



Combined Authority Board

16 October 2024

Title:	Motions
Public Report:	Yes

Motion 1 Proposer: Councillor Anna Bailey
 Seconder: Councillor Chris Boden

This Authority notes:

- The recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal Winter Fuel Payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credit and other benefits.
- Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will now not 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). Age UK research suggests 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.

This Authority further notes:

- In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 138,176 who will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards, many of whom will face a 'heat or eat' dilemma and significant risks to their health as a result of this decision.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures will negatively affect the health and well-being of some of our poorest older residents. Further, the government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.
- The Labour Government has set the threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for pension credits. This is significantly lower than the Living Wage.
- The low take up of Pension Credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving it – and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so. This Authority recognises the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people get access to the support they are entitled to.
- The Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

This Authority resolves to:

- Urgently commence a significant awareness campaign to maximise uptake of pension credits, including when available using the Low-Income Families Tracker (LIFT) to identify those who are eligible.
- Request that the Mayor and all Board Members sign a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to

ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty, as well as considering what support can be given to help people reduce their energy bills and consumption.

- Commit the Authority to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all constituent council members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through constituent council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are supported in claiming their entitlement.