

PENSIONS BULLETIN

Protecting Teachers' Pay and Pensions – Standing Firm Against Short-Term Fixes

NASUWT is clear: teachers deserve pay that reflects their professionalism and contribution to society, not quick fixes that undermine long-term security.

Some employers have advocated allowing public sector workers to swap future pension benefits for an immediate salary rise – a so-called 'swapping pensions for pay' option. While some portray this as flexibility, the reality is a long-term threat to teachers' retirement, creating a future of pensioner poverty.

We take pride in defending members' hard-earned pensions. We know teachers need a proper, permanent pay rise, not a trade-off that stores up financial hardship. We will not allow the teaching profession's future to be sacrificed for short-term gain.

Our Position

Teachers' pensions are not a perk; they are a fundamental part of fair reward for demanding, skilled work. Undermining the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) risks making teaching even less attractive as a career, harming recruitment and retention.

NASUWT General Secretary Matt Wrack has written to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson, calling for immediate assurance that these proposals will be scrapped.

Matt warned:

"Teachers are woefully underpaid, but the answer is to restore pay to 2010 levels as a starting point – not to slash pensions and leave future generations of teachers in poverty."

He reminded the Prime Minister:

"Your Government has revived the Pensions Commission because future pensioners risk being poorer than today's. Proposals to 'swap pensions for pay' would make that risk a certainty for public sector workers."

Teachers need security in retirement, not just survival today. We have seen how similar plans in independent schools pushed teachers into inferior pensions which were cheaper for employers. NASUWT members fought back – and won – through determined industrial action. We are committed to doing the same wherever this threat arises, including in academies like United Learning Trust (ULT), where our campaigning has already forced a pause in their proposals.

Our demands:

We are calling on the Government to:

- ban alternative workplace pension schemes to the TPS across all state-funded schools;
- publicly rule out any 'pensions for pay' swaps in the public sector;
- publish a clear guarantee that the TPS will remain a defined benefit scheme for all teachers.

Read Matt Wrack's full letters here – nasuwt.org.uk/Pensions

TPS Membership – A Vote of Confidence

The Department for Education (DfE) confirms that over 94% of eligible teachers are now members of the TPS – the highest level in more than a decade. Claims that teachers are abandoning the scheme are misleading and wrong. Teachers value their pensions, and NASUWT will continue to defend them.

State Pension Age – We Say No to More Increases

The Government has launched its third review of the State Pension Age (SPA) in a decade, being widely expected to recommend another rise. Any increase will automatically raise the TPS Normal Pension Age (NPA), under rules the Government introduced in 2015.

The UK already has one of the highest pension ages in the developed world. Life expectancy growth has slowed since those rules were made, yet no review of the SPA–NPA link has been carried out, despite the Hutton Report recommending one.

Matt Wrack stated:

“The Government must not make teachers work even longer for their pensions, especially when the evidence on life expectancy no longer supports these increases. NASUWT will work with the TUC and build a coalition across society to defend working people's pensions.”

NASUWT General Meetings over the next year will provide members with opportunities to plan action to protect pay, pensions and working conditions. All members are urged to get involved.

Normal Minimum Pension Age – Clarity Needed Now

From 6 April 2028, the UK's Normal Minimum Pension Age (NMPA) rises from 55 to 57, except for those with protected NMPAs in the schemes.

For TPS members, this creates unnecessary complexity:

- The final salary scheme retains a minimum NMPA of 55.
- The career average scheme has a minimum NMPA of 57.
- Currently, members cannot split these NMPAs if they want to take actuarially reduced benefits (ARBs).

We have pressed the DfE for years to amend the TPS Regulations to allow members to split the ages at which they take their career average and final salary pensions if they take ARBs. The DfE says it is waiting for HM Treasury guidance.

This uncertainty is already affecting retirement plans. We will continue to demand urgent publication of the draft regulations so teachers can plan with confidence.