

GROUP CIRCULAR 970

To: Branches, Groups and Executive Council

May 2025

Dear Colleague

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1) Re-introduction of the Newsletter of the Year Competition – call for Volunteers for Judging Panel

Motion **A15/24** carried at the 2024 AGM called on the EC to re-instate the Newsletter of the Year competition. The competition had last been held in 2019, with the winner presented with a silver salver at the Annual General Meeting dinner. The Executive Council have considered the motion, taking account of changed circumstances since 2019, and have agreed to re-instate the competition on a zero-cost basis and call on Groups and Branches to nominate volunteers to a small judging **panel of 3 members** to select the best Group or Branch Newsletter over the past year.

The membership of the panel of judges will be agreed by the Finance & General Purposes committee at its meeting on the 24th June. The criteria for selection of the winning Newsletter will be determined by the judging panel, which will meet on-line, to consider the merits of all Group and Branch newsletters published on the website since the 2024 AGM. The selected Group or Branch winner will then be presented with a Certificate at the 2025 AGM dinner on the 8th October.

All active Groups and Branches are invited to nominate one member to the judging panel by sending an e-mail to: david.luxton@cspa.co.uk headed “**Newsletter Competition 2025**” to arrive no later than **Monday 16th June**. The

selected members of the judging panel will be notified after the 24th June and their names will thereafter be confirmed in a Group Circular.

2) Member Survey and Group & Branch Consultation on CSPA's Democratic Processes

Following on from the General Secretary's presentation at the 2024 AGM, a member survey was published in the December issue of The Pensioner magazine, and we are delighted to report that it elicited 1,353 responses, most being returned to us online, but with many being posted back to us as well. The survey returns were analysed by Connect and presented to the EC on the 24th April in the form of a comprehensive report.

The survey results suggest that an overwhelming majority of individual members are in favour of electoral reform, with 76.6% of members supporting the proposed changes, and 53.8% strongly supporting them. Over 43% of the members returning surveys indicated that they do not currently feel able to participate in CSPA's democratic processes, often due to the closure of their local groups. Members also said they would like to see a more diverse range of candidates being nominated to EC positions, with some going so far as to suggest that they would consider standing for EC posts themselves in future.

The EC is very mindful of the need to consider the views of members participating in CSPA Local Groups and Branches as well and continues to emphasise the need to prioritise the ongoing support that those active in Local Groups and Branches rely upon. As promised at the last AGM, Groups and Branches were consulted on proposals to trial a new EC electoral process via GC 965/24, issued before Christmas. Responses were received from 28 of our Groups and Branches, representing a broad cross-section of organisational experience and views from across the country. Whilst being broadly supportive of reform, Groups and Branches expressed caution, particularly around the implementation, and the constructive feedback received commonly referenced ways in which All Member ballots might be designed to strengthen, rather than sideline, their local structures.

All the Groups and Branches we heard from reported active participation in local and national CSPA activities, with most holding regular meetings and issuing newsletters. Whilst most Groups and Branches supported All Member ballots in principle, at least on a trial basis, especially for the benefit of members who were not in active Groups or Branches, concerns were raised about candidate visibility, member understanding and the future role of local structures. Although there was scepticism expressed about whether All Member ballots would increase member engagement and participation, most submissions rightly pointed to member communications as being critical to the

trial's success. There was universal support for dual method voting (with online and postal options) to ensure accessibility for all CSPA members.

In view of these survey and consultation results, the EC have adopted the headline recommendations of the report, namely to:

- a) Proceed with the two-year trial of All Member ballots,
- b) Offer a combination of postal and online voting options,
- c) Invest in clear, accessible member communications,
- d) Ensure that All Member ballots complement, and do not undermine, Group and Branch structures,
- e) Support and encourage candidate diversity,
- f) Monitor and evaluate the trial period closely.

A presentation on Connect's report will be given at the 2025 AGM, with the necessary enabling Constitutional Amendments being moved by the EC for the AGM's agreement.

3) HQ Staff Changes

Lorraine Lydon, our part-time Office Manager, has decided to retire and will be leaving us in early June. Although Lorraine has not been part of the team for very long, she was a great help during the office relocation towards the end of last year and we wish her everything of the best for a long and happy retirement.

As Lorraine will be taking some well-deserved annual leave in the coming weeks, we would ask you to copy the following colleagues into all correspondence relating to Group Newsletters and other matters –

Benedetta Makanju – benedetta.makanju@cspa.co.uk

Verity Morrish – verity.morrish@cspa.co.uk

Marion McAuliffe – marion.mcauliffe@cspa.co.uk

We have recruited Lorraine's replacement, who is due to start at the beginning of June, and we will update you further in this regard in a following circular.

4) Audio versions of The Pensioner magazine

CSPA has made arrangements to have audio copies of each issue of The Pensioner made available for those who cannot easily read the printed edition. A recording of each issue is being made available on a memory stick, which is to be mailed to each recipient in a returnable wallet. There will be no additional charge to members receiving it, and there will be no postage to pay. Members are asked to return the memory sticks in their wallets by turning over the

address label and posting them back in time for the following issue. If any member would like to receive The Pensioner in this form they should notify CSPA Head Office.

The EC has asked if Groups and Branches could let their members know about this service through their newsletters, in addition to notices being placed in The Pensioner.

5) Civil Service Pensions Administration and work with the Cabinet Office

On the 15th April the General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary and Pensions & Personal Case Manager joined representatives from the Cabinet Office and Capita for an introductory meeting online. Capita are due to take over the administration of Civil Service pensions in December, and they have been working with the team from the Cabinet Office on an engagement programme with representative groups of employers, active scheme members and members with deferred pensions already. The next group of scheme members to be engaged with as Capita's new systems are developed is retired pensioners and Capita have said that they are open to engaging with CSPA as part of this work with stakeholder representatives. Capita are to confirm the next steps but, in the meantime, if you are interested in taking part in these 'focus groups' please get in touch so we can pass your details on to Capita as and when appropriate.

In mid-April we learned, via the unions, of an ongoing National Audit Office investigation into MyCSP's service levels. The General Secretary and Pensions & Personal Case Manager subsequently appeared before the investigating team on a 45-minute video call on the 16th April to give evidence. We await the outcome of their investigation whilst discussing the issues raised with the Cabinet Office. Please see *attached summary of the Background and Scope of the NAO Investigation*.

On the 16th of April we wrote to the Cabinet Office about our members' concerns around delays to the issue of the 2015 Remedy (McCloud) 'Immediate Choice' packs to pensioners who retired between 2015 and 2022. We had been impressed by the NHS pension scheme's administrators' communications with those affected by similar delays, which included a timeline illustrating plans to prioritise cases, so we asked if something similar could be put together to assist our members, and others, impacted. On the 28th April, we received a detailed letter in response from the Deputy Director of Pensions and we have scheduled a follow up meeting on the 4th June.

We have been asking the Cabinet Office to give CSPA greater prominence in their Civil Service Pension's newsletter, as we (and several CSPA members)

took note of significant coverage recently afforded to the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship and other 'Trusted Partners', whilst CSPA is only referred to in a link. We intend to pursue this with the Cabinet Office once again when we next meet with them.

6) Update on Digital Exclusion/Inclusion Campaigns

We continue to work through Later Life Ambitions (LLA) and with the NPC and other organisations on issues around Digital Exclusion and Inclusion, and a number of updates in this regard will be in the Summer issue of The Pensioner.

On 29th April, the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary represented the LLA partners at a meeting with the Athena Foundation, which acts as convener and catalyst for the work of three All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) including the APPG on Fair Banking and the APPG on Sustainable Finance. The Athena Foundation were interested to hear about the LLA's (and our members') views on, and experiences of, bank closures and access to cash issues. It was agreed that there was much to be gained from collaboration, and it is hoped that the CSPA/LLA will be invited to future APPG events to provide input from the perspective of pensioners on relevant topics.

Forthcoming LLA meetings with MPs interested in issues around bank closures and access to cash include plans to meet Esther McVey MP (Conservative, Tatton) and Gregory Stafford MP (Conservative, Farnham and Bordon). Updates on these meetings are to follow.

On the 9th April, Later Life Ambitions submitted online evidence to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's consultation on the Government's Digital Inclusion Action Plan (refer also to GC 967/25). We await the outcome of their consultation.

On the 30th April, the Treasury Committee's report on Access to Cash was published, including reference to the LLA's submission arguing that the cash system is essential to increasing the financial independence of an increasingly ageing population, who are struggling with the fast pace of digitalisation, particularly with respect to banking and financial services, and citing evidence that 49% of people aged 75 and over in the UK in 2023 were unable to perform the necessary tasks to set themselves up for banking online. The Treasury Committee's report is available here - [Acceptance of cash](#) or on request from Head Office. A copy of the *LLA written evidence to this inquiry is attached* for your information, along with a *copy of an MSN news article - "Cashless society warning as disaster awaits for UK towns and cities" (30 April 2025)* quoting Later Life Ambitions, Age UK and others.

LLA has also recently submitted written evidence to the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee's investigation into "AI in Financial Services". A copy of the submission is available from HQ on request or on the Later Life Ambitions website here - <https://www.laterlifeambitions.co.uk/post/ai-in-financial-services> .

7) Update on Health and Social Care Campaigns

On the 5th May, the parliamentary Health and Social Care Committee [published](#) their report: "**Adult Social Care Reform: the cost of inaction**".

It is recognised that adult social care is in desperate need of reform. Done well, the report argues that social care has the power to positively transform people's lives. Yet too many people aren't getting the care they need; care workers are undervalued and far too much pressure is placed on unpaid carers.

Further points of note include:

- Individuals face unknowable, and potentially life-changing, charges for care, including 1 in 7 older people with care costs over £100,000.
- The care individuals do receive can be inadequate, leaving people unable to work or take part in other meaningful activities and risking worsening existing conditions.
- The London School of Economics found that 41% of older people in the fifth most deprived areas had experienced unmet need, compared to 19% in the least deprived areas.
- Despite an ageing population, the number of older people receiving state-funded care has fallen by 10%, from 587,000 to 529,000 people.
- This "care rationing" can also be seen through the type of care that local authorities are able to offer. As Melanie Williams, President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), told the Committee:
 - "For older adults we [...] will be looking at the minimum that they would require to stay relatively well. We would not necessarily be able to invest in them having friendships or being able to get out and about more. Somebody will probably be receiving basic personal care, the bare minimum, rather than what is needed for an older adult to enjoy a great quality of life as they age. There is rationing over time, if you like, because we are focusing on the most immediate need."

With these points, the Committee recommended that government should publish an annual assessment of the level of unmet care needs for both older

adults and working age disabled adults, publishing its methodology and supporting data to ensure transparency and allow for scrutiny.

A copy of the LLA evidence submitted to this inquiry in December 2024 is attached for your information, and copies of the Committee's report are accessible on the link included above or in print from CSPA HQ.

The **Terms of Reference of the review of Adult Social Care**, lead by Baroness Casey of Blackstock, were finally published on the 2nd May 2025.

A summary of the [Terms of Reference for the Casey Review](#) is as below.

Phase 1 (Medium Term – Report by 2026): Develop a plan to implement a national care service, in line with the government's manifesto.

Approach

- Launch a national conversation about adult social care.
- Focus separately on older people and working-age disabled adults.
- Provide pragmatic, phased recommendations to improve care over 10 years.
- Emphasise productivity, prevention, and empowerment of care users and carers.

Scope

- Use a data-driven review to understand current challenges.
- Focus on funding efficiency (local authority and NHS interface care).
- Recommend reforms to support NHS targets (e.g., 18-week elective care).
- Operate within existing fiscal constraints.

Phase 2 (Long Term – Report by 2028): Recommend long-term transformation of the care system.

Focus

- Adapt to demographic changes.
- Explore new models of care that are fair and affordable.

Baroness Casey will lead the commission independently, with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) as the lead sponsor. The commission will collaborate with multiple government departments to ensure full transparency and access to necessary data.

In response, the three co-chairs of the Care and Support Alliance (CSA); Caroline Abrahams CBE, Charity Director at Age UK, Jackie O'Sullivan, Executive Director of Strategy and Influence at Mencap, Emily Holzhausen CBE, Director of Policy and Public Affairs at Carers UK, said:

"It's great news that the terms of reference for the Casey Commission have now been published and that the work has got formally underway."

"We are pleased that Baroness Casey is being given the scope to explore all the issues that require examination as part of the process of creating a sustainable National Care Service worthy of the name. However, we are dismayed that the terms of reference the Government has set refer to the need for "recommendations that can be implemented in a phased way over a decade", suggesting that we will not get a fully reformed social care system until 2036. That's far too slow, and it means that social care transformation is being put off for two parliaments, possibly longer. This delay is particularly alarming in light of the rapidly growing demand for social care driven by demographic changes with people living longer, often with more complex needs. Estimates suggest that at least 1.7 million more adults will require social care in the next 15 years. Especially given that some other similar countries, like Germany and Japan, overhauled their care systems more than twenty years ago now, it's unacceptable that in England older and disabled people and their unpaid carers are being asked to go on waiting."

"We welcome the fact that Baroness Casey's first act was to convene a roundtable of people in receipt of care and unpaid carers. It was exactly the right place to start, and we hope this approach of learning from those with direct experience of care – professionals and providers as well as recipients and their families – will be a prominent feature of how the Commission operates."

CSPA is working with the CSA, Carer Poverty Coalition, NPC, LLA and others hoping to have opportunities to provide evidence to influence the outcome of the Casey Review.

8) Independent Age – Winter Fuel Payments & Commissioners Campaigns

Our fellow campaigners at Independent Age have renewed their campaign to get Winter Fuel Payments reinstated following speculation after the recent elections that the Government would be reviewing eligibility criteria. In the week following the local elections, their call for people to email their MPs about the issue saw over 530 MPs being contacted, with 1,500 plus emails being sent. This is a great sign of support, but there's still time to add your voice if you would like to email your MP using the link here - [Ask your MP to show support towards reviewing the changes to Winter Fuel Payment](#). If you don't have

internet access or you need any help with this, please get in touch with Independent Age by telephone on their Helpline number 0800 319 6789.

The changes to Winter Fuel Payment have been disastrous, as 5 in 6 of all older people in poverty missed out on this vital income top-up last winter. We cannot allow that to happen again, and every email sent could have an impact. Behind the scenes, a number of MPs want to look again at this decision and having first-hand evidence about how constituents are feeling can help them to put pressure on the Government. For 1.6 million people, losing this £200 or £300 payment can be the difference between keeping a home warm in the cold weather or not.

Please find *attached, for information, an article from The Guardian on 5th May* on this topic, including a photograph from the NPC/Unite Westminster protest last October featuring our Deputy General Secretary and the CSPA logo to the right hand side of the image.

Independent Age say they're also keeping tabs on the UK Government's response to a cross-party group of MPs who have recommended that they consider introducing a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing in England.

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

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