



## **SOUTHWARK PENSIONERS ACTION GROUP**

### **Manifesto Commitments for May 2026 Council Candidates**

#### **Introduction**

SPAG still feels that the needs of older people are not being given sufficient priority. There was no reference to older people – over 55s – in the Council's 2030 document - although there has been a Cabinet report and some progress on Age Friendly work, it has been slow.

Instead of organising a hustings, SPAG is circulating this document to as many candidates in the coming Council elections to be held in May 2026 as we could contact.

Candidates are urged to review these pledges – with particular focus on the rights and safety of older residents – and formally declare to SPAG whether they will champion these pledges if elected to Southwark Council.

Please email SPAG with your pledges at [info@southwarkpensioners.org.uk](mailto:info@southwarkpensioners.org.uk). If we do not hear from you by the beginning of May, we will assume you are not interested in making a commitment to improve the lives of older people.

#### **Pledges**

- **Equality:** To consult and represent the diverse communities and groups in Southwark and act to counter prejudice and disadvantage in the provision of good quality services for older people.
- **Cost of Living:** To campaign for higher basic benefits (including state and over 80s pensions) based on the London Living Wage, building on the work the Council has done to date in assisting the most vulnerable experiencing fuel poverty. To continue the important support for warm spaces and community kitchens. In this appalling situation of food inflation, to support food banks and approach supermarkets to organise strategies to prevent food

going to waste. To terminate the food voucher system that strips recipients of their dignity.

- **Housing Emergency:** Southwark Council must declare a housing emergency and commit to a radical overhaul of its policies for older people by drastically increasing the supply of high-standard social-rent homes and reclaiming all unoccupied properties through every available legal mechanism. This expansion must be driven by a directly employed, unionised building trades workforce and financed by divesting council pension funds into local social housing projects. Furthermore, the Council must formally oppose rent convergence, guarantee total transparency for retrofitting budgets to eliminate waste. To campaign for a national cap on private sector rents, abolish the Right to Buy scheme and transfer all historic housing debt from local to central government.
- **Planning:** Planning policy must be reformed to give priority to the housing needs of Southwark residents on residential applications, paying particular attention to the needs of older people and those with disabilities, maximising the number of homes provided at Council-set rent levels. Recent decisions show things are going in the wrong direction and it is imperative to campaign to reverse this trend. To ensure greater transparency and resident participation in the planning process.
- **Social and home care:** Involve older people in determining quality standards for care/nursing homes and home care, and introduce a more open system for regular monitoring and reporting on the performance of these services. To deliver two new care/nursing homes in the borough, with input from older people and experts, considering dementia and chronic health problems, providing homes which are well designed and provide the best possible care. To campaign to bring care staff and services 'in house' with adequate public funding, free at the point of need, as advocated by End Social Care Disgrace (ESCaD). To commit to the total abolition of all charges for at-home care services, matching the standard set by Hammersmith & Fulham and Tower Hamlets, where essential home care is provided entirely free of charge to those assessed by Social Services as in need.

- **Health:** We recognise this is the responsibility of the NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) but the Council plays important roles co-chairing the NHS and Council strategic 'Partnership Southwark' through which NHS funds pass to the Council, and in relation to scrutiny, public health and commissioning. Central government must be pressured immediately to reverse the trend of privatisation – the catastrophic failure of the local Synnovis contract being a prime example of why this is necessary. Instead, funding should be allocated to complete capital projects and ensure essential staffing. To transform the public and patient involvement procedures and promote transparency. To protect Ageing Well and develop public health budgets, including the availability of essential vaccines for older people (particularly flu, Covid and RSV) in Age Friendly appropriate settings. Central government's December 2025 Service Specifications made no mention of the role of GPs in respect to vaccine distribution – candidates are urged to play a more proactive role with the ICB in ensuring this does remain the case. To campaign for adequate funding and facilities for primary care, including GPs, in consultation with what local communities and local professionals need and want. To restore Patient Participation Groups. To campaign for the return of 'walk-in' medical facilities for all who cannot access online consultation.
- **Mental Health:** To campaign for the return on the Maudsley site of a 24-hour walk-in place of sanctuary for those in crisis. To commit to requiring that Major Clinical Depression be accepted by the Maudsley as a Serious Mental Illness.
- **Transport:** To campaign to bring transport into public ownership and create an integrated system, which is both affordable and accessible for those on a low-income. To campaign for the provision of lift access to platforms at Peckham Rye, Elephant and Castle and Nunhead stations. To engage with older and disabled people and adopt the Transport for All Equal Pavements Pledge by removing clutter and rubbish, dropping kerbs and protecting Blue Badge bays. To campaign for London Councils to ensure Freedom Pass use times are expanded – not restricted (see Manchester's

work). To continue to regulate and control the use of e-bikes and scooters in the borough, stopping the dangers a minority of cyclists cause, including cycling on pavements. To campaign for TfL to expand the time for pedestrians to cross at controlled crossings, ensuring older and disabled people can cross the road safely. To ensure the Better Buses funds recently allocated for the busway in Southwark are consulted on and well spent.

- **Climate Emergency:** It is recognised that the Council has been doing good work on the issue, but more must be done to make people aware of the crisis, particularly regarding the risk of flooding.
- **Safety and Security:** To partner with the borough's older and more vulnerable residents in designing a public safety system that truly serves their needs. The closure of Camberwell's last physical bank, Lloyds, in June 2026 threatens to isolate our most vulnerable residents. To combat this digital exclusion, we must secure three new [Banking Hubs](#) for the borough, ensuring face-to-face financial services remain a right, not a luxury.
- **Consultation and Transparency:** In all departments, to develop the consultation skills of officers so that any initiative is properly consulted on and set out an annual plan for community consultation within the Council's overall plans, which includes a clear strategy for dealing with digital exclusion. To give feedback to residents and CVS organisations who respond to consultations and publish their comments.