



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dr Carolyn Wilkins
Chief Executive
Oldham Council
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Our Ref: KHM/PARK02002/02170588

21 March 2017

Dear Dr Wilkins

Thank you for sending me copies of resolutions made by the Council on Local Government Funding and Women's State Pension Age. I apologise for the delay in responding, which is due to the sheer volume of correspondence I have recently received.

I agree with the Council's motion on local government funding and the choices made by the Chancellor at the Autumn Statement. As you will be aware, additional funding was announced at the Spring Budget for Social Care, but this is nowhere near enough to meet the chronic underfunding to date.

There was also nothing at all on the devastating cuts to social security support including tax credits, ESA WRAG, Universal Credit Work Allowances and the Bedroom Tax, not to mention the recent PIP cuts pushed through in emergency regulations, all of which I have been opposing vigorously in the House. There was also no mention of the promised affordable starter homes or concrete action on homelessness and housing. I will continue to use every opportunity available to me to challenge the Government's priorities for public spending.

On the Women's State Pension Age I agree with the Council that the Coalition Government's decision to accelerate the rise in the women's state pension age had a devastating impact on many women who were born in the 1950s.

I support the equalisation of the state pension age, however, I believe it is vital that changes to the state pension age are carefully implemented so that those who are affected, are given adequate notice of the changes and have enough time to plan for the future. The decision to accelerate the rise in women's state pension age has meant that women born in the 1950s did not have enough notice of changes and could not plan for their new circumstances. The impact of these changes has been further exacerbated by the Government's failure to communicate the changes.

Debbie Abrahams MP is proud to represent the people of
Alexandra, Lees, Saddiworth, Shaw & Crompton, St Mary's, St James' and Waterhead

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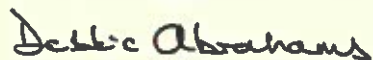
We have repeatedly called on the Government to deliver on its promise to look at transitional arrangements for the 1950s women but they have consistently failed to engage. Labour recently announced plans to help end the plight of women in Oldham East and Saddleworth, abandoned to live in poverty by the Tory government's changes to their state pension age.

Under Labour's plan, Pension Credit will be extended to those who were due to retire before the chaotic pension age increase of the Conservative-led Coalition Government. This would alleviate the worst of the impacts for the most vulnerable women, and restore some of the dignity many of them feel they have been robbed of.

My colleague, Alex Cunningham MP, Shadow Pensions Minister leads on this specific issue and I know he has been engaging with a number of groups, including WASPI, WASPI Voice, 60/63 and others on this issue. We are actively working with the various groups to expand upon these policy proposals.

Thank you once again for writing to me and for highlighting these issues.

Yours sincerely



DEBBIE ABRAHAMS MP
Oldham East and Saddleworth

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