



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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JFS/LC

26<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Ms Cheryl Johnson,  
Governance Support Officer,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Sandwell Council,  
Oldbury,  
West Midlands B69 3DE.

Dear Cheryl,

Thank you for contacting me about the effect of state pension equalisation – I fully endorse the statement agreed by the Council.

The Coalition Government's decision to accelerate the rise in women's State Pension Age, had a devastating impact on many women who were born in the 1950s, some of whom are now facing real hardship as a result.

Whilst Labour supported the equalisation of the SPA, which was agreed in the mid-90s, I believe it is vital that changes to the SPA 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.

In 2011 the then Work and Pensions Secretary committed to looking at transitional provisions to help the women who have been hit hardest by the changes but he has failed to do so. There has been a number of Parliamentary debates on this issue in recent months, including an Opposition Day Debate in February 2016, where the Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary set out six transitional support options that the Government could consider.

In March 2016 the Work and Pensions Select Committee published a Report on the SPA. I welcome the Report's call to invite the Government to make up for their mishandled changes to the state pension age. It is clear there are a range of options Ministers could, and should, be pursuing, including the option of early access to a lower state pension. I also note that the Work and Pensions Select Committee has now launched an inquiry to explore the possible effects of such a policy.



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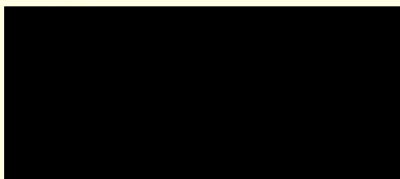
The Government has announced that there is to be an independent review of the future of the SPA, but that this review will not cover the existing SPA timetable up to April 2028. Given the mishandling of the acceleration of the SPA for women born in the 1950s, which has already caused huge financial worries for 2.6 million women across the country, I believe that the Government should also consider this review to look again at what more can be done to help those women born in the 1950s who are set to lose out.

As you may also be aware, the recent Queen's Speech included a Pensions Bill. I believe this is a missed opportunity to take action to address the injustices of the WASPI campaign. Inaction is no longer an option and that the Government must look again at the issue.

On the 30th November 2016, the House of Commons debated a motion on women affected by the increase in the state pension age. The motion noted that the Government has not taken action to alleviate the injustice facing these women, despite the House previously voting in favour of such action. It called for the Government to work with WASPI and WASPI Voice campaigns to explore transitional protection for the women affected. The Opposition supported the motion.

Thank you once again for writing to me and for highlighting this issue. I will continue to support efforts to press the Government to look at measures to help the women who have been disadvantaged by their actions.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon John F Spellar MP,  
Warley.