BCSSS
British Coal
Staff Superannuation Scheme

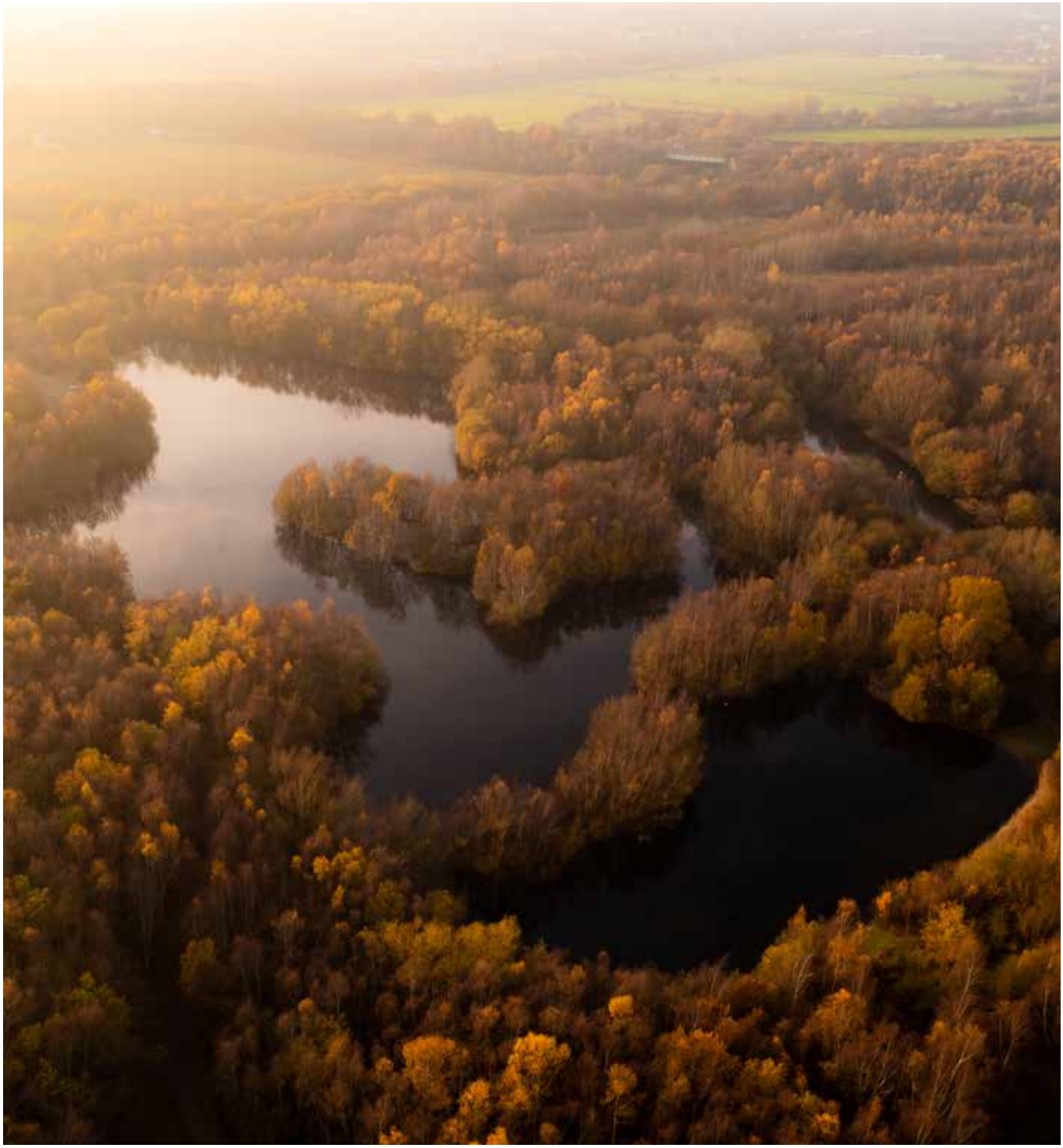
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PensionsNews

Part of the coal mining community since 1947

Your 2026 Newsletter



Welcome

Welcome to your 2026 newsletter.

It has been another busy and important year for the Scheme. There is plenty to update you on in this year's newsletter, but I'm delighted to start with some particularly good news.

This year, the Government agreed that 100% of any future surplus will be used to increase members' pensions. This is an important outcome for members and the culmination of a great deal of work by the Trustees. Turn to pages 3 and 4 to find out how we got here and what it means for you.

A new approach to managing the Scheme's investments

The Trustees have carried out a full review of how the Scheme's assets are managed, with the aim of ensuring they continue to be invested in a way that supports the Scheme's long-term security while also seeking to generate further surpluses for members. Following this review, BlackRock has been appointed as the Scheme's new investment manager. You can read more about the changes and what they mean for the Scheme on page 6.

A new Scheme administrator

Capita currently administers the Scheme and ensures that members' pensions are paid accurately and on time each month. We have now appointed Brightwell as the Scheme's new administrator, and they will take over from Capita from October 2027. You can read more about this on page 5.

Your pension payments will continue to be paid monthly and on time. You do not need to take any action at this stage. We will keep you informed as the transition progresses and provide further information before Brightwell takes over.

Listening to our members

Almost 2,000 members took part in our member survey. Thank you to everyone who took part. It was encouraging to hear that most of you are confident the Scheme is being well managed. You also told us where we can do better – including making our website and member portal easier to use. The Trustees are taking your feedback seriously and are looking at what we can do differently. You can find out more on page 10.

Our history spotlight tells the story of the pit brow lasses – the women who played an important role in the coal industry. You'll also find advice on taking care when using AI tools to ask questions about your pension, as well as information about your pension and tax. At the back of the newsletter, there is a guide to what happens when a member is no longer with us.

Finally, I hope to see many of you at our regional meetings this winter. These meetings are a great opportunity to meet the Trustee Board, ask questions and hear more about the Scheme, and catch up with fellow members. Page 8 has details of how to book your place.

On behalf of all the Trustees, I'd like to wish you and your families a very happy festive season and all the very best for 2027.



Cheryl Agius
Chair of Trustees

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Good news on surplus sharing – how we got here

This change follows several months of work by your Trustees

The transfer of the £2.3bn investment reserve in 2025 was very good news for the Scheme. But the Trustees wanted to go further. Their goal was to change the Scheme rules for the long term. When the Scheme has a surplus in future, members should get the full benefit.

So as soon as the investment reserve was secured, the Trustees began part two of their campaign.

The talks started early in 2026. In February, the Trustees met the then Minister for Industry, Chris McDonald. The BCSSS Chair, Cheryl Agius, led the discussion. Their proposals were shaped by what members had told them. Both sides agreed to work together on the details.

That work carried on through the spring and summer. In the Autumn Budget on 28 October, the government announced that members will get 100% of future surpluses.

Read more about what this means for members on page 4 ⟶



Above: The BCSSS Trustees meet with Chris McDonald, the then Minister for Industry, in February 2026.

Surplus sharing: where things stand now

What's been agreed

Your Trustees asked the government to change the Scheme rules around surplus sharing. From now on:

- the Scheme will produce clear valuations that show any surplus or deficit
- when there is a surplus, the Trustees can use all of it to increase members' pensions.

We have also asked that as part of the update to the Scheme's rules, any meaningful surplus can be distributed when it arises, rather than waiting for the next three-yearly valuation. We are still in discussions about this.

What this means for your pension

These new rules do not change your pension today. They change what can happen in the future.

The Trustees did not ask to change the Government Guarantee. It stays exactly as it is. Your pension is protected, just as before.

When could you see a difference?

Any increase depends on the Scheme having a surplus. The next full valuation of the Scheme will show whether there is a surplus to share. Under the new rules, all of that surplus can go to members. The next full valuation will be at 31 March 2027.

Valuations are complicated, so they take several months to finish. After that, the Trustees need to decide how to share any surplus. This means it will be a number of months before you could see an increase to your pension. We'll let you know as soon as we have more details.

What happens next?

The Trustees will work with the new minister for industry, Blair McDougall, to put the new rules in place. They will also prepare for the next valuation. We will keep you updated whenever there is news to share on the Scheme website.



Above: The Trustees celebrate the return of the investment reserve with Chris McDonald and MPs in Durham, December 2025.



Above: Blair McDougall, the new minister responsible for BCSSS.
Image credit: Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence

Trustees appoint new administrator for the Scheme

The Trustees have carried out a review of the Scheme's administration services to make sure that members are getting the best possible service. Following the review, they have decided to appoint Brightwell, replacing Capita.

Brightwell manages administration for the BT Pension Scheme and the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme, two of the largest private sector pension schemes in the UK. The Trustees chose Brightwell for its focus on providing members with a high-quality service.

Brightwell is expected to take over as the BCSSS administrator in October 2027. In the meantime, Capita will continue to pay members' pensions and be the first point of contact for queries.



You do not need to do anything. Your pension will be paid as normal throughout. We'll keep you informed with full details via the Scheme website as we carry out the change.

A new investment manager for the Scheme

BlackRock is now managing the Scheme's investments and advising on investment strategy

The Trustees appointed BlackRock in July 2026 after a detailed review of the Scheme's investment arrangements. They looked at what is available across the pensions and investment industry. They considered how best to meet the Scheme's needs now and in the future.

BlackRock is one of the world's largest investment firms. It has significant experience working with UK pension schemes. The Trustees chose it for its expertise, resources and ability to support the Scheme as it continues to develop.

Why have the Trustees made this change?

The Scheme has been maturing over many years, with a growing proportion of members now retired and drawing their pensions. That means the Scheme needs to balance several things at once: paying pensions from investment income, keeping funding stable, and making sure assets continue to grow over the long term.

The Trustees decided that BlackRock is well placed to help manage all of these priorities together, in a joined up way. It will advise the Trustees on investment strategy and manage the Scheme's investments day to day, working within clear boundaries set by the Trustees.

How is your pension affected?

You will continue to be paid exactly as you are today. The Government Guarantee remains in place and is not affected. You'll continue to receive information from the Scheme in the same way as before.

What has BlackRock been doing?

BlackRock has worked closely with the Trustees since being appointed. The work has three aims: paying pensions when they are due, keeping the Scheme financially strong, and building future surpluses for members.

Getting ready for the next valuation

A valuation is a financial health check for the Scheme. It compares the money the Scheme has with the money it needs to pay all the future pensions that have been promised.

BlackRock is helping the Trustees and their advisers build a clear way to measure this. The aim is for members, the Trustees and the government to see the same picture. It will also be easier to see when the Scheme has more money than it needs. That extra money is called a surplus.

The Trustees believe this openness matters. It helps everyone understand how secure your benefits are.



Reviewing how the Scheme invests

A steady income from investments is important. The Scheme puts money into bonds, company shares, property and infrastructure. Spreading it this way means the Scheme does not depend on any single investment or market. It balances paying pensions now with protecting the Scheme for the future.

Protecting the Scheme from inflation and interest rates

The Scheme needs to make pension payments for many years into the future. Inflation can increase the cost of those payments, so the Scheme invests in assets that are designed to keep pace with rising prices.

Interest rates affect how much money the Scheme needs to set aside today for future pension payments. When interest rates rise, less money is needed today. When they fall, more is needed. BlackRock is helping the Trustees manage these risks so the Scheme remains on a stable footing.

Your pension is going up in January

Your guaranteed pension payments will increase from 1 January 2027 in line with the November Retail Prices Index. The increase will be applied automatically. We'll write to all pensioners in January with details. Deferred members will receive a benefit statement later in 2027.



Other news from around the Scheme

Regional meetings coming up

We're holding meetings in November and December in Chester, Durham, Sheffield and Nottingham. It's a great opportunity to hear what's new with your Scheme, chat with the Trustees, and catch up with fellow members.

Capacity is limited and places are first come first served. Email us at **bcsss.social@coal-pension.org.uk** to book your place. You can also write to us using the contact details on the back of this newsletter.

We know that not everyone can make it. Members have told us that it would be great to hear afterwards what's been discussed. So this year we're introducing summaries of the key topics and a highlights video. We'll post these on the website as soon as they're available.

BCSSS is now on Facebook

In April this year we launched a Facebook page for the Scheme, and we're very pleased to see the follower numbers going up. We're using it to provide useful information and to update members on any news that's been added to the Scheme website.

The Facebook page is not replacing our website, newsletters or any other ways we communicate with members, such as regional meetings. And it does not replace the usual ways you should contact us. It's there for members who like to receive updates via social media.

Search for 'British Coal Staff Superannuation Scheme – BCSSS' on Facebook to find us.

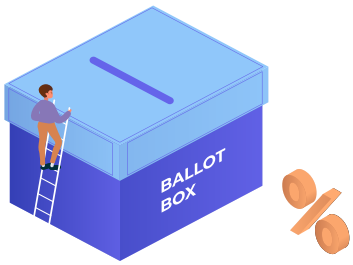
Trustee update

David Griffiths re-elected as Pensioner Representative

David Griffiths has been re-elected as the Pensioner Representative for the East Midlands, Southern England and Overseas constituency.

In the election held during August and September, David received 1,359 votes, representing over 46% of all votes cast. He will now serve as a Pensioner Representative Trustee until 30 September 2030.

The Trustees would like to congratulate David on his re-election and thank everyone who participated in the election, whether as candidates or voters.



What's the role of the Trustees?

Your Scheme has eight Trustees. Members elect four of them. The Trustees appoint the other four for their skills and experience. Every Trustee has the same job – working together to run the Scheme well.

Their top priority is making sure pensions are paid. Every pensioner must get the right amount, every month. Members must also get any increases the rules allow.

The Trustees set the Scheme's investment strategy. This helps make sure there is enough money to pay pensions. They also appoint specialists, such as investment managers and administrators.

The Trustees cannot change the Scheme rules. Only the government can do that, after asking the Trustees first. The rules can never be changed to reduce pensions.

One duty guides everything the Trustees do: they must always consider the interests of the membership as a whole.

Your Scheme in numbers

We've picked out some of the most important figures from our Report and Accounts and other data to give you a snapshot of how the Scheme performed over the year ending 31 March 2026.

Our Report and Accounts explains how we've been looking after your pension. It will give you some information about the Scheme's membership and how the Scheme's investments have been managed. We've highlighted the key points here – and you can find the full Report and Accounts at **bcsss-pension.org.uk/scheme-publications**

Number of members in the Scheme at the end of the Scheme year



37,455
(31 March 2026)



39,095
(31 March 2025)

How much money the Scheme held in assets at the end of the Scheme year



(31 March 2026)



(31 March 2025)

How much the Scheme paid to members in pensions over the Scheme year



Around £880 million
(31 March 2026)



Around £600 million
(31 March 2025)

The oldest and youngest Scheme members this year



Oldest member



Oldest spouse



Youngest former



2026 member survey: what you told us

This summer, we emailed members to ask what they think about the way we communicate with you. Thank you to everyone who took the time to reply.

We wanted to find out what you find useful and what you'd like to hear more about. We also wanted to know where we could do better. A communications consultancy ran the survey for us, and it was open throughout August.

Almost 2,000 of you took part, and many of you also added comments in your own words. Hearing from so many members, in the UK and overseas, gives the Trustees a clear picture of what matters to you.

What you're happy with

Overall, the feedback was very positive. Most of you told us that:

- you're satisfied with the communications you receive from us
- you find the information we send clear and easy to understand
- you read and value this newsletter
- you're confident the Scheme is being well managed.

Many of you also left kind comments about the Trustees and about the help you've had from the people who look after your pension. We're grateful for that.

Where we could do better

You also told us about things that are not working as well as they could. Some of you said that:

- you'd like to hear from us more often, and to get news from us sooner
- you'd like more information about some subjects, including the Scheme's finances and the reasons behind the Trustees' decisions
- you've had trouble logging into or finding your way around our website and member portal
- you've sometimes waited too long for a reply when you contacted us
- you've had particular difficulties because you live outside the UK.

What happens next?

The Trustees are now looking carefully at everything members told us. They'll take your views into account as they decide how to keep you informed in the future, and the results will inform how we communicate with you from now on. We'll let you know about any changes as soon as we can.

Tell us what you think:

If you'd like to take part in future surveys, please share your email address with the Scheme. Call Capita on 0333 222 0074 or log in to the member portal to update your details.

Be careful using AI search tools

Many people now use AI tools to search for information online. These include tools like ChatGPT, Google's AI Overview and Microsoft Copilot. They can be useful for general questions.

But they are not a reliable source of information about your BCSSS pension.

AI tools pull together information from across the internet. They do not have access to your pension records or the latest Scheme rules. Their answers can be out of date, incomplete, or simply wrong. This is true even when an answer looks confident and detailed.

Pension rules change. Your benefits depend on your own record in the Scheme. No AI tool can tell you what you are entitled to.

Always come to official BCSSS sources

For accurate information, use the Scheme website: **bcsss-pension.org.uk**. You can also follow our Facebook page for Scheme news.

If you have a question the website does not answer, contact Capita on **0333 222 0074**.

If something you have read via AI does not match what the Scheme has told you, trust the Scheme, not AI.

Watch out for phone scams

Scammers sometimes call and pretend to be from your pension scheme. They may call out of the blue. They may ask for personal or bank details. They may pressure you to act quickly. These are all warning signs.

If you get a call like this, put the phone down. You are not being rude. Any genuine caller will understand.

Then report it. Contact Capita on **0333 222 0074**. Do not use any number the caller gave you. You can also report a scam to Report Fraud at **reportfraud.police.uk**.

Being the victim of a scam is nothing to be ashamed of. Reporting it helps protect other people.



Get help with your taxes

We've partnered with a charity called TaxAid, who can help you understand your tax circumstances better and find ways to tackle debts if you're on a lower income – they usually help people earning under £28,000.

These are some of the things the charity can help you with:

- Tax queries around pensions, for example pension lump sums
- Checking a tax code
- Self-assessment and tax return issues
- Filling in and submitting forms

Call **0333 207 5659** – lines are open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Or visit **taxaid.org.uk** and fill in the contact form.

Changes to inheritance tax and pensions

From 6 April 2027, some pension death benefits will count towards your estate for inheritance tax. Anything paid to your husband, wife or civil partner will generally be inheritance tax-free. That includes their survivor's pension and any lump sum.

The changes only affect some death benefits paid to other people. Not all the details have been confirmed. When they are, we'll give you a full update.

Get support after a member dies

We've partnered with Life Ledger, which offers practical and emotional support to members and their families after a bereavement.

When someone dies, you may have to manage estate administration tasks, such as telling numerous companies. Life Ledger offers an easy-to-use service to help with this. From a single online point, you can quickly and securely notify hundreds of UK companies across various sectors, including financial services and utility providers.

Life Ledger's secure platform could save your family hours of repetitive and often distressing work. BCSSS is proud to collaborate with an organisation that provides such a compassionate and valuable service, reinforcing our dedication to supporting our community.

Find out more about how Life Ledger can help by visiting **app.lifeledger.com/partner/bcsss**

See more about what to do when a member dies in our guide at the end of this newsletter.



Get financial help and guidance

Find out and claim money you're entitled to

From a boost to your pension payments to help with energy costs, there's financial help available for all kinds of situations. The government has gathered all this information in one place. Take a look at **gov.uk/cost-of-living** to see what's available to you.

Help with essentials, from your council

You don't have to be claiming other benefits to get this help. Check with your local council to see what they offer. Go to gov.uk/find-local-council to find yours.

Extra help if you have a disability or are unwell

There are extra benefits and financial support available if you have a disability or health condition. Go to **gov.uk/browse/benefits/disability** for a full list of these and how to claim them.



Give yourself a Midlife MOT

Midlife MOT is aimed at people aged 45 to 65, but you can use it at any age. It brings together trusted services, tools and charity resources to help you think about your work, health and money and plan for the future. Go to jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/midlifemot to get started.

Wealth at Work: free guidance on how to take your BCSSS pension

If you're due to start taking your BCSSS pension, you can book a free call with Wealth at Work to talk about your income options through the Scheme. Wealth at Work are financial wellbeing and retirement specialists, and can help you understand the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Call them directly on 0800 954 0756 to arrange a consultation. You'll need to have received your retirement options from the Scheme before arranging the call.

Pit brow lasses: how women shaped coal, above ground and below



Women were part of the coal industry from the very start. They worked underground, sorted coal at the surface and ran the offices that kept it all moving. When the pits were threatened, they led the fight to save them. This is their story.

For hundreds of years, women and children worked in Britain's coal mines. Many went underground, into hard and dangerous jobs, often working alongside the men in their family.

Then came the Huskar Colliery flood. In 1838, water rushed into a mine near Barnsley and killed 26 children. The youngest was just eight. The disaster horrified the country and added to a growing unease about who was sent down the pits.



A public report soon laid the conditions bare. It led to the Mines and Collieries Act of 1842, which banned all women and girls from working underground. Boys under 10 were banned, too. Thousands of women and girls had worked below ground. Within a few years, almost none did.

But the ban did not send women home. Many kept working above ground – sorting coal, clearing stone and loading wagons. In Lancashire they had a name: pit brow lasses. The work was hard, and they were proud of it. Some were still doing it in the 1960s.

Salaried roles away from the coal face

From 1947, the National Coal Board ran the industry. It also employed thousands of women. They kept the pay and pensions running. They worked in personnel, health and safety, sales and marketing. Others were clerks and typists. The everyday work of mining could not have happened without them.

Holding mining communities together

Women ran the homes, raised the families and stretched tight budgets, week after week.

Their role came into full view during the miners' strike of 1984 to 1985. It started in Barnsley, where a group of women organised to support the strike. Soon there were groups across the coalfields. They ran food kitchens, raised money and packed food parcels. They spoke at rallies and stood on picket lines.

The movement had a name: Women Against Pit Closures. In August 1984, thousands marched through London. For many of the women, it was the first public role of their lives.

From the pit brow to the picket line, and in every office in between, women helped build the coal industry. That story belongs to this Scheme, and to its members, too.

Photos left to right: Pit brow girls, c.1905; two Wigan colliery workers, 1890s; and colliery lasses working above ground, 1890s.

Did you know …?

- Pit brow lasses went by different names around the country. In Cumberland they were 'screen lasses'. In South Wales they were 'tip girls'.
- Their trousers caused a stir. Victorian society was shocked that women wore trousers for work. Photographs of them were sold as postcards, and sightseers came to watch them.
- The work was widespread. By 1880, more than 1,300 pit brow women worked in the Wigan and St Helens area alone.
- Women ran the offices too, not just the pit yard. The National Coal Board employed thousands of women in jobs like pay, pensions and personnel.
- The strike movement chose its name with care. The women picked 'Women Against Pit Closures', not 'wives' or 'ladies'.

Your Scheme administrator

If you have any questions about your pension or the BCSSS Scheme, please contact Capita:

By phone:

0333 222 0074

By secure message:

Log in to the member portal

By post:

BCSSS
PO Box 555
Darlington
DL1 9YT

Your Scheme Trustee

Send your query, addressed to the relevant Trustee, to the Scheme Secretary:

By email:

bcsss.enquiries@coal-pension.org.uk

By post:

Coal Pension Trustees Ltd, Ventana House,
2 Concourse Way, Sheaf Street, Sheffield, S1 2BJ

HMRC

If you have any queries about the tax you pay on your BCSSS pension, please contact HMRC:

By phone:

0300 200 3300 (overseas: **+44 135 535 9022**)

By post:

Pay As You Earn and Self-Assessment
HM Revenue & Customs
BX9 1AS



The Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO)

CISWO is a national charity working across the UK to improve lives and reduce disadvantage in coal mining communities.

CISWO's services are available to those previously employed in the coal mining industry, including partners, widows and dependent children or adults with a disability.

Through its personal welfare service, CISWO aims to enhance living conditions and maintain independence. It provides a free confidential home visiting service and offers help including:

- Assistance with welfare benefits, including an industry-related compensation scheme
- Help to access mobility equipment
- Support to reduce loneliness and social isolation
- Advocacy to express views and concerns, and defend and promote rights

For more information, go to **ciswo.org.uk** or call **01709 728 115**

BCSSS
British Coal
Staff Superannuation Scheme

What happens when a member dies

What happens when a member dies

Let us know as soon as you can

If a member has died, we'll do everything we can to make it easy for their loved ones to deal with us. We ask that you tell us what's happened as soon as you can. You can do this using the contact details overleaf. The Scheme is covered by the Life Ledger service but isn't covered by the government's 'Tell Us Once' service, so you'll need to contact us separately if you decide not to use the Life Ledger service. We'll need to know:

- the member's Pension Reference Number or National Insurance number
- their date of birth
- the date they died
- your contact details and your relationship to the member.

We'll take it from here

When a member dies we will stop their pension at the date of death.

If you are the member's spouse, a spouse's pension will be paid to you from the day following their death.

If you were living together, but not married, we will write to you and ask you to apply for a pension. You'll need to show us that you were partners and had some financial dependency. You can get support with this from CISWO (see page 16 for contact details). A pension may be paid at the discretion of the Trustees.

If the member was your parent, we might be able to pay a pension to children who are: under 18, aged 18-23 and in full-time education, or over 18 and were financially dependent on the member due to illness or disability. We'll write to you or a guardian to ask for proof of age, education status or medical conditions. You can get help with this from CISWO (see page 16 for contact details).

If you need any support at all, our administration team will guide you through the process.

We may need to write to you for more information

For example:

- **The death certificate:** we need the original for legal reasons, but we will return the certificate promptly
- **The member's birth certificate:** if we don't have one on file
- **The member's marriage certificate:** if there is a surviving spouse
- If a partner, child or anyone else was financially dependent on the member when they died. And proof to support that, eg a bank statement.

Notify UK companies from one platform

We've partnered with Life Ledger to support members and families after a bereavement. Their service lets you notify hundreds of UK companies from one secure online platform. This saves hours of potentially distressing admin work. Visit **app.lifeledger.com/partner/bcsss** to find out more.

We'll work out if anyone is entitled to death benefits

If you were married to the member and the member paid full family benefit contributions, you'll receive a spouse's pension of around two thirds of the member's pension. Otherwise, it will be less.

If a spouse's pension is payable, we'll write to you to let you know your options. Those include a pension for life or an option to convert part of the pension to a one-off lump sum in exchange for that pension. And, if you're also entitled to a Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP), we'll pay a GMP income as well as your lump sum.

If you were living together but not married and we decide to award you a pension, you'll also be able to choose between a pension for life or a one-off lump sum – the same as if you were married.

If the member died before they were 75 years old, the lump sum will be tax-free if paid within two years. If they died after they were 75, it will be taxed.

Unfortunately, we can't tell you how much a lump sum will be until after a member dies. That's because we need to know how old the spouse is when the member dies, the value of their pension, and socio-economic factors like predicted inflation at the time they die.

If the member dies before taking their pension, or within 5 years of taking it

We'll pay a lump sum to a spouse, relative or dependant. This is in addition to a spouse pension. The Trustees will decide who the lump sum is paid to, taking into account the member's wishes if they've filled out a Rule 28A form.

Check your Rule 28A form is up to date

Tell us who you'd like the above lump sum to go to, using the Rule 28A Election and Declaration form (also known as an Expression of Wish form).

- Download the form from: **bcsss-pension.org.uk/media/xumdfbks/election_and_declaration_rule_28_v5.pdf**
- Update it on the secure members site. Go to **bcsss-pension.org.uk** and click on the 'Login/Register' button
- Speak to your administrator on the contact details below.

Contact details

- **Call the Member Helpline: 0333 222 0074**
- **Send us a secure message through the member portal**
- **Write to:** The Scheme Administrator, BCSSS, PO Box 555, Stead House, Darlington DL1 9YT

You can get more information on Death Benefits and what to do when a member dies on the BCSSS website: **bcsss-pension.org.uk/death-benefits/**

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