

GROUP CIRCULAR 967

7 March 2025

To: Branches, Groups and Executive Council

Dear Colleague

GROUP AND BRANCH UPDATES

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ATTACHMENTS

1. NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OCTOBER 8 - 9, 2025

The CSPA Annual General Meeting 2025 will take place at Chesford Grange Hotel, commencing in the afternoon of Wednesday 8 October and finishing in the afternoon of Thursday 9 October.

Groups and Branches will be invited to submit Motions for discussion at the 2025 AGM and Nominations for the posts of Officers, members of the Executive Council and members of the Standing Orders Committee in April.

Please note that the date for receipt of nominations and motions this year will be **Friday 4 July**.

2. REMINDER - GROUP & BRANCH CONSULTATION RESPONSES ON ALL MEMBER BALLOT PROPOSALS (GC 965/24)

We gently remind Group and Branch Chairs/Secretaries to submit their Group or Branch's collective responses by email or post, to be received by CSPA Headquarters no later than **5pm on Friday 21st March 2025**. At the time of writing, we have had a good number of returns, and we are grateful to those who have submitted them already.

Please email Group/Branch responses to: benedetta.makanju@cspa.co.uk

Or, alternatively, post to:

FREEPOST RUHB-AGAL-SSUA
Civil Service Pensioners Alliance
160 Falcon Road
London SW11 2LN

We thank you in advance for your time in completing and returning your Group or Branch's responses for the EC to consider at their next meeting on the 24th April 2025, along with the results of the individual Members' Survey. The EC will update members on the outcome in due course.

3. GROUP POSTHOLDERS

Groups are reminded to update CSPA Head Office about their Group Committee Postholders as soon as possible after their AGMs to ensure that our central records are updated accurately.

We also need confirmation of the name of the person designated to receive posted copies of circulars, and the numbers of copies they will need, if anything has changed in this regard.

We can add any group committee members' names to our electronic circulation lists for group circulars or alternatively remove the names of people who no longer wish to receive these communications, upon request.

4. GROUP ACCOUNTS

Please could all Groups send in their Group accounts for the year ending 31 December 2024. They should be submitted to the National Treasurer within two months of the Group AGM and should have been examined/audited and agreed by members at a general meeting. The accounts can be sent by email to M.Sparham@cspa.co.uk or posted to Head Office marked for the attention of Mike Sparham.

5. GROUP NEWSLETTERS

As is usually the case at this time of year, due to the number of Group AGMs, we have had a big increase in the number of newsletters being submitted to Head Office for circulation. May we remind Groups to submit their newsletter content as far in advance of their meeting dates as possible, as we need to receive it at least two weeks prior to the date of issue to have sufficient time to process them.

Lorraine Lydon has asked for the newsletter text to be sent in simple Word format, with no columns, address boxes, background colours or text boxes, as these are not compatible with the software on the Quadiant platform. If you would like to submit a different version for publication on the website and circulation to your members by email, then please make sure this is clearly named as such and preferably supplied in both Word and PDF format.

Group newsletters being posted out to members are now also being emailed to those with email addresses and the relevant permissions on our records.

If you have any queries in this regard, please contact Lorraine by email in the first instance (Lorraine.Lydon@cspa.co.uk). Lorraine is part-time and works Monday to Wednesday each week.

6. UPDATE ON PENSION CREDIT APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS

Minister for Pensions, Torsten Bell, has made a written statement on this recently, providing new figures for the year to date 2024/25, indicating that the DWP has received around 300,000 applications for Pension Credit. This is the highest annual number of applications recorded by the DWP since comparisons began.

Since 29 July 2024, when the changes to Winter Fuel Payments were announced:

- DWP has received 235,000 Pension Credit claims – an 81% increase or 105,100 extra applications on the comparable period in 2023/24;
- DWP has cleared 232,200 Pension Credit claims – a 92% increase or 111,100 extra clearances on the comparable period in 2023/24, and
- Of the claims which DWP have cleared, 117,800 (around half) have resulted in an award of Pension Credit – a 64% increase or 45,800 extra awards on the comparable period in 2023/24.

Age UK and others have reminded that this still leaves over 700,000 pensioners who are likely to be entitled to Pension Credit without this support.

7. WEC REPORT ON ‘THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE’

We welcome the publication, on the 19 February, of the cross-party Women & Equalities Committee’s long-awaited report. The WEC, chaired by Sarah Owen MP, concluded an extensive inquiry taking into consideration written and oral submissions from individuals, charities and organisations representing pensioners, including Later Life Ambitions (LLA). CSPA contributed to a written LLA submission to the inquiry in November 2024.

The WEC concluded that “ageism is widespread and culturally embedded in the UK”, despite there being over 11 million people over 65 in England and Wales, with the proportion of the population in this age group set to increase in the coming decades. The report was supported proposals for a Commissioner for Older People in England, citing positive achievements by the Commissioner in Wales.

Referring to evidence submitted by LLA and other organisations, the WEC found that “some groups of older people are at a high risk of digital exclusion from a wide range of essential services and activities, including aspects of healthcare, local authority services and benefits, and banking”.

8. GOVERNMENTAL ‘DIGITAL INCLUSION ACTION PLAN’

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has published its Digital Inclusion Action Plan, focussing on five different groups in society including older people, people with disabilities and low-income households.

Over the coming year, the Government plans to:

- Launch a Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund to support local initiatives to increase digital participation,
- Progress the digital skills framework which enables people and businesses to use online services with confidence and safety,
- Pilot a device donation scheme with the Digital Poverty Alliance,
- Improve the online experience of government digital services, including the GOV.UK login, and
- Measure and assess the economic and social value of digital upskilling.

The document also addresses barriers to digital services and notes that 11% of people tend to favour offline services. For services such as Pension Credit, 36% of claimants are currently using offline routes. The renewed focus on digital inclusion chimes with the response letter CSPA received from Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, which was included in GC 966/24.

9. INDEPENDENT AGE REPORT: 'JUMPING THROUGH HOOPS'

On the 4 March, Independent Age published their report 'Jumping through hoops: reducing the complexity of the social security system for older people'. The report draws on research into the complexities of the social security system for those over State Pension age, drawing on the experiences of older people who have used Independent Age's services. It identifies a number of aspects of the system which could be improved to increase take-up of financial entitlements and reduce pensioner poverty levels and calls on the UK Government to develop a take-up strategy for all social security entitlements.

You can access a copy of the report here - www.independentage.org/jumping-through-hoops or request an emailed or printed copy from Head Office.

ATTACHMENTS

1. NPC Housing Working Party newsletter - Housing Matters, Edition 3, February 2025
2. NPC press release - 'Shocking proof Winter Fuel Payment cuts are causing misery for 3 in 4 older people'
3. NPC Campaign!, Issue 185, February 2025
4. Age UK press release - 'Three in four pensioners - equivalent to 9.1 million - admitted they were cold in their own homes in January' (649,827 strong petition submitted to 10 Downing Street)
5. Age NI - Briefing Note for Members in advance of the Assembly Debate on Strategic Planning for an Ageing Population, 25 February 2025

If you have any questions or require any further information about the matters covered by this Group Circular, please don't hesitate to contact me, either by email at sally.tsoukaris@cspa.co.uk or by telephone on **020 8688 8418 (Office)**.

Yours sincerely



Sally Tsoukaris, General Secretary

Tel: 020 8688 8418

Email: benedetta.makanju@cspa.co.uk

Civil Service Pensioners Alliance □ Sally Tsoukaris, General Secretary
160 Falcon Road, London, SW11 2LN

Tel: 020 8688 8418 □ Email: enquiries@cspa.co.uk □ Website: www.cspa.co.uk