

WASPI SCOTLAND APPG EVIDENCE OCTOBER 21

WASPI Scotland co-ordinators thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on PHSO Stage 1 report July 2021.

WASPI Scotland is closely associated with WASPI 2018.

We want to concentrate our efforts in going forward, pointing out where we see major flaws in the report & the actions we would be keen to pursue in preparation for the next PHSO stage.

There is no doubt DWP has provided incomplete, inaccurate, incorrect and untimely information repeatedly over a number of years and this has seriously impacted the decisions made by 50's born women regarding income beyond the age of 60, when they expected to reach retirement age & receipt of State Pension.

Whilst happy the PHSO have already found maladministration we further believe injustice has/is being suffered due to poor communication from DWP since 1995.

In summary our response to the PHSO stage 1 report is :

- Between 1995 & 2004 (approx. 10 years) information / communication with 50's born women in relation to State Pension age changes has been sadly lacking, if at all. Not enough emphasis on their failure to keep women informed.
- Letters were apparently issued April 2009 - March 2011 to women born 6/4/1950 – 5/4/1953, & these women, though affected, were not delayed to the extent of 6 years.
- The PHSO report repeatedly implies during the period 2006-2009 (28 months) DWP could have communicated the changes better. This does not reflect the enormity of the non-communication, misinformation or injustice endured 1995-2005.
- **Point 94, 98,& 145** Significant no of women identified in DWP research 2000/2001 unaware of changes to their State Pension age. DWP were unable to provide a copy of their 2000/2001 research findings, but information is included in 2004 research findings.
- **Point 114.** The proposed schedule for issuing letters included women who turned 60 between April 2010 and May 2015. How did DWP propose to tell those turning 60 after May 2015? (whose State Pension age had increased to 65 under the 1995 Act).
- **Point 115.** Unpublished DWP research from 2007 found 85% of women aged 48 to 59 knew State Pension age to be equalised, but many women did not know when it would happen. The research also found 50% of women whose State Pension age had risen to between 60 and 65, and 36% of women whose State Pension age had risen to 65, still thought that it was 60. DWP told us that if people are aware of the changes, they can find out their own State Pension age.
- **Point 116.** An internal DWP memo from April 2007 described the 2007 research findings as 'depressing reading'. The memo reflects on lack of progress since 2004 and on the prospect of future complaints from women. It states:

'You floated the idea of contacting the Ombudsman to get a feel for how she would react to claims from women saying they had never been told or were not aware that state

pension age is increasing. In the light of the lack of upward movement from our 43% base figure from 3 years ago, we suggest putting this off until we can explain our strategy from here to get the message over. If we go now, we face being painted into a corner. Despite a really strong defensive brief, we still have 50% “ignorance levels” with three years to go. [The Ombudsman’s] first question will be what are you proposing to do about it?’

- **Point 131 -133 & 138.** Leaflet APF1(August 2004) contained a serious inaccuracy & though the error was corrected Nov 2005 women had already been misinformed.

- **What would we like APPG to do?**

We would like the APPG to continue showing support for 50’s born women & take on board the many personal stories & evidence provided. It is essential all members of the APPG show an understanding of the poor treatment 50’s born women have been subjected to since 1995. One particular area of concern relating to Scotland which comes up regularly, is that the Scottish Government could find a solution by way of the Scottish Act. Sections 24, 26 & 28 however, this has proven not to be the case. NI payments were made to UK government & is therefore a UK issue. Perhaps this type of inaccurate response could be challenged by APPG.

What would we like MP’S to do? Simply engage with & enlighten other MP’s about the campaign. It would be welcomed if members of the APPG continue to demonstrate a willingness to work with each other & cascade their support for Women born in the 50’s up & down the ranks of their political party. MP’s support across all parties will be crucial when PHSO eventually reach a decision on suggested compensation level & the government will have to be convinced to take action on PHSO recommendations.

WASPI Scotland have a cross party group in Holyrood. We include representation from WASPI Ltd & WPIYPO. For some time now the CPG have recognised that allowing earlier access to State Pension, women born in the 50’s could be regarded as part of the solution to assist with the country’s economic recovery, particularly post Covid. This would allow retirement & free up much needed positions for the younger or unemployed.

We are currently organising a week long exhibition in the Scottish Parliament where we will have the opportunity to meet with MSPs from across Scotland & highlight our concerns.

Perhaps something similar could be held in Westminster?

Many MSP’s include updates on the campaign in their constituency newsletters & social media with contact details for the local 50’s born women groups.

Would this be an option for MP’s across all parties to pursue?

Ayrshire WASPI group carried out research & indicates the effects lack of state pension has on individuals, their families & the local economy.

Sadly, this situation will be replicated across the UK. (See attached)