



Later Life Ambitions · Apr 1 · 2 min read

When 'Gold-Plated' Doesn't Match Reality

Sally Tsoukaris, General Secretary of Later Life Ambitions partner the Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA), wrote this letter to the editor of *The Telegraph* in response to its coverage of public sector pensions. The letter was not published, but the questions it raises remain important.

There is a familiar narrative that public sector pensions are somehow excessive – “gold-plated”, even. But that characterisation doesn't stand up to scrutiny. The average civil service pension is just over £10,000 a year. That's hardly a lavish reward for a lifetime of public service.

So, what exactly is being challenged? The idea that teachers, nurses, prison officers, and members of the armed forces should have a guaranteed pension? Or that it should rise with inflation, so their income doesn't steadily lose value over time?

Of course, pension systems should be reviewed to ensure they remain sustainable. But that process must not be used to justify undermining the principle of a secure and dignified retirement for those who have spent their working lives serving others.

LLA's letter may not have been published, but it speaks to a wider debate that is far from settled.

Dear Sir,

I read with interest your article of 24 March headlined 'Gold plated public sector pensions face review over £57bn hit to taxpayers'.

Despite reporting to your newspaper's usual standard, I am unclear about exactly what Baroness Neville-Rolfe takes issue with. Does she think teachers, soldiers, prison officers and nurses should not be guaranteed a pension? Or is the problem that it rises with inflation – would she rather those that have spent a lifetime in public service are penalised with real terms decreases in their income in later life?

The average civil service pension is £10,478 per annum, according to the Cabinet Office. This is scant reward rather than gold plated.

I have no issue with reviewing public sector pension debt. We all have an interest in ensuring the system is robust. But it must not be undertaken as cover for an attack on the very people who choose a career in the service of their country and fellow citizens, including some who put their own safety or even life on the line in the course of their duties.

Yours faithfully,

Sally Tsoukaris, General Secretary, Civil Service Pensioners Alliance