

Northern Ireland Branch Newsletter

Issue 8 – December 2025

CSPA
CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONERS' ALLIANCE

HERE TO DEFEND & PROTECT YOUR INTERESTS



Domestic abuse of older people

CSPA NI recently attended a major seminar in Belfast on the increase in domestic abuse on older people. What we heard shook us to our core.

Domestic abuse generally is on the rise but alarmingly it is rising most against older people.

Domestic abuse comes in many forms – financial, physical, psychological, sexual, coercive control – and it can come from the hands of partners, children, great grandchildren, friends or neighbours.

UK charity Hourglass is the only specialist charity dealing with abuse on older people. They use this definition: “Abuse is any action that violates a person’s human or civil rights. It can take many forms and involve a number of factors. We define abuse of an older person as a single or repeated act or lack of

appropriate action coming within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.”

At the seminar, Hourglass revealed some frightening statistics. The charity takes 15,000 telephone calls a year from distressed older people and sets up, on average, 8,000 new personal cases every year.

In a large survey, it was reported that 35% of the UK population had no issues with family members taking money from an older person’s bank account; 34% saw no problem with family members trying

to amend an older person’s will; and 32% saw nothing to worry about with family members taking precious belongings from an older person’s home.

If you or anyone you know is facing, or has faced, any kind of the domestic abuse highlighted in this article, please do not suffer alone. Hourglass provides a confidential service to any older persons or anyone concerned about an older person who is at risk of experiencing or recovering from abuse or neglect.

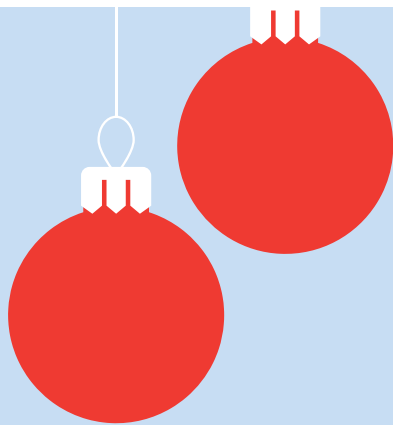
This confidential service is free from either a landline or a mobile and their name will not appear on your phone bill.

Hourglass is the only specialist charity dealing with abuse on older people

Hotline: 0808 808 8141

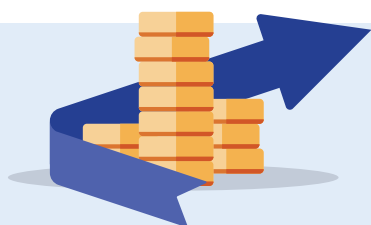
Text: 07860 052906

Email: helpline@wearehourglass.org



Christmas greetings

Christmas is a time for families and friends to enjoy the magic of the season, so we wish all our members the very best for Christmas and the new year. But it can also be a time when some older people experience terrible loneliness and isolation. So please look out for those people – a smile, a chat or a mince pie would be deeply appreciated.



State pension increase

The state pension rise in April 2026 is likely to be 4.8%, in line with the average earnings growth in September 2025. This is determined by the triple-lock which allows for state pension rises to be the higher of average earnings growth, inflation or 2.5%. It will mean the 'new' pension rises from £230.25/week to £241.30/week; the 'old' pension from £176.45/week to £184.90/week.

Meet our new Chair: Harry Baird



I was honoured to be elected as your Chair at our 2025 AGM, held in the Presbyterian Assembly Buildings on 7 May 2025.

A very successful AGM included an interesting session with Commissioner for Older People Siobhan Casey. I urge you to attend the 2026 AGM at the same venue on 26 April – great opportunity to meet former colleagues and get updates on pensions and welfare issues.

Since I retired, I have taken a keen interest in government policy around pensioners. I believe passionately that NI civil service pensioners need a strong voice to protect our rights.

Over the past year we have lobbied government on the triple-

lock, tax thresholds, winter fuel allowances, concessionary fares, the warm home discount and related social issues. I'm sure, like me, you are frustrated by media attacks on our "gold-plated pensions". Nothing could be further from the truth and as your Chair I am determined to take every opportunity to refute this. The average civil service pension is £10,500 – hardly "gold-plated".

Of course, we cannot carry out all these functions without the support of you as members. Unfortunately, due to our age profile, the size of our membership falls each year. I ask you all to encourage former colleagues to join the CSPA, so we can continue to have a strong voice in lobbying government on the wide range of issues adversely affecting NI civil service pensioners.

I look forward to representing you this year – and very much hope to meet you at our 2026 AGM.

Please encourage former colleagues to join the CSPA, so we have a strong voice

Subscription rates for 2026

The decision was taken at the AGM in May for a small increase in our subscription rates from January. Individual membership will now cost £24 a year, joint membership £39 a year.

These equate to £2 and £3.25 a month for members paying via your civil service pension or via direct debit monthly payments. Monthly payees need not do anything; your monthly payments will automatically be increased to the appropriate amount in January.

Members who pay their CSPA costs annually will shortly receive their reminder letter to pay their subscription for 2026.

CSPA NI incurs considerable costs in respect of annual payees – for stationery, ink, postage and bank fees for cashing cheques and bank transfers.

CSPA NI, regrettably, decided last year, like many organisations, to ask members who still wish to pay on an annual basis to cover these additional costs. We have therefore added a small supplement of £4 to cover these.

Members can avoid paying this supplement by signing up through their civil service pension or monthly direct debit. To switch to either, please email Roisin Lilley at roisincspa@gmail.com or call her on 9065 8513.

National AGM success

The 2025 national CSPA AGM took place in Kenilworth in October. It was another successful one for CSPA NI. Our Treasurer Roisin Lilley was re-elected as CSPA national Vice Chair and the branch's three motions – on pensions, the income tax threshold and TV licences – were all well argued by branch Chair Harry Baird.



CSPA NI 2026 AGM

Plans are well under way to ensure that the 2026 CSPA NI AGM is as successful as previous years. The event will return to the Presbyterian Assembly Building Fisherwick Place, Belfast. This is close to the Grand Central bus and rail station, and to Glider stops.

We have a former Northern Ireland Minister for Justice lined up as our guest speaker – Independent MLA Claire Sugden, who is also Chair of the All-Party Group on Ageing and Older People.

The AGM will take place on Wednesday 22 April at 2pm, with a hot buffet lunch served from 1pm. Mark it in your diary now please.



2025 AGM in focus

The branch AGM took place on 7 May in the Presbyterian Assembly Building, Belfast. Around 35 members attended.

As well as the usual reports from the President, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary, there were two excellent addresses from the keynote speakers – CSPA Chair Les Priestley and the newly appointed Commissioner for Older People, Siobhan Casey.

Les said he could understand why some members had lost hope of things improving; we were living in tough times. But he still had hope. Devolution was

an asset to the branch, he said, as the committee could actively lobby decision-makers.

He highlighted that one of the CSPA's most important campaigns was to get government to lift the income tax thresholds.

In her address, Siobhan Casey set out her priorities for the role as Older Person's



Commissioner. This included health, the environment, social care, public transport, housing and public toilets accessible for older people.

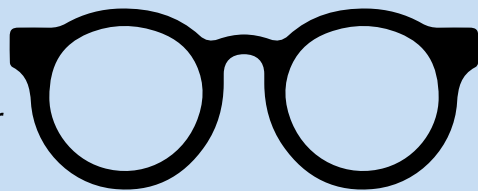
She explained how she wanted to work with the diverse range of organisations speaking for older people.

She also highlighted that she was looking forward to working with CSPA NI, whose AGM was one of her first engagements since being appointed.

ABOVE: Commissioner Siobhan Casey with CSPA NI's committee members; and Les Priestley addressing the AGM

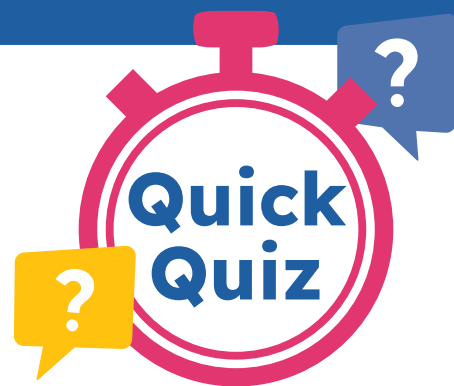
Specsavers deal

Since our last Newsletter we have received requests for a further 52 £20 Specsavers vouchers, meaning a total of 327 have been issued since we started. This means a total saving for members of £6,540!



If you would like one for yourself, family members or friends, just send their names to tony.mcmullan@outlook.com.

The voucher will guarantee a £20 saving in the Specsavers £99 and above range.



We had a very high response to the last Quick Quiz. Obviously the answers were far too easy!

The answers were:

- The 82-year-old rugby union player who went to Campbell College then Cambridge University and who was capped 82 times by Ireland was Mike Gibson.
- Gary Lightbody was born in Bangor.

And the two lucky winners were

Gemma Murray and **Joanna McGlaughlin**.

This issue's questions for the two £25 M&S vouchers are:

- Mike Bull won two Commonwealth gold medals for Northern Ireland in the 1970 and 1974 Games for two different competitions. What were they?
- Norman Whiteside replaced Pele as the youngest footballer to take a place in a World Cup final when he played in Spain in 1982 – at what age?

Please send your entries, including your home address, to: tony.mcmullan@outlook.com.

Remember when...?

This time we look back to the launch of the Pensioners' Manifesto for the 2010 UK general election. The initiative was supported by Age Concern, Help the Aged, NPC, Age Sector

Platform and the trade union ICTU. Among those pictured are current NPC NI Secretary John Martin and two CSPA NI stalwarts, Ivan Baxter and Nixon Armstrong.



CSPA Newsletter of the Year

We were delighted to be adjudged joint runner up in the UK-wide CSPA Newsletter of the Year competition. Editor Tony McMullan was awarded a certificate at the CSPA AGM in Kenilworth in October.



We'd love to hear what you liked or didn't like. Is there something you'd like to hear more of or something you particularly didn't like about the newsletter? Please let us know and we'll try to accommodate your views in future issues. This is YOUR newsletter, which we are proud to produce on your behalf. Contact us via tony.mcmullan@outlook.com



TODAY, TOMORROW AND EVERY DAY!