Chloe Smith MP

Secretary of State

Department for Work and Pensions

Caxton House

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XX October 2022

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State!

I write in the hope that you may be able to ‘reset’ the government’s relationship with the Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) campaign, whom I met during the Summer Recess.

Parliamentary answers (see [UIN14559](https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-06-08/14559)) confirm that no Minister in your department has met the campaign since 2016, which is something I am hoping that you and colleagues will be prepared to put right.

As you will know, last year the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has found that the Department was guilty of maladministration, in failing to communicate significant changes to the State Pension Age, which were legislated for in 1995. Specifically, the PHSO has concluded “*the opportunity that additional notice would have given them to adjust their retirement plans was lost…DWP failed to take adequate account of the need for targeted and individually tailored information… Despite having identified there was more it could do, it failed to provide the public with as full information as possible.*”

While the PHSO is continuing to investigate the harm caused to women born in the 1950s, as a result of this maladministration, CEO Amanda Amroliwala has also made clear that the government need not wait for further reports before making an offer of compensation. In a letter to our parliamentary colleague, Andrew Gwynne, she said, “*We must now consider the impact of these failings on the women affected and what recommendations may be needed to remedy any associated injustice. We have suggested to the Department for Work and Pensions that they consider being proactive in this respect*”.

Meanwhile, WASPI have recently commissioned research which establishes that, by the end of this year, 220,000 women will have died waiting for compensation since their campaign began in 2015. Sadly, another woman dies every 14 minutes.

I have been struck during my conversations with the campaigners that they are therefore extremely pragmatic about achieving a resolution quickly. They are not looking for a long fight with the government, preferring to accept a fair, fast one-off sum for those whose retirements have been devastated by mistakes made at DWP. Specifically, they are not looking to receive ‘lost’ pension amounts, but rather to be compensated for the maladministration at DWP, which caused them to take decisions they might not otherwise have taken, had they been given proper notice of changes to the law. Quite sensibly, they are suggesting higher levels of compensation for those given the shortest notice of the longest delay to receipt of their State Pension.

They have been through four stages of complaint at DWP and now face two further stages of the PHSO process. All the while more of the women affected die waiting, so they are keen to see the proactivity suggested by the PHSO from your department.

Would you prepared to meet with me and with Angela Madden, the Chair of the campaign, together – both so that you can understand the (surprisingly reasonable and pragmatic) position of the campaign, and that they can hear directly from you?

While both they and I recognise that you could not make immediate commitments in any such meeting, I do believe it would be helpful to open a dialogue now rather than have the group getting more and more frustrated that government will not talk to them. The PHSO’s ongoing investigation is not a reason to postpone discussion, since the substance of maladministration has already been confirmed.

At some point, government (of whichever political stripe) is going to be required by the Ombudsman to make an offer of compensation, so it makes sense to begin the conversation now rather than brooking further delay, during which time – sadly – more and more of the affected women will pass away.

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Member of Parliament for XXXXXXXXXXXXXX