

WASPI SCOTLAND

MINUTES OF MEETING SEPT 28 2017, HOLYROOD, EDINBURGH.

ATTENDEES,

MSP's / Government Officials

Jean Freeman, Clare Haughey, Colin Smith, Brian Whittle, Colin Brown, Alison Johnstone, Colin Smyth, Gavin McDougall, Sandra White, -(Chair),

WASPI

Susan Beevers, Anne Houghton, Andrea Gregory, Linda Carmichael, Rosie Dickson, Elizabeth Mc Quarrie, Ann Fraser, Susan Bolland, Heather Dennis, Kate Stewart, Ellen Hunter, Sally Morgan, Diane Alexander, Maureen Martin, Susan Fallon, Marina Shaw, Joyce Stevenson (STUC), Anne Dean (STUC), Anne Potter, -(Secretariat).

APOLOGIES

Jackie Baillie, Richard Leonard, Jane Cowley, Ann Greer, Karen Murphy

1- Welcome & Apologies,

All attendees welcomed & apologies noted.

2- Action Points, (See attached.)

3- Updates.

WASPI e-Petition, All encouraged to promote the recent e-Petition, Sept 2017, Submitted by Graham Morris. Susan Beevers commented that she was very pleased with the wording & with the response to date, around 61K signatures.

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/200088>

Susan Beevers, WASPI Legal Director gave a very encouraging update on the campaign so far. WASPI are continuing to work & meet with all political parties, & had just returned from the Labour Conference in Brighton where the WASPI Directors had several successful meetings, however she was a bit concerned at proposals by Debbie Abrahams since they were not as expected. Susan along with other WASPI directors will be meeting Jeremy Corbyn in October. WASPI are still keen to achieve Transitional payments for all affected 1950's women, not means tested.

Currently 38 Tories showing support & continuing to work with Westminster WASPI APPG. WASPI are attending the Tory party conference first week in October where further MP meetings have been arranged.

Campaigning across UK continuing to raise awareness.

Still concentrating on gathering evidence of Maladministration, Complaints tally over 3,000 with ICE, (Independent Case Examiner). Estimated cost to DWP, so far, of £1.1m., with further 65,000

letters in pipeline. ICE apparently want to examine all cases. New team expected to be in place sometime in October. All WASPI's being encouraged to query delays in responding, First Complaint about to go to Parliamentary Ombudsman, so very interested in outcome. Sandra W asked if MSP's need to do anything & Susan suggested MSP's should be asking how much this exercise is costing . (AP1/3)

Anne Dean (STUC) suggested they could ask members to write complaint letters & Susan confirmed that trade unions are generally very supportive & their input would be useful. Most agreed UNISON very supportive though there is still an issue with Fife. Anne Dean has offered to look into the Fife situation. (AP2/3)

Jean Freeman, Minister For Social Security, Scotland attended to clarify the Scottish Governments position regarding "What the Scottish Government can & cannot do to help WASPI women".

Jean stated that Scottish Government absolutely supports WASPI, & is one herself. She believes State Pension is a contract, & would be happy to help investigate costs of Maladministration process.

The critical area is the Scottish Powers & everyone's understanding of the powers available.

There are 3 sections of the Scottish Act. Section 24,26,28. (See attached)

Briefly, Section 24 only applies if receiving a reserved benefit, ie State Pension, So not applicable. Section 26, Short term needs where a persons well being at risk therefore not readily available to majority of WASPI women.

Section 28, Power to create new benefit though it states it cannot be used to provide pensions. Jean is keen to help & assured us all in SNP working to aid the campaign. She stressed the need to keep the pressure on our MP's in Westminster.

Sandra agreed with Jean that it was important to continue the campaign as a UK issue rather than creating a Scottish issue.

Various questions were raised, mainly about Section 26, Short term arrangements. Jean agreed that in Scotland it could be done but it would only apply to a very small minority, & of course although we do want to help worst affected it is not a solution to the wider UK issue. Short term benefits are handled by Local Authorities & the max is 3 payments.

It was felt unanimously the solution could only be provided by UK Government.

Rosie Dickson went on to ask if we could source facts & figures regarding Numbers affected in Scotland, life expectancy etc with perhaps a working party set up to produce information. This will be considered. (AP 3/3)

Linda Carmichael asked "what can the Scottish Government do for all those severely suffering hardship that is not means tested" & commented that the CPG could be regarded as a "talking shop". Jean responded by saying it was as previously stated, plus all the NI contributions had been paid to UK government. All agreed.

Diane asked if there was any way to highlight the fact that the NI Contributions were paid to UK Government & Susan responded by saying to ask all MPs/MSPs to support the campaign &

understand what WASPI campaign about. Susan reiterated the fact that we do have several Tory MP's on our side & this is encouraging. They are even doing podcasts.

Rosie stated that the local economies are being affected due to the delayed State Pensions.

AOB

WASPI debate likely to be January with a reception held after the debate in Holyrood.

ANNE P asked if we could find a way of encouraging David Mundell to engage with WASPI & it was suggested that MSPs could write to DM to ask him to show support. (AP4/3)