

TRAPPED & STRESSED in social isolation, but DOES ANYONE CARE ENOUGH

As Coronavirus figures grow across Scotland, the Scottish Government has tightened the regulations to combat the pandemic and drive down the infection levels. Early signs are that the measures are working and we're being slowly hauled back from recent levels.

The Government efforts are commendable, but we have to ask if enough attention is being paid to how the elderly are faring during these difficult times.

Much has been said and done to offset the effect of COVID on the 'mental welfare' of students who are in locked down. On the other hand, little regard seems to have been paid to the social effect and 'mental welfare' of older and equally vulnerable, members in our communities.

Many elderly people live alone - devoid of daily contact with others. Close families more often than not live outwith their Region. Pensioners don't have the skills to use computers or smartphones (even if they have them). Many fear going outside - even to walk their dog - during the hours of darkness. They are not able just to pop-in to their neighbours for a 'blether and a wee cup of tea'....

For some, local pubs with beer gardens provided an invaluable point of contact for older people to continue to meet informally.

Help us to keep in touch with you

The Scottish Committee has been looking at how it can improve its contact with Retired Members across the country.

With about 11,000 Retired Members in Scotland, postage and printing costs would be too great to have a regular (monthly or even quarterly) newsletter.

The easiest cost-effective way is to produce a copy which is 'electronically' mailed to branches - who can then send it out to their own members, but that depends on local Branch Offices having the resources and time to distribute it quickly.

The obvious answer is to 'modernise' and send copies direct to all members by e-mail, for whom we have e-mail addresses.

Put yourself on the regular circulation list. Simply send your e-mail address to liam.chalmers@sky.com. All names and addresses will be secure and never shared with other members or commercial outlets.

The more we get on the list, the better it will be. Keep in touch with your UNISON and let UNISON keep in touch with you!

They could go there for a natter with their pals and others in similar circumstances. That's now been vetoed in most parts of Scotland.

Many older people are now suffering from acute stress by this enforced 'social isolation'. It will have serious long-term consequences for many pensioners - perhaps much greater than the effect the regulations is having on our young people and students.

Many old folk are "trapped and stressed" in social isolation - but does anyone care enough?

General Secretary Ballot

The ballot is now running and you should have received your ballot paper by now.

The ballot is being run on our behalf by an independent organisation called Civica Election Services (CES).

The pack contains everything you need to cast your vote

- A ballot paper
- Information on the candidates and a
- Pre-paid envelope to post your completed ballot back

Select your preferred candidate - and post your completed ballot in plenty of time (to get to CES by 5th November 27. It's freepost, so don't need a stamp.



Dave Prentis current General Secretary will be leaving on 31st December. Dave was elected GS in 2000. We wish him "all the best for his retirement.

If anything's missing from your election pack, or you lose your ballot paper, call the ballot helpline free on 0800 0 857 857 or on textphone 0800 0 967 968.

The BBC has U-TURNED

on its plan to do away with free TV Licences for UK pensioners over 75, following the campaign organised by the Pensioners Campaign Group - SILVER VOICES.

In a letter to SV - the BBC's Director General has agreed that "at this time" no enforcement visits will take place to households who previously held free licences and nor will enforcement letters be issued to this group."



SV's Director, Dennis Reed, has also raised the propriety of any enforcement visits taking place to older people under 75 during current lockdown restrictions. Dennis had earlier written to Clare Sumner, the BBC's Director of Policy, arguing that "the dangers of doorstepping vulnerable people

and calling on many households in a day are obvious and could result in super-spreading events".

Dennis told us "The BBC's boasted that 70% of over 75s households have now reached agreement on their licence arrangements. They reach this figure by downgrading the number of UK households requiring a licence by 300,000, and including the 700,000 who are eligible for free licences because they receive pension credit.

"Even on these dubious figures, that leaves 1.26 million over 75s households who are either refusing to pay, or unable to pay, their licence fees" Dennis emphasised.

This licence enforcement amnesty is important as it buys time for greater public pressure on the Government and the BBC to restore free licences."

COVID Vaccine developments

Be ready for your jab when it comes ...

We're all heartened by the recent successful COVID Vaccine developments. Experts are warning we're still a far way off beating the virus, but at last there's definitely a light at what has been a long tunnel ...

They say that pensioners and vulnerable individuals will be among the first recipients when the vaccination programme starts Be ready for yours when it comes ...

Winter Heating Allowance

If you were born before 6th October 1954 you should have received your Winter Fuel Payment by now. It will have been paid directly into your nominated bank account.

You should get a letter from the Dept of Work and Pensions to this effect ...

We'll still need our local Bank

One consequence of lockdown has been how we're using money. With social distancing, shop closures etc, many have taken to internet shopping or to using contactless payment systems ("tap and go" cards). It's faster with no need to footer about with coins.

There's even been some talk of doing away with cash ... but with any luck, there will be a community reaction to that if they try it. Many older people still see the need to visit their bank. Many don't trust or have the facilities or the technical expertise for 'internet banking'.

Keep your eyes open and get ready to protest if there are moves to shut your local bank branch.