



## **SOUTH LONDON GROUP NEWSLETTER FOR THE PERIOD JULY – DECEMBER 2026**

**The South London Group of the CSPA is the local group for CSPA members in this area. The Group meets at 11.00 am on the second Tuesday of each month at Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road Croydon CR0 1BD, with refreshments available before the meeting. Information about how to get to Ruskin House can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.**

**We also arrange outreach meetings for CSPA members who live too far away to attend our meetings regularly. Details are on page 4.**

### **A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR**

Dear CSPA Members,

Welcome to the July edition of CSPA South London Group's newsletter. I hope that the first half of 2026 has been good to you and your family.

Our group's committee now numbers nine, and this enables us to maintain our monthly meetings, many with guest speakers, at Ruskin House, together with around four 'outreach' meetings per year to locations across our expanded area for those that find it difficult to come to Croydon. You will find details of all meetings scheduled for the remainder of the year on page 4. Let us know if you have any ideas for additional social activities to broaden our appeal.

You will be aware from The Pensioner, and to some extent the mainstream media, of the multiple problems that have arisen with the transfer of the civil service pensions scheme back-office administration from MyCSP to Capita last December. Although Cabinet Office and Capita have deployed considerable resources to address the problem, including using pool staff from HMRC, it is not expected that normal contracted service standards will be achieved before the autumn. Some recent retirees have yet to receive any regular pension or lump sum payments and have had to rely upon hardship loans. Existing pensioners have been largely unaffected unless they have needed to report changed circumstances or have a query. If you are having difficulties with resolving such an issue with Capita, please contact CSPA HQ and David Luxton, our Pensions Case Manager, will help.

By the time that you read this newsletter, the OFGEM mandated 13% increase in gas and electricity prices triggered by the military action in the Gulf region will have come into effect. The next review will set prices from 1 October. Demand increases as we move into the autumn, and so even if the Gulf reopens by this July, we are unlikely to see any price reduction before next spring. Energy bills take a larger proportion of pensioners' income than that of younger generations, and the recent increase is well in excess of the indexed increases in our pensions. CSPA continues to work with partner organisations to highlight the issue and press for solutions.

On the 16th June our EC met to discuss the results of the all-member survey and group / branch feedback on the proposal to incorporate the CSPA. The results were broadly supportive of the proposal. Our EC therefore agreed to move forward with drafting enabling motions to be presented to the National AGM this October. If these are passed by the AGM, they will allow more detailed research on potential legal, procedural and organisational matters to be undertaken to enable our 2027 National AGM to make a definitive decision upon whether or not to incorporate.

Finally, I thank our committee and all those members who have subscribed to our Group, attended our meetings, made suggestions, contributed raffle prizes and participated in our raffles. Without their support our Group could not continue to thrive.

**David Owen, South London Group Chair**                      [private.drdavidowen@btinternet.com](mailto:private.drdavidowen@btinternet.com)  
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## **SECRETARY'S COLUMN**

I write this in late June, but by the time you read it in July, it is likely that we shall soon have a new Prime Minister. What will this change mean for civil service pensioners? What about two of our key issues, the future of Social Care and the Triple Lock? We can only speculate.

If, as is likely, it is 'The King of the North', Andy Burnham, he is a former Secretary of State responsible for Health & Social Care. He maintained this area as a priority during his time as Mayor of Greater Manchester and is likely to put pressure on Louise Casey to hasten her review on the subject. The full review is not expected until 2028 and full implementation is estimated to take up to 2036.

Full structural reform, such as capping how much an individual has to pay for their care or creating an NHS-style model in which most social care is free (similar to in Scotland), is likely to cost £36bn a year by 2030 according to estimates by the Institute for Public Policy Research. This would probably need to be funded through an increase in national insurance contributions or other taxes, which would prove politically and publicly contentious for Burnham.

On the Triple Lock, much of the press are already speculating that, if savings have to be found somewhere, then this may be an easy option. But Burnham has committed to honouring Labour's manifesto pledge to keep the policy during this Parliament. In addition, scrapping it would be controversial and divisive within the Labour Party and likely to alienate pensioners, as happened with the withdrawal of Winter Fuel Allowance. Pick your battles! Indeed he has suggested other tax breaks for pensioners, hinting that the next government should "look at" the growing number of older people being drawn into paying income tax through frozen tax thresholds.

On a personal note, the past month has been busy. As Secretary of our Group, it's never great to miss our monthly meeting. I had to do that in June to attend a funeral in the West of Ireland. Just six hours after my return, my daughter went into labour, 12 days early! My role in this momentous event was mainly to look after their dog, Peggy. I am pleased to say that I am now a Grandad for the first time. Since then, my role has extended to cuddling and winding Clodagh and, occasionally, feeding and pampering some extremely tired parents. Who says that you begin to wind down after 70!

**John Hickey, South London Group Secretary**                      [johnphickey1954@gmail.com](mailto:johnphickey1954@gmail.com)  
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## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Many thanks to those of you who have subscribed to the Group this year. The Group is self-financing. Group members pay a small subscription annually and some CSPA members generously support the Group with donations. We are especially pleased that some members from outside the original Croydon Group area have renewed their subscriptions and attended our meetings. We aim to provide a variety of speakers to interest our Group members. Attending our meetings helps to keep members informed about pensioner issues and the work which the CSPA is doing and gives you the opportunity to feed back your ideas.

If you have not joined the Group this year and would like to do so, the subscription is £8, or £10 to include one's partner. We prefer subscriptions to be paid directly into our bank account because bank charges can take a large chunk of money when paying in cheques. Our Lloyds Bank account name is CSPA South London Group, sort code 30-91-72, account number 01042787. Please insert your name in the reference field so I can identify you. If you are paying in this way, please could you also email me to confirm your name, address, email address and phone number so that we can keep our records up-to-date.

If you prefer, we are still happy to be paid by a cheque made payable to CSPA South London Group and posted to me at 58 Forster Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 4LQ. Please include your name, address and, if you use email, your email address. No cash please.

I will acknowledge all payments provided I have a valid email address.

Or simply come along to try one of our meetings and you can join there if you wish to do so.

**Bill Hudson, Hon Group Treasurer**      [billbohudson@btinternet.com](mailto:billbohudson@btinternet.com)

## **ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE** - Maxine Leyland

If you have any health condition which prevents you from participating in "normal" life you should consider applying for Attendance Allowance (AA). It is designed to help older people stay independent even if they have significant care or supervision needs due to a long term disability or health condition. It can be used for such things as paying for help at home, higher household bills and taxis.

AA is paid at 2 rates; the basic level is £76.20 per week and the higher level is £114.60 per week. It is not means-tested and it is not regarded as taxable income.

Eligibility depends on how your condition affects daily living. The strongest evidence is always about your care needs, not your diagnosis or how you are coping. The Department of Work and Pensions wants to know what activities you struggle with, what impact this has on your life and what happens if you don't get help. Are you at risk because of falls, not operating appliances safely, confusion, wandering, or medication mistakes?

The 32 page forms seems daunting but help is available from charities and organisations associated with age or health conditions eg Age Concern, Macmillan, Parkinson's UK.. Some company advertisements on Facebook offer to help with the form for £350; this is a scam. Getting advice can increase the chances of your claim begin successful. If you are uncertain about applying or have concerns about eligibility, ask the relevant charity for help. You are the reason for their existence and they are experts.

## **FREEDOM PASS** -- Maxine Leyland

I have 2 essential cards, my library card and my Freedom Pass. Some of our national media appear to dislike or even hate the Freedom Pass. They are annoyed that London (the Greater London Authority, GLA) offers the most advantageous transport pass in UK. They would prefer a more limited use.

London is big which means you can travel a long distance. The Elizabeth line is managed by TfL which means that Maidenhead and Reading are available for days out. The Freedom Pass and the Over 60s Railcard are an unbeatable combination because you pay only for the part of the journey NOT covered by the Freedom Pass. The normal cheap day return fare from Coulsdon to Rochester would be £30. The Freedom Pass and the Railcard reduces this to £8.50.

The London Councils recently pledged to maintain the Freedom Pass but there is certain to be further pressure in the future to downgrade it. The next GLA elections are in 2028. The Mayor and GLA councillors will decide London's transport policy and the candidates will be seeking votes. If you see a candidate from any party, ask them whether they will retain the Freedom Pass in its current form. The Freedom Pass keeps us participating in the community enabling us to contribute to the local economy. We have the power of the grey £ !

## SOUTH LONDON GROUP PROGRAMME JULY – DECEMBER 2026

### GROUP OUTREACH MEETINGS

We appreciate that not all of our members can travel to Croydon or join us on Zoom to participate in our meetings. We therefore arrange a small number of additional outreach meetings in our expanded coverage area giving you an opportunity to come along for a chat and an update on CSPA business with us. We look forward to seeing you.

**Wednesday 29 July at 11 AM in the Black Sheep Cafe, 95 High Street, Bromley, BR1 1JW.**

This modern cafe is passed by multiple bus routes and convenient for Bromley South Station. Please note that our previously used cafe venue has closed.

**Friday 31 July at 11 AM in the Dolce Cafe, Unit 1, Adenmore Road, London, SE6 4FD.**

This popular modern cafe next to Catford Bridge Station is passed by multiple bus routes.

### CROYDON MEETINGS

Our Croydon meetings are on the second Tuesday of each month at 11am at Ruskin House, 23 Coombe Road, Croydon, CR0 1BD. Refreshments are available before the meeting, so come early!

Ruskin House is a 20 minute walk from East Croydon and West Croydon stations. The nearest bus stop is Coombe Road South End (stop W) which is served by the following buses: 60, 405, 312, 412, 119, 166, 407, 466, 468 or Coombe Road Park Lane (stop R) which is served by the 403.

<b>14 July</b>	<b>English Churches Part IV and Great Mysteries:</b> The Revd Dr Nicholas Henderson's talk will cover the Georgian period to the present. He will also talk about great mysteries and conspiracy theories such as The Bermuda Triangle
<b>11 August</b>	<b>London Transport:</b> Michael Peacock will talk about the history of London Transport from horse drawn buses in the 1820 through the development of underground railways until the unification of services in 1933. (Talk 1 of 2.)
<b>8 September</b>	<b>Mandating meeting for the CSPA AGM in October:</b> Members can discuss the motions to be raised at the CSPA AGM as published in the Autumn edition of The Pensioner to decide how our delegate should speak and vote on our behalf.
<b>13 October</b>	<b>CSPA Annual General Meeting Report:</b> Our delegate and other Group members who attended will report back on decisions made at the CSPA AGM. You may wish to bring your copy of the Autumn Pensioner.
<b>10 November</b>	<b>Bats:</b> Derek Coleman will tell us about these mammals which are capable of sustained flight and are more agile in flight than most birds.
<b>8 December</b>	<b>Christmas Social</b> Do come along to the Ruskin House bar at 12.00 pm to meet other members and enjoy the buffet, which will again be provided by committee members. The bar will be open and drinks are very reasonably priced.