

Written evidence submitted by the APPG for State Pension Inequality for Women (PPCM0046)

Re: Government response to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's (PHSO) report on 'Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues' dated 21st March 2024

We write in our capacity as Co-Chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women in relation to the Government's recent response to the [PHSO report on 'Women's State Pension age: our findings on injustice and associated issues'](#) dated 21st March 2024.

You may be aware that the report's key finding was that the failure by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to adequately inform thousands of women that their state pension age was increasing constituted maladministration. Further, the report stated that as a result, some women had lost opportunities to make informed decisions about their finances and the failure of the DWP to communicate adequately also diminished the women's sense of personal autonomy and financial control.

The report recommended that the DWP should acknowledge its failings, apologise and that the women affected were entitled to compensation.

You may also be aware that the PHSO also made the extremely rare decision to lay this report before Parliament, with the request that Parliament identify a mechanism for appropriate remedy rather than with the DWP directly. This was based on what the DWP had said during the investigation leading the PHSO to be of the view that they would not be forthcoming with any such remedy and that Parliamentary intervention was now the only viable option in seeking implementation of the report's recommendations. This was done in accordance with Section 10(3) of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act to make a Special Report to Parliament.

The [Government responded to the PHSO's report](#) on 17th December 2024.

They accepted the PHSO's findings on maladministration but declined to accept the PHSO's recommendations on injustice or remedy, to outline any other alternative approach to remedy, nor to allow Parliament the opportunity to identify an appropriate mechanism as was the PHSO's recommendation.

The PHSO has subsequently expressed that the *"the Government's decision not to accept in full the recommendations is disappointing"*.

As you can imagine many of those women who have suffered this injustice are simply devastated and perplexed by the Government's response. We are therefore writing to kindly request that you consider opening an inquiry or holding a one-off session into the Government's response.

While we appreciate that the Committee has no legal powers to compel the Government to act in a particular way, we note that historically the Committee has played a role in scrutinising Government responses to such reports from the PHSO.

Indeed, we were heartened by the work of the Committee during the last Parliament where you reviewed the PHSO's report and held a one-off session. This culminated in the [Chair of the Committee writing to the then Secretary of State](#), bolstering calls for proposals for remedy to be laid before Parliament as soon as possible.

It is gravely concerning that without such scrutiny in this instance, a precedent may be set by this case where the Government rejects the PHSO's independent review and central recommendations without further challenge and discussion.

We understand that there have been only nine occasions where the PHSO have felt the need to put down a Special Report, the first being in July 1978 published as HC 598 "*Rochester Way, Bexley – Refusal to meet late claims for compensation*". In most of these cases, the Government has given way on at least some of their objections to the PHSO's recommendations either immediately or after further review by Committees or the PHSO themselves. In the rare cases where the Government did not accept the central recommendations, they have typically implemented some alternative mechanisms for redress of some form.

As the Work and Pensions Committee, we would therefore also ask you potentially consider:

- an inquiry or one-off session into the Government's response to the PHSO report
- whether the basis for the Government's decision to not provide financial redress to women impacted by the identified DWP maladministration is justified (particularly relating to the statistics referred to by the PHSO concerning how many women knew and how letters are read and remembered)
- an investigation into what options for financial redress have been considered and costed by the DWP in the process of making this decision, and whether more options are available for consideration
- subsequently publishing a response from the Work and Pensions Select Committee on the Government's response to the PHSO report

We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,



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Member of Parliament for Salford
Co-Chair of the APPG on State Pension
Inequality for Women



Bryn Davies
The Lord Davies of Brixton
Co-Chair of the APPG on State Pension
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