

Labour Group Amendment to Liberal Democrat Motion - Stop the Winter Fuel Payment Cuts

Moved by Councillor Peter Dean
Seconded by Councillor Aftab Hussain

~~Delete~~
Insert

This Council notes that:

The recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal Winter Fuel Payments has restricted eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credit, ~~excluding too many vulnerable pensioners.~~ In addition, Labour is keeping the triple lock which increased a full state pension by £902.20 PA in April 2024 and will rise again by £470.60 PA in April 2025.

Many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will no longer receive the payments. Across England and Wales, the number of people eligible for Winter Fuel Payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).

While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance. However, those on the full state pension who aren't now entitled to Winter Fuel Allowance are receiving just £41.40 a year less than someone on Pension Credit who is also in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance of £200 a year – a difference of 79p a week.

~~According to data obtained by the Liberal Democrats from the Department of Work and Pensions, 85% of pensioners in Oldham Borough will lose out. There are an estimated 7,800 pensioners in Oldham over the age of 80 set to lose their winter fuel payment who do not receive pension credit.~~

This Council believes that:

The criteria for Winter Fuel Payments that the Labour Government is using will exclude too many pensioners who need help. ~~Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for Pension Credit.~~ The standard minimum guarantee has been raised to £227.10 a week meaning pensioners earning up to £11,809 PA can now claim pension credit.

This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.

Take up of Pension Credit has been worryingly low, more than one in three eligible pensioners are not signed up. ~~We have a role to play~~ Oldham Council is working with partners to increase awareness of welfare support such as Pension Credit to ensure people get the help that they need.

This Council further notes that:

The Energy Price Cap has risen by 10% in October, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Universal Winter Fuel Payments has been a neglected and overlooked benefit payment during the period of the last Conservative Government having sat statically at £200 and £300. Between 2010 and 2023 state pensions have risen from £97.65 a week to £221.20, and average combined energy bills have risen from £1076 to £1,834. The effective spending power of the Winter Fuel Allowance due to this has been greatly eroded.

This Council resolves to:

~~1. Instruct the Council's Communications Team to urgently commence a significant awareness campaign to maximise uptake of Pension Credit. This should include a dedicated advice line, promotion in the local press as well as targeted letters to those who may be eligible.~~

1. Reconfirm the Council's resolution to launch a targeted Awareness Campaign to maximise the uptake of Pension Credit; collaborate with local organisations to inform and assist residents with applications; identify and prioritise staff to help residents complete application; monitor and report on the effectiveness of the campaign.

2. Instruct the ~~Leader of the Council~~ Acting Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer ~~calling for to express Council's view that~~ the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt ~~to be immediately paused should be reviewed~~ and ~~introduce~~ a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments ~~be considered~~. Council further requests the ~~Leader of the Council~~ Acting Chief Executive write to Oldham's three MPs asking them to give their formal support to ~~a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments be considered. halting these changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility.~~

Amended Motion to read:

This Council notes that:

The recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal Winter Fuel Payments has restricted eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credit. In addition, Labour is keeping the triple lock which increased a full state pension by £902.20 PA in April 2024 and will rise again by £470.60 PA in April 2025.

Many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will no longer receive the payments. Across England and Wales, the number of people eligible for Winter Fuel Payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).

While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance. However, those on the full state pension who aren't now entitled to Winter Fuel Allowance are receiving just £41.40 a year less than someone on Pension Credit who is also in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance of £200 a year – a difference of 79p a week.

This Council believes that:

The criteria for Winter Fuel Payments that the Labour Government is using will exclude too many pensioners who need help. The standard minimum guarantee has been raised to £227.10 a week meaning pensioners earning up to £11,809 PA can now claim pension credit.

This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.

Take up of Pension Credit has been worryingly low, more than one in three eligible pensioners are not signed up. Oldham Council is working with partners to increase awareness of welfare support such as Pension Credit to ensure people get the help that they need.

This Council further notes that:

The Energy Price Cap has risen by 10% in October, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Universal Winter Fuel Payments has been a neglected and overlooked benefit payment during the period of the last Conservative Government having sat statically at £200 and £300. Between 2010 and 2023 state pensions have risen from £97.65 a week to £221.20, and average combined energy bills have risen from £1076 to £1,834. The effective spending power of the Winter Fuel Allowance due to this has been greatly eroded.

This Council resolves to:

1. Reconfirm the Council's resolution to launch a targeted Awareness Campaign to maximise the uptake of Pension Credit; collaborate with local organisations to inform and assist residents with applications; identify and prioritise staff to help

residents complete application; monitor and report on the effectiveness of the campaign.

2. Instruct the Acting Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to express Council's view that the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt should be reviewed and a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments be considered. Council further requests the Acting Chief Executive write to Oldham's three MPs asking them to give their formal support to a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments be considered.