

### **CSPA WEST MERCIA GROUP OFFICERS – 2024/25**

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### **WEST MERCIA GROUP**

CSPA West Mercia Group began life in February 2022, following the merger of the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Group with the closed Shropshire Group. We have over 700 members in the Three Counties. CSPA nationally has about 35,000 members.

Our informal quarterly meetings last no more than 2 hours. Those held at Hereford and Worcester are preceded by an optional pub lunch. Meetings end with tea and biscuits. We plan to complement the in-person meetings with occasional online gatherings using the free Zoom platform. We also produce a seasonal newsletter which we aim to issue at least 3 weeks before each quarterly meeting.

**If you wish to join our 150-strong email group, please contact the Group Secretary.** You will then receive occasional emails on subjects of interest to older people.

### **YOUR CIVIL SERVICE PENSION**

**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 our pension scheme is on the scheme website at: <https://civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk>. There are 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 pension, which MyCSP can't or will not resolve, please contact the Group Secretary for help and initial advice. More complicated matters will be referred to the CSPA Pensions & Personal Case Manager at CSPA HQ to pursue.

MyCSP has reportedly experienced problems in recent months delivering its service to the standards expected in its contract with the Cabinet Office. CSPA nationally has been in contact with Cabinet Office, which has implemented a “recovery plan” including additional staffing for the MyCSP call centre.

The contract for managing the Civil Service Pension Scheme has been awarded by the Cabinet Office to Capita for 10 years from September 2025. Capita held the contract prior to MyCSP. CSPA nationally is in close contact with the Cabinet Office to ensure that the transition from MyCSP to Capita goes seamlessly. Follow this link for more information - <https://www.capita.com/news/capita-selected-administer-civil-service-pension-scheme>.

## **WEST MERCIA GROUP MEETINGS IN 2025**

Our schedule of Group meetings in 2025 is as follows:

- **Monday 17 March 2025** (Group AGM) from 2pm to 4pm at Quaker Meeting House, 1 Sansome Walk, **Worcester**, WR1 1UG
- **Monday 16 June 2025** from 1.30pm to 3.30pm at Hampton Park United Reformed Church, **Hereford**, HR1 1UJ (new venue because Eignbrook URC has closed)
- **Monday 15 September 2025** from 1.30pm to 3.30pm at **Shrewsbury** United Reformed Church, Coleham Head, SY3 7BJ
- **Monday 8 December 2025** from 2pm to 4pm at Quaker Meeting House, **Worcester**.

The 17 March 2025 meeting is our Group Annual General Meeting, when we elect the Group Officers and the Accounts Examiner for the coming year and adopt the Statement of Accounts for 2024. The 16 June meeting is our last chance to submit nominations for election to CSPA national posts and motions for discussion at the CSPA 2025 National AGM in early October. At the 15 September meeting we will give a steer to our appointed delegate to the CSPA National AGM. The 8 December meeting provides an opportunity to review our activities in 2025 and make plans for 2026.

Meeting reminders appear in our newsletters, and members of our email group receive copies of the meeting papers. If you cannot attend a meeting but have a bee in your bonnet about an issue affecting older people that you think can usefully be discussed, please contact the Group Secretary.

## **DEMOCRACY IN CSPA**

This subject featured in the Winter 2024 edition of "The Pensioner" magazine with proposals from the National Executive Council to introduce some changes to national electoral arrangement. The article included a feedback form for individual members. The general view at our December 2024 Group meeting was that the modest proposals were unobjectionable and would make little difference to the growing democratic deficit in CSPA, caused largely by the continuing decline in the number of active Groups. We will discuss them again at our 17 March 2025 meeting, with a view to determining our collective response to the National Executive Council by the 21 March deadline.

## **LATER LIFE AMBITIONS**

**Later Life Ambitions** (LLA) represents nearly 200,000 members of the CSPA, the National Federation of Occupational Pensioners (NFOP), and the National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO). Its manifesto - <https://www.laterlifeambitions.co.uk/manifesto> - was launched at a Westminster

Parliamentary event in November 2023 and sets out six aims for a better future for the 11 million older people in the UK.

## **THE CHARITY FOR CIVIL SERVANTS (CfCS)**

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

Find out more by visiting the CfCS website [www.foryoubyyou.org.uk](http://www.foryoubyyou.org.uk) or call its free confidential helpline on 0800 056 2424. **CfCS is a charity and not a membership organisation, so all serving and former civil servants can ask it for 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 and older people, 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 2026, will elect the NPC national officers and determine its policies and priorities for the following 2 years. NPC also stages an annual 2-day "Pensioners Convention" in Blackpool. The 2024 Blackpool event in early September was attended by several hundred pensioners from all over the UK, who listened to informative speakers and held lively discussions on a range of topics of interest to older people.

The NPC's monthly bulletin "**Campaign!**" is sent by the Group Secretary to the 150 members of our email group. Visit the NPC website at <https://www.npcuk.org> to receive it. The latest edition of Campaign contained articles on the Winter Fuel Allowance and the WASPI campaigns, the Blackpool convention, and a call for the UK to support a UN Convention for Older People. In the run-up to the July 2024 General Election, NPC published a 9-point "**Manifesto for Older People**". NPC also has several working parties covering a variety of topics and which issue regular newsletters.

The NPC has been leading the national campaign to reverse the Government's shock decision to means-test the **Winter Fuel Allowance** - <https://www.npcuk.org/post/npc-general-secretary-plea-to-chancellor-to-halt-ill-advised-winter-fuel-payments-means-test-plan>

The NPC has recently issued a review of their important campaigning work in 2024 for retired and older people which you may like to read - <https://www.npcuk.org/post/npc-annual-review-2024>

West Mercia Group is affiliated to the **West Midlands Pensioners Convention (WMPC)**. We attend its monthly meetings in Birmingham. WMPC's informative website is at <https://wmpc.org.uk> and it also issues a quarterly newsletter. The WMPC Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/7125023377569919>

## **CSPA MEMBERSHIP SERVICES AND BENEFITS**

There are a wide range of services and benefits available to CSPA members. These can be found in the Savings Hub in the Members Area of the CSPA national website - <https://www.cspa.co.uk/>. Here is a selection of them:

- **Financial planning advice** by Quilter (08000 85 85 90).
- **Motorfinity** 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 services and benefits are accessed online, but many can also be accessed by phone. The Group Secretary will help with access if you encounter a problem.

## **CSPA – "PROTECTING WHAT YOU'VE EARNED"**

West Mercia Group brings together over 700 CSPA members in Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Worcestershire, with a view to stimulating interest and support for **CSPA's objects**, which are:

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

Our Group meets quarterly in various locations in the Three Counties, issues a quarterly Newsletter, communicates additionally through our 150-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, adult social care, health care, public services such as libraries and public toilets - please contact a Group Officer.

We rely on volunteers to keep West Mercia Group going. Without "new blood" our long-term future as a Group cannot be assured. If you have some spare time and an interest in older person's issues, we can put it to good use.

**CSPA is a membership organisation.** Please spread the good news about CSPA to all your retired civil and public service contacts. The discounted cost of our CSIS travel insurance may well save them more than the CSPA annual subscription! Prospective members can download an application form from the national website <https://www.cspa.co.uk/> and post it free to CSPA HQ; or call 020 8688 8418 for a membership pack; or join easily and quickly online.

CSPA has a **Facebook** page - <https://www.facebook.com/cspalliance>. The Spring 2025 issue of "**The Pensioner**" magazine should come through your letterbox by early March. If you do not receive it, please contact the Group Secretary. The Pensioner magazine is also published online on the national website - <https://www.cspa.co.uk> - if you want to look at previous issues.

If you believe CSPA can do things differently/better, locally, and/or nationally, please don't hesitate to tell us.