

## **Conservative Group Motion to Full Council, 25 September 2024**

### **Changes to Winter Fuel Payments and protecting pensioners from fuel poverty**

This Council Notes:

- The Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves. This change will cut support from an estimated 26,688 pensioners in the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme.<sup>1</sup>
- The outcome of the vote held in the House of Commons on 10 September, in which none of the Borough's three MPs voted to stop this cut.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners across the UK who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of our Loyal and Ancient Borough and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The compelling criticism from charities, including Age UK and the Countryside Alliance, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

This Council Believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that suddenly restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- That thousands of pensioners across our Borough sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of some of our poorest older residents.
- 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.
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<sup>[1]</sup> Source: DWP StatXplore -<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/>  
ONS Dataset <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/populationofstatepensionageandworkingageandoldagedependencyratiosforlocalauthoritiesandregionsinengland>

This Council Resolves:

- To lead local efforts to promote awareness of Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in the Borough are supported in claiming their entitlement.
- To ask the Leader and Chief Executive to write jointly 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.
- To ask the Leader and Chief Executive to jointly write to Adam Jogee MP and the other MPs representing the Borough, calling on them to support campaigns to reverse the Government's decision.
- To commit the Council to signing up to the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK, and circulate details to all Members, offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.

**PROPOSER: Cllr Mark Holland**

**SECONDER: Cllr Simon Tagg**