



WASPI CAMPAIGN



Women Against State Pension Injustice

 www.waspicampaign2018.co.uk
 waspigroupnetwork@gmail.com

Annual Report September 2022

1. The Campaign

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman published the findings of stage 1 of their investigation into the communication of changes to women's State Pension age in July 2021. The PHSO found that there had been maladministration by the DWP in communicating the changes to women's State Pension age, albeit during a limited time period.

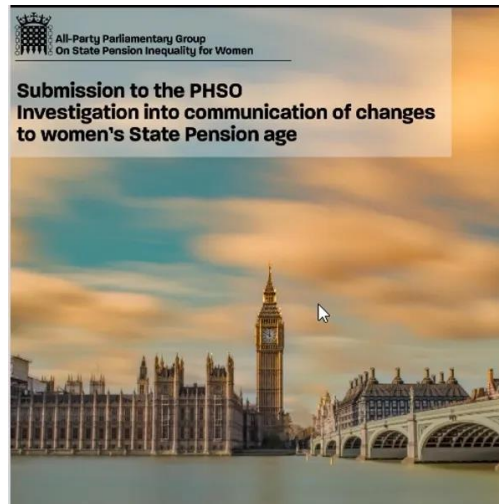
The challenge for our campaign over the last year has been to maintain momentum and morale while waiting for the PHSO's stage 2 findings on injustice resulting from the maladministration. These findings were finally issued in provisional and confidential form to complainants and their MPs in August 2022 and we now await their publication along with any recommendations for "remedy".

In October 2021 we held a silent masked rally at the Emmeline Pankhurst statue in St Peter's Square, Manchester, during the Conservative Party Conference. This was organised under the guidance of Jane Morwood (Chorley) with Elizabeth Stanley (Stroud) acting as Mistress of Ceremonies. There were speeches by MPs Andrew Gwynne and Peter Aldous, the Labour and Conservative co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on State Pension Inequality for Women.



Peter Aldous MP (left) and Andrew Gwynne MP at our silent rally in Manchester, October 2021

In November 2021 we gave evidence to the APPG which informed their submission to the PHSO in January 2022.



Our evidence to the APPG was included in their submission to the Ombudsman

When the PHSO's final recommendations on compensation are published we will need as much support as possible at Westminster. In March 2022 we began an initiative to persuade MPs to sign a simple pledge saying "I support fair and fast compensation for 1950s women". All four of the main party leaders (Labour, Liberal Democrat, Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru) had signed by May 2022 and since then the numbers have been growing steadily.



Opposition leaders have pledged their support for fair and fast compensation

As the first anniversary of the publication of the PHSO's stage 1 findings approached in June/July 2022, we embarked on a "Not Going Away" campaign in the media. More details can be found below under Public Relations.

2. The Steering Group

Eleven Local Group Coordinators were elected to form the Steering Group at the 2021 AGM:

1. Janet Blackman *Lewes*
2. Elizabeth Daly *West Dunbartonshire*
3. Dilys Jouvenat *Rhondda*
4. Pamela Judge *Ceredigion*
5. May Low *Burton* (resigned June 2022) - England representative
6. Jocelyn Morgan *Bridgend & Valleys* (resigned June 2022) – Wales representative
7. Anne Potter *Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Dunbartonshire & Renfrewshire* – Scotland representative
8. Judith Robertson *Salford & Eccles*
9. Hilary Simpson *Cheltenham*
10. Elizabeth Stanley *Stroud*
11. Catherine Williams *Barrow & District* (resigned June 2022)

A further two members were co-opted to the Steering Group during the year: Jane Morwood (Chorley) with responsibility for campaign merchandise and Carla O'Hara (Lothian) with responsibility for the campaign website.

At the first meeting of the Steering Group Hilary Simpson was elected as Chair, Dilys Jouvenat as Secretary, and Catherine Williams as Treasurer. We are grateful to Catherine for getting our accounts on a firm footing until her resignation in June 2022 and to Elizabeth Stanley for stepping up as Acting Treasurer.

Further roles were allocated as follows:

1. Dilys Jouvenat *Vice Chair/Local Group Network Coordinator*
2. Pamela Judge *Vice Chair/Public Relations*
3. Janet Blackman *Social media*
4. Elizabeth Daly *Social media*

The Steering Group has met at least every three weeks via Zoom and during the period 1 October 2021 – 5 September 2022 16 meetings were held. Meetings have been efficiently organised and minuted by our Secretary Dilys Jouvenat. Dilys is also Local Group Network Coordinator and a Vice Chair; she works tirelessly for the campaign and the Steering Group are immensely grateful for her contribution.

3. Local Groups

We currently have 60 local groups - 39 in England, 12 in Scotland and 9 in Wales.

Since the AGM last year, the Local Group Network Coordinator has sent an average of at least one email per week to our Local Group Coordinators to keep them in touch. These have covered a wide range of topics, including materials to support their local work and communications.



Six Coordinator Catch Up meetings have been held on Zoom and there have been two General Meetings, the first in October 2021 to discuss the APPG Call for Evidence and the second in December 2021 to agree our revised campaign ask.

Two Coordinator Surveys have been carried out, the results of which have been considered by the Steering Group and used to inform subsequent decision-making.

The Local Group Network Coordinator has also dealt with 26 queries from coordinators and 21 from interested parties outside the organisation.

The Local Group Directory has been updated and contact has been made with inactive coordinators. Volunteers have come forward to act as Coordinator and Joint Coordinator for an inactive group, and one new group has been formed. There have also been two enquiries about forming new groups but these have not yet come to fruition.

The Code of Conduct has been updated to include an Online Group Protocol. We also produced an information leaflet to help Coordinators support members needing advice on a range of issues following a suggestion made at a Coordinators Catch Up meeting.

4. Public Relations

Over the last 12 months we have had a very active social media presence as well as raising our profile in the national media.

Carla O'Hara (Lothian), who had been running the WASPI Scotland website, was co-opted to the Steering Group to take responsibility for our new WASPI 2018 website which had been designed and set up by a supporter. They have worked closely together to make sure our messages are clear and consistent. The website is regularly updated and pages have been added throughout the year. Our website volunteer also produced a range of graphics to highlight important issues such as the APPG report, the death statistics and our Not Going Away month. Over the last 12 months our website has had an average of almost 500 visitors a week and our performance score (which compares performance with the websites of other similar organisations) was 98%.

Liz Daly (West Dunbartonshire), assisted by Susan Ward (London), has taken responsibility for our public Facebook page which has over 11,700 followers. Janet Blackman (Lewes) manages our Twitter account and has organised training sessions for Co-ordinators which have increased the number of WASPI tweeters. Our Twitter account has nearly 1,000 followers and this number is increasing steadily.

In the past 12 months our Public Relations officer, Pamela Judge, has placed 18 in-depth articles – well over one a month – in the *Daily Express* online, which clearly communicated our views and the campaign's aims. Local press coverage has been good too, usually through co-ordinators using centrally produced template news releases.

The silent rally in Manchester in October 2021 was attended by over 200 people from WASPI and other campaign groups and was covered by the *Daily Express* and several local media.

A constant theme has been educating politicians about our Ask for fair and fast compensation and dispelling some pervasive and persistent myths. After securing pledges from the leaders of the main opposition parties at Westminster (Keir Starmer, Ian Blackford, Ed Davey and Liz Saville-Roberts) we have steadily increased the number of MPs' pledges of support. These appear in a gallery on our website, and many have also attracted local press coverage. Thank you to all the co-ordinators who helped secure these.

We used by-elections and local council elections to raise our profile with candidates of all parties by producing a window poster and briefing note to help WASPI supporters to lobby canvassers. We have also produced an information leaflet for use at party and trade union conferences and other events.

We designated 20 June – 20 July 2022 as Not Going Away Month, and encouraged local groups to organise their own publicity to promote our campaign Ask. WASPI groups in 14 areas of the country organised events and achieved good local and national media coverage. We are grateful to Chrissie Fuller and Jane Morwood (Chorley) for producing the *Fair & Fast Solution* t-shirts which added to the colour at these events. We had our first Conservative MP pledges during this month too.



Local groups found a number of ways to drive home the message during Not Going Away month

The next challenge will be to prepare draft public relations material in preparation for the Ombudsman's formal announcement of their Stage 2 findings.

We are fortunate to have Pamela Judge as our Public Relations Officer and the Steering Group extends its thanks for her professional and supportive approach.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the Steering Group who have given their time and energy selflessly and unstintingly to the work of the campaign over the past year to secure justice for their 3.8 million sisters.

Hilary Simpson

Chair, WASPI (Women Against State Pension Injustice) Campaign 2018

September 2022