



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

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The Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
By email to: [george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk)

*Dear George,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 January to Guy Opperman on behalf of a number of your constituents about the retirement age of ambulance staff. As your constituents' concerns are related to the healthcare workforce, your email has been passed to the Department of Health and Social Care.

I appreciate your constituents' concerns and I would like to thank them for taking the time to bring them to your attention. I would like to thank your constituents for their years of service to the NHS, which greatly values its skilled and experienced staff.

As your constituents are aware, a new pension scheme for NHS staff was introduced in April 2015, following recommendations on the future of public service pension schemes made in 2011 by the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission in its final report, a copy of which can be found on the Government website at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) by searching for '2015 NHS Pension Scheme'.

The cost of providing public service pensions has risen significantly over recent decades, with the majority of the cost increases falling to the taxpayer. The previous government introduced reforms to put public service pensions on an affordable and sustainable footing. A key part of the reforms, as recommended by the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission, was to manage continued improvement in life expectancy by linking a member's Normal Pension Age to their State Pension Age. The change does not mean that public servants are required to work longer, but pensions are calculated on the assumption that people will work to their State Pension Age. Those retiring earlier or later will have a fair adjustment applied to the pension they receive to reflect the additional costs or savings to the scheme.

The final report of the Independent Review of the State Pension, published in March 2017, made recommendations on future changes to the State Pension Age. This can be read in full on the Government website by searching for '2017 State Pension Age'.

The report notes a commitment made by HM Treasury to review, when announcements are made on future State Pension Age changes, whether linking Normal Pension Age to State Pension Age remains appropriate for the public service pension schemes.


As part of the 2012 proposed final agreement on reforms to the NHS Pension Scheme (NHSPS), the previous government agreed to establish a tripartite review between the Department, NHS Employers and the NHS trades unions to consider and identify ways to address the impact of working longer in the NHS, with particular reference to staff in frontline and physically demanding roles, including emergency services. A copy of the proposed final agreement, which includes the terms of this review, can likewise be searched for on the Government website.

The Working Longer Group produced a report in March 2014 detailing its preliminary review conclusions and setting out 11 recommendations to the Department on behalf of the NHS Staff Council. These recommendations were taken forward, with tools and resources produced to help employers prepare for and support NHS staff to continue working safely to a later age. The work of this Group, including its report and resources for employers, can be found on the NHS Employers website at [www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org) by searching for 'working longer group'.

The Department will continue to follow the decisions of previous reviews of the NHSPS, where NHS trades unions agreed that ambulance service staff would continue to be treated in the same way and have the same rights and opportunities as other staff in the NHSPS.

Finally, I note your constituents' concerns about the demanding nature of the job, and the need to be physically fit and the risk of injury. Although I hope your constituents do not need to consider early retirement, their employers can provide relevant information about the NHSPS and other options should this need to be explored.

I hope this reply is helpful.

*Yours ever*  


**STEPHEN HAMMOND**