



Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
ADVICE TO GROUPS IN ENGLAND AND
WALES

REVISED MAY 2017

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INTRODUCTION

This guidance was last published in 2011. It is intended to provide CSPA groups in England and Wales with some basic and practical advice on the structure of the Alliance, the role of groups and their relationship with the Executive Council (EC), and some basic information on a range of issues that group officers may come across. This updated version has been prepared as a loose-leaf publication to aid in the process of revision on a more regular basis. To that end, each section and each appendix can be issued as a stand-alone update without affecting the pagination of the other sections.

If groups or their Regional Representatives have any points of concern or suggestions to amend or extend the content of this document, they should be sent to CSPA head office for the attention of the Deputy General Secretary.

In addition to copies of this document being made available directly to groups in hard copy, it will also be available for download from the membership pages of the CSPA website. Additional copies can also be obtained from CSPA Head Office.

PART I AN OVERVIEW OF THE CSPA

1. THE ALLIANCE'S AIMS

Although the purpose of this guidance is to provide advice to groups in England and Wales regarding administrative and procedural issues, it is also important to put the role of groups into context with regard to the Alliance's national aims. The Alliance has the three following aims listed in the national Constitution:

- to maintain and improve the purchasing power of all pensions from Civil Service and related schemes;
- to initiate and participate in any action which will benefit pensioners;
- to promote the economic and social well-being of pensioners;

These objectives may be pursued in collaboration with other pensioner organisations or by affiliation with or to any other body with similar objectives to the Alliance. The Alliance also works in cooperation with the Civil Service Trade Unions where issues affect both working and retired civil servants.

2. WHO CAN JOIN THE CSPA

a. Full National Membership

This paragraph should be read in conjunction with **Appendix (i)**. Full national membership of the Alliance is open to pensioners who are in receipt of benefits from:

- the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (PCSPS) and its successors, or
- pension schemes analogous to the PCSPS and its successors operated by fringe bodies such as Research Councils, or by other Non-Departmental Public Bodies, or
- a pension scheme operated by a Civil Service trade union.

Full national membership is also open to active and former members of such pension schemes, who remain entitled to benefits and are within ten years of their pension age. A member's spouse or partner, or the surviving spouse or surviving partner of a member may also join the Alliance. It should be remembered that spouses and partners or surviving spouses and surviving partners, Civil Service widows and widowers (even though their spouses may not have been Alliance members) may join as Full National Members when they are in receipt of a Civil Service widows/widower's pension. (**N.B.** All references made in this document to the Civil Service or Civil Servants should be read in accordance with the above definition.)

b. Associate National Membership

A pensioner from another public-sector pension scheme can also join as an Associate national member, and an Associate national member's surviving spouse or partner in receipt of a widow's or widower's pension may also join as an Associate national member. A list of organisations and pension schemes that can join the Alliance is included at **Appendix (i)**. Associate national members enjoy rights and responsibilities the same as those of Full national members, except they cannot stand for national office and on the clear understanding that the Alliance only has representational rights in respect of Civil Service and directly related pension schemes. If anyone applies to join who has been in

a part of the public sector not listed in **Appendix (i)** then the application should be referred to the Deputy General Secretary for consideration.

c. Associate Group Membership

Where an individual is unable to join the Alliance as a Full or Associate national member, there is provision in the national rules and constitution for a group to make an individual an associate member of the group. These may, for instance, be members of other Public Service Pensioners' Council, organisations, or their spouses or partners of members who groups may wish to involve. Sometimes there are other relatives or friends of members and helpers who come along to group meetings, again kind enough to give their assistance in the group's activities without being able to be Full or Associate national members of the Alliance, see **Appendix (i)**.

All these people may be classed as 'group associate members' and asked to pay only the group subscription. Nevertheless, they have no national voting rights out with the group, will not be counted as national members, and will not appear on the official national membership lists. Whether they have group voting rights, or allowed to take group officer or committee positions, is left to the discretion of individual groups.

The model group constitution at **Appendix (iii)** does not stop group associate members becoming group officers or committee members or voting on group issues such as the group constitution, but they have no rights to participate in the national business of the Alliance including attendance at the national AGM as a group delegate or observer because they are not members of the CSPA nationally.

3. RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

Annual mailshots have been carried out on behalf of the Alliance by MyCSP to make sure eligible people retiring or approaching retirement age are approached and provided with a letter explaining the role of the Alliance and a membership application form.

Local groups can assist with recruiting new members, by promoting the Alliance's aims to prospective members in their areas where there are known to be retired Civil Servants. Groups can also help by developing or maintaining contacts with Civil Service departments, agencies and related fringe bodies in the area they cover, by providing literature, posters, and application forms to Human Resources Departments, Personnel or Welfare Officers. This would be particularly helpful where there is a large site in the area especially if a civil service office or site is facing staffing cuts or other changes of significance. Individual members can also assist by recruiting old friends and former colleagues.

Updated recruitment leaflets are produced periodically but can also be produced for a specific campaign on request to CSPA Head Office but please give at least 14 days' notice. If groups require copies of recruitment leaflets, they should also request them from CSPA Head Office again giving at least 14 days' notice. Application forms can also be downloaded from the Alliance's website.

4. CSPA SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Current subscription rates are **£2.00** per month or **£24.00** per annum for individual membership and **£2.80** per month or **£33.60** per annum for joint membership, (member

and spouse or partner). Increases to subscription rates are subject to approval by the Alliance's Annual General Meeting and are publicised in *The Pensioner* magazine prior to being implemented. To make administration easier, new members formerly employed in the civil service or related pension schemes are encouraged to have their CSPA national subscriptions paid by monthly deduction from their pension. Individual or joint deductions may be made for anyone whose pensions are issued by MyCSP or by Joint Superannuation Services via the Natural Environment Research Council payroll at Swindon. Please refer members to their annual pension statements for contact details of the pension provider.

New members may also pay individual or joint subscriptions by Annual Direct Debit, which is why there are two separate membership application forms available for download from the CSPA website or by post from CSPA Head Office.

Local groups are required to be financially self-supporting and raise funds through group membership fees, and/or charging an attendance fee at meetings.

5. THE ALLIANCE IS STILL RELEVANT AND NEEDED

The Alliance is a not for profit unincorporated body that is managed by its Executive Council and the Annual General Meeting, with a Trustee acting as the legal entity on behalf of the Executive Council. The Alliance was formed in 1952 to campaign for improvements to the value of both Civil Service and State Retirement Pensions, which were constantly eroded by inflation. The CSPA is a 'non-party political' and democratically run organisation and it makes representations to all levels of government and to other authorities to safeguard the rights of its members. It is recognised by the Cabinet Office and other Government Departments and Agencies as speaking for all Civil Service pensioners, and the body to be consulted under the Pensions Legislation regarding retrospective changes to civil service and related pensions.

The Alliance endeavours to influence:

Ministers, MPs, and other bodies that may be making, reviewing or changing legislation on pensions, social security, healthcare and other matters of interest to CSPA members and retired people on a more general basis.

All CSPA policies are decided by its members, through Annual General Meetings (AGMs). We have some long-outstanding campaigning aims in relation to Civil Service pensions. These are:

- restoration of full pensions for those affected by pay pause and pension troughs
- reckoning in full of all unestablished and temporary service
- pensions for the widows/widowers of post retirement marriages
- widows/widowers' pensions for life, irrespective of remarriage and cohabitation
- abolition of National Insurance Modification for those with service between 1948 and 1980.

These longstanding claims are pressed whenever the opportunity arises but hitherto Governments of all complexions have refused to concede.

Major campaigning objectives include:

- the securing of substantial increases in the basic state retirement pension and annual increases through the 'triple-lock' mechanism by increases linked to the

best of either average earning, price increases or an underpinning minimum of 2.5%

- the maintenance of Universal Pensioner Benefits which include concessionary bus pass, winter fuel allowance, free prescriptions, free eye tests and free TV licences for the over 75s
- indexation of future increases of Civil Service and related pensions to earnings or prices whichever provides the greater benefit
- affordable provisions for long term care
- adequately funded health provision for older people
- avoidance of age discrimination
- the ability to use the concessionary bus pass throughout England, Scotland and Wales, also for it to be able to be used as proof of entitlement for reduced rail fares available with the Senior Rail Card, without the need to purchase the Senior Rail Card.

Civil Service pensioners who join the Alliance sometimes also join other civil service organisations which work for the benefit of serving and former employees. One of those which works solely for pensioners is the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship (CSRF) and Alliance members often subscribe to the Fellowship as well. However, the CSRF has a different function, for instance carrying out social activities and running a welfare visiting service for retired civil servants. The CSRF is a registered charity, so is unable to campaign politically. Only the Alliance has the right to make active and direct representations on pensions and related subjects.

The CSPA and CSRF are the only two organisations that are specifically recognised to deal with the interests of civil service pensioners and related pension schemes

6. ORGANISATIONS THE ALLIANCE WORKS WITH NATIONALLY

a. Public Service Pensioners' Council (PSPC)

The Alliance is a constituent member of the PSPC which represents more than one and half million public service pensioners. PSPC's policies are in line with the Alliance's and seek among other things:

- an early review of the possible inclusion of existing pensioners in the single-tier pension on a nil detriment basis;
- a 15-year transitional period for derived rights accrued under the current system to ensure there is adequate time for individuals to adjust to the change in future pension expectation;
- increase in all state pensions (including Second State Pension/State Earnings Related Pension Scheme) in line with the 'triple lock' of prices, earnings or 2.5%;
- maintenance of pass-ported benefits for those with single-tier pension and no other income.

b. Later Life Ambitions Campaign (LLA)

CSPA works closely with the National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO) and the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners (NFOP), which represents pensioners in a number of occupational pension schemes including those for British

Telecomm, Royal Mail, Post Office and British Steel plus a number of private sector pension schemes. The three organisations, which represent over 250,000 pensioners, banded together to pursue common policy concerns as part of the General Election campaign in 2014 titled 'Later Life Ambitions' (LLA). A number of issues were identified as being of particular importance to pensioners and these formed the basis of the joint LLA campaign. These were:

- Retention of Universal Pensioner Benefits including the concessionary bus pass, winter fuel allowance, free prescriptions, free eye tests and free TV licences for the over 75s
- Proper planning for pensions and that all pensioners be placed upon the Single Tier State Pension without detriment
- Adequate funding for care and the introduction of the lifetime contribution cap of £35,000 for care needs and £10,000 per year for food and accommodation costs
- Adequate provision for housing in later life and for the 'Lifetime Homes standard' to be extended across the whole of the UK and not just London
- The provision of affordable public transport and retention of the concessionary bus pass and the introduction of the use of the bus pass in place of the Senior Rail Card as proof of entitlement for reduced rail fares

In the light of the success of the LLA campaign during the General Election in 2015, it has been decided to retain the campaign on a more permanent basis for the pursuit of common policy objectives identified by the three organisations.

c. National Pensioners' Convention (NPC)

The Alliance is affiliated to the NPC, which represents over a million pensioners in Britain through its affiliated bodies. The NPC campaigns on behalf of all retired and older people by making representations to Government and other authorities.

The NPC declares that every pensioner has the right to choose, dignity, independence and security as an integral and valued member of society. The issues which it seeks to satisfy include:

- Better basic state pensions;
- Eradication of pensioner poverty;
- Benefits by right, rather than means-testing;
- An improved NHS and long-term care;
- Free public transport for all pensioners;
- Safeguarding the future of the Post Office network; and
- Removal of ageism and age discrimination.

d. Age UK

The Alliance works closely with Age UK, the major charity for older people, which has a good number of policy stances that are very similar to those being progressed by the Alliance.

e. AGE the European Older People's Platform

The Alliance is affiliated to AGE which makes representations to the European Union (EU) institutions on issues of common interest to retired people throughout the EU. Following the decision of the Referendum held on 23 June 2016 for the UK to leave the EU, the longer-term involvement of UK affiliates to AGE will need to be reconsidered, although it is likely to continue until the UK formally leaves the EU.

7. CSPA EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (EC) AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The Alliance's work is administered by the EC between AGMs, this consists of 22 people elected or appointed in accordance with the Constitution, as follows:

Officers:

- Chairman
- Vice Chairman
- Secretary (Administration)
- Secretary (Organisation)
- Treasurer
- Editor of 'The Pensioner' magazine
- General Secretary

Fifteen other members:

- 9 Regional Representatives (England and Wales)
- 3 National EC members
- 2 Scotland Branch members
- 1 Northern Ireland Branch Member

The EC currently has four sub-committees which consider the more detailed aspects of managing the organisation:

- Finance & General Purposes Committee
- Finance Committee
- Organisation & Recruitment (O & R) Committee
- Campaign Committee and Health Monitoring Group

Guidance to assist groups in the process of nominating and electing members to the EC, and in submitting motions for the AGM is contained in **Appendix (iv)**.

The Chairman introduces candidates for election at the AGM, so that delegates not familiar with the nominees can identify them. If a group has a candidate for election he or she should be made aware of this. Candidates are not, however, required to make a speech at the AGM. Anyone attending the AGM as a candidate for election is paid expenses on the same basis as a group delegate.

The EC has in **Remitted Motion A12/16** been requested to notify groups of the names of any EC member planning to stand down from the next AGM to assist in the process of identifying alternative candidates to nominate. Any EC members indicating such an intention will be notified to groups and branches in a group circular prior to the call for nominations being issued.

8. CONTRIBUTION MADE BY CSPA GROUPS

The contribution which groups can make to the effectiveness of the Alliance in recruiting new members, lobbying MPs and MEPs, making representations to local authorities, publicising the work of the Alliance and keeping the EC informed of members' wishes and opinions, cannot be over emphasised.

The most effective local organisation of the Alliance is secured through groups and this provides the EC with the full and obvious backing of the membership, expressed through their local activities and associations.

All members are allocated to and counted as members of the group which covers their home postcode, unless they specifically inform CSPA head office that they wish to become a member of another group.

As far as possible, a viable network of groups is maintained which gives as many members as possible the opportunity to attend group meetings and thereby contribute to Alliance activities. This may sometimes involve setting up new groups or resurrecting a former group, in areas which cannot be satisfactorily covered by functioning groups.

Consultation with groups is of course most important. This is done mainly through the national AGM. The Alliance also relies on groups to put forward motions for discussion as well as to consult their members on what attitude their delegates should adopt on motions tabled for debate at the AGM.

The Alliance also relies on groups to raise with the EC important matters which are of concern to them and which they consider the Alliance should be pursuing. New issues may also arise on which it is not obvious what line the Alliance should take. In such cases the EC may consult groups for their views. Groups may also submit comments or ideas to the EC through their Regional Representative or directly.

9. A REGIONAL APPROACH IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The Alliance's group structure is strengthened by having elected Regional Representatives. There are eight in England and one in Wales. The groups allocated to each region are shown in **Appendix (v)**. These groupings are purely for the allocation of areas of responsibility for the Regional Representatives and their size and shape has been determined by the distribution of members and groups, taking account of the geographic spread and travelling distances and transport centres involved where possible.

Where experience of running the regions, indicates that the moving a group from one region to another would be sensible, this should initially be considered between the group and their Regional Representative, who will then refer the proposal to the O & R Committee and the EC. In the same way, proposals to alter the postcode allocations to groups should also be discussed with the relevant Regional Representative. Further information on the role of the Regional Representative can be found at **Appendix (vii)**. The current postcode allocation to groups is shown at **Appendix (vi)**.

10. A VIABLE NETWORK

a. Motion A5/2014

Keeping groups active and viable is matter of ongoing concern to the EC. Although a group may be functioning satisfactorily it sometimes only takes one or two group Officers

or committee members to retire, or for the number of members attending meetings to drop off. At the AGM in 2014, **Motion A5/14** was carried:

'This AGM recognises that CSPA Groups are the backbone of the Alliance's local structure in England and Wales. This AGM is also aware that an increasing number of Groups are facing difficulties due to the following issues:

- *a reduction in the number of new members applying to join the Alliance and local groups*
- *a generally increasing age profile among active members and*
- *an increasing reluctance on the part of both existing and new members in some Groups to volunteer to take on Group Officer and Committee positions.*

A combination of the above factors has led to some Groups closing and to others facing an uncertain future. This AGM recognises that the Executive Council (EC) has had some limited but nonetheless welcome success in resurrecting one or two Groups that have been closed for considerable periods. Given the above-mentioned concerns, this AGM requests that the EC urgently investigates what steps can be introduced to identify Groups that may be struggling and to ascertain what early assistance might be offered to Groups in such circumstances to avoid closures, if at all possible. This investigation should include an early review of the relevant paragraphs in the Blue Book.

If, despite all necessary measures being taken to try to prevent a Group closing, the EC decides that there is no alternative to Group closure, then the EC is requested to inform, without delay, affected members. At the same time, those members affected should be provided with details of alternative Groups in the vicinity, which they may wish to join. This would enable those who wish to continue to participate in local campaigning and social activities.

This AGM requests the EC to report back to the 2015 AGM on the action taken to follow-up this motion.'

b. Regular Monitoring of groups by Regional Representatives

As part of its response to **Motion A5/14**, the EC agreed that it would be helpful for Regional Representatives to maintain regular contact with the groups in their regions, with a view to ascertaining whether each group meets at least quarterly and that there are no officer or committee vacancies. If there are vacant posts, that steps are being taken to fill them if possible. The EC believes that each group by agreement with their Regional Representative should be visited at least annually by the Regional Representative.

Regional Representatives have been asked to monitor the submission by groups of information to CSPA Head Office such as Annual Statements of Account, whether they have a group constitution, and whether a regular newsletter is issued. Also, whether or not they have submitted motions to the AGM and sent group delegates to the AGM. Is the group generally active and regularly participating in the activities they would normally be expected to undertake, if not, then is this a possible indication that the group requires closer monitoring or assistance.

The EC believes these regular checks will help to address the terms of **Motion A5/14**, to reduce the likelihood of a group facing problems, and to provide any necessary assistance to aid the group during a period of difficulty. The EC has agreed that where there are indications that a group may be facing organisational or other problems, that

the Regional Representative should be made a bank signatory to help resolve any financial problems should there be a need to suspend or close the group.

Although the role of the Regional Representative in monitoring group activities is a key aspect of keeping groups viable, the role of group officers and committee members in alerting the Regional Representative of the position of the group and any difficulties being encountered, is also fundamental to the EC being able to keep group suspensions and closures to a minimum.

c. What next if a group encounters difficulties?

A major problem faced by groups in recent years has quite often been the inability to attract volunteers to fill group officer and committee posts that become vacant. Group officers and committee members have often been in post for several years if not one or more decades. What to do when they have to give up their posts due to age or ill health is often an issue that is only addressed when a problem crops up. The EC has considered whether some form of succession planning is feasible with suggestions such as encouraging more members to attend regional meetings, and to encourage group observers to the Alliance's AGM in the hope this might enthuse members to participate more has met with varying responses.

The Alliance is not the only organisation that has experienced difficulties in encouraging members to get involved, and most organisations reliant upon voluntary activists have experienced similar problems to a greater or lesser degree.

The EC has been examining alternative situations, where volunteers are not forthcoming, including the possibility of establishing a local contact point or a number of local contacts, so that information on issues of concern in a given locality can be made available to Regional Representatives for inclusion in a regionally produced newsletter once or twice a year. Regional Representatives could organise an annual meeting where a group has previously been active for the purpose of affording members an opportunity to be consulted and provided with information regarding Alliance campaigns and other activities. It is believed this might encourage the resurrection of a group.

The EC is examining what further steps might be introduced to provide individual members with the opportunity to participate in CSPA activities and decisions where groups are not currently functioning, including:

- Creation of virtual groups using Facebook and other available digital media.
- Undertaking membership surveys and postal votes via The Pensioner magazine.

Whatever alternatives are considered, as stated earlier on, the EC sees the need to maintain a viable network of local groups as being the primary means of providing suitable opportunities for members to participate in Alliance business and to undertake local campaigning and social activities.

PART II CSPA GROUPS – PROCEDURAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

11. RUNNING A CSPA GROUP

a. Group names

Each group can decide its own name, providing it reflects the area covered by the group. e.g. “Anytown and District Group” or “Someshire Group”. If a group wishes to change its name, then it should notify the proposed new name to their Regional Representative and to the Secretary (Organisation) for consideration if necessary by the O & R Committee.

b. Group Constitution

Every group should have a formally adopted Constitution, which sets down the Rules for the conduct of business, holding of meetings, election of officers and so on. A model group constitution can be found at **Appendix (iii)**. Any groups wishing to significantly deviate from the model group constitution should consult the Secretary Organisation for further advice as to possible difficulties any such changes may introduce. Once a group constitution has been adopted by the group AGM copies should be provided to the Secretary Organisation and CSPA Head Office.

c. Public Liability Insurance

A Public Liability Insurance policy is maintained by CSPA Head Office, which covers the whole of the organisation, including not only CSPA Head Office, but also the Northern Ireland and Scotland Branches and all groups including the venues hired for group meetings. A copy of a statement by the Alliance’s Insurance Brokers regarding public liability insurance cover can be obtained from CSPA Head Office.

d. Group Officers and Committee

The essential posts in the running of each group are the Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. Where possible a fourth officer, Membership Secretary which, although not required by the national constitution, is considered advisable for most groups. The names, addresses and telephone numbers of these four positions should be made available to CSPA Head Office which maintains a register of all group officers. Even though it may be expedient to solve a short-term difficulty, if possible individuals should avoid taking on more than one of these jobs, because this may prove to cause stress to the individual undertaking the work but also increases the difficulty of finding a replacement when that becomes necessary.

Groups may wish to create other officer posts such as, Vice Chairman, Assistant Secretary, Assistant Treasurer, Social Secretary or Speakers Secretary or Campaigns Officer, according to local needs. They may also wish to appoint a long-serving post holder to a Group Presidential post. The group officer posts should be spread around and, if thought appropriate, “rotated” after reasonable periods of time. However, it is appreciated that in smaller groups rotation may be difficult to achieve and, in any case, people often take time to “grow” into a job. No one should be expected to spend more than half a day a week on group work. Further information regarding the duties involved with the four main group officer positions is available at **Appendix (viii)**.

It is also normal for a small committee to assist the group officers and to spread the workload. The group constitution limits this to a maximum of eight with the provision for six of these to be elected and two further committee members to be co-opted. See **Appendix (iii)** for further information.

e. Finance Examiners/Scrutineers

Group Examiners/Scrutineers need not be formally qualified. All that is required is an ability to check and certify the annual accounts. All group Examiners/Scrutineers, should be issued with a Letter of Appointment signed by the Chairman of the group. The form of the letter should be along the following lines:

“At the group, AGM held on ... you were appointed as one of the group’s Examiners/Scrutineers (or the Group’s Examiner/Scrutineer if there is only one). The Treasurer will submit the accounts to you for audit as soon as possible after the end of the financial year, and in good time for the audit to be completed and your report submitted before the group’s AGM to be held on ... You will carry out such a review of the accounts and financial statements, and will be entitled to seek such information and explanations as you may require, as will enable you to have a reasonable basis for your opinion on the accounts and financial statements. You may also, if you wish, comment on the way in which the accounts are maintained and on the way in which the group conducts its financial affairs and make suggestions for improvement.”

f. Group finances

If the group has not previously had a group subscription, it may be worthwhile initiating one. Members may be unable to attend meetings or might not wish to do so but they may respond well to a request for a small subscription, especially if the group can show enthusiasm and relevant activities, perhaps also a free or discounted meal occasionally, teas at meetings, outings etc. It is found quite consistently that a circular to all members in a group area will find many who are willing to pay a modest annual subscription to group funds in return for news of the group’s activities. An annual group subscription, supplemented by raffles and the like, is usually enough to keep a group financially secure. However, it is important to note that group subscriptions are voluntary. Alliance members who do not pay a group subscription will nevertheless continue to be classed as group members, as defined in Rule 6. (c) (i) of the national Constitution.

The group Treasurer should submit the Annual Statement of Account to the National Treasurer normally within three months of the close of the financial year after approval by the group Examiners/Scrutineers and the group AGM, normally held in or around March. The Alliance pays VAT on national subscriptions. Group subscriptions are exempt from this payment because groups are required to be self-financing and because their own subscription income will be well below the VAT registration threshold.

Group finances vary considerably, with some groups having significant funds in their accounts and are more than capable of looking after themselves; others, especially those with widely scattered memberships, may be in a more difficult financial position.

The National Constitution allows the full costs of up to a maximum of four group newsletters a year to all group members to be claimed from central funds and this helps to relieve pressure on many groups’ finances. CSPA Head Office prints and despatches

group newsletters for most groups, although a small number still print and despatch their own newsletters as well. Costs of group delegates attending regional meetings may also be cause for concern where group funds are low. The EC is prepared to assist any group that makes a reasonable case for financial assistance. The following criteria will normally need to be satisfied before a grant could be considered:

- The group meets at least four times a year;
- They raise a reasonable amount by local subscriptions;
- They have less than £450 in their funds;
- The EC will carefully consider any request for financial help on these grounds, particularly where it is needed to ensure a group keeps running.

g. Data Protection

Most groups require access to locally held membership lists and contact details which can be requested from CSPA Head Office as and when necessary. Due to continued and increasing reports of hacking and other breaches of data protection being reported in the news and media, the security provisions for CSPA membership information have had to be reviewed. Although there is no wish to prevent groups from being able to readily access their membership information, there is a need to take extra steps to make sure this information is held on a safe and secure basis.

There is a need as a minimum for anti-virus, anti-malware software and firewalls to be in place where membership information is held on a personal computer or laptop, and the Data Protection Act places a duty on all data handlers to securely delete or dispose of data should it no longer be required. All of these considerations apply to data that is held whether on computer databases or as paper records.

The increasing incidence of scam telephone calls and emails purporting to be from organisations such as Microsoft, which may contain malicious software should also be a matter of increasing concern for all users of the internet. There are some very good free anti-virus programmes available, and as an absolute minimum the software available with Windows, 'Windows Defender' which includes anti-virus and firewall provisions can usefully be turned on to provide a basic but effective level of protection. 'Malwarebytes' anti-malware software also provides a free and effective means of dealing with adware and malware. If anyone requires further advice on these issues, then BC Technologies our information technology consultants should be able to assist or advise on effective software available.

Groups may also be approached by external organisations, asking for details of Alliance members so that they can contact any who may be interested in their services or products. Groups must be aware that under no circumstances should any members' names and addresses be released to any outside organisation, as this could be a breach of the Data Protection Act. If an outside organisation wishes to publicise its services, they should be asked to write to CSPA Head Office. If any such approaches are received or any other difficulties are experienced in the handling of membership records or contact information, then please report these occurrences to CSPA Head Office as a matter of priority.

h. Organisation and communication issues

(i) Publicising meetings

It is important that all groups publicise meeting arrangements in *The Pensioner* once every six months coupled with a brief report. The Group Secretary is normally responsible for producing these brief notes. It is important to give members adequate notice of the group AGM, so that they have the opportunity to participate in the process of electing Officers and deciding policy.

Groups should also try to attract new members to the Alliance by local publicity, through contact with Civil Service employing departments, etc. There are often opportunities for publicising meetings and events by seeking permission to display posters in local libraries, on community notice boards, in local authority publications or websites, or by advertisements in the local press, either in the free press advertising papers, or by entries in the "What's On?" columns of the local newspapers. Some local newspapers will include meeting details as a news item especially if a guest speaker is in attendance. If promotional material about the Alliance at the meeting would be of assistance or a publicity stand then the group should contact CSPA Head Office who will be pleased to provide a stand and arrange its delivery and collection by courier.

(ii) Meeting venue location and transport considerations

Attendances at group meetings may be relatively low, but there are exceptions, particularly in small groups where almost everyone was employed by a single local department, dockyard or factory. Such meetings can, in effect, be meetings of former colleagues. This may be something which the group committee will wish to consider and cope with especially if they cover an area where there is or was a number of different civil service departments.

Where a choice of venue is available, a small comfortable room, provided free or for hire at reasonable cost, with easy parking facilities and reasonable public transport is a great help. Meetings should also be kept as informal as possible. Those attending for the first time will not return unless they are made welcome, enjoy themselves and see something being achieved. There are many different options for meetings and events which produce varied levels of group activity.

(iii) Some basic health and safety considerations

The issue of health and safety at group meetings is not intended to be burdensome, and where groups meet in a regular well used venue there may be no need for any actions to be taken at all. For any new group members or where groups meet in a venue on an irregular basis however, the following checklist may prove to be of assistance:

- Is there disabled access and parking provision?
- Where are, the fire exits and fire alarms located?
- Have members been informed of where the fire exits are located?
- Does the venue have any staff in attendance?
- Does the venue have a first aid kit, and/or a qualified first aider?
- Does the venue have an automatic electronic defibrillator (AED)?

If there is no one trained in first aid in the group or staff member on the premises trained in first aid, the group may wish to ask one of the group officers or committee members to be the 'appointed person' who will take responsibility for calling for an ambulance or

ensuring other assistance is provided should an injury to a member occur. Again, this is not intended to be burdensome, just a simple precaution in the event a problem arises. Should any group have any further suggested items for inclusion in this list then they are requested to forward them to CSPA head Office for the attention of the Deputy General Secretary.

(iv) Meeting content and group activities

Some groups have coffee mornings only or do not have many business meetings, but they may be in danger of losing sight of the objects of the Alliance. Where possible, a monthly or quarterly meeting which reports on and discusses CSPA national and local business, coupled with occasional social events, is usually the most successful formula. Although social activity may be difficult where numbers are small, a simple social meeting with perhaps, a speaker on a light topic, might attract one or two new members, particularly if spouses and partners are invited, also joint activities with other organisations on an informal basis can prove to be successful in increasing support. The provision of refreshments may be a helpful consideration as well.

Also, try to get various speakers to group meetings to talk about things of particular concern to older people, especially at local level, e.g. hospital provision and public transport. Consider supporting one of the local branches of a charity perhaps Age UK is a good example and offer to assist them in their efforts. Be willing to work with local organisations with similar concerns to our own.

(v) Keeping members informed

It is well worth contacting new retirees or new members notified about the group. A quarterly, newsletter should usefully be sent out to all members in the group. Many members who cannot attend meetings will be pleased to hear what the group is doing and will be pleased to offer their moral and financial support. The best newsletters are informative, interesting, campaigning, involving and well presented. They might include invitations to attend group meetings to decide how the group will vote on issues at the national AGM, or inform members about a local issue which has been taken up and ask their views about it. Groups might also wish to include items from group circulars and national newsletters which can be found on the membership pages of the CSPA website www.cspa.co.uk. Where the number of members is too small to make more than the occasional meeting worthwhile, a regular newsletter can be most valuable in keeping the group together.

Groups may also wish to participate in the annual group newsletter competition where the group with the best newsletter will be awarded the 'Tom Hoyes' Silver Salver at the Alliance AGM. To participate all a group has to do is to provide copies of their group newsletters to CSPA Head Office where they are produced on a local basis, the group newsletter is printed and distributed by CSPA Head Office, then the group newsletter will automatically be included in the competition. The judges who are appointed by the EC, assess each group newsletter on its own merits using criteria of being informative, interesting, campaigning activities, involving members and being well presented. Tom Hoyes was a former CSPA General Secretary and latterly member of the EC, and the silver salver is awarded for the best group newsletter in Tom's memory.

(vi) CSPA Website

The CSPA website can be found at www.cspa.co.uk it includes updated news items, membership application forms can be downloaded and printed off, and there is also a direct mail link with CSPA Head Office on the 'Contact Us' page. The website is regularly updated and copies of recently published group circulars, back copies of *The Pensioner* and Supplements, and other documents of interest to groups can be found on the membership pages which can all be downloaded and printed off. These pages can be accessed by logging in using the generic login facility located in the top right hand corner of the website using the following username: **cspacircs** and password: **swf365**. This login facility also enables members to access the enhanced membership benefits referred to below.

The membership pages of the website also contain copies of group newsletters that have been supplied to CSPA Head Office for inclusion on the website.

Group's requiring information about setting up a website of their own should contact the Deputy General Secretary at CSPA Head Office. It would be helpful for CSPA Head Office to also have details of any existing group websites in order to establish links with them.

(vii) Use and provision of email addresses

Email addresses of national Officers and EC members, who have them, are shown at the front of each edition of *The Pensioner* magazine.

The EC is trying to encourage members who use email addresses to provide them to CSPA Head Office so that they can be incorporated into the national membership record which will eventually allow for the greater use of email for the distribution of such items as group newsletters. Emails provided are held on a secure database and will only be used by CSPA Head Office for the distribution of information relating to the Alliance, its campaigns and membership services and benefits.

There is a facility on the Membership page of the CSPA website where members can login to undertake limited amendments to their individual membership record including the insertion or updating of their email address, and the selection of their preferred method of receiving a group newsletter and copies of *The Pensioner*. The login to this facility requires a member's surname and membership number.

The EC is aware that some groups maintain their own local email databases for the distribution of group information, and there has recently been a request made to groups to ask members whose email addresses they hold whether the group can be put these onto the national membership database.

(viii) CSPA Facebook page

In addition to the website and call for increased use of email addresses, a CSPA Facebook page was set up in 2015. This can be accessed at www.facebook.com/cspalliance/. The number of people visiting the Facebook page has been steadily increasing since it was first set up and it is a useful source of news and updates on a good range of issues. The existence of a Facebook page also opens future possibilities for alternative means of members being involved in group and national activities and decisions affecting the work of the Alliance.

(xi) Reorganisation and closure of groups

Advice to Groups in England and Wales Part II

It is sometimes impossible for the EC to say with certainty that a postal area naturally belongs to a certain group. This can best be decided by local knowledge of transport systems, and transport hubs, which may have changed significantly since a group was set up. If the present distribution of postcodes to a group is no longer effective or relevant, the Group Secretary needs to alert the Regional Representative and suggest what possible changes might be made. The Regional Representative will discuss changes with neighbouring groups and will seek authority for the necessary changes from the O & R Committee.

If a group comes up against organisational difficulties of any kind, they should report them to the Regional Representative as soon as possible. The Regional Representative will then consult the Secretary (Organisation) and the Deputy General Secretary to see what assistance can be given, including the production and distribution of special letters to members seeking their views and support.

If the group is unable to remain in its existing form the national and group officers will jointly consider the scope for a re-allocation of postcodes or the merger of the group facing difficulties with neighbouring groups.

If it emerges that a group is facing closure the group officers should advise the Regional Representative without delay to see what assistance can be given. If, despite all efforts to keep a group going, a decision is taken at a General Meeting to close the group, the current officers will be requested to stay in post temporarily in order to secure an orderly closure.

In accordance with national Rule 9. (d)(ii), the accounts should be closed, certified and sent, together with the remaining funds, to the National Treasurer for any remaining funds to be held in the Group Trust Fund in case the group can be resurrected. CSPA Head Office will then write to members inviting them to transfer to neighbouring groups or any other group of their choice. It has been suggested that such transfers might be considered on an informal basis if there are any signs that the group might be resurrected. (See also paragraphs 9a, b and c in **Part I**).

i. Certificates of Merit

The work of the Alliance is largely taken forward and progressed by volunteers, and although there is very little recognition of the efforts put in by individual active members, there is one exception and that is the award of a 'Certificate of Merit'. Groups can nominate a group officer or other post-holder within the group who has held office for a period of at least 10 years. The nomination should be notified to the General Secretary at CSPA Head Office with a short summary of the positions and periods for which they have been held by the nominee and some details concerning the contribution they have made. A 'Certificate of Merit' can only be awarded once to any individual so it is vital to ensure the award it is seen as an important award and recognition of the work of the individual on behalf of the group and the Alliance.

Once a nomination has been received, which can be submitted by email or letter, the EC will consider whether to approve the award or not. If approved a 'Certificate of Merit' will be made available to the group and if requested arrangements for a national officer, or other EC member including the Regional Representative to come along to a group meeting and formally make the award. A cheque for £10 will be made available to the group so that the 'Certificate of Merit' can be framed, if there are any budding

photographers at the award with photos that that can be made available to the Editor of *The Pensioner*, then space permitting, the details of the award will be included in the next edition of the magazine.

N.B: Photos need to be jpeg files of at least 1 megabyte in size for them to be of a sufficiently high resolution required for printing.

12. LOCAL CAMPAIGNING

There are over 12 million pensioners in Great Britain, which represents over 20% of the electorate. There is a need for local groups to contact other pensioner organisations in their areas, so that they can campaign together on common issues. This is particularly relevant regarding the local group, branches or committees of our partner organisations under the LLA campaign. (See Section 1 paragraph 6.b)

The names, addresses and telephone numbers of such organisations can often be found in local libraries or on the internet. CSPA Head Office has a list of national contacts, these are updated and circulated to groups annually. Such links may be useful when contemplating a joint approach to a local MP, a local authority or health trust for example. It is usually better to join an existing campaign than to try to start a separate one. As described in **section 6**, the Alliance is affiliated to a number of national organisations in addition to the LLA campaign and the EC believes that an effective approach to campaigning activity has been achieved through such affiliations.

A good example of local campaigning activity is available through the Campaign for Better Transport, where on their website there is a facility to input a local postcode which then identifies any ongoing local campaigns in the vicinity of the postcode and which organisations are pursuing them.

Where a group is functioning well, interest and involvement in local issues can be most rewarding and can directly help local members, for example being active in the campaign to keep a hospital open, or complaining about the reduction of much needed council services.

This also demonstrates that the group is active and effective and may attract new members. Many issues are dealt with at national level but there is plenty for groups to do. Members may well wish the group to take up local problems which require local knowledge and clearly cannot be dealt with in any detail from a national level. It is important to tell your members what you have done. By the same token, if a general campaign is started by the EC, groups need to make sure all the group's members are encouraged to support it and the EC kept informed of local activities and views from members on such campaigns.

a. Contacting Members of Parliament (MP)

Groups and members are quite often requested to put comments or complaints to their MP, Council officers, Government officials, etc. Such approaches should always be polite and straightforward. Where other group members find common cause in the matter or CSPA Head Office asks for special support, then the group may decide to add its collective weight in the particular representations. It should be borne in mind that MPs are under no obligation to respond to any organisation and only respond to their constituents normally as a matter of courtesy. If pursuing a general campaigning point in all constituencies then a group is best advised to try to ensure they have a member living in

each constituency available to write or contact each MP. Groups can be provided with membership lists sorted into parliamentary constituencies on individual request to CSPA Head Office.

Names of local MPs can be found at local libraries or by checking the Parliamentary website www.parliament.uk All MPs can be reached at House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. Letters to MPs or officials should be as brief as is reasonable (as a rule not more than one typed A4 sheet of paper), succinct and to the point.

b. Campaigning during elections

Although the CSPA is a non-party political organisation, that does not mean we do not get involved in political campaigning. Parliamentary and local elections give the Alliance and others the opportunity to draw attention to the concerns of pensioners. At the time of a General Election, the General Secretary will normally send briefings for the use of groups. It is very important that any campaigning material and additional information at such times is distributed as speedily as possible to group officers and members. Many members may wish to raise specific issues with candidates during an election campaign. All candidates should be able to answer questions on party policy on a wide range of national issues such as the level of the state pension, the health service and the provision of long-term care for the elderly. They should also be familiar with local issues such as the standards of local transport, hospital provision and social services.

Opportunities to raise questions will usually be available in the following ways:

- **Public meetings** – Most candidates will usually hold a series of meetings to which the public will be invited to hear their views on the party's manifesto and to ask questions. Many of these meetings, especially in marginal constituencies, will be attended by major political leaders. Attendance at these party-political meetings is usually quite low and they could afford the opportunity for group officers and members to discuss issues in detail and advance CSPA policies.
- **Joint public meetings** – These meetings, whilst better attended, are not always as useful. Speakers tend to stick to party political lines and time factors limit time for question. If a group can organise a substantial presence (preferably spread around the venue), then pressure can be exerted to press for answers to key national policies such as the level of state pensions, the state of the health service, etc. (Details of the above meetings can be obtained from local newspapers and local party offices will always provide information on times, venues and dates).
- **Canvassing** – It is very probable that members will be canvassed for their voting intentions. This is also done to assess the attitude of voters to key issues, which are then fed to the local candidate. If the canvasser cannot answer your questions directly you should suggest that another party worker, preferably the candidate, should call to see you. As canvassers tend to call or phone unannounced, it is a good idea to prepare a short note of the issues you wish to raise.

The above notes are for general guidance, and at election times briefings will be issued from CSPA Head Office giving details of questions directly related to Alliance policies and issues of concern, which members may wish to put to meetings or individual candidates.

PART III MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS AND SERVICES

13. MEMBERSHIP SERVICES PROVIDED DIRECTLY BY THE CSPA

Groups are notified of the names and addresses of new members living within their area. This is achieved by sending a copy of the, 'Welcome letter' that is sent out to all new members with their membership card and a copy of the national constitution, by CSPA Head Office. The welcome letter includes the contact details of the relevant Group Secretary, so that the group can make a local approach to encourage the new member to join the local group.

Groups may wish to emphasise the range of activities they undertake at group meetings or any social events when approaching new members including coach outings and presentations by guest speakers at group meetings. Arrangements for a Christmas party or a free or reasonably priced lunch or dinner may be mentioned, if possible, together with the fact that refreshments are provided and raffles held at group meetings. Updates of information from CSPA Head Office, including in group circulars, should be made available at group meetings.

Group may also wish to alert new members to membership services that are on offer from the Alliance, and these are summarised at **Appendix (x)**.

14. EXTENDED MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS PROVIDED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARLIAMENT HILL LIMITED

From January 2016, the Alliance launched an extended range of membership benefits which can be accessed via the membership pages of the CSPA website, **www.cspa.co.uk**

By logging in using the generic login facility at the top right hand side of the website home page, with the username: **cspacircs** and password: **swf365** then by clicking on the page headed 'Membership' a sub-heading 'Membership Benefits' will be seen by clicking on this and then sign 'Access Membership Benefits' will reveal further website pages containing the enhanced membership benefits. These are organised into four separate categories: **Home and Lifestyle, Travel, Advice and Work**

The Home and Lifestyle pages contain information relating to discounts available from High Street retailers using a system of cashback reloadable gift cards, which the service provider claims can result in savings of up to £600 per annum, plus other special offers and discounted services including a comparison facility for energy companies. The Travel pages contain information regarding holidays at preferential and discounted rates, also car hire, holiday extras and preferential rates for the FX preloaded Mastercard. The other two categories may be of less interest to most members but nonetheless contain some very interesting and useful discounts.

For those members who do not have access to the internet a separate leaflet has been produced listing those products that can also be accessed by telephone, and the services that can be accessed via the CSPA website have been covered in some detail in The Pensioner and will continue to be given regular publicity through articles and items included in group circulars.

Appendix (i)

WHO CAN JOIN THE CSPA?

A. Full National Membership

Retired or serving civil servants or those from other employment areas directly linked to or analogous with the PCSPS, within 10 years of occupational pension age:

Civil Servants

Civil Service Agencies

Quasi Autonomous Non-Government Organisations (Quangos)

Research Councils

NI Civil Service

Civil Service Trade Unions

First Generation Privatised/Contracted out parts of the Civil Service

UKAEA

Civil Service Police, Fire and other emergency workers

Metropolitan Police Civil Staff

Probation and Family Courts Services

Spouses or partners of deceased former members

B. Associate National Membership

Retired or serving workers, within 10 years of occupational pension age, whose pensions were included in the Public Service Transfer Club, including:
NHS

Local Government

London Transport

Public Sector Teachers

Universities and Higher Education Pension Scheme Members

British Aerospace Defence

Retired public servants who can also join certain other pensioner organisations relating to their former occupation such as those listed below are only eligible to join the CSPA if they have first been advised and encouraged to join their respective occupational retirement organisations.

NARPO – National Association of Retired Police Officers

NFOP -National Federation of Occupational Pensioners - retired employees from Royal Mail, Post Office, British Telecomms, British Steel and other organisations that NFOP covers

FPS - Forces Pension Society - Retired Service Personnel

British Transport Pensioners' Federation (BTPF) - Retired National Rail personnel

C. Associate Group Membership

Eligible to join local Groups as a Group Associate Member - Any person deemed by the Group to offer a benefit to the Group who is not entitled to national membership whether full or associate

Anyone approved by a local Group who is in receipt of a pension whether state or occupational.”

Appendix (ii)

WHAT THE NATIONAL RULES AND CONSTITUTION STATES ABOUT GROUPS

The following text is taken from Rule 6. (b) and 6. (c) of the national Rules and Constitution:

6. (b) Groups in England and Wales

(i) The aim of the Alliance shall be to set up a network of Groups, covering the whole of England and Wales, with areas defined in terms of postcodes. Each Group shall publish its meeting arrangements in the Alliance periodical once every six months and, in addition, may at its discretion, communicate with each member resident within its area, the costs of four communications per year being borne by national funds. Apart from this, the functions of a Group shall be:

(a) to assist in attracting new members;

(b) to make the objects, policy and aims of the Alliance known to potential members, to the public in the Group area, to local branches of Civil Service organisations and Members of Parliament within the Group area, and to establish liaison with other organisations representing pensioners;

(c) in suitable cases to act as the agents of the Executive Council in enrolling members and collecting subscriptions payable to the Alliance and donations to central funds;

(d) to make local representations on behalf of Group members.

(ii) Groups in England will be organised into eight Regions as determined by the Executive Council in consultation with Groups. Groups in Wales will be organised into a Wales Region.

(c) Group Membership and Organisation

(i) Every Alliance member living within the stated area of a Group shall be considered as coming within the purview of that Group. Exceptionally, however, members may opt to join a Group not covered by their designated postcode.

(ii) It shall be for each individual member living within the defined area of a Group to decide whether or not to take advantage of the services provided by that Group, but for card voting and similar purposes the Group shall count all such members as Group members. If any members living in the defined area of one Group decide that they would prefer to seek membership of another Group, they shall send to the Hon Secretary (Organisation) notification to that effect, when they shall count for all purposes as members of that second Group.

- (iii)** Groups shall remit in full to the National Treasurer any annual national subscriptions collected on behalf of members. Groups may invite members as defined in Rule 6 (c) (i) and (iv) to contribute a subscription to help to maintain the Group, provided the rate, and any subsequent change thereto, is approved by due notice having been given to members and adopted at a constitutionally convened Annual or Special Meeting.
- (iv)** Groups may also admit as an associate member any person who, whilst ineligible to join the Alliance under any of the provisions of Rule 3 as a Full or Associate Member at a National Level, can bring benefit to the Group. At Group discretion, an associate member may be elected to any Officer-ship or other position within the Group.
- (v)** Apart from the costs mentioned in Rule 6 (b) (i) above, Groups shall seek to be financially self-supporting.
- (vi)** A copy of the audited statement of the accounts of a Group and any related reports shall be sent to the National Treasurer as soon as possible, and not later than two months after the Group AGM which ratifies the documents.
- (vii)** Groups shall meet not less than four times a year and one such meeting shall be the Annual Meeting which shall elect a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, such other Officers as may be necessary, and a Committee, and appoint Auditors/Scrutineers.
- (viii)** The names and addresses of a newly elected Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer, shall be notified to the General Secretary within fourteen days of the election.
- (ix)** Constitutions and/or Standing Orders should be adopted by Groups within the terms of this Rule provided that such Constitutions and/or Standing Orders and any subsequent amendments thereto, have been adopted by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of those full members attending and voting at a constitutionally convened Annual or Special Meeting of members and approved by the Executive Council.
- (x)** Groups may hold Inter-Group Meetings consisting of representatives from local Groups for the purpose of interchange of information on Group activities and problems, and for the discussion of general topics.
- (xi)** An Inter-Group Meeting shall elect one of its number as Chairman and a member of the Executive Council may attend in a consultative capacity.

Appendix (iii)

MODEL GROUP CONSTITUTION Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance ANYTOWN AND DISTRICT GROUP CONSTITUTION

1. NAME AND MEMBERSHIP

The group shall be known as the 'Anytown & District Group'. Membership shall be open to any member of the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the group shall be to bring together all Civil Service Pensioners and their spouses or partners, especially those residing in the group's area with a view to stimulating interest in, and support for the Alliance.

3. SPOUSES OR PARTNERS

Spouses or partners of members or the surviving spouses or surviving partners of members shall be encouraged to become full members of the Alliance, paying both the appropriate Alliance national subscription and any prescribed group contribution. Alternatively, spouses or partners may elect to pay only the recommended group subscription and join as associate group Members; but in this event, they shall have no national voting rights.

4. CONTROL

The affairs of the group shall be administered by a group committee of no more than **12** members.

5. MEETINGS

(i) The group shall meet at least quarterly and one such meeting shall be the Annual General Meeting (AGM) which shall elect a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and such other officers as may be necessary, elect a committee and appoint Examiners/Scrutineers.

(ii) The names, addresses and telephone numbers of a newly elected Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary shall be notified to the Alliance's General Secretary within **14** days of the election.

(iii) The AGM shall be held at some convenient date in March of each year and notice thereof shall be issued to all members at least **1** month before the date of the meeting.

(iv) Motions for the Alliance's AGM shall be submitted at least **15** days before the date of the group AGM failing which they will be considered by the group committee for submission to the Alliance's General Secretary.

6. PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENTS

A President and Vice-Presidents of the group may be appointed by the group AGM. Their nominations may be made by the group committee from members who have given

outstanding service to the group. On appointment, they shall hold office for life or until they resign or they are removed from office by a general meeting. They shall be entitled to attend all meetings of the group and, ex-officio, all meetings of the group committee.

7. GROUP COMMITTEE

- (i) The group committee shall consist of up to **10** members including the Officers – Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and other elected Officers – with the power to co-opt **2** further members.
- (ii) The group committee shall hold office for **12** months from the date of the group AGM. They may fill any vacancies arising during their term of office.
- (iii) The group committee shall meet at least once a quarter.
- (iv) **4** members of the group committee, of whom at least one shall be the Chairman, Treasurer or Secretary shall constitute a quorum.

8. FINANCE

- (i) The group's financial year shall run from 1 January to 31 December.
- (ii) **2** Examiners/Scrutineers), of whom at least one shall not be a member of the group committee, shall be appointed at the group AGM. For smaller groups one Examiner/Scrutineer would be sufficient, providing of course that they are independent of the group committee.
- (iii) The accounts of the group shall be examined annually as soon as possible after the close of the group's financial year and a copy of the group accounts signed by the examiner(s) shall be sent to the national Treasurer of the Alliance not later than **3** months after the close of the financial year.
- (iv) Members and Associate members of the group shall be invited to subscribe annually towards the group's expenses at a rate determined by a majority of members present and voting at the group's AGM.
- (v) Should the state of the group's finances make it advisable, the group committee is empowered to request the co-operation of the membership in a levy for additional funds.
- (vi) The Treasurer shall take charge of the group's funds and render a full account of the finances at the end of the financial year for approval by the group AGM (held normally in or around March) and also when requested by the group committee.
- (vii) Withdrawals and cheques on the group's banking accounts shall be signed by any **2** of the following Officers – Treasurer, Secretary and Chairman.

9. AMENDMENTS

No amendment to this Constitution shall be made except by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of group members attending and voting at a group AGM, or at a special general meeting (SGM) convened for this purpose on the request of at least **15** group members. At least one month's notice shall be issued to all group members of any SGM which is convened to consider amendments to this Constitution".

Appendix (iv)

NATIONAL AGM – GUIDANCE ON NOMINATIONS, ELECTIONS & MOTIONS

A. NOMINATIONS

NATIONAL OFFICERS: CHAIRMAN, VICE CHAIRMAN, SECRETARY ADMINISTRATION, SECRETARY ORGANISATION:

These officers are elected by the AGM. The national Treasurer and Editor are appointed by the Executive Council (EC) and approved by the next AGM. (Constitution Rules 4(a) and 4(b) refer). At a suitable branch or group meeting held in time for nominations to be received by CSPA head office (by the first Friday in July – Rule 7(b)(iii) refers) Groups need to decide if they wish to nominate any member of the Alliance resident in the UK, Malta or Overseas for the officer posts of Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary Administration and Secretary Organisation (Rule 7(e) (ii) refers). Groups can only nominate one member for each officer post. A form for the submission of nominations will be circulated by CSPA Head Office. It would be helpful if the group could check with the nominee if they wish to stand for the post concerned as sometimes nominations are received which are subsequently turned down by the nominee and this creates additional unnecessary work. If more than one person is nominated for any of the posts an election will be held at the AGM.

REGIONAL EC MEMBERS:

Nine members of the EC shall represent the eight regions in England and one in Wales. The list of groups assigned to regions is detailed in **Appendix (vi)**.

Groups will therefore need to decide if they wish to nominate someone from a group in their region for the EC post. The nominee must be a member of a group within the region. **(Rule 7(e) (ii) refers)**.

Groups can only nominate one member for their region. Otherwise the procedure for dealing with nominations will be the same as for officers. If more than one person is nominated for any region there will be an election at the AGM for that regional EC Post.

NATIONAL EC MEMBERS:

Three seats on the EC are set-aside for members not representing specific regions. Nominations may proceed from branches and groups in the same way as for officers. If more than three people are nominated for these posts an election will be held at the AGM (Rule 7(e) (ii) refers). Groups can nominate up to a maximum of three members for these posts, who must be CSPA members in England and Wales.

SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND EC MEMBERS:

The Scotland branch is entitled to two members and the Northern Ireland branch one member of the EC. The Scotland and Northern Ireland branches will elect their own members at their own AGM's for these posts.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE (SOC):

Branches and groups are also entitled to nominate members for the SOC (three members). The procedure for dealing with nominations is the same as for officers. If there are more than three different nominations for the SOC there will be an election at the A.G.M.

B. ELECTIONS

If there are to be elections at the AGM for any of the posts described each group delegate will be handed ballot papers with the group's voting strength as at the preceding 30 June (Rule 7(g) (i) refers) for each election. The elections will be taken in the following order.

NATIONAL OFFICERS: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary Administration, and Secretary Organisation.

PLEASE DO NOT COMPLETE A BALLOT PAPER UNTIL THERE HAS BEEN AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE CHAIRMAN AT THE AGM

Candidates sometimes withdraw at the last minute or if they are standing for two posts e.g. Chairman and Vice Chairman the first ballot will have to be completed before the second can begin (e.g. the successful candidate in the Chairman's election will need to be deleted from the Vice Chairman's election). Some candidates also stand for officer posts and the EC and therefore if they have been successful in an officer election it will be necessary to delete their name from an EC ballot paper. Each branch or group (Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Malta branches and groups in England and Wales) will be entitled to vote for one candidate in each officer election.

REGIONAL EC MEMBERS:

The next ballot paper will be for the eight regional seats on the EC reserved for Regional Representatives. The ballot paper will be divided into regions and the candidates for each region (if more than one) shown.

The delegate from each group in England and Wales will be entitled to vote for up to eight candidates (one per region) in this election. The constitution provides for the Regional Representatives to come from a group in their region but all groups in England and Wales can vote for any one candidate in any region. This is because the Regional Representatives will be full members of the EC and are together responsible to all groups nationally, not just the groups in their region, Rule 5b refers.

The successful candidates will be those achieving the highest vote in each region. (It is possible that a candidate in one region can be unsuccessful but have a higher vote than a candidate in another region who is successful).

Some candidates may stand for Regional EC seats and National EC seats. If they are successful in the Regional EC Elections, it will be necessary to delete their name from the National EC Ballot paper.

NATIONAL EC MEMBERS:

The next ballot paper will be for the three ordinary seats on the EC not reserved for specific regions. The delegate from each group in England and Wales will be entitled to vote for up to three candidates in this election.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE (SOC):

If elections are necessary for these posts each branch or group (Scotland, Northern Ireland, Malta branches and groups in England and Wales) may vote for up to three SOC Members.

C. MOTIONS

In order to help the SOC compile the AGM Agenda and avoid motions being ruled out of order unnecessarily, groups should follow the guidelines detailed below in both preparing and submitting motions:

- (a) Motions must deal with only one subject**
- (b) Motions must be positive in their intent**
- (c) Motions must be worded clearly and unambiguously**

If these simple guidelines are followed the Agenda is much easier to compile and follow. The most frequent mistake encountered by the SOC is that a motion is only a statement e.g.

“This AGM agrees that NHS waiting lists are too long”

This would be ruled out of order by the SOC and not debated. However, if the motion said:

“This AGM agrees that NHS waiting lists are too long and instructs the Executive Council to make representations to the Secretary of State for Health to ensure urgent steps are taken to reduce them.”

This version is positive in intent and gives a clear instruction and would be accepted for debate by the SOC.

Groups also need to bear in mind Rule 7(d)(iii) of the Constitution:

The Standing Orders Committee shall for Annual General Meetings allocate to each motion a prefix as follows: -

“A” – indicating that the motion requires a decision.

“B” – indicating that the motion is in line with existing Alliance policy and is accepted without debate.

“C” – indicating that the motion would reverse Alliance policy determined at the previous year’s Annual Meeting or Special Meeting in that year and is not for debate.

“D” – indicating that the motion could be dealt with by correspondence and is not for debate.

“X” – indicating that the motion is out of order.

Appendix (v)

GROUPS BY REGION (*denotes closed or suspended)

EAST MIDS/EAST ANGLIA

Bedford
Buckinghamshire*
Cambridge & District
Chelmsford & Mid Essex*
Clacton & District
Leicester & Rutland
Norfolk
Northants*
Nottingham, Derby & District
Peterborough
South Beds & Harpenden
Stevenage & District*
Suffolk

GREATER LONDON

Bexley & District
Bromley & District
Croydon & District
Epsom & District*
Harrow
Hillingdon & District
Inner London
Lewisham, East Southwark & District
Kingston
North East London*
North West London
Southend-on-Sea & District
Southgate, Wood Green & District*
South West Essex*
Twickenham & District
Watford & District

NORTH EAST & CUMBRIA

Cumbria North*
Darlington & District
Harrogate & District
Hull & East Riding*
Lincoln & District
Newcastle upon Tyne & District
Scarborough & District
Sheffield & District
Teesside
West Yorkshire

York & District*

NORTH WEST

Blackpool & Fylde*
Bolton*
Chester
East Lancs*
Liverpool & District
Manchester & District + Bolton
Morecambe Bay*
Preston, Chorley & District
Stockport
Wirral

SOUTHERN

Bexhill & Hastings & District
Bognor Regis & District*
Canterbury & District
Central Sussex*
Crawley & District
Eastbourne & District
Folkestone & District
Guildford & District
Maidstone & Medway*
Seaford
Tunbridge Wells & District*
Worthing & District

SOUTH WEST

Bath & District
Bridport & District*
Bristol
East Devon
North Devon*
Plymouth & District
Swindon & District*
Taunton & District*
Torbay & District
West Cornwall*
Weston Super Mare*
Weymouth & District

WALES REGION

North Wales
South East Wales
West Wales

WESSEX

Aldershot & District
Basingstoke*
Bournemouth & District
East Solent
Gosport North
Isle of Wight
New Forest*
Portsmouth & District
Reading
Salisbury & District
Southampton

WEST MIDLANDS

Birmingham & District
Coventry & Warwickshire
Gloucestershire
Hereford & Worcester
North Staffordshire*
Oxfordshire*
Shropshire*

Appendix (vi)

POSTCODE ALLOCATIONS TO CSPA GROUPS

CSPA GROUP	POSTCODES COVERED
Aldershot	GU9-GU17, GU34-GU35 (except GU35-38), GU46-GU47, GU51-GU52
Basingstoke	RG21-RG29
Bath	BA1-BA4, BA7-BA11, BA13-BA15, BA20-BA22, GL8-GL9, SN12-SN16
Bedford	MK1-MK19, MK40-MK46, MK61, NN9-NN10, SG15-SG19, PE19
Bexhill and Hastings	TN30-TN40
Bexley	BR8, DA1-DA18, SE2-SE3, SE7, SE9-SE10, SE18, SE28, TN15.6, TN15.7
Birmingham	B8-B48, B62-B79, B90-B95, DY1-DY9, WS1-WS14, WV1-WV14
Blackpool	FY1-FY8
Bognor Regis	BN18, PO18-PO22
Bolton	BL1-BL7, M28, M29, M38, M46, WA3, WN1-WN7
Bournemouth	BH1-BH24, BH31, DT10-DT11
Bridport	DT6, DT7, DT8
Bristol	BS1-BS17, BS20, BS30, BS41, BS48-BS49
Bromley	BR1-BR7, TN14.7, TN16.3
Bucks	HP5-HP22, HP27, SL7-SL9
Cambridge	CB1-CB11, IP32-IP33, PE15-PE18, PE27-PE29, IP27-IP29, SG8
Canterbury	CT1-CT14, ME13
Central Sussex	BN1-BN8, BN10, BN41-BN43, BN45, RH15-RH17
Chelmsford	CM0-CM20, CM77
Chester	CH1-CH4, CW1-CW12, WA6-WA7
Clacton	CO1-CO16

Coventry	B49-B50, B80, CV1-CV13, CV21-CV23, CV31-CV37, CV47
Crawley	RH1-RH14, RH18-RH19
Croydon	CR0, CR2-CR8, SE19-SE20, SE25, SE27, SM5-SM6, SW16-SW17
Cumbria North	CA1-CA28
Darlington	DL1-DL17
East Devon	EX1-EX14, EX16-EX19, EX24
East Lancs	BB1-BB12, BB18, BB97
East Solent	PO12.1 & 12.2, PO14-PO15, SO31.1, PO13.8, PO13.9, SO31.6, SO31.9
Eastbourne	BN20-BN24, BN26-BN27
Epsom	KT4, KT11, KT17-KT23, SM1-SM4, SM7
Folkestone	CT15-CT21, TN23-TN29
Gloucester	GL1-GL7, GL10-GL20, GL50-GL56
Gosport North	PO12.3 & 12.4, PO16, PO13.0
Guildford	GU1-GU8, GU10.2, GU18-GU30, GU33, GU35.8, KT13, KT16, KT24
Harrogate	BD23, HG1-HG5
Harrow	HA0-HA3, HA5, HA7-HA9, UB5-UB6
Hereford & Worcester	B60-B61, B96-B98, DY10-DY14, HR1-HR9, WR1-WR15
Hillingdon	HA4, HA6, SL0-SL3, UB1-UB4, UB7-UB10
Hull	DN14, HU1-HU20
Inner London	EC1-EC4, N1, N4-N8, N19, NW1, NW5, SE1, SE5, SE11, SE17, SW1-SW12, W1-W4, W6, W8-W12, W14, WC1-WC2
Isle of Wight	PO30-PO41
Kingston	KT1-KT3, KT5-KT10, KT12, SW15, SW18-SW20
Leicester	DE11, DE12, LE1-LE19, LE65, LE67
Lewisham, and East Southwark	SE4, SE6, SE8, SE12-SE16, SE21-SE24, SE26

Lincoln	DN15-DN21, DN31-DN41, LN1-LN13, NG23-NG24, NG34, PE21-PE25
Liverpool	L1-L40, PR8-PR9, WA1-WA2, WA4-WA5, WA8-WA12, WN8
Maidstone	ME1-ME12, ME14-ME20, TN12.0, TN12.9
Manchester	BL0, BL8, BL9, M1-M9, M11-M27, M30-M37, M40-M41, M43-M45, M50, M60, OI1-OL16, WA13-WA15
Morcombe Bay	BD24, LA1-LA23
New Forest	BH25, SO41-SO43
Newcastle	DH1-DH9, NE1-NE13, NE15-NE49, NE61-NE71, SR1-SR9, SR43, SR48
Norfolk	CO1-CO10, NR1-NR35, IP24-IP26, IP30-IP31, PE14, PE30-PE38
North Devon	EX20-EX23, EX31-EX39
North East London	E1-E18, IG1-IG11
North Staffs	DE6, DE13-DE15, ST1-ST21, WS15
North Wales	CH5-CH8, LL11-LL49, LL51-LL78, SY10, SY15-SY22
North West London	N2-N3, N10, N12, N20, EN5, NW2-NW11
Nottingham, Derby	DE1, DE3, DE5, DE7, DE21-DE24, DE56, DE65, DE72-DE75, NG1-NG23, NG25, NG31-NG33
Northants	NN1-NN8, NN11-NN18, NN29
Oxford	OX1-OX18, OX20, OX25-OX29, OX33, OX39, OX44, OX49
Peterborough	PE1-PE13, PE20, PE26
Plymouth	PL1-PL21
Portsmouth	GU31-GU32, PO1-PO11, PO17
Preston	PR1-PR7, PR25-PR26
Reading	RG1-RG10, RG12, RG14, RG17-RG20, RG30-RG31, RG40-RG42, RG45, SL4-SL6
Salisbury	BA12, SP1-SP11
Scarborough	YO11-YO18, YO21-YO22, YO25

Seaford	BN9, BN25
Sheffield	DE4, DE45, DN1-DN12, DN22, S1-S14, S17-S18, S20-S21, S25-S26, S32-S33, S35-S36, S40-S45, S60-S66, S70-S75, S80-S81
Shropshire	SY1-SY9, SY11-SY14, TF1-TF13, WV15-WV16
South Beds	AL5, LU1-LU7
South East Wales	LD1-LD8, CF1-CF5, CF10-CF12, CF14-CF15, CF23-CF24, CF31-CF48, CF61-CH64, CF71-CF72, CF81-CF83, NP1-NP8, NP10-NP13, NP15-NP16, NP18-NP20, NP22-NP26, NP44
South West Essex	RM1-RM20
Southampton	SO14-SO19, SO31-SO34, SO31.5, SO31.8, SO30, SO32, SO40, SO45, SO51-SO52
Southend	SS0-SS9, SS11-SS17
Southgate	EN1-EN4, N9, N11, N13-N15, N17-N18, N21-N22
Stevenage	AL6-AL10, CM21-CM24, EN10-EN11, SG1-SG7, SG9-SG14
Stockport	SK1-SK17, SK22-SK23, WA16
Suffolk	IP1-IP23
Swindon	SN1-SN11, SN25-SN26
Taunton	EX15, TA1-TA7, TA10-TA24
Teesside	TS1-TS29
Torbay	TQ1-TQ14
Tunbridge Wells	TN1-TN22
Twickenham	SW13-SW14, TW1-TW20, W5, W7, W13
Watford	AL1-AL14, EN6-EN9, HP1-HP4, HP23, WD1-WD7, WD17-WD19, WD23-WD25
West Cornwall	PL22-PL35, TR1-TR27
West Wales	SA1-SA20, SA31-SA48, Sa61-SA73, SY23-SY25
Weston Super Mare	BA5-BA6, BA16, BS21-BS29, TA8-TA9
Weymouth	DT1-DT5, DT9
Winchester	SO20-SO24, SO50, SO53

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Wirral	CH41-CH49, CH60-CH66
West Yorkshire	BD1-BD22, HD1-HD9, HX1-HX7, LS1-LS21, LS25-LS29, WF1- WF17
Worthing	BN11-BN17, BN44, RH20
York	LS22-LS24, YO1-YO8, YO10, YO19, YO23-YO24, YO26, YO30- YO32, YO41-YO43, YO51, YO60- YO62

Appendix (vii)

ROLE OF THE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

- To be a full member of the EC, entitled to participate in all debates and votes, and to report on regional matters;
- To have direct responsibility for keeping in touch with groups in their regions;
- To give advice to groups and members, most importantly when in difficulty;
- To encourage communication between groups and to arrange meeting of groups within their region;
- To ensure adequate group organisation and the well-being of groups in their regions;
- To aid dissemination of information to members and assist groups in responding to requests for views, etc; and
- With help from CSPA Head Office, and in liaison with the Secretary (Organisation), to visit groups and prevent them failing, to revive those that have ceased to exist, or to set up groups where none exist at present.
- Reference to annual regional meeting organised by CSPA Head Office

The primary role of the Regional Representatives is to give first hand help and assistance to those groups who request it and to regularly contact the groups in their region to ensure that they are meeting from time to time and not running into difficulties. Groups are responsible for running their own affairs, doing their own local campaigning and in the case of the groups in Wales in dealing directly with the Welsh Government - Llywodraeth Cymru, collectively via the Wales Regional Representative. Regional Representatives are encouraged to organise meetings of groups in their region, so as to foster an exchange of ideas and mutual support. Unlike the AGM, which has a formal debating structure, Regional Meetings are informal and mean that group and Alliance Officers can exchange views about campaigns, current policies, common problems, etc. The meetings give an opportunity to find out the thinking behind particular policies, to represent members' views and to enter into a constructive discussion about the future. Newer group officers can perhaps benefit from the experience of their more experienced colleagues.

The Regional Representatives serve as full members of the EC but they are not to be regarded as a further layer of bureaucracy. They work to support groups where groups would like this and are available to visit groups where a visit would be welcome. They are not expected to be constantly attending group meetings, nor to undertake work which is proper to groups.

It is hoped that groups would prefer to have their own nominees for the Regional Representative positions. However, if at any time there is no forthcoming candidate for a particular Region, then the EC will appoint someone. This arrangement ensures that there is a Representative in each Region who can deal with "early warnings" when groups have difficulties, e.g. in finding sufficient officers to keep the group going. Sadly, on some occasions groups have soldiered on without seeking help and then, finding no volunteers, have started the process of winding up without telling anyone. It is therefore of utmost importance that before getting to a situation where they feel they have to wind up, any group in trouble should get in touch with their Regional Representative, so that additional assistance may be given to try and resolve the situation. Success cannot be guaranteed but it is much harder to resurrect a closed group than to help out a group in difficulty. One of the reasons why Regional meetings

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can be helpful is that problems can be identified early and groups can be mutually supportive.

As already stated, under the Alliance's executive structure, the Regional Representatives have the primary role in liaising with groups and maintaining a healthy group structure in their regions, but they may seek help from the DGS and/or the Secretary (Organisation).

Appendix (viii)

DUTIES OF GROUP OFFICERS

Chairman: should be able to chair meetings and to ensure that all business is conducted properly and at a sensible pace. It is desirable that they should represent the group's desired image and have a broad appreciation of the running of the group.

Secretary: should arrange meetings and their agendas, make sure that a record of decisions and actions is kept of the group's activities, prepare newsletters, carry out general correspondence and service the requirements of the Chairman and group Committee.

Treasurer: should keep a reliable record of the group's income and expenditure, in a form which can be readily confirmed as correct each year. The Treasurer is responsible for the group funds and pays all bills incurred in running the group including the hire of accommodation for meetings, and other essential expenses such as stationery, postage, photo-copying, travelling. All cheques should be signed by two of the group officers. All transactions should be recorded and carried forward from there to the accounts under a clear cross-reference. The Treasurer is required to submit a full, clear account of the finances at the end of each calendar year and when required by the Chairman. After approval at the AGM the certified annual accounts should be sent to CSPA head office and the national Treasurer. All records and associated vouchers and receipts should be kept for at least six years.

Individual group finances may vary, but for an average group, the sensible level at which the working balance in group funds should be maintained is in the region of £450. One solution for any group in financial difficulties could be for its Secretary to write to all the Alliance members in the group area (whether active, attending meetings, or not) and include an amiable invitation to pay a group subscription. Most groups raise a subscription, per annum, from members who wish to be informed of activities undertaken, forthcoming meetings and other group events

Membership Secretary: should receive details of all new members from CSPA head office, and once notified the Membership Secretary should write to the new member inviting them to join the group. Opportunities should be sought to attract new members to group meetings. Up to date group membership lists are available from CSPA head office on request. If the group wishes to circulate its members, CSPA head office will, on request, supply an up-to-date set of addressed stick-on labels and or for the distribution of group newsletters.

Appendix (ix)

GETTING OUR MESSAGE ACROSS : WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Introduction

Many groups complain that their voices are rarely heard in the local or national media and that when they do appear; their views are either marginalised or patronised. Yet much of modern campaigning is now increasingly played out in the media, and any organisation that seeks to raise public awareness, influence opinion and change government policy must find ways of effectively getting their message across.

News as a product

We consume news every day through papers, radio and television and the internet – but very few of us ever analyse what we see or hear. We might feel we instinctively know that ‘man bites dog’ is more newsworthy than ‘dog bites man’, but we seldom consider why a story appears and more importantly, why a story does not appear and we rarely look at how a news item is presented or how the media works.

Nevertheless, news stories are as much a product as anything else we might consume. A news item must go through certain stages before it appears in print or on a screen, and it has to conform to various constraints and rules.

For example, national TV news items are rarely longer than 3 minutes; within which time there are usually at least two interviews and a comment from the reporter, along with accompanying pictures. Yet how many issues can be adequately explored and explained in such a short space of time? Likewise, newspaper coverage is limited by available space, the paper’s house style and – as with all news stories – whatever else is happening on that particular day.

It is therefore vitally important to understand how news is constructed in order that you can effectively present your story in such a way that will gain some much-needed publicity.

Media Strategy

Before you even begin to issue information or make contact with the media, it is important that you have a clear idea as to what you are trying to achieve. It may sound grand, but a media strategy is very simple. You must consider:

- whether your story is the type that will interest journalists
- the main points you are trying to get over
- which media outlets you are going to contact
- who is going to write the press release, make telephone calls, etc.
- who is going to do an interview

Without this very basic planning, even a good story can fail to grab the journalist’s attention. It is worth spending a bit of time thinking about how this work is going to be done. Your first point of contact with the media however will usually be through a press release.

Press Release

Journalists are busy people, so the press release that gives all the important facts about a story in a clear and concise way, stands the best chance of success. In general, press releases can be used to give advance notice of an event, report on an event that has taken place or offer comment on something that has happened elsewhere in the news.

Make sure you give the 'who, 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'why' of the story as simply and as quickly as possible. For example:

WHO: the Anytown group of the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance
WHAT: will be lobbying the Anytown Council meeting
WHERE: at the Town Hall, Anytown Road
WHEN: at 11am on Tuesday, January 25
WHY: to protest at plans to cut concessionary bus travel for the over 60s

Once you have covered the 'Five Ws' in the first and second paragraph, continue your press release giving more information. News is often about people – so make sure you also include comment, in direct quotes, from someone who is involved in the story. Some important points to remember:

- Wherever possible type out your press release on proper headed paper so that it is easy to read. Try to write in the style of the media e.g. look at a local paper story and follow how it is constructed.
- Only use one side of the paper and end each page with a complete paragraph. If you have to go over to two pages (and never more than two), make sure you write 'More Follows' at the end of page 1.
- Date your press release and give a time/date from when the information can be used e.g. 'For immediate use 25 September 2016'.
- Give your press release a short, snappy headline but don't be surprised if the newspapers don't use it.
- Stress a photo opportunity if there is one and always include a good quote from someone involved in the story.
- At the end of the press release give details of who to contact if the journalist requires more information. Give telephone numbers and make sure the person chosen is knowledgeable about the subject.
- 24 hours before your event, call the News desk and ask if your event is in their diary and whether they will be covering the story.
- Give journalists as much notice as you can. If possible, use a fax machine to send your press release or better still, email. Always mark for the attention of the News desk – unless you have the name of a journalist.

Giving Interviews

If your press release is successful, the journalist will probably want to do an interview with someone from your group. Make sure the person who does this is good at getting your views across. For any interview, it is worth making a few notes. Never try to make more than three points in any one interview – and sometimes you may only get the chance to make one. If your interview is not going out live on radio or TV, you can always ask to give an answer again if you didn't feel it went very well. Try to relax and be yourself.

If you are concerned that the interviewer will edit what you are saying, you can always try to give a similar answer to whichever question you are asked. That way, the

journalist either has to use what you have said or cut the item completely. On this basis, your interview will almost always be used.

Making contacts

Try to establish contacts in advance. Whenever you have dealings with a journalist, ask for their telephone, fax and, if possible, email details. You can then build up a network of contacts and use these the next time you've got a story. The essence of modern journalism relies on people bringing stories to the media's attention. If *you* give a journalist a good story, quickly and clearly, they are much more likely to come back to you when *they* want a comment on another subject. This relationship can be beneficial to both sides: the journalist gets the story done quickly and you get some useful publicity. They are often looking for items to fill up the empty spaces.

Angles and opportunities

Once you start contacting the media, you will realise that there are many reasons why a story doesn't make it into the paper or onto our screens. The most obvious ones are that there was a bigger/better story happening at the same time, there was too short notice given or the story wasn't deemed interesting enough. There are however, some easy ways of getting publicity:

- A publicity stunt (e.g. giving your local MP some food such as a few teabags or half a loaf of bread etc.) that adds up to the value of the rise in the pension. It makes a good photo opportunity)
- Lobbying/meeting local councillors/ Writing to the local paper
- Taking part in local radio phone-in programmes
- Commenting on national issues in terms of how it will affect local people

Summary

All groups need publicity to get support for their campaigns and to influence those in power to act. That is why it is important to understand how the media works and what methods you need in order to maximise your chances of getting your message across. Don't be discouraged if your story doesn't always make the headlines – persevere and eventually you will be news.



SPECIMEN PRESS RELEASE

PENSIONERS' PROTEST

The Hampton group of the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA) will be lobbying Arthur Anstruther, the Hampton MP, at the Houses of Parliament, at 1 pm on Wednesday 10 September, to demand his support for the continuation on the triple-lock used to maintain the value of the State Retirement Pension.

The National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) is organising a Mass Lobby of Parliament on 10 September and the Hampton group of the Alliance will be giving their full support. They will be highlighting:

- The abysmally low level of the State Retirement Pension

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- The low increase to the State Retirement Pension this year and the event lower increases to occupational pensions
- The massive increases to Council Tax and other essentials which form a significant proportion of pensioners' expenditure
- The demand to have a decent State Pension, free from means testing and linked to the triple-lock.

NB: The triple-lock used for maintaining the value of the State Retirement Pensions is whichever is the highest of earnings increases, consumer price increases or 2.5% as at the previous September.

Mrs Jean McDuff, Hampton group secretary of the CSPA said "Pensioners are fed-up with the Government's pussyfooting around with pensions. We need a significant increase now, to pay the increases in Council Tax and maintain our standard of living. Another layer of means-tested benefits would be a bureaucratic nightmare, meaning many pensioners will again miss out on their entitlement. Britain has the fourth strongest economy in the world but pays the lowest State pensions in Europe. We want action not platitudes."

The group will be insisting that MP Arthur Anstruther presses the Prime Minister to take action, now.

For further information, contact Jean McDuff. Give telephone number, address and, if possible, email address.

In the further information section, you could offer a photo opportunity. Group members boarding the train to London or outside the MP's surgery? You could also add the number of members the group represents, the area it covers and the venue, dates and times of group meetings.

Appendix (x)

DIRECTLY PROVIDED CSPA MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

CAMPAIGNING to protect the value of Civil Service and related occupational pensions, state pensions, social inclusion, health and care, transport and other issues of concern affecting all pensioners.

HELP AND ADVICE with civil service pension issues and directly related pension schemes. Individual cases involving pension issue are dealt with by the Secretary Administration, whose contact details are included in every edition of *The Pensioner* magazine.

THE PENSIONER MAGAZINE sent free to members' homes every quarter with news about campaigning activity and on other issues of interest to members.

CSPA WEBSITE where up to date news, reports on campaigning activities and other resources including back copies of 'The Pensioner' can be found. www.cspa.co.uk

CSPA FACEBOOK PAGE launched to extend CSPA communications for those members with Facebook accounts. www.facebook.com/cspalliance/

COMPUTER SUPPORT HELPLINE BC Technologies provide a free service to members answering your computer questions and giving advice on which type of computer to buy. Email anytime to CSPA@bc-group.co.uk or call **01369 706656** 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

LEGAL ADVICE Parliament Hill the provider of the extended range of CSPA membership benefits has announced that a new legal advice provider has taken over the provision of free initial legal advice for members living in England, Wales and Scotland. The legal advisers are Lyons Davidson Solicitors, and their advice service can be accessed by calling **01752 300 584** quoting **CSPA**. Members may be requested to provide their CSPA membership number. These legal advice services are available when you need them and they will discuss any legal query you may have. If you require a lawyer to act on your behalf Lyons Davidson's legal advisers will put you in touch with one of their specialist teams to discuss how they can help you and what costs are likely to apply.

Members in Scotland also have access to a Scottish based firm of solicitors, A M Simpson & Son on **01683 220118** and ask for Alan Davidson. Members in Northern Ireland should contact McCartan, Turkington & Breen on **02890 329801** and ask for Vivian Harty. These Solicitors offer services for preparing Wills and Lasting Power of Attorney.

CIVIL SERVICE INSURANCE SOCIETY (CSiS) the CSiS offers members a wide range of high quality insurance policies at reasonable cost. As an added incentive, the CSiS has undertaken to beat members' home and contents renewal costs by at least £10, an offer which already applies to car insurance policies. This means that members can make savings of nearly the annual cost of a single CSPA membership

subscription. Members who have previously taken out the combined household insurance policy will continue to receive the incentives that applied when the policy was first taken out. For more information: Tel: **0845 60 77 444** or online at www.csis.co.uk/cspa

LIFE AND FUNERAL INSURANCE COVER the Royal London Insurance has launched in conjunction with the CSiS, an over 50's life insurance that also caters for funeral care cover. This policy compares favourably with similar products and provides flexibility. The Funeral Care cover facility attracts a £300 contribution to the cost of a funeral. A special offer currently available to CSPA members is £50 M & S Voucher for every new policy taken out. Further information can be obtained via the CSiS website www.csis.co.uk or by calling **0800 202 8702**.

WORLDWIDE CSPA GROUP ANNUAL TRAVEL INSURANCE at highly competitive rates specifically for CSPA members and their families. Pre-existing health conditions are discounted - members simply have to be fit to travel. Tel: **0800 223 0972** or go to www.healthinsurancegroup.co.uk/cspatravel

FINANCIAL ADVICE Affinity Financial Awareness has now become a member of the Wealth at Work group of companies, which specialises in retirement incomes options service including financial advice. 'my wealth' is a trading name of Wealth at Work and part of the Wealth at Work group of companies, and provides guidance and advice on investing. Visit www.wealthatwork.co.uk/mywealth or call **0800 028 3200** and quote 'CSPA'.

HEARING STAR - PRIVATE AUDIOLOGY (HEARING AID) SERVICES

For members who have tried and been unsuccessful with the NHS, or simply do not wish to wear the style offered, the CSPA have entered into a charitable partnership with Hearing Star.

Hearing Star do not serve the general public. Services are exclusively available to members and their dependents (includes spouse, parents and children over 18yrs). Alliance members are invited to contact Hearing Star for their copy of the 2017 brochure. Please note that all enquirers are verified with the CSPA before brochure information or advice can be provided. Non-members are required to join the CSPA to access this service. For further information: Telephone: **0800 03 23 771**
Email: CSPA@hearingstar.org.uk Web: www.hearingstar.org.uk

HOLIDAY EXTRAS offer CSPA members discounts off their pre-booked prices. Tel: **0800 083 8746** quoting reference "WC38A" or contact them using the link on the CSPA website. This service is also included as part of the extended benefits and services launched in January.

DISCOUNTS FROM FRED OLSEN CRUISE LINES of 10% are available in addition around the UK to over 200 destinations worldwide. Members of Fred Olsen's Oceans Club are restricted to a 5% discount limit. Quote discount code '**CSPA10**' and call **0800 0355 110** or email member.cruises@fredolsen.co.uk

DISCOUNTS FROM NATIONAL TYRES AND AUTOCARE are available to members by quoting account number **870814**. This provides a 15% discount for items purchased, including tyres, batteries, exhausts, and work on brakes, steering and suspension and reduced MOT costs. This discount cannot be combined with any other discount.

SINGAPORE AIRLINES discount on air fares is currently suspended because prevailing market conditions means that ordinary prices are lower than those that were on offer at a discount. Further information is available on their website **www.singaporeair.com**

