





WASPI CAMPAIGN

Women Against State Pension Injustice



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Annual Report September 2023

1. The Campaign



WASPI lobbyists at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham in October 2022 with Peter Aldous MP, Co-Chair of the State Pension Inequality for Women All Party Parliamentary Group

It's now over two years since the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) published the findings of stage 1 of his investigation into the communication of changes to women's State Pension age. His report 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 once again been to maintain momentum and morale while waiting for the PHSO's final recommendations, as well as keeping MPs updated on what is an increasingly complex situation. The PHSO's stage 2 findings (on injustice resulting from the maladministration and possible remedies) were issued in provisional and confidential form to complainants and their MPs in August 2022, but were found to be flawed in a number of respects. We organised a discussion by Zoom for co-ordinators who are PHSO complainants to discuss the failings of the report, and complainants were encouraged to communicate them to their MPs.

Following legal action by our fellow campaigners at the Women Against State Pension Inequality Campaign, which we supported, the PHSO agreed in May 2023 to reconsider

his provisional findings on injustice and compensation. We continue to await the publication of his final report and recommendations.

When the recommendations are eventually published (and assuming they are acceptable) we will need as much support as possible at Westminster to ensure that they are implemented swiftly and fairly. During 2022-23 we have continued to urge MPs to sign a simple pledge saying "I support fair and fast compensation for 1950s women". A gallery of these can be found on our website at <https://waspicampaign2018.co.uk/westminster-supporters>.



WASPI lobbyists at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool in September 2022

In October 2022 we lobbied the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool and the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham, and had a stall at the SNP Conference in Aberdeen. In January 2023 I represented the campaign at a private meeting of supportive Labour MPs at Westminster, and a similar discussion is planned with supportive Conservative MPs in September. However, no party has so far made an unequivocal commitment to the implementation of the PHSO recommendations or included such commitments in their party manifestos.



WASPI stall at the SNP Conference in Aberdeen in October 2022 with Martyn Day MP

Nevertheless, in response to a question by Rebecca Long Bailey MP (one of our most active supporters at Westminster) in May 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak did confirm that the government would “respond appropriately to any recommendations”.

“Will he commit to the fair and fast payment of any compensation that is recommended by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman to 1950s women for the injustice they have suffered due to maladministration by the Department for Work and Pensions?”

Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Prime Minister’s Questions, 3 May 2023



“Of course we will respond appropriately to any recommendations.”

Rishi Sunak, Prime Minister’s Questions, 3 May 2023

We continue to receive support from a number of major Trades Unions and one of our Coordinators, Carol Garfield (Solihull), proposed a motion of support which was carried unanimously at the UNISON Women’s Conference in February 2023.



Carol Garfield (Solihull WASPI) at the UNISON Women’s Conference

2. The Steering Group

The following Local Group Coordinators were elected to form the Steering Group at the 2022 AGM:

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| 1. Janet Blackman | <i>Lewes</i> |
| 2. Elizabeth Daly | <i>West Dunbartonshire</i> |
| 3. Dilys Jouvenat | <i>Rhondda</i> |

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|----------------------|---|
| 4. Pamela Judge | <i>Ceredigion</i> |
| 5. Carla O'Hara | <i>West Lothian</i> |
| 6. Anne Potter | <i>Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Dunbartonshire & Renfrewshire</i>
<i>(Scottish groups representative)</i> |
| 7. Judith Robertson | <i>Salford & Eccles</i> |
| 8. Hilary Simpson | <i>Cheltenham</i> |
| 9. Elizabeth Stanley | <i>Stroud & District (English groups representative)</i> |

At the first meeting of the Steering Group Hilary Simpson was elected as Chair, Dilys Jouvenat as Secretary, and Elizabeth Stanley as Treasurer.

Further roles were allocated as follows:

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|-------------------|--|
| 1. Dilys Jouvenat | Vice Chair and Local Group Network Coordinator |
| 2. Pamela Judge | Vice Chair and Public Relations |
| 3. Janet Blackman | Social media (Twitter) |
| 4. Elizabeth Daly | Social media (Facebook) |
| 5. Carla O'Hara | Website |

The Steering Group normally meets at least every four weeks via Zoom; during the period 7 October 2022 – 15 September 2023 13 meetings were held. Steering Group meetings continue to be efficiently organised and minuted by our Secretary Dilys Jouvenat, who is also our Local Group Network Coordinator and a Vice Chair.

3. Local Groups

We have a total of 55 local groups - 35 in England, 11 in Scotland and 9 in Wales.

Our groups are vital in keeping the campaign alive at a local level and now that COVID restrictions are a thing of the past, members have been able to meet in person once more. Groups have continued to meet with their MPs wherever possible, and a number have organised motions of support from their local councils.



Birmingham WASPI group meeting with their MP Paulette Hamilton

Groups have also taken part in a number of local events to raise and maintain awareness of our campaign. The Durham WASPI group joined the Durham Miners Gala; the Glasgow, Lanarkshire, East Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire group took part in Sma' Shot Day in Paisley; the Castleford/Yorkshire group took part in the Banners Held High event in Wakefield; and in April 2023 a number of groups including Hartlepool, Aberdeen & Shires, West Lothian, Stroud & District, Burton, Salford & Eccles and West Dunbartonshire took part in events to mark International Workers Memorial Day.



Hartlepool WASPI laying a wreath on International Workers Memorial Day in April 2023

In March 2023 our groups were well represented at the International Women's Day rally in Parliament Square organised by 1950s Women United, and at other International Women's Day events. The West Dunbartonshire Group worked with the local council to organise a flag raising ceremony and the Salford and Eccles Group had a stall in a local supermarket promoting the group and the campaign. Many groups also arranged for local landmarks to be lit up in purple. Template news releases, leaflets and placards were made available to groups participating in the rally and in local events, and merchandise was available to purchase.



Ceredigion WASPIs with Hywell Williams MP at the International Women's Day rally in March 2023

The Local Group Network Coordinator sends regular emails 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. In addition, seven Catch Up meetings for Coordinators have been held on Zoom.

4. Public Relations

During the last year our fellow campaigners at Women Against State Pension Inequality, working through their PR company, have carried out an increasing amount of media activity, resulting in regular articles in the national and local press as well as some broadcast interviews. This has enabled us to focus on our campaign's online presence and liaison with MPs. We have produced leaflets for party conferences, provided template letters for sending to MPs and template releases for the local press. We have also 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.

Many thanks to Pamela Judge who produces our press and PR material and to the coordinators who have used these to get our message across.

Carla O'Hara (West Lothian) is responsible for our website, which had 14,000 visitors over the past year and a performance score (which compares performance with the websites of other similar organisations) of over 95%. Liz Daly (West Dunbartonshire), assisted by Susan Ward (London) is responsible for our public Facebook page which has 11,000 followers, and Janet Blackman (Lewes) manages our Twitter account which has over 1,000 followers.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the members of the Steering Group who have once again 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 2023