

Amendment: Compensation for WASPI

Moved by: Cllr Holly Harrison

Seconded by: Cllr Umar Nasheen

Insert

Delete

The 1995 and 2011 Pension Acts saw the State Pension age for women rise from 60 to 66, the 2011 Act being supported by the Coalition Government and steered through Parliament by the Pensions Minister, Liberal Democrat MP, Stephen Webb.

Unfortunately, but the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) consistently failed to adequately communicate these changes from 2011 despite the Act bringing forward to November 2018 an increased pensions age for women to 65. As a result, tens of thousands of women were plunged into poverty. A recent survey by the WASPI Campaign of its members found that one-in-four affected women struggled to buy food and one third fell into debt. This was an avoidable scandal.

A landmark Ombudsman report in March 2024 told the Government to pay compensation and apologise to 3.6 million, women born in the 1950 's who were affected by the lack of communication in relation to their State Pension age. The report concluded ministers from the Coalition and Conservative Governments failed to properly notify those impacted by the changes.

However, the DWP – under the new Labour Government - has indicated it does not accept the findings of the report. Compensation to up to 3.5m women ranging from £1,000 to £2,950 each would cost between £3.5bn and £10.5bn. A 2006 survey found that 90% of affected women knew about the planned changes in pension age.

Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) calls for fair and fast compensation for the financial and emotional hardship caused by DWP failures. WASPI argues for the highest level of compensation for the worst affected, i.e., women who had the shortest notice of the longest increase to their state pension. The worst affected women received just 18 months' notice of a six-year increase to their state pension age. WASPI continues to call for: All Members of Parliament to support the urgent delivery of fair and fast compensation to all those affected; and compensation scheme proposals should be brought before MPs to vote on as quickly as possible. However, the Ombudsman's report only addressed the issue of communicating the planned changes and did not recommend compensation for the change itself.

This Council notes that more than 11,600 WASPI women across Oldham Borough stand to lose out on compensation after the Labour Government decided to ignore the independent ombudsman's assessment and go against their long-held policy to support WASPI women. It is estimated that the compensation owed to impacted women across Oldham Borough would be a minimum of £11,642,500.

This Council notes that previous Labour Leaders of this Council have referred to the situation facing WASPI women as "an injustice" and as recently as March 2023, Oldham Labour were still campaigning to put that injustice right.

This Council also notes that despite the parlous state of the public finances and scorched earth policy pursued by the previous Conservative Government, the current Labour Government has committed to the 'triple' lock on the state pension which means the state pensions is rising by £470 a year in April 2025.

This Council reasserts its support for the WASPI women and ~~regrets the previous Conservative Government's delay in responding to the Ombudsman's report leaving the decision of~~ incoming Labour government to ~~decide whether the~~ ~~ignore an~~ independent ombudsman's assessment that compensation should be paid to them.

Council resolves to instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions ~~Right Hon~~ Liz Kendall MP asking her to look again at this decision.

~~Council further resolves to instruct the Chief Executive to write to the three MPs who represent Oldham Borough as well as the Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, calling on them to publicly support justice for WASPI women.~~

Amended motion to read:

The 1995 and 2011 Pension Acts saw the State Pension age for women rise from 60 to 66, the 2011 Act being supported by the Coalition Government and steered through Parliament by the Pensions Minister, Liberal Democrat MP, Stephen Webb.

Unfortunately, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) consistently failed to adequately communicate these changes from 2011 despite the Act bringing forward to November 2018 an increased pensions age for women to 65. As a result, tens of thousands of women were plunged into poverty. A recent survey by the WASPI Campaign of its members found that one-in-four affected women struggled to buy food and one third fell into debt. This was an avoidable scandal.

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However, the DWP – under the new Labour Government - has indicated it does not accept the findings of the report. Compensation to up to 3.5m women ranging from £1,000 to £2,950 each would cost between £3.5bn and £10.5bn. A 2006 survey found that 90% of affected women knew about the planned changes in pension age.

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This Council reasserts its support for the WASPI women and regrets the previous Conservative Government's delay in responding to the Ombudsman's report leaving the incoming Labour government to decide whether the independent ombudsman's assessment that compensation should be paid to them.

Council resolves to instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Right Hon Liz Kendall MP asking her to look again at this decision.