

Motions

The following Motion has been submitted by Councillor Amanda Broom:-

WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality)

The Council calls upon the Government to make fair transitional state pension arrangements for all women born on or after 6th April 1951, who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age (SPA).

Additional information:

On behalf of Somerset residents and women born in the 1950's I ask for your support with the following issue:

Significant changes to the age women receive their state pension have been imposed upon women born in the 1950's. These changes were imposed with little or no notice and take effect much earlier than was promised. Some of these women have been hit by more than one increase. We do not disagree with the legislation which results in these changes, but rather with the inadequate notice given to this group of women - in some cases as little as two years. We are seeking transitional payments to assist with the financial hardship resulting from the accelerated increase in State Pension Age, which has disproportionately affected this group of women.

WASPI women are among the worst affected by the speed up - those born 6 April 1953 to 5 April 1955 – who were written to in January and February 2012. In 2012, they were aged 58 when they were sent a letter telling them that their pension age would not be 60, but would be almost 66.

Some women, of course, may have discovered previously that their pension age had already been extended once. For them the letters sent in 2012 arrived only between four and eight years before that revised pension date. It told them that their state pension age was to be extended further by between two and eighteen months. Again, they are in the group hardest hit, facing an eighteen month extension to the original extension.

The accelerated increase in SPA does not affect only women. Men married to women born in the 1950's are in many cases, 3 years older than their wives. Their financial plans for retirement included their wife's pension. In the case of a wife born in 1954, she will not receive her pension until she is almost 66 when her husband will be 69 years of age. The man's pension must now also support his wife, not just himself, for four unplanned years. This married couple were not given the necessary information in time to make provision for this massive shortfall, even assuming that it would have been possible at such a late stage in both of their careers.

To further aggravate the situation, the number of qualifying years required for a full state pension has recently been increased from 30 to 35 years. For those women unable to obtain employment sufficiently well paid to merit National Insurance Contributions this will result in a further 14% reduction in their pension when they eventually receive it, in our case some 6 years later than anticipated.

Hundreds of thousands of these women are suffering financial hardship, with not enough time to re-plan for their retirement. With no other source of income, securing suitable work is proving impossible, and zero contract hours or Job Seekers' Allowance is the only alternative for many.

The following Motion has been submitted by Councillor Graham Oakes:-

Funding of Community Pharmacies

This Council notes:

- The £170 million reduction in NHS funding for community pharmacies announced on 17th December 2015 which could put many out of business.
- The announcement made by the Government on 5th September 2016 of the delay to the cuts which were due to be introduced in October 2016.
- The scrapping of the plans to introduce a "hub and spoke" model for all community pharmacies.

This Council believes that:

- The Government's plans threaten patient access to pharmacies and pharmacy services in the South Somerset District Council area and that recent announcements are causing uncertainty about future investment in pharmacy services.
- Our local pharmacies are at risk of closure or being forced to cut services such as free delivery of prescription drugs, family planning advice and advice on medicines.
- This will put more pressure on GPs and hospitals and impact on social services and is at odds with the Clinical Commissioning Group's desire to increase the use of pharmacists to ease pressure on GPs.

This Council resolves to:

1. Request that the Chief Executive (or Leader of Council) writes to the Secretary of State for Health, calling for the Government to abandon these cuts, rather than just simply to postpone them, and to make a commitment to maintain a fully-funded community pharmacy service.
 2. Request that the Chief Executive (or Leader of Council) also writes to the MPs for Yeovil and Somerton & Frome, along with the Chair of the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group asking them to make similar representations on this matter to the Secretary of State for Health.
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