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**After changes to who will receive the Winter Fuel Payment, local charity Age UK Oxfordshire urges people of pensionable age to check whether they're entitled to receive Pension Credit.**

After the Government announced at the end of July that the Winter Fuel Payment will become means-tested from this year, local charity Age UK Oxfordshire is urging older people across the county to check whether they are entitled to Pension Credit or other qualifying benefits.

The Winter Fuel Payment is an annual tax-free payment for households that include someone born on or before 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1958 (for 2024-25) designed to help cover heating costs in winter, with households receiving up to £300. Previously, the payment was not mean-tested, but changes by the current Government mean that only those in receipt of certain benefits will receive the contribution to heating costs.

Pension Credit is the primary way older people can continue to receive the Winter Fuel Payment, and with an estimate of more than 4,000 older people across the county not claiming the Pension Credit to which they're entitled, the charity declares that it's more important than ever that people check their eligibility.

Pension Credit is an income-related benefit that tops up weekly income to £218.15 for a single person and to a joint £332.95 for a couple. In addition to ensuring those on a low income continue to receive the Winter Fuel Payment, even a small award of Pension Credit can provide access to help with housing costs, council tax or heating bills and, for those over 75, continued entitlement to a free TV licence.

**Paul Ringer, CEO of Age UK Oxfordshire said:** "We are concerned that the changes to the way the Winter Fuel Payment is awarded from this year will mean that many people relying on the additional income to keep their home warm will not receive it. Recent data shows that thousands of older people in Oxfordshire are eligible for, but not claiming, Pension Credit.

"We know that pensioners tend to do everything possible to avoid going into debt, so if they are worried about their future energy bills, some ration their fuel use and economise by reducing their spending on other essentials. This proposed policy change is therefore certain to result in more older people experiencing a horrible 'eating or heating' dilemma.

"We urge people to check their eligibility, or that of family members, to ensure they can benefit from both the Winter Fuel Payment, and the other financial support that comes in the form of Pension Credit."

You can apply for Pension Credit online ([www.gov.uk/pension-credit](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit)) or by phone (0800 99 1234).

If you want to check whether you are entitled to Pension Credit or other benefits, you can use Age UK's free and anonymous Benefits Calculator online ([benefitscheck.ageuk.org.uk](http://benefitscheck.ageuk.org.uk)) or phone Age UK Oxfordshire's free Information & Advice helpline on 0345 450 1276.

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Editor's notes

**About Age UK Oxfordshire**

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity dedicated to enabling older people in Oxfordshire to maintain their independence and live life to the full.

We provide free local information, advice, and a wide range of support services as well as campaigning on the issues that matter to people in later life. We work with our national partner, Age UK, and other local Age UKs in England. Our work focuses on four key areas: money matters, health and wellbeing, home and care and social connections and enjoyment.

You can find further information on all our services and volunteering opportunities by telephoning 0345 450 1276 or by visiting our website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire)

Age UK Oxfordshire is a charitable company limited by guarantee (registered charity number 1091529 and company number 4328143). For all media enquiries please contact Emma Duckett on 07799 051682 or email [media@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk](mailto:media@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk).