

Name of MP

House of Commons,
London,
SW1A 0AA

Dear

POLICE WIDOWS PENSION UNFAIRNESS

I write to highlight what I believe is a grave injustice and unfairness in the way that Police Widows are being treated within the United Kingdom.

The background to this is that in May 2008, the then Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said that she wanted to do more for existing survivors who had already lost a partner in the line of duty:

"In the future, the pensions of the surviving partners of officers killed in the line of duty should be payable for life, regardless of whether they go on to remarry."

In the short term, a special discretionary grant scheme – the Police Survivors' Support Scheme – was set up, running until 30 March 2011. For the longer term, the Government intended to change the rules. However, that change had not been made by the time of the 2010 general election.

The Justice Minister in the Northern Ireland Executive, David Ford, announced on 21 March 2014 that **all survivors** of members of the RUC pension scheme should retain their pensions for life:

"Since 6 April 2006, every police widow may retain her pension rights for life. However a late amendment incorporated into the Public Service Pension Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, by the Assembly allowed only survivors of the 1988 Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Pensions Scheme to have their pensions reinstated

effective from 1 July 2014. This benefit does not currently extend to preceding RUC pension schemes in Northern Ireland – those spanning the darkest days of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. David Ford said: "I firmly believe that, with the acceptance of the amendment to the 1988 Scheme, all RUC widows should be treated equally. For this reason, I have asked my officials to take forward steps to explore how this provision might be extended to allow all widows in any Royal Ulster Constabulary pension scheme, to retain their pension rights for life as from 1 July 2014."

This meant that widows, widowers and civil partners whose pensions had ceased on remarriage would be able to apply to have them reinstated.

In February 2015, Richard Graham MP called for a change in the rules. He argued that there was a precedent for this, in the form of changes to the rules for survivors of police officers in Northern Ireland, and members of the armed forces in the UK.

In the Budget on 19 March 2015, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne announced that the Government would:

"correct the historical injustice to the spouses of police officers, firefighters, and members of the intelligence services who lose their lives on duty."

Although the 2006 and 2015 police schemes allow for lifetime awards of adult survivor benefits, pensions paid to widows, widowers and civil partners, under the 1987 Police regulations they can be withdrawn on remarriage, registering for a civil partnership and cohabitation.

On the 18th January this year the 2006 Police [Injury Benefit] Regulations were amended.

This change means that survivors' pensions paid in respect of 1987 scheme members will no longer be subject to the rule where the police officer dies or dies as a result of an injury received on duty.

In England and Wales this change only applies to widows, widowers or surviving civil partners, who marry, remarry, form a civil partnership or start to cohabit **on or after**

1st April 2015. This change came into force retrospectively from 1st April 2015.

In Scotland however the change applies to **all** those wives, husbands, or civil partners of police officers who died on duty who have already had their pension withdrawn because of remarriage, forming a civil partnership or cohabitation and consequently they will have their pension reinstated with effect from 1 October 2015.

Thus we now have a ridiculous situation with three differing approaches across the UK to the pensions of police widows, widowers and civil partner pensions.

We believe these provisions are demeaning and not an appropriate condition in a modern age and they should be abolished. Widows, widowers and surviving civil partners should be able to plan their lives ahead without worrying about making a choice between future happiness or financial security.

Surely it cannot be right in this modern day that we can continue to treat people differently because of where their deceased loved one served in the Police?

We call on you to raise the matter in Parliament and support our campaign for fairness across the UK, and ensure that **all** surviving police widows, husbands and civil partners have the same rights to retain their pension as those survivors of former Northern Ireland police officers.

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

Yours sincerely