



Open Letter to the Pensions Commission from the Pension Playpen Community.

Date 2nd September 2025

A Call for Necessarily Bold Action on the UK's Retirement Future

Dear Baroness Jeannie Drake, Sir Ian Cheshire and Professor Nick Pearce,

We write as a coalition of individuals and organisations, and members of the 'broad church' that makes up the [Pension Playpen](https://pensionplaypen.com) community, deeply committed to securing a fair, adequate and sustainable retirement system for all UK citizens.

We congratulate you on your appointments to lead this critical Commission and are excited about the potential for your work to help 'take the politics out of pensions' – moving beyond short-term electoral cycles to forge lasting solutions that transcend party political boundaries.

The original Pensions Commission was undoubtedly a great success, building consensus around auto-enrolment and establishing frameworks that have helped millions save for retirement. However, there is significant unfinished business in ensuring our pension system can deliver for everyone.

This new commission has the opportunity to complete that unfinished business and go further.

But time is not on our side.

We are heading for a pensions crisis – and if we are wrong, it is only because we are already there.

The statistics speak for themselves: 15 million people are not saving enough for retirement, pension saving among the self-employed has collapsed and entire demographics face systematic exclusion from adequate provision. Every month of delay compounds these problems. For politicians there is always the temptation to put these challenging and potentially unpopular challenges in the 'too difficult' box; it is up to your pension commission to give them the 'air cover' to address these challenges, backed up by a consensus around the need for change.

We urge you to ensure that the following critical issues are placed firmly on the table for comprehensive examination:

1. Triple lock

There needs to be a defined end to the triple lock commitment. Everyone knows it is unsustainable in the long term; no politician is willing to blink first. There is more than one way to move forwards from here. For example, future pension increases could be linked to economic growth; or the state pension could be set at a fraction of median/minimum wage at 40 hours per week – the important thing is to open up the debate on how we move forwards.

2. Extension of State Retirement Age

As with the Triple Lock, the state pension age is unsustainable but it is almost as politically toxic. Your commission has the opportunity to open a debate on what the long term sustainable future of the state pension looks like.

3. AE Contribution rates

AE minimum contributions must increase. The heavy lifting should also come from employers; it makes no sense that their mandatory contributions are lower than for employees. Clearly this is a difficult moment for a government to ask employers to accept further increases to the cost of employment. Nevertheless, we need you to set out for the government a pathway towards higher contributions.

4. Self employed

The self-employed are being left behind. They urgently need a form of auto-enrolment. The logical vehicle is probably HMRC through tax returns. Whatever the answer is, not having an answer should not be an option. In addition, the Self Employed need to be offered a more attractive voluntary system. The LISA is unavailable to the over 40s. Deferred income government bonds could be used, allowing the Self Employed (and the employed as well) to buy tranches of future income from the government. The concept has been promoted under the brand of SeLFIES (already submitted to you via David Fairs and Dr Muralidhar). Myriad other solutions are available, including side-car accounts.

Again, whatever the solution looks like, we urge you to use this opportunity to ensure this issue is addressed.

5. Inherited wealth

We are approaching the inheritance generation, as the accumulated wealth of the baby boomers starts to cascade down to Gen X and Gen Z. There are opportunities to allow one off inheritance payments to be transferred to the pension accounts of younger generations.

6. Revaluation of Public Sector Pensions

The terms of the public sector schemes were last negotiated in 2012. Since then much has changed. Today, one of the most egregious disparities in our pension system is between public and private sector employees. Whilst the primary focus of the Commission should rightly be on looking at how private sector pension provision can be improved, that does not mean public sector pensions should be ignored. The government spends in the region of £50 billion a year on public sector schemes. An option for further reform include introducing an element of Defined Contribution, pioneering the use of Collective Defined Contribution schemes such as that recently adopted by the Royal Mail.

7. Pensions Regulation

We have two different regulators overseeing the defined contribution workplace pensions sector. The FCA looks after the insurance company, platforms and the contract-based world, while the Pensions Regulator looks after trust-based schemes. This makes sense only when viewed through the rear-view mirror. No one has a political interest in challenging this status quo; it needs the pension commission to speak up on behalf of scheme members and sponsors, who are currently carrying the cost of this duplication of regulation.

Pensions policymaking cannot be a success without addressing the issues we have highlighted above. Dashboard will help but new technologies especially for the younger generation should be high up your priorities.

We recognise that addressing these issues requires the kind of long-term thinking which is often impossible for elected politicians. However, the cost of inaction far exceeds the political challenges of reform. We offer our support to your work through evidence, analysis, and public engagement. We possess deep expertise across the retirement landscape and represent diverse constituencies whose voices must be heard in this process.

We would welcome the opportunity to contribute constructively to your deliberations and help build public understanding of the choices ahead.

The UK needs a pension system that is not just adequate but transformative – one that ensures dignity in retirement for all citizens regardless of their employment history, gender, or background. We believe your Commission can deliver that vision, but only if it is prepared to think boldly and act decisively.

We look forward to engaging with your important work and stand ready to support you in achieving the ambitious reform our country desperately needs.

Yours sincerely,

Members of the Pension PlayPen Community, namely:

Steve Goddard, CEO, Pension Playpen

Andy Agathangelou, Founder, Transparency Task Force

Tom McPhail, Trustee

Dr Arun Muralidhar

Johnny Timpson OBE

Charles Malcolm Brown, Dixon International Group

Chris Giles, Independent Consultant

Joao Cabral, Nexum Pensions

Bobby Riddaway, HS Trustees Ltd

William McGrath, C-Suite

Martin Kuzmiki, Head of Risk, Penfold