

# THE GREEN PARTY'S POLICY STATEMENT FOR OLDER CITIZENS 2017 GENERAL ELECTION / GREEN SENIORS

The Green Party wants to build a better, more positive future for everyone, including for older people.

We believe that society as a whole benefits from strong intergenerational communities where older citizens can play an active role. Older people contribute to the economic and social life of their communities in all sorts of ways – from unpaid caring for grandchildren to voluntary work with charities, religious organisations, and the not-for-profit sector. Many, of course, continue in paid work. Sadly today, many older people are not being offered the support they need to continue playing these crucial roles in our society.

In the UK, the proportion of the population over 65 has continued to rise, and more of us are living longer. While this is something to be celebrated, we also need to make sure that we are providing older members of the community with the support they need. National government policies can play a decisive role in addressing the challenges created by an ageing population and in giving everyone the chance to enjoy a positive experience in later life: not just in terms of physical wellbeing but also in respect, dignity, independence and the feeling of being valued.

The Green Party will campaign for a confident and caring Britain where no-one is left behind, and where older citizens are supported to live fulfilling and happy lives.

## REDRESS PENSION INJUSTICE

The Green Party believes that everyone, regardless of their age, has the right to a fulfilling, safe, and comfortable life. Britain's older citizens have given many years to building our society, and they should be able to depend upon the government to ensure that in their retirement they can maintain a good quality of life.

We are calling for a pensions system that is fair for everyone, with flexible retirement options for those who want to continue working. Equally, there should be provision for those older people who have become carers to parents and partners, potentially losing their own careers early because of a lack of adequate support.

### Our policies:

- » **Work towards the introduction of a Citizens' Pension** to replace the current basic state pension and additional top-up benefits. The Citizens' Pension would ensure that no pensioners are living in poverty, and would be up-rated annually. There would be a supplement paid to pensioners living alone as well as to those with disabilities and special needs.
- » **Take steps towards the introduction of a universal basic income**, which would enable retirement age to be flexible.
- » **Push for a state pension sufficient to cover basic needs** and to enable people to live with dignity as a right, without the need for additional means-tested benefits.

- » **Support fair, transitional payments for women** who have been left in a state of uncertainty following the rapid introduction of changes to equalise the pension age.
- » **Campaign for pension funds to be invested in long-term sustainability projects**, including renewable energy, with divestment from sectors such as coal that are fuelling climate change.
- » **Ensure that there is a good variety of positive work and retirement opportunities available**, including via extending age discrimination rules to the voluntary sector, and ensuring funded opportunities to study adult education courses
- » **Campaign for an increased investment in familial and neighbour carers**, to help safeguard their health and encourage them to keep in touch with their own interests and skills. Ensure the proper implementation of the Care Act, including the legal duty to identify carers and signpost them to support.
- » **Push for a progressively increasing Carer's Allowance**, to ensure that everyone is given a basic income to support themselves.

## COMMUNITIES ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The Green Party believes that the places where we live, work and spend our free time should be open and accessible to all, no matter their age. Good planning of living space, better design of streets and buildings, and community facilities that consider the needs of older people can help to bring people together and enable generations to mix.

It is vital that public services are designed to be age-friendly, and that concessionary travel continues, keeping our older citizens active, healthier and socially engaged, and playing a critical role in keeping services in operation, to everyone's benefit.

### Our policies:

- » **Ensure access to safe, reliable, and affordable public transport**, including subsidised taxis for the less mobile, alongside improvements to provision for pedestrians and cyclists. Timed settings at pedestrian crossings must take into account those with reduced mobility, while 'sight lines' should be kept clear to help those with poor eyesight.
- » **Push for free, accessible seating in public places**, especially for those with mobility and fatigue problems, and ensure that pavement furniture and signage is properly planned and maintained, with hazardous objects removed.
- » **Stop the closure of local post offices, banks and other critical neighbourhood facilities**, and campaign for the government-owned Royal Bank of Scotland to create a network of local people's banks for every city and region, obliged to lend locally and provide cheap basic banking services.
- » **Encourage socially-sensitive 'crime prevention through environmental design'** as opposed to high levels of technological surveillance. Our goal is a convivial and cohesive community, not barriers, division and segregation.

- » **Push for better management of local neighbourhoods that preserve opportunities for older citizens** and invite their active participation, for example through the protection and expansion of allotments and park facilities such as bowling greens.
- » **Support lifelong learning**, via protecting the provision of short courses at local colleges and in community facilities.
- » **Establish funding to support local community centres** providing affordable healthy meals, and a variety of activities and events for older people, such as age-friendly exercise programmes.
- » **Encourage projects that bring neighbours together**, sharing activities and interests, to combat loneliness and build community cohesion.

## HOUSING FIT FOR OLDER CITIZENS

The Green Party wants to make communities fully accessible and inclusive of older people. This includes encouraging the development of high quality social housing, with the flexibility to adjust to increasing care needs.

### Our policies:

- » **Significantly improve housing choice for D/ deaf, disabled and older people** by requiring all councils to appropriately plan for their housing needs and significantly increase the numbers of homes built to lifetime home and mobility standards over the next 5 years.
- » **Campaign to maintain the winter fuel allowance**, and promote schemes to install renewable energy systems and retrofit insulation to suitable buildings, making houses energy-efficient. This will reduce fuel poverty, make homes more comfortable, and provide training and jobs.
- » **Call for the repeal of the National Planning Policy Framework**, which encourages the use of out-of-town greenfield sites for speculative executive housing developments that offer little to older and less-wealthy citizens.
- » **Promote sustainable redevelopment**, including of brownfield sites, where land would be allocated for social housing and for property designed with older citizens in mind - accessible, adaptable and easy to heat and maintain. We would also encourage co-housing schemes for seniors to combat loneliness and increase community cohesion.
- » **Make 'downsizing' easier**, both to enable older citizens to live in more suitable properties and to free up bigger homes for young families.

## INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL CARE

The Green Party recognises that at some point in our later lives, many of us will experience challenges to our physical and mental health.

Our health and social care system needs to help individuals to cope with such challenges, and should be integrated into broader communal provision. Proper preventative public health programmes can save money on care, but there is also a need for major government funding to provide access to good quality social care.

We particularly need to work together to address the range of impacts of the increasing level of dementia. Whilst scientists are researching new treatments for the many forms of this condition, we need to ensure that high quality social care is in place to support sufferers and their families.

### Our policies:

- » **Call for major investment in social care**, including proper integration with health care.
  - » **Enable people to stay in their own homes** if that is what they wish.
  - » **Introduce proper wages for paid carers** and an end to the scandal of 15-minute visits and no remuneration for travel time, for example through our policy of a national Living Wage.
  - » **Reform taxation** so that those with the deepest pockets contribute the most to pay for decent care and adequate pensions for older citizens, and crack down on exorbitant fees for market-driven pension plans and care programmes.
- » **Campaign for concerted action on the problem of elder abuse**, including specific and regular training for community workers, including within the police.
  - » **Increase the emphasis on preventative medicine and health care**, not least with regards to cutting air pollution and improving food quality.
  - » **Protect free prescriptions for over 60s**, abolish other related charges, and extend free prescriptions to other age groups. These are wrong in principle, unfair in practice, and generate little income for the National Health Service. The taxation system would require adjustment to compensate the NHS for the revenue lost.
  - » **Oversee improvements to high quality palliative care**, with services planned and delivered in such a way that avoids discrimination on the basis of age, gender, mental health diagnosis, disability, or any other factor.

---

**For more information on Green Party policies, see [policy.greenparty.org.uk](https://policy.greenparty.org.uk)**

Green Seniors are affiliated to the main body of the Green Party of England and Wales, and open to all Senior Citizens (aged 50+), promoting understanding on matters affecting Senior Citizens and encouraging co-operation with similar bodies throughout the UK, Europe and worldwide.