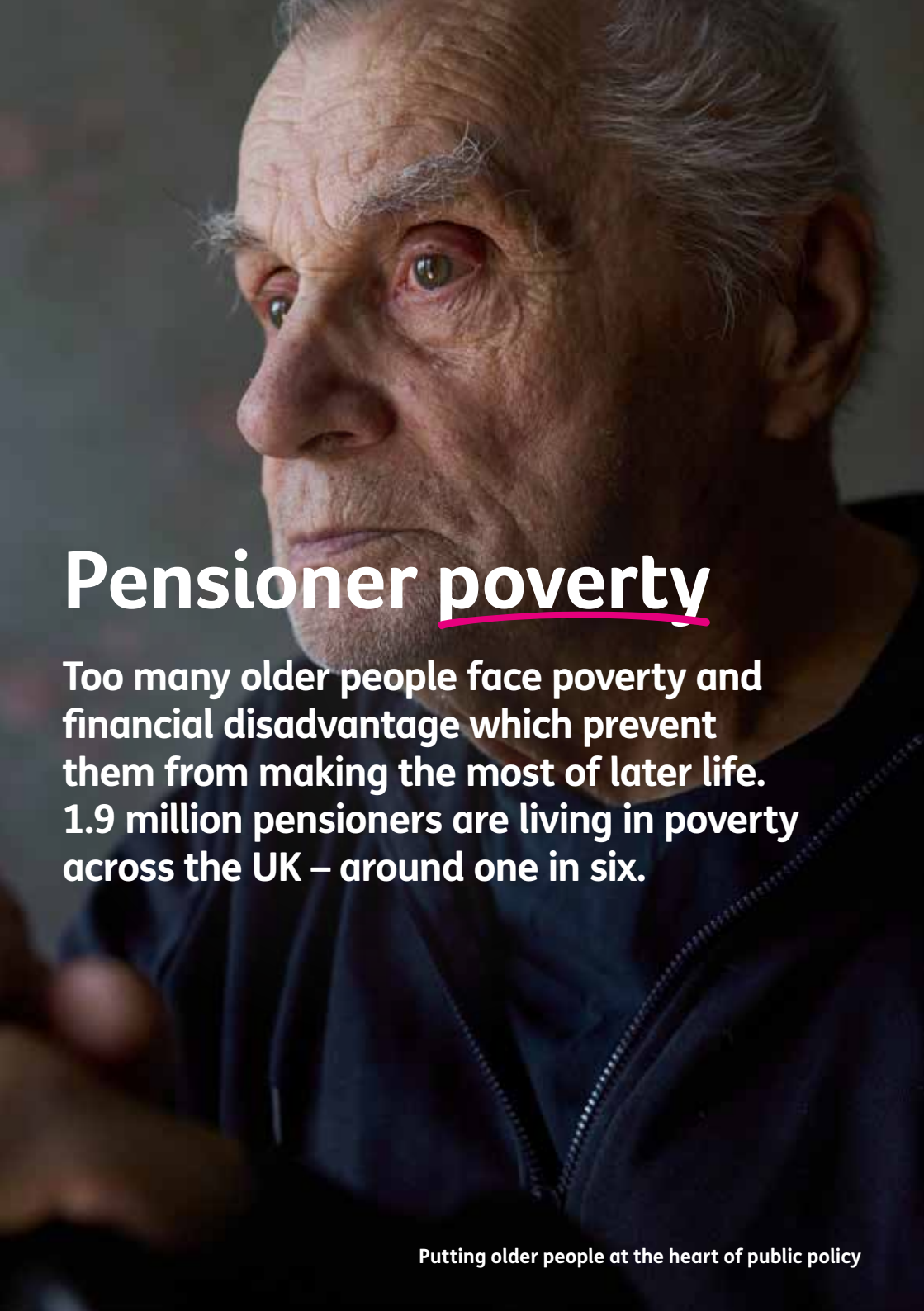
Households owe more than £4 billion to energy suppliers, and this figure is continuing to rise. Energy companies can pass the cost of unpaid bills onto everyone else - so if people can't afford to pay, it drives up prices for others too. Right now, it's costing consumers £1.5 billion per year.

Rising energy debt and worsening fuel poverty are threatening the stability of the market and, more importantly, are leaving vulnerable

people unable to heat their homes. With the right intervention, the Government can ease the pressure, cut fuel poverty, and deliver a fairer system that works for the long term.

The Government should:

1. extend the Warm Home Discount beyond March 2026 to avoid a cliff-edge in support
2. increase support to at least £400, in line with the fuel poverty gap
3. work with Ofgem to address record levels – over £4 billion – of household energy debt through a relief scheme
4. consult on a fairer way of targeting energy support and retrofitting initiatives based on income and need—not just benefit eligibility.



Pensioner poverty

Too many older people face poverty and financial disadvantage which prevent them from making the most of later life. 1.9 million pensioners are living in poverty across the UK – around one in six.

Pensioner poverty

Once people have reached retirement, they often have little opportunity to increase their pension income or savings. Consequently, the most poverty vulnerable pensioners are renters, single people, older pensioners, women, disabled people, carers and people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds.

January 2025 polling showed that older people have been struggling as much as they did at the height of the cost-of-living crisis of 2022:

- 41% of those surveyed are having to cut back on heating their home
- One in five (21%) said that they were having to cut back on food, rising to 30% of older people with a disability and 33% of those receiving means-tested benefits.

The State Pension must provide an adequate foundation for people's income in later life – one in eight pensioners rely fully on the State Pension and other entitlements – through continuing the triple lock.

Pension Credit is the main means-tested benefit for pensioners. However, many miss out – people may not know what is available, may

feel they are not eligible for any help, may be put off by the claim process, or feel reluctant to ask for help.

We are also very concerned about those just below State Pension age. Among people aged 60-64, 22% were living in poverty in 2023/24 – this is the joint highest rate among all age groups over 24. The forthcoming rise to the State Pension age will just exacerbate this issue.

The Government should:

1. review pensions adequacy, including the role of the State Pension and means-tested benefits, to ensure that the system delivers for current low-income pensioners and future pensioners
2. develop a sustained and strategic approach to tackle the persistently low take-up of Pension Credit and other pensioner benefits
3. tackle high poverty rates among people below the State Pension age.



The crisis in A&E and 'corridor care'

The inability of many A&Es to process people swiftly and effectively is causing long, uncomfortable and unsafe waits, and is scarring the NHS. It is a phenomenon that disproportionately impacts sick older people.

The crisis in A&E and ‘corridor care’

At worst, older people can wait days to be admitted to a bed on a ward. This often becomes ‘corridor care’: older people on trolleys or chairs in overspill passages, even converted cupboards, because there are no beds available. 10 years ago, corridor care was unheard of, today it is almost normal:

- in 2024 a third (32%) of people aged 90+ attending A&E waited 12 hours or more to be admitted or discharged home
- people who wait more than 12 hours in A&E are more than twice as likely to die within 30 days than those who were seen within two hours.

It is impossible to provide good, dignified care in these ‘war zone’ conditions, which staff deplore as much as patients. Older people are at heightened risk in these spaces, lacking the equipment, staff and environment to support them safely.

Ultimately this crisis is a symptom of wider problems in our health and care system: an over-reliance on hospital care and insufficient emphasis on supporting older people

to stay well at home, and then recover fully after a hospital stay.

The Government should:

1. urgently produce a fully funded operational plan to end corridor care and long A&E waits
2. establish a robust system to collect and publish regular data on how often corridor care and long waits happen, and the impact on patients
3. appoint a DHSC Minister with responsibility for ending corridor care who reports progress to Parliament
4. turbo-charge a peer learning programme for hospitals and ICBs to share proven solutions, tackle barriers to discharge and protect and support NHS staff
5. work at pace to implement the NHS 10 Year Plan, especially the ‘hospital to home’ shift and creation of a Neighbourhood Health Service, ensuring social care and the VCS are fully played in.

Housing

The quality of an older person's housing is central to their experience of ageing. People living in poor conditions have worse health outcomes, and are more likely to experience loneliness and poverty.

Much policy discussion is limited to specialist housing (care homes, retirement villages, etc) and downsizing. Focusing solely on these solutions ignores the fact that most older people – over 90% – live in mainstream homes, many will age in place, and the current system has not produced sufficient accessible homes for an ageing population. Quality, accessible and adaptable homes must become the norm.

The Government should:

1. require all new homes are built to the higher accessibility standards of Part M4 Category 2 of the Building Regulations
2. ensure local housing plans explicitly consider the needs of older people across both general mainstream and specialist housing.

Equalities

Ageism is pervasive in our society. Too often older people's needs are not properly considered in policymaking and service delivery. Older people with other protected characteristics, such as women, and those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, may also experience multiple forms of discrimination.

The Government should:

1. establish a Commissioner for Older People and ageing in England
2. implement Section 14 of the Equality Act on combined discrimination to help to tackle intersectional discrimination faced by older people
3. deliver justice for Windrush scandal survivors by implementing the full Wendy William's review recommendations and including workplace pensions in the compensation scheme
4. support the creation of a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons to recognise and protect their rights.