

GROUP CIRCULAR 992 / 26

To: Branches, Groups and Executive Council

20 August 2026

Dear Colleague

- 1) AGM Forms - Deadline reminder - **Wednesday, 2 September 2026**
- 2) Civil Service Pension Scheme, Taskforce Updates & Capita
- 3) CSPA / LLA in the Media
- 4) Casey Commission – The Big Conversation on Care
- 5) Government Announcements – Cost of Living
- 6) Digital Voice – PSTN Switchover
- 7) Group & Branch Feedback – Recruitment Initiatives
- 8) Incoming General Secretary starts Monday 24 August

1) AGM Forms - Deadline reminder

A reminder that the AGM delegate and attendee forms circulated with GC 991/26 must be completed and returned to CSPA Headquarters no later than **Wednesday 2 September 2026**. If you require the forms again, please contact CSPA Head Office on 020 8688 8418 or by email at enquiries@cspa.co.uk

A Group Circular with final AGM arrangements will be sent in mid-September.

2) Civil Service Pension Scheme, Taskforce Updates & Capita

The latest Taskforce Update #14 was published on 6 August 2026 and can be viewed on [Member Knowledge Article](#)

The appointment of independent advisers and an external auditor is a clear indication of the seriousness of the ongoing problems. Greater oversight is welcome, but what matters most to members is seeing a meaningful reduction in the backlog and receiving the pensions and support they are entitled to without further delay.

While Capita continues to report progress, the latest figures show that more than 17,000 retirement quotes and over 13,000 bereavement cases remain outstanding. Behind every one of these cases is an individual or family waiting for financial certainty at what is often a significant moment in their lives.

We also recognise the growing concern among members waiting for information about their McCloud remedy options. It is disappointing that there is still no confirmed timetable for completing this work, leaving many members without the information they need to plan for retirement.

CSPA has recently written to key Government and Civil Service Pension Scheme stakeholders regarding matters of concern to our members.

CSPA has written to the following:

- Louise Haigh MP - First Secretary of State, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Minister for the Cabinet Office
- Richard Vianello - Director, Civil Service & Royal Mail Pensions
- Mark Ferguson MP - Parliamentary Secretary (Cabinet Office)
- Sally Jameson MP - Parliamentary Secretary and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
- Baroness Twycross - Parliamentary Secretary (Cabinet Office)

In addition, we have written to senior representatives of Capita:

- Adolfo Hernandez - Group Chief Executive Officer, Capita plc
- Richard Holroyd - Chief Executive Officer, Capita Public Services
- Chris Clements - Managing Director (Pensions), Capita Pension Solutions

CSPA continue to press for clear timescales, better communication and lasting improvements to the administration of the Civil Service Pension Scheme. We continue to monitor developments closely to ensure that members' interests remain at the forefront of discussions. The next Taskforce Update should be published on 21 August 2026.

3) CSPA in the media

Below is some of the latest media coverage for CSPA and Later Life Ambitions.

Pension Age article - [Civil Service Pensions appoints auditor as backlog remains above 30,000 cases - Pensions Age Magazine](#)

Liverpool Echo article - Deputy General Secretary quote - [Kirkby woman hasn't been paid for six months - Liverpool Echo](#)

Daily Express article - [Halifax to close 15 bank branches in 10 weeks – full list | UK | News | Express.co.uk](#)

Birmingham Live article - [Andy Burnham £12,570 personal tax-free allowance increase for two groups proposed - Birmingham Live](#)

Later Life Ambitions Press Release - [UK Finance Report highlights continued importance of cash, says Later Life Ambitions](#)

[Later Life Ambitions Press Release – Free bus travel must be matched by reliable services, says Later Life Ambitions](#)

[Later Life Ambitions Press Release - CARE CANNOT WAIT: LATER LIFE AMBITIONS WELCOMES ACCELERATED CASEY COMMISSION BUT URGES SWIFT ACTION](#)

[Later Life Ambitions Press Release - LLA welcomes Centre for Ageing Better report on supporting disabled older workers](#)

4) Casey Commission – The Big Conversation on Care

The Government has launched The Big Conversation on Care, a nationwide consultation led by Baroness Louise Casey as part of the Independent Commission on Adult Social Care, giving people across England the opportunity to help shape the future of social care.

Speaking at the launch, Health Secretary Yvette Cooper highlighted the vital contribution of care workers and argued that, after decades of unsuccessful reform attempts, the country “cannot keep walking around the same circles”. She announced the creation of a new ministerial group to accelerate progress on social care reform and workforce issues, alongside the appointment of a Dementia Tsar later this year.

Baroness Casey said the Commission had listened carefully to public views and noted that, unlike previous reviews, this process would place the public at its centre. The consultation will explore key questions including who should receive support, the role of families and how social care can be funded fairly and sustainably.

In his keynote speech, Prime Minister Andy Burnham stressed that this review would be different, drawing on his own family’s experience of Alzheimer’s disease. He praised care workers, saying they should be among the best-paid people in society, and argued that social care must be recognised as an integral part of the wider health system rather than treated in isolation. He also highlighted the pressures poor social care places on the NHS, including avoidable hospital admissions.

Burnham announced three main measures:

- The Independent Commission’s final report will be brought forward by one year, with recommendations now due in 2027.
- The Government will explore expanding the planned Fair Pay Agreement into wider workforce reforms, including improved training and conditions more closely aligned with NHS standards.
- Cross-party talks on social care reform will be initiated to build long-term consensus.

During the Q&A session, Burnham said previous reform efforts had failed because action was delayed and argued that accelerating the Commission’s

work would help avoid repeating that mistake. On funding, he said workforce pay improvements would be fully funded and that the Government would first examine existing resources before considering tax rises. He also reiterated that, in an ideal system, people should not have to sell their homes to pay for care.

For CSPA members, the consultation represents an important opportunity to influence decisions that could affect millions of older people. Participants can submit views and vote on proposals through the Commission's online platform, while a nationally representative Public Panel on Care will contribute directly to the Commission's recommendations.

As part of Later Life Ambitions (LLA), the CSPA has consistently called for a sustainable and properly funded National Care Service, national standards, investment in the care workforce and closer integration between health and social care. LLA intends to submit evidence to the Commission and encourages members to take part in the consultation to help shape the future of social care.

Further information about submitting views to the Commission can be found on the below links

[The Big Conversation on Care](#)

[Share your views with the Commission](#)

5) Government Announcements – Cost of Living

Since Andy Burnham became Prime Minister in July 2026, the Government has announced a series of measures intended to reduce living costs and provide what it describes as "breathing space" for households facing continued pressure from inflation and rising prices.

Energy Costs

One of the first measures announced was the temporary removal of the 5% VAT rate on domestic electricity bills in Great Britain from October 2026 until March 2027. The Government estimates this will reduce the average annual household bill by around £45.

Transport

The Government has introduced several measures aimed at reducing travel costs:

- Free bus travel for children aged 5 to 15 throughout August 2026 in England under the "Great British Summer Savings" scheme.
- A commitment to introduce a £2 bus fare cap across England from January 2027, replacing the current £3 cap.
- Continuation of the 5p fuel duty freeze.

- Disabled bus pass holders in England will be able to travel by bus for free at any time of day from April 2027 - disabled bus pass holders in Scotland and Wales are already entitled to free bus travel, while in Northern Ireland, blind people and disabled war veterans are able to travel for free, while it is a half-fare for everyone else who holds a disabled bus pass.

Food Prices

The Government announced targeted cuts to agri-food tariffs on products including biscuits, chocolate, dried fruit and nuts. The aim is to lower import costs and ease pressure on consumer food prices.

Consumer Protection Measures

In August 2026, Burnham launched a programme of "everyday fixes" focused on household finances. These measures include:

- New rules to make it easier to cancel subscriptions.
- Requirements for clearer renewal reminders.
- A new 14-day cooling-off period after certain contract renewals.
- Action against misleading retail discounts and pricing tactics.

The Government estimates consumers currently spend around £1.6 billion a year on unwanted subscriptions and believe these reforms will save households money.

Support for Communities and Businesses

The Government has also announced a 20% business rates relief for pubs, social clubs and live music venues in England for 2027/28, on top of existing relief schemes. While aimed at businesses, the policy is intended to support local services and reduce pressure on prices.

6) Digital Voice – PSTN Switchover

The Deputy General Secretary has been attending monthly BT meetings on this topic and that phasing out of PSTN analogue telephone network, scheduled for January 2027.

The figures below refer to BT customers:

From the most recent meeting: 90% had switched to Digital Voice by the end of July 2026. Of the remaining; 34% have a landline only, 27% are over 80, 23% have telecare, 22% have additional needs. (some people may fall into multiple categories). Further information can be found on: [Digital Voice | Digital Home Phone | BT](#)

If you are unsure whether you need to switch or to get further information about the digital telephone switchover, please contact your telephone provider.

7) Group and Branch Feedback – Recruitment Initiatives

In **GC 988/26** (item 9), we shared the Recruitment Strategy Work Plan, which had a range of ideas and activities that Groups and Branches might be able to undertake at a local level. Local activity complements the national recruitment plan, with the shared goal of growing membership, retaining existing members and encouraging greater involvement in Groups and Branches.

My thanks to those who have responded. I would really appreciate getting feedback on the actions Groups or Branches have taken:

- What worked well in your area?
- What didn't work so well?
- Were there any barriers or challenges that made local recruitment more difficult?
- What activities generated the most interest or engagement?
- Are there any examples of good practice you'd like to share?
- What other actions or ideas could we try next?
- What support, resources, or guidance would help your Group or Branch with future recruitment activity?

Please feedback to the Deputy General Secretary, Jonathan Safir - jonathan.safir@cspa.co.uk

8) Incoming General Secretary starts Monday 24 August

Josie Irwin will take up the General Secretary role from Monday 24 August. Josie comes to CSPA from UNISON, where she headed up their Equalities Unit, including responsibility for supporting the work of 170,000 retired members. This has involved campaigning on issues aligned with many of CSPA's priorities. I am sure that you will make Josie feel welcome.

If you have any questions or require any further information about the matters covered by this Group Circular, including printed copies of documents and articles on web links, please don't hesitate to contact me, either by email at jonathan.safir@cspa.co.uk or by telephone on **020 8688 8418 (Office)**.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan

Jonathan Safir
Deputy General Secretary
Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA)