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## BFAWU Womens Network meeting January 2024

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### Issues around the branches

#### **Retirement age**

There was a discussion around the age of retirement in the UK and how high it is for women in comparison to other countries and is continually increasing, this has an obvious impact on the quality-of-life women have in their retirement.

The WASPI campaign was referenced as part of the discussion, there is still a lot of anger around the stolen years of women who were expecting and planning to retire then having those plans uprooted because of the hike in retirement age, not to mention the other complications of being penalised for having children and losing out on their 'stamp' etc.

#### **Carers allowance**

Concerns were raised around the impact of reaching state pension age on receiving carers allowance.

An example was given of a relative needing additional care, a family member becoming their carer, ensuring they had the support they needed, and was in receipt of carers' allowance whilst doing so. Once the family member reached state pension age and began receiving their state pension, their carers allowance was stopped as you are unable to claim 'two benefits'.

There was shock and frustration in the meeting that your state pension, which you contribute towards through life is classed as a benefit at all, it is not enough for people to live off and those with caring responsibilities should not be penalised financially for reaching state pension age.

#### **Care System**

The subject of the care system for elderly relatives then moved onto the cost and how unaffordable it is for working class families. Carers' allowance stopped, this then forces the elderly relative into a care home, which comes with a bill of say £700 a month.

What little life savings have been saved up for retirement, quickly run out, houses are in some cases forced to be sold or used as collateral to the care bills, if you have more than £13,000 in savings you receive no financial support yet at £700 a month £13,000 would only last 18 months!!

Once you have no savings left and are potentially in debt, the council will pay a percentage towards the care and the individual is responsible for the left, usually out of their pension – which is not in any way shape or form a benefit!

It was agreed that we need to ensure members have more information about carers allowance, the impact of state pensions and the general care system for elderly relatives so members aren't hit with surprises when they least need it.

### Conference

It was suggested and agreed that we should hold a Women's network meeting at conference, to reboot and re-engage women again, we could potentially have a speaker and then a discussion on issues and plan out priorities for the next 12 months.

### Engagement at future meetings

A discussion was had around the timing of the meetings and whether it would be worth looking at alternative times for meetings that don't clash with shift finishes, teatime and other caring responsibilities that typically fall to women to facilitate.

A suggestion was made to hold one at 6/6.30 and the next 12/12.30 as they do in branch 600.