

CSPA WEST MERCIA GROUP NEWSLETTER NUMBER 17 – SPRING 2026

CSPA WEST MERCIA GROUP OFFICERS – 2025/26

Chair: Valerie Farmer - 01684 569266 - valfarmermalvern@gmail.com

Vice Chair: Malcolm Moore - 01531 660457 - malcolm.m.a.moore@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Helen Connelly - 01905 830451 - helenfconnelly12@gmail.com

Secretary: David Humphreys - 01562 631188 - dnhumphreys@gmail.com (David also covers Membership matters)

WEST MERCIA GROUP

CSPA West Mercia Group began life in February 2022, following the merger of the Hereford & Worcester Group with the closed Shropshire Group. We have over 700 members in the Three Counties. CSPA nationally has about 34,000 members. Our informal quarterly Group meetings last no more than 2 hours. Meetings end with tea and biscuits. We plan to complement the in-person meetings with online gatherings using Zoom. We also produce a seasonal newsletter.

To join our 150-strong email group, please contact David Humphreys, our Group Secretary. He will send you occasional emails on subjects of interest to older people, including advance copies of our meeting papers. Our quarterly Group meetings in 2026 are:

- Monday 16 March (Group AGM), 2pm-4pm, at Quaker Meeting House, 1 Sansome Walk, Worcester, WR1 1UG (near Worcester Foregate Street Station)
- Monday 8 June, 1.30pm-3.30pm, at Hampton Park United Reformed Church, Hampton Dene Road, Hereford, HR1 1UJ
- Monday 14 September, 1.30pm-3.30pm, at Wellington Methodist Church, New Road, Wellington, TF1 1LU (near Wellington Station)
- Monday 7 December 2026, 2pm-4pm, at Quaker Meeting House, 1 Sansome Walk, Worcester, WR1 1UG (near Worcester Foregate Street Station).

CSPA CERTIFICATES OF MERIT



(Left to Right: Helen Connelly, Valerie Farmer, David Humphreys, and Kevin Billson)

At our December 2025 meeting in Worcester, Kevin Billson, the Midlands Regional Representative, presented the Certificates of Merit awarded by the CSPA Executive Council to Val Farmer (Group Chair), Helen Connelly (Treasurer), David Humphreys (Secretary), and Vic Reed. Sadly, Vic Reed died in late November and his certificate has now been given to the solicitors handling his estate. Vic will be sorely missed. He joined CSPA on retirement in 1994, hardly missed a Group meeting, and variously held the offices of Group Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer. We understand that a memorial service may be held in the Spring, and we will gladly share the details when known.

YOUR CIVIL SERVICE PENSION

Capita Plc was contracted by Cabinet Office from 1 December 2025 to administer the Civil Service Pension Scheme for the next 10 years. Its contact details are Capita Pensions Solutions, PO Box 713, Darlington, DL1 9JZ; Phone: 0300 123 6666 (Mon-Fri: 0800-1800). Information about our pension scheme is available at: <https://civilservicepensionscheme.org.uk>, including various "what to expect" guides. The Civil Service Pension Portal gives online access to your pension information, and provides an online contact form. If you experience any problems with your pension, which Capita cannot resolve, please contact the Group Secretary for initial advice. More complicated matters are dealt with by David Luxton, the Pensions & Personal Case Manager at CSPA HQ.

The earlier contractor (MyCSP) experienced problems in recent months delivering its service to the standards expected by the Cabinet Office. CSPA was in close contact with the Cabinet Office to help ensure that the transition from MyCSP to Capita went seamlessly. Unfortunately, there

were problems from the outset, partly caused by the backlog of work handed over by MyCSP, including the large amount of work arising from the McLeod judgement. CSPA has been in contact throughout January with Capita and the Cabinet Office about the unacceptable situation. Capita and the Cabinet Office jointly issued a detailed update on 28 January about their efforts to tackle the backlog and restore normal service: <https://www.capita.com/news-and-insights/news/2026/joint-statement-civil-service-pension-scheme-csp>. Capita will soon launch an App, for use on all Android and iOS phones and tablets, for easy access to the pension portal.

CSPA NATIONAL AGM 2026

CSPA National AGM 2026 will be held in early October in Kenilworth. At our June and September Group meetings we will appoint our Group delegate, consider making nominations for national elections, decide whether to submit any motions for discussion, and give our delegate a steer on how to vote on the key motions on the National AGM agenda.

“LATER LIFE AMBITIONS” (LLA) CAMPAIGNS

“Later Life Ambitions” (LLA) represents the 160,000 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 6 aims for a better future for the 11 million older people in the UK. LLA recently published its “Budget for Later Life” – <https://www.laterlifeambitions.co.uk/copy-of-our-manifesto> - seeking to:

- Protect the State Pension
- Reduce the tax on pensions
- Tackle the gender pension gap
- Support older people in the workplace
- Introduce a minimum income guarantee
- Widen access to public transport
- Make housing safe, secure, and accessible
- Support health and social care

THE NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION (NPC)

CSPA is affiliated to the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), the largest pensioners organisation in the UK. NPC campaigns for the welfare and interests of 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 relevant issues. Its 2024 Biennial Delegate Conference elected the NPC national officers and determined its policies and priorities until 2026. NPC also stages an annual 2-day “Pensioners Convention” in Blackpool. Sadly, current financial difficulties meant that the 2025 event was postponed. NPC’s monthly bulletin “Campaign!” is sent by the Group Secretary to our email group. Visit the NPC website at <https://www.npcuk.org> to receive it. The latest Campaign! contains articles on the recent Budget, on the WASPI campaign, and news from the NPC Regions. The various NPC working parties issue regular newsletters.

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>. WMPC Facebook page is at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/7125023377569919>

CSPA MEMBERSHIP SERVICES AND BENEFITS

Many services and benefits are available to CSPA members. These can be found in the Members Area of the CSPA national website - <https://www.cspa.co.uk/> and are usually featured in "The Pensioner" magazine. 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. The services and member benefits on offer have recently been revamped, so check them out!

CSPA – “PROTECTING WHAT YOU’VE EARNED”

CSPA West Mercia Group supports the CSPA’s national objects:

- 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.

We meet quarterly in various locations in the Three Counties, issues a quarterly Newsletter, communicate additionally through our email group, and hope to offer occasional Zoom gatherings. 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, 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 cannot be assured. If you have some spare time, 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 2026 issue of "The Pensioner" magazine should come through your letterbox in late February. 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.

APPEAL FOR VOLUNTARY DONATIONS

CSPA Groups are expected to be self-funding. West Mercia Group, and its predecessors, have never resorted to local subscriptions or raffles etc to raise money to cover our annual operating costs. We spend upwards of £200 a year, mainly on the cost of hiring meeting rooms, bank charges, and our affiliation to the West Midlands Pensioners Convention. Our current bank balance is £134, which will keep us going at least until our September 2026 meeting. We last launched a general appeal for voluntary donations in 2016, which produced a marvellously generous response from members of over £600. We recently appealed to our 150-strong email group, which so far has elicited donations amounting to £50. We now need to widen the appeal to the remaining 600 members. We are deliberately seeking modest donations, with a suggested maximum donation of £10. If you would like to donate, please either send a cheque payable to CSPA West Mercia Group to David Humphreys, 49 Trimley Drive, Kidderminster, DY11 5LB, or pay online to our Lloyds account (sort code:30 98 97; account no:68460663; account name Civil Service Pensioners’ Alliance West Mercia Group). All donations will be acknowledged by email, if available. Thank you in anticipation.