



November 2023

WEST MERCIA GROUP NEWSLETTER NUMBER 8 - WINTER 2023

CSPA West Mercia Group Officers – 2023/24

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(David also covers Membership matters)

HOW WEST MERCIA GROUP WORKS

West Mercia Group began life in February 2022 following the merger of the Hereford & Worcester Group and the closed Shropshire Group. Our 800 or so members reside in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire. CSPA nationally has about 40,000 members.

We meet quarterly in various locations - in Hereford, Shrewsbury, Wellington, and Worcester - to facilitate attendance. We last met on 18 and 20 September in Worcester and Shrewsbury, respectively. Our meetings are run fairly informally, and they last no more than 2 hours. The meetings at Hereford, Wellington and Worcester are preceded by an optional pub lunch nearby. Meetings end with a refreshing cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit.

Our final Group meeting in 2023 will be held at **2.00pm on Monday 11 December 2023 at Quaker Meeting House, Sansome Walk, Worcester, WR1 1UG** (5 minutes' walk from Worcester Foregate Station).

We plan to complement the in-person meetings with occasional online gatherings using the free Zoom platform. The Zoom link will be sent to everyone in our 140-strong email group. If you wish to join our email group, please contact the Group Secretary.

We produce a quarterly newsletter which we aim to issue at least 3 weeks before each quarterly meeting.

Payment of Your Civil Service Pension – MyCSP

MyCSP pays your Civil Service pension. Its contact details are: MyCSP, PO Box 2017, Liverpool, L69 2BU; Phone: **0300 123 6666** (Mon-Fri: 0830 -1800). Full information about the pension scheme is on the scheme website at: <https://civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk>, including various “what to expect” guides. You can also register for the **Civil Service Pension Portal**, which gives online access to your pension information.

If you experience any problems with your civil service pension, which MyCSP can't or won't resolve, please contact the Group Secretary for help and initial advice. More complicated matters will be referred to the CSPA Pensions & Personal Case Manager to pursue if appropriate with MyCSP.

CSPA National Annual General Meeting 2023

The CSPA National AGM was held in October at the Chesford Grange Hotel in Kenilworth. The national annual report and statement for accounts for 2022 (issued with the Summer 2023 edition of “The Pensioner”) were presented for adoption; elections were held for the Executive Council (EC); and motions on various issues of interest to older people were debated. The Group Secretary represented us at the National AGM.

Our 3 motions - which were set out in the Summer 2023 newsletter - achieved mixed results. Remarkably, our Group Secretary persuaded the National AGM, in the face of Executive Council opposition, to remit the EC's Motion A7 on membership recruitment. That allowed our Motion A8 on membership recruitment and retention to be debated. It received a tied hand vote, but it fell as a result of the card vote. Our Motion A13 on the need to publish the 2022 National AGM work-plan was narrowly lost on an uncounted hand vote. The EC opposed it despite saying the work-plan would be published after the AGM! Our Motion A37 on Voter ID was carried.

A full account of the National AGM will be published in due course in “The Pensioner” magazine.

Group Meeting Dates for your 2024 Diary

- 2.00pm on **Monday 18 March 2024** at the **Quaker Meeting House, Worcester**, and 1.30pm on **Wednesday 20 March** at **Shrewsbury United Reformed Church**.
- 2.00pm on **Wednesday 17 June** at **Eignbrook United Reformed Church, Hereford**, and 1.30pm on **Wednesday 19 June** at **Wellington Methodist Church**.

- 2.00pm on **Monday 17 September at the Quaker Meeting House, Worcester**, and at 1.30pm on **Wednesday 19 September at Shrewsbury United Reformed Church**.
- and 2.00pm on **Monday 9 December 2024 at the Quaker Meeting House, Worcester**.

Reminders will appear in the newsletters, and members of our email group will receive advance copies of the meeting papers.

The Charity for Civil Servants (CfCS)

CfCS, formerly called the Civil Service Benevolent Fund, helps current, former and retired civil servants with whatever problems they may have. **Its vision is of a lifelong civil service community of people offering effective support for each other when life takes a turn for the worse.** The support includes financial assistance and a range of services, including help with bereavement, residential care, relationships, caring, dementia, long-term illness, and other emergencies. CfCS works with specialist organisations – including Macmillan, Dementia UK and Relate – and signposts other appropriate sources of helpful advice.

Visit the CfCS website www.foryoubyyou.org.uk, or call its free confidential helpline on **0800 056 2424**. CfCS is **not** a membership organisation, so all serving, former, and retired civil servants are eligible to ask for its help.

National Pensioners Convention (NPC)

CSPA is affiliated to the **National Pensioners Convention (NPC)**, the largest pensioners organisation in the UK. NPC campaigns for and promotes the welfare and interests of all pensioners, as a way of securing dignity, respect and financial security in retirement. It organises rallies, lobbies of MPs, and makes submissions to Government on policies affecting older people. Its Biennial Delegate Conference, which next meets in March 2024, elects the NPC national officers and determines its policies for the coming 2 years. NPC also stages an annual 2-day “Pensioners Convention” every June in Blackpool.

NPC’s monthly bulletin “**Campaign**” is sent by the Group Secretary to the 140 members of our email group. Visit the **NPC** website at <https://www.npcuk.org> to receive it. The latest edition of Campaign covers the NPC Transport conference; Ticket office consultation; the State Pension Triple Lock; International Older People’s Day; Black History Month; and much more.

West Mercia Group is affiliated to and supports NPC’s regional organisation, the **West Midlands Pensioners Convention (WMPC)**. We send delegates to its monthly meetings in Birmingham. **WMPC’s** informative website is at <https://wmpc.org.uk> and it produces a quarterly newsletter. Its Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/7125023377569919>.

CSPA Membership Offers and Services

The main CSPA membership offers and services are:

- **Financial planning advice** by Lighthouse (08000 85 85 90).
- **Motor Source** is a competitive **car purchase and leasing service**.
- **MyCarNeedsA** gives access to over **4000 vetted garages**.
- **CSIS Home and Motor Insurance** and the new **CSIS Travel Insurance**.
- Prepaid **MyCashback cards** offer between 3% and 15% cashback discounts on purchases from stores like **M&S, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Boots, Argos, B&Q, Homebase and Curry's/PC World**.
- **Audiology and hearing services** by Hearing Star (0800 0323 771).
- Lyons Davidson Solicitors (01752 300 584) for **free legal advice**.
- Discounted **Lost Luggage Protection scheme** (TRACE ME Smart ID).
- BC Technologies provide **free computer support** (01369 706656).

Some of the offers are accessed online, but many can still be accessed by phone. Contact the Group Secretary if you need help in accessing any of the offers and services, which can be found in the Members' Area of the national website at <https://www.cspa.co.uk> and in "The Pensioner" magazine.

CSPA - Protecting What You've Earned - Use It Or Lose it

West Mercia Group brings together over 800 local CSPA members, with a view to stimulating interest and support for CSPA's aims. We meet quarterly in various locations, issue a quarterly Newsletter, communicate additionally through our 140-strong email group, and through occasional Zoom gatherings. We know that not everyone can attend meetings in our far-flung area. So, if there are local concerns - e.g. bus services, social care, health care, public services such as libraries and public toilets - please contact a Group Officer.

We rely on volunteers to keep us going locally. Without "new blood" our long-term future as a Group cannot be assured. So, if you've got a little bit of time and some interest in older person's issues, we can put that to beneficial use.

CSPA is a membership organisation. **So, please extol the virtues of CSPA membership to all your retired civil and public service contacts.** The discounted cost of our CSIS travel insurance may well save them more than the annual subscription to CSPA. Prospective members can download an application form at the website <https://www.cspa.co.uk> and post it free to CSPA HQ. Or they can call 020 8688 8418 for a membership pack. Or they can join easily and quickly online.

Apart from its national website, CSPA also has a Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/cspalliance> - and can be found on LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter).

If you believe CSPA can do things differently/better, locally and/or nationally, please tell us.