

Work and Pensions Committee

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# The appointment of Emma Douglas as Chair of the Pensions Regulator

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Sixth Report of Session 2024–26

HC 1610

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# Work and Pensions Committee

The Work and Pensions Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Work and Pensions and its associated public bodies.

## Current membership

[Debbie Abrahams](#) (Labour; Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Chair)

[Rushanara Ali](#) (Labour; Bethnal Green and Stepney)

[David Baines](#) (Labour; St Helens North)

[Lee Barron](#) (Labour; Corby and East Northamptonshire)

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[Amanda Hack](#) (Labour; North West Leicestershire)

[John Milne](#) (Liberal Democrat; Horsham)

[Joy Morrissey](#) (Conservative; Beaconsfield)

## Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

## Publication

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## Contacts

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# The appointment of Emma Douglas

## The Pensions Regulator

1. The Pensions Regulator (TPR) is the independent UK regulator of work-based pension schemes. Set up under the Pensions Act 2004, it is an arm's-length public body sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). TPR works with trustees, employers, and business advisers of occupational pension schemes in the private and public sectors, to help them understand their legal duties and the standards it expects. TPR also works with employers and their advisers to ensure compliance with Automatic Enrolment duties. TPR works within the policy and resource framework determined by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. Its Corporate Plan and its financial resources and headcount budget is agreed with the DWP.<sup>1</sup>
2. The previous Chair of TPR, Sarah Smart, was appointed in April 2021, having served on the Board since 2016.<sup>2</sup> Her appointment had been due to run until 31 May 2026. However, she requested to stand down early, on 31 July 2025. This was announced in February 2025.<sup>3</sup> On 3 June 2025, the Minister for Pensions, Torsten Bell MP, wrote to us explaining that officials had started to organise a recruitment campaign for a full-time chair. Until this could be successfully completed, Kirsten Baker, then a Senior Independent member of the TPR Board, would act as interim Chair from the beginning of August. The draft timetable was for a final decision to be made in the week commencing 3 November and the new Chair to start in the role in early January.<sup>4</sup> In the event, we were notified that Emma Douglas was the preferred candidate on 18 December 2025 and held the pre-appointment hearing on 14 January 2026.

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1 DWP, [The Pensions Regulator - Chair: Appointment details](#), gov.uk, 9 June 2025

2 Work and Pensions Committee, [The appointment of Sarah Smart as Chair of the Pensions Regulator](#), HC 1358, 23 April 2021

3 TPR, [Chair of the Pensions Regulator, Sarah Smart, to step down in July](#), PN25-02, 13 February 2025

4 Letter from the Minister for Pensions to Committee Chair, 3 June 2025

3. The key responsibilities of the Chair of the Board of TPR include:
- Leading the Board, ensuring its meetings are focused on TPR’s current and future priorities and that the Board’s views are communicated clearly to the executive team.
  - Ensuring there is a constructive working relationship with Ministers and officials in the sponsoring body, the Department for Work and Pensions.
  - Reviewing TPR’s strategic direction and ensuring alignment with DWP and wider government priorities; ensuring that its plans are challenged constructively by the Board so that priorities and targets are clear and appropriate.
  - Providing strong leadership to ensure TPR delivers on its plans in line with the statutory, administrative and financial frameworks that apply to it.
  - Supporting and motivating the Chief Executive and executive team whilst also holding them to account for deliver[ing] agreed objectives efficiently and effectively.
  - Representing TPR confidently and persuasively externally including at conferences, with the media and with expert stakeholders.<sup>5</sup>

## The suitability of Emma Douglas

4. Emma Douglas has worked in the pensions industry for her whole career, most recently as Chair of the Board of Pensions UK (formerly, the Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association) and Wealth Policy Director at Aviva since 2021. She has been at the forefront of many key industry initiatives, such as Retirement Living Standards, climate-focused investment funds, retirement planning tools and personalised video benefit statements. As well as a good understanding of the issues facing pension schemes, she has considerable experience of working as a non-Executive Chair, to build consensus, set strategy and direction and manage risks. On appointment, she told us she would seek to develop her understanding of some aspects of TPR’s work (how it executes its duties, its current priorities and risk management framework) and areas of policy where she has less experience, such as the use of DB surplus, Superfunds and Collective Defined Contributions.<sup>6</sup>

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5 DWP, [The Pensions Regulator - Chair. Appointment details](#), 9 June 2025

6 Emma Douglas CV and response to questionnaire

## The pre-appointment hearing

5. The successful candidate for the role of TPR Chair must demonstrate:
  - Leadership: the ability to set strategic vision and drive forward priorities of the Pensions Regulator with a strong track record in relevant senior leadership roles.
  - Knowledge: a clear strategic understanding of the pension sector or wider financial services sector.
  - Experience: a strong track record of delivery at a senior level with experience of regulation, working in a regulated environment in financial services or the pensions sector
  - Relationship building: ability to build strong stakeholder relationships, including with Ministers, Senior Government officials, industry and external stakeholders.
  - Communication: strong communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to listen, accept challenge and constructively challenge others in discussions with clarity and respect.
  - Judgement: effective decision-making skills with the ability to critically analyse a wide range of information to make clear and objective evidence-based recommendations to support the delivery of the organisation's objectives.
  - Collaboration: ability to work closely with the executive board and other key stakeholders, providing support, constructive challenge and assurance as appropriate.<sup>7</sup>
6. It is against these criteria that we assessed Ms Douglas' suitability for the role, using her CV and responses to our written questions, which she provided in advance of the hearing. In line with Liaison Committee guidelines on pre-appointment hearings, we also took evidence from her in person to test her professional competence and independence.<sup>8</sup> We thank Ms Douglas for her evidence, which is appended to this report.
7. We questioned her about:
  - Her past experience and any gaps in her knowledge and experience;
  - Her personal independence and arrangements to avoid any conflicts of interest; and

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7 DWP, [The Pensions Regulator - Chair, appointment details](#), 9 June 2025

8 For further details, see Liaison Committee, [Revised Guidelines for Select Committees carrying out pre-appointment hearings](#)

- Her assessment of current TPR’s effectiveness, the challenges she expected it to face over the next five years and how it should meet them.

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## Conclusion

8. We questioned Ms Douglas about:

- How she would ensure she acted independently of the pensions industry, in which she has worked for her whole career;
- The arrangements to manage any potential conflicts of interest arising from the fact that she has pension savings with regulated bodies and shares in Aviva and L&G;
- TPR’s effectiveness and what would enhance this;
- The Financial Policy Committee’s recommendation that TPR should have the remit to have regard to financial stability considerations;
- Whether TPR had the right strategy in place; and
- TPR’s role in addressing longer-term challenges.

9. **CONCLUSION**

We are satisfied that Emma Douglas has the personal independence and professional competence to be Chair of The Pensions Regulator. We wish her every success in her new role and look forward to working with her.

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# Formal minutes

**Wednesday 14 January 2026**

## **Members present:**

Debbie Abrahams, in the Chair

Rushanara Ali

David Baines

Lee Barron

Johanna Baxter

Mr Peter Bedford

Damien Egan

Amanda Hack

John Milne

Joy Morrissey

## **The appointment of Emma Douglas as Chair of the Pensions Regulator**

Draft Report (*The appointment of Emma Douglas as Chair of the Pensions Regulator*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 1 to 9 read and agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

## **Adjournment**

Adjourned till Wednesday 21 January at 9.00 am

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# Witness

The following witness gave evidence. A transcript can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Wednesday 14 January 2026

**Emma Douglas**, Government's preferred candidate for Chair of the Pensions Regulator

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# Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [publications page](#) for the pre-appointment hearing

- 1 Emma Douglas: CV
- 2 Information provided by DWP about the recruitment campaign for the Chair of the Pensions Regulator
- 3 Correspondence with Emma Douglas, the Government's preferred candidate for Chair of the Pensions Regulator, in advance of her pre-appointment hearing
- 4 Correspondence with the Minister for Pensions, DWP, relating to the Chair of the Pensions Regulator. dated 3 June, 25 June and 3 July 2025

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# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2024–26

Number	Title	Reference
5th	Get Britain Working: Creating a new jobs and careers service	HC 1286
4th	Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres	HC 653
3rd	Get Britain Working: Pathways to Work	HC 837
2nd	Pensioner Poverty: challenges and mitigations	HC 465
1st	Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants	HC 402
7th Special	Get Britain Working: Creating a new jobs and careers service: Government response to the Committee's Fifth Report	HC 1494
6th Special	Get Britain Working: Reforming Jobcentres: Government response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1493
5th Special	Pensioner Poverty: challenges and mitigations: Government Response	HC 1384
4th Special	Get Britain Working: Pathways to Work: Government Response	HC 1385
3rd Special	Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants: Government response	HC 1248
2nd Special	Defined Benefit Pensions Schemes: Government Response	HC 870
1st Special	Statutory Sick Pay: Government Response	HC 787