



The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and
Minister for Women and Equalities,
Caxton House,
Tothill Street,
London.
SW1H 9NA

5 August 2019
2019/01211

Dear Ms Rudd

Gender inequality in pension income

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Minister for Women and Equalities. I wish you success in tackling the important issues you face in this role and as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

I am writing about a problem that falls within the remit of both your ministerial roles – gender inequality in pensions.

My trade union, Prospect, has been campaigning on the issue of gender inequality in pensions for many years. We recently published updated research on the size of the gender pension gap, the percentage difference in pension income for female pensioners compared to male pensioners.

Our research shows that the gender pension gap increased to 39.9% in 2017-18. This was over twice the level of the gender pay gap in 2018 (17.9%). The gender pension gap is particularly detrimental because it starts to impact women when there is little they can do about it.

I have attached a copy of Prospect's latest report on the gender pension gap.

Unfortunately, the government does not produce its own measure of gender inequality in pension income or otherwise benchmark progress towards gender equality in pensions. Indeed, some of the government's pension policies actively indirectly discriminate against women.

In April I wrote to the Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to request an assessment of whether the government is in breach of the Equality Act in relation to its inaction over the gender pension gap.

I have been in further correspondence with the EHRC recently and look forward to receiving their response.

Since I wrote to the EHRC, the government has published its report "Gender Equality at every stage: a roadmap for change" and associated documents. While any acknowledgement of the

problem of gender inequality in pension income is welcome, the analysis contained in these reports is incomplete and the recommendations are completely inadequate.

I am writing to ask you to implement a step change in the government's approach to the gender pension gap. A basic first step must be for the government to produce its own estimate of the gender pension gap and other relevant benchmarks of gender inequality in pensions. This could initiate a proper debate on the concrete actions that are needed to tackle this issue.

I would be happy to meet at your convenience to discuss Prospect's report on the gender pension gap and the steps that the department and unit you are responsible for could be taking.

I am copying this letter to the Chief Executive of the EHRC and the Chairs of the Work and Pensions and the Women and Equalities committees. I will also make it available to Prospect members.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Ferns
Senior Deputy General Secretary