

# Rt Hon John Healey MP



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Caxton House  
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20 February 2020

Dear Thérèse

### **WASPI women**

I write on behalf of the 6,100 women in our constituency facing financial difficulties as a result of Government changes to the state pension age. They are among 3.8m women born in the 1950s who have been affected.

Many campaigners are not against equalising the state pension age but believe the changes were implemented unfairly. They have my full support.

In 2011, the Government accelerated the timetable for rising the women's state pension age and you will know the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman is considering a case of maladministration by DWP brought by WASPI women.

Many women only received a letter advising them of their pension age increase within a year of their expected retirement age of 60 and others say they had nothing at all. This was unfair and unreasonable.

Women were not given sufficient notice, with no time to make alternative plans to see them through. Many simply did not have the money to enable them to make other arrangements and are suffering huge financial difficulties.

The impact is clear in the number of women in the constituency aged 60 and over forced to claim out-of-work benefits which has nearly tripled in the last few years, from 219 in 2013 to 587 in 2019.

The figures of course tell only part of the story and cannot convey the impact the pension changes have on people's lives, so I wanted to share with you some of the experiences of women in our Wentworth & Dearne constituency.

*"I have worked non-stop since the age of 18 (47 years). My mum is 87 years old and lives with me, I am therefore a full-time unofficial carer as well as being forced to remain in full time employment. I have very little respite therefore my own health is starting to suffer as a result. A few weeks ago mum had a fall shortly after I had gone to work – she was on the floor for 2½*

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*hours before she crawled to a phone and contacted me. Had it been cold weather or if she had struck her head she could have died. I should have been there for her not 15 miles away because of a Government forcing me to stay in employment for an extra 4-5 years.*

*[later correspondence] My dear mum passed away. As you can imagine this has distressed me greatly as, not only have I lost my best friend, I was also denied having quality time with her as I am being forced to work (full time) because of the great pension robbery. It has also filled me with anger as mum passed whilst I was out at work and I found her when I returned home. The question will always be, could I have saved her had I been in the house at the time?"*

Miss G, Bramley

*"I am writing this email whilst sat in my car crying. In June I reached the age of 60 to find I am not able to retire and take my state pension which I have paid towards without any break in service since the age of 16. Five years ago my 85 year old mum became ill forcing me to look at changing my working hours to 40 hours per week over 4 days in order to care for her. Fortunately I am still caring for my mum but no longer have the energy to give her my time and attention like I used to."*

Ms A, Swinton

*"I have had to sell our beautiful retirement bungalow, downsize to a smaller property to reduce our outgoings, used all my savings accrued over the years and now find myself looking for new employment at the age of 61; meaning all my hopes and dreams of enjoying the latter part of my life with my family have now diminished because of an unfair lack of application and thought by successive Governments. Having worked for 44 years, I now find myself not able to go on holidays, budgeting with everyday necessities such as food and clothing and not having enough money to treat our children and grandchildren as I would have enjoyed if my income included my planned pension. If I had paid into a private pension instead, I would now be drawing out the monies which I have paid in over the last 44 years and I feel that I have been swindled out of this money which I have outlaid. If I should die before the age of 66, I and my family would not benefit from one penny despite all the money paid in over the last 44 years! How can this be fair?"*

Mrs W, Rawmarsh

*"By now, I should be in receipt of MY PENSION, that I am entitled to having paid into the system for many years and to say I am disgusted, angry and shocked is very much how I am feeling. I appreciate that there are MANY MANY women feeling this way and we all may have different life circumstances to deal with. I feel that under my personal circumstances, the death of my mum has given me a living, that she is now paying for that and that which the Government has ROBBED me of."*

Mrs W, Wath-upon-Dearne

*"I myself feel discriminated against as I did not have the opportunity to pay into works pensions and not enough time to build my pension up, because I had only a short time from the government telling me of the increase. I have to wait the full 6 years to get my pension at 66. My husband already has his pension at 65 and 3 months and you call that equality. Women will never have equality with men as we have to stay at home and look after the family. Also be carers for our elderly parents, plus babysit grandchildren so our grown up children can go out to work, because they find it difficult to pay childcare costs."*

Mrs A, Brampton

*"I left school like many women at the age of 15, I wasn't allowed to stay on at school I had to go out work to help with household bills. Most of my working life entailed manual labour. My husband of 30 years passed away in 2012, I received widows pension for one year. I had worked all my married life with the intention to retire at 59 when my husband was 65. Fate had a different plan. In 2017 I started being ill more often than I was well so decided to re-evaluate my life and finish work and look after my health. So now I'm living a much more frugal lifestyle than I had worked so hard for. I now save for bills instead of multiple holidays. I have not signed on the dole as I am not looking for work, and the thought of going on the sick with all the medicals and assesments fills me with dread."*

Mrs R, Bolton-on-Dearne

*"I personally really do not know how I am going to be able to carry on working until I am 66 and become eligible to receive state pension. It is only recently that I found out that I would have to work until this age and was looking forward to being able to retire at 60 and be able to help to take care of grandchildren and elderly relatives. I feel quite embittered by the changes, especially as I have worked all my life; except for a short period when I had my daughter. My husband and I do not have the finances or the option to stop working before I can receive state pension and the future is looking very daunting and frightening."*

Mrs M, Bolton-on-Dearne

*"I am for equality. What I am against is the way it has been done. I have worked since the age of 14 and thought I would retire at 60 years old. However due to ill health I had to finish at 59 years old. I have never had to be dependent on any man for money. The way that the government has done this means the loss to me is over £30,000 – it's daylight robbery. The fair way would have been to phase it in. This has left me with no money of my own which I never planned for."*

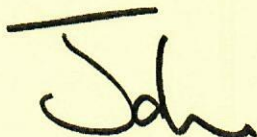
Ms L, Sunnyside

As you can see, these women are now having to combine work in later life with significant caring responsibilities while struggling with poor health.

You will be aware that Labour's manifesto at the 2019 general election recognised the injustice of the Government's 2011 pension changes and committed to right this wrong by working with women affected to design a system of recompense for the losses and insecurity they have suffered.

I would like to know what plans the Government has to help the WASPI women with fair transitional support and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours



**JOHN HEALEY MP**  
Wentworth & Dearne