

Age Concern



Union presses to end forced retirement

THIS WEEK, the TUC conference backed a motion to amend the Employment Equality Age Regulations to stop people over 65 being fired because of their age. The motion was tabled by the University and College Union to protect older workers. The backing adds further pressure on the Government to revise the regulations after a long campaign

by Age Concern to end the use of mandatory retirement ages.

New age regulations that come into effect from October 1 will give older workers new rights in employment, education and training. For the first time older people will have protection from unfair discrimination in recruitment, promotion, training and dismissal.

But the good news only extends to people's 65th birthday. Over 65s can still be forced to retire against their wishes and employers will still be able to refuse to hire someone over 65.

Gordon Lishman, Director-General, Age Concern said: "I am delighted that trade unions have backed our campaign to consign forced retirement to history.

"The Government must acknowledge that mandatory retirement ages do not make any sense. The Government caved into pressure from business, despite the DTI's own figures that show scrapping retirement ages would mean a boost to the economy.

"The Government is now standing at odds with unions, charities, progressive employers and public

opinion. A birth certificate should not be an excuse to hand someone their P45 - age is not a proxy for performance."

Sally Hunt, joint general secretary University and College Union said: "All workers, regardless of their age, should be treated with respect and be fully protected by employment rights. It is the role of the union to fight for those rights."



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Don't miss out on fuel payment

THE NUMBER of older people living in fuel poverty and unable to heat their homes properly this autumn, is likely to have doubled in only two years, warns Age Concern.

Energy price hikes and the falling value of the Winter Fuel Payment in real terms are likely to have caused the number of pensioner households in fuel poverty to more than double since 2004. This means that around 1/2 million households with someone aged 70+ will now be affected by fuel poverty.

Older people are more likely

than any other age group to be affected by fuel poverty. More than one in five (22%) of those over 70 and eligible for pension credit are living in fuel poverty compared with only three in 50 people (6%) in the population as a whole.

The Winter Fuel Payment, aimed at helping those over 60 meet the cost of heating their homes, only makes a small dent in the spiralling costs of energy bills which have reached an all-time high of almost £1,000 per year. Three years ago the £200 payment covered just over one

third (35%) of the average annual gas and electricity bill.

It now covers just one fifth.

To avoid running up huge bills that they cannot afford to pay, many older people heat one room only or only switch on their heating for short periods of time.

Gordon Lishman, Director General of Age Concern, said: "Older people may put their health at risk by turning off their heating in an attempt to reduce their bills.

"We urge all older people to make sure they are getting all the benefits."

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