



ADVERTISEMENT



WORTH F
SHOP AT DUBAI DU

Were you a stay at home mum in the 1980s or 90s? You could be owed £80,000 in unclaimed state pension payouts - here's how to check

- Women refused state pensions for failing to make ten years' of NI contributions
- But it has since emerged DWP officials were entirely wrong in their assessment
- Those who took time off in 1980s and 1990s should check if they were underpaid

By [FIONA PARKER FOR THE DAILY MAIL](#)

PUBLISHED: 22:01, 6 September 2022 | **UPDATED:** 09:47, 7 September 2022



83
shares

339
View comments

Helen James was shocked to discover last year that she was entitled to not a penny of the state pension.

The grandmother had always assumed she'd receive the benefit, having worked in a variety of jobs, including one role at a school and another in a local shop.

But civil servants pointed to a 12-year career break she took from the late-1970s to care for her two children.



Are YOU owed? Experts are urging those who took time out of work to care for their children in the 1980s and 1990s to check if they have been underpaid on the state pensions

They informed her she did not meet the minimum requirement of ten years of National Insurance (NI) contributions to receive even the smallest weekly payment in retirement.

It has since emerged that Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) officials were wrong in their assessment. Helen, 67, from South Wales, is just one of thousands of pensioners who may have been short-changed after similar blunders were made.

SHARE THIS ARTICLE



83 shares

RELATED ARTICLES



Are YOU affected by £1.5bn state pension error - what should...



Majority back state pension triple lock increase to...



That was then... Steve Webb celebrates his 300th pensions...



Pension investors 'batten down the hatches' by taking...

Historic failings

The errors stem from a failure to take into account changes to the way NI contributions are calculated for stay-at-home parents.

Now, experts are urging those who took time out of work to care for their children in the 1980s and 1990s to check if they have been underpaid. They could be entitled to payouts of up to £80,000.

In Helen's case, she won back £4,000 and is now entitled to a state pension worth £79 a week.

'It is quite wrong that I was told I wasn't entitled to any pension,' she says. 'If my daughter hadn't read Press coverage about the issue, I might still be getting nothing.'

It is the latest in a long line of scandals to rock the DWP in recent years. In 2020, an investigation by former pensions minister Steve Webb and our sister website, This Is Money, revealed tens of thousands of people — mainly women — had been hugely underpaid in retirement.

The mistakes dated back to 1985 and related to the failure to boost their state pensions in line with what their husbands were owed.

In July, a DWP report revealed that around 221,000 people missed out on vital state pension payments because of historic admin errors — a 67 per cent rise on the previous projection of 132,000. It was estimated the cost of repaying those affected would be more than £1.3 billion.

Check if you're due a payout

Parents can check their NI records at gov.uk/check-national-insurance-record or by calling 0300 200 3500.

If you reached state pension age after April 5, 2010, Home Responsibilities Protection (HRP) credits should show as an NI year on your records.

Older parents should call the helpline to ask if HRP was added for the years they were not working.

If you think you have been short-changed, **ask for a CF411 form, or download it online**, and post to HMRC. For details, visit lcp.uk.com/mothers-missing-millions.

The report also detailed a new blunder: credits for time spent at home caring for children — known as Home

Responsibilities Protection — were not recorded accurately on some NI records.



The DWP said this accounted for the second largest number of underpayments. Sir Steve Webb, now a partner at consultants LCP, says: 'The DWP has admitted that even more people are being underpaid state pension than previously thought, with a whole new category of errors coming to light.

'Undoubtedly, this means many thousands have been underpaid for years.'

Ros Altmann, another former pensions minister, adds: 'It's just so disheartening . . . Once again women are the casualties.'

To qualify for the full new state pension — worth £185.15 a week — you must build up 35 qualifying years of NI contributions. Any years which were 'contracted out' in exchange for lower contributions will not be included.

Those who retired before April 6, 2016, are entitled to £141.85. If you accrue more than ten years of NI contributions but fewer than 35, you will receive a smaller weekly payment.



Mistakes: In July, a DWP report revealed 221,000 people missed out on vital state pension payments because of historic admin errors - a 67% rise on the previous projection of 132,000

Income boost

Since 1978, mothers and fathers have been able to safeguard their pensions if they have taken time off to care for their children and receive child benefit.

For stay-at-home parents who reached state pension age before April 6, 2010, the DWP was supposed to reduce the number of years of contributions required to qualify for the state pension.

Those retiring after this date were to receive NI credits for each year they were stay-at-home parents. The DWP is working with HMRC to investigate how many people have been caught out, but no update is expected until autumn at the earliest.

In the meantime, LCP has launched a campaign to encourage pensioners to find out if they are being underpaid by checking their NI records online or by phone.

Those who think their contributions may not have been recorded properly can then send a claim by post to HMRC.

Lorraine Wainwright was able to boost her weekly pension by £20 a week by doing just this.

Like Helen, the mother of two had stayed at home looking after her children during much of the 1970s and 1980s. However, she later went back to work and ran a care home alongside her husband, Eddie, 67.

When Lorraine, now 68, first applied for her state pension in 2020, she was told she had only accrued 31 qualifying years of NI contributions so would not receive the full new state pension.

But with Sir Steve's support, she made a claim to DWP this year, recovering £1,500 in underpayments as well as the weekly uplift.



How much do you need to save for retirement?

£

Calculate >

Lorraine, who lives in Gloucestershire, says: 'I would encourage any parent who spent time bringing up their children to check that they are getting credits on their NI record. If I had not checked my own record carefully, it is quite possible I would still be getting the wrong rate of pension.'

A Government spokesman says: 'This year we will spend more than £110 billion on the state pension and support over 12.5 million pensioners. We are investigating an issue with the historical recording of Home Responsibilities Protection, with work under way to identify those affected.'

- Have you been underpaid? Write to us at moneymail@dailymail.co.uk or Money Mail, Northcliffe House, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5TT.