

FEBRUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER

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Building Our Capacity

It is a well known fact that when threatened with policies and practices that will affect their livelihood, freedoms, standard and quality of lives, people mobilise in their existing groups, organisations and unions to collectively confront the issues. They form a united front to speak with one voice to act to defeat the attacks. Communities and especially the most vulnerable are suffering untold hardship as a result of the Government's Austerity measures. As an older people's group we have a role to exercise our right to organise ourselves and to speak up for each other.

In the present climate of cuts to our services, threats to our universal benefits and a Government determined to rip up

what we have built over the years, we need to build up our capacity to organise, mobilise and to take action to counter and defeat the onslaughts. To do this we need to speak with a strong voice and join with likeminded organisations to bring about change.

This 'togetherness' was clearly demonstrated at the meeting called by Lambeth Older People's Alliance (LOPA) recently. Our February meeting will be given over to addressing the urgent issue of building our group's capacity to meet the challenges that face us by getting more involved in organising and mobilising for change.

OPEN MEETING
Monday 15 February 2016
The Old Laundry
Stockwell Gardens Estate
20 Eastcote Street
Stockwell SW9 9BY
12.30pm to 2.30pm

We will be organising a workshop where members will have input into discussing how we, the membership can become more involved in building up the organisation. Your voice, ideas and decisions are important and need to be heard. We hope to have your views on how we can strengthen and develop our Communications, Finances, Campaigns and Events programmes in order to make our group even more effective and credible. Come and be part of this important task of building our capacity.

**Warm and Well Event
Stockwell Resource Centre
Friday 26 February 2016
1pm to 3.30pm
1 Studley Road
London SW4 6RA**

LAMPAG has been awarded funding by Age UK Lambeth to hold a Warm and Well event. The event will take the form of a social afternoon and will give us an opportunity to share personal stories of our experiences and those of people we know of life in 2016 Britain. The idea is to also talk about the positive self-help strategies that we have developed to live well and positively despite the challenges we face. There will be opportunities to access information and support on how to maximise our capabilities to remain warm, well, active and positive. We hope to target older people who are housebound and who would enjoy coming out to a social afternoon on how to keep well and warm.

Light refreshments, Information, fun and more.

Lambeth Older People's Alliance (LOPA)

LAMPAG members joined a cross section of voluntary groups at a meeting of the re-launch of LOPA. LOPA was re-launched in response to Lambeth Council's proposed cuts to older people's services and funding to older people's centres. These cuts will exacerbate loneliness, social isolation and poor health caused as a result of previous cuts. The cuts have been proposed without consultation and without an equalities impact assessment of the impact of former cuts to older people's services.

Dot Gibson, General Secretary, NPC said that older people face many challenges of pensioner and fuel poverty, social care and health services in crisis. The NPC stands up for today and tomorrow's pensioners. There was a need for intergenerational action against Austerity with younger people who faced similar concerns. We needed to show that working together can be done as has been demonstrated in the LOPA meeting.

John McDonnell MP Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer said that Austerity has brought absolute and untold misery on whole communities and the Welfare State was being systematically dismantled. Austerity is not working and has been caused by reckless bankers, the suppression of wages, tax avoidance and evasion. It was a political choice **not** an economic necessity. The Labour Party stood for investment in a fair taxation system. People wanted hope and an alternative understanding of the world. There was an alternative. We had a responsibility to defend the right to live in a civilised society.

The mood of the meeting was that of disbelief that a Labour Council would cut the very services that people depended upon and that they would neglect other essential services like heating.

Contributions from the floor raised concerns amongst others of safeguarding adults with mental health problems,

unreliable heating on council estates, cuts to library services, the fragmentation of police services and the TTIP proposals that will increase the privatisation of the NHS.

It was clear that the Council is not listening and ignoring the demands of people to share ideas and strategies to

tackle them. It was crucial that we got together pooled ideas, strategies and actions to oppose and defeat the cuts for **'United we stand and divided we fall'**. LOPA looks to building the resistance against the Lambeth Council cuts by joining forces and campaigning around the issues.

Kill the Bill

LAMPAG member were seen on the march to Downing Street against the **Housing Bill**. Protesters are angry about proposals to sell off council and housing association homes and introducing two to five year tenancies for transferred and new tenants.

The Bill also proposed local authorities being forced to sell 'High value 'council homes' not fund extending right to buy to Housing Associations. Under the new policy announced at last year's budget, families or an individual earning more than £40,000 a year in London and more than £30, 000 elsewhere will be to pay local

authority rates rather than lower social rent. The Housing Bill will worsen Britain's shortage of homes. It will condemn ten of thousands of hard working families to leave their council homes and find themselves unable to afford a local alternative.

As pensioners we need to defend people's right to decent affordable social housing and for older people to live in safe, warm, well insulated homes updated to support independent live in our later years.

Junior Doctors' Day of Action

Junior doctors in England will take a second day of action after contract talks ended without agreement. They will carry out a 24 hour strike action from 8am Wednesday 10 February to 8am Thursday 11 February. They will provide emergency services.

The Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt has accused the BMA of behaving in a 'totally irresponsible' way in the ongoing dispute about junior doctors' contracts. In turn the BMA has accused Jeremy Hunt of spreading 'misinformation' about the terms being offered by the government and of fuelling a sense of grievance among its members.

The government is introducing a new contract for junior doctors as part of the drive to put the NHS on a seven day working basis.

Although some of the issues have been realised there is still a dispute about the expectation that doctors will work on Saturdays without receiving premium pay. The BMA claims the Hunt was ignoring the need for the NHS to receive more staff and more funding. Doctors were already working around the clock seven days a week and they do so under existing contracts. If the government wanted more seven day services, they need more doctors, nurses, diagnostic staff and the extra investment needed to deliver it.

Doctors provide an essential service. They are the backbone of the NHS and as service users of hospital services, we need to give them our support. We must defend the Junior Doctor's right to strike for enhanced working conditions. The NHS is buckling under mounting pressure and needs to be protected and preserved.

It is our NHS.

Committee meeting: Monday 22 February 2016, Manor Court, 11am to 1pm.

