



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

8th July 2023

Dear Catherine,

RE: WOMEN'S STATE PENSION AGE

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about changes to the State Pension age. I have read your comments with interest.

The Government decided over 25 years ago that it would make the State Pension age the same for men and women as a long-overdue move towards gender equality. The relevant legislation for equalisation includes the *Pensions Acts* of 1995, 2007 and 2011.

In light of increases in life expectancy since the 2007 Act, the Coalition Government decided to accelerate equalisation to ensure that the UK pensions system remained sustainable. As such, the 2011 Act brought forward equalisation, but capped the maximum increase at 18 months. This meant that the State Pension age for women would still reach 65 in November 2018, but the increase from 65 to 66 would happen by October 2020, rather than April 2020 – at a cost of £1.1 billion to the Exchequer.

Both the High Court and the Court of Appeal have supported the actions of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and the Supreme Court refused the claimants' permission to appeal. Importantly, the case brought before the High Court was dismissed on all grounds, including notice, in October 2019. The Court also ruled that there had been no discrimination on grounds of age or sex.

Moreover, the *Pensions Acts* of 1995, 2007 and 2011 were all subject to public consultation and debate in Parliament and were all widely reported in the media. The changes in the 1995 legislation were communicated in leaflets, advertising campaigns and individual letters. The up-to-date State Pension age was also provided to those who requested a Pension Statement. More than 37 million personal State Pension statements were provided between April 2000 and September 2020.

I am aware that the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has concluded the first stage of its investigation into how the DWP communicated changes to the women's State Pension age and is currently reviewing the second stage following a legal challenge. However, the PHSO investigation is a multi-staged process, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment while the investigation is ongoing. Section 7(2) of the *Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967* makes clear that investigations "shall be conducted in private".

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,

TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE