



The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
By Email

12th August 2024

Dear Rachel,

I write to ask you to reconsider your policy of removing Winter Fuel Payment from all but those claiming Pension Credit or other means-tested benefits. I have received numerous emails and letters from concerned constituents who are deeply worried about how this change will affect their ability to heat their homes this winter.

I very much share these concerns, and I urge you to reconsider.

Winter Fuel Payment is a crucial income supplement for many households, and serves as an essential investment in helping elderly citizens to stay warm and well. Those with health needs or disabilities are particularly vulnerable. Removing WFP is likely to lead to more health-related problems among the elderly, which will, in turn, place additional strain on the NHS. Instead, we should be helping people to stay well and keep warm in their homes.

I do of course welcome the drive to increase take-up of Pension Credit, [given that it has stagnated below 66% for the last 10 years](#), leaving up to a third of eligible pensioners without this much-needed support. However, I very much doubt that you will be able to ensure 100% take-up before the coming winter, which means that some who are eligible will continue to miss out on the WFP.

I also know there are many households that, despite not being eligible for Pension Credit, are still on very low incomes and were depending on the Winter Fuel Payment. I understand that [roughly 300,000 older people in the UK have a weekly income within £10 of the poverty line](#). These households will likely suffer heavily from the withdrawal of WFP.

I would like to suggest that, at a minimum, you consider:

1. For winter 2024/25, enabling any pensioner to access Winter Fuel Payment at their own request and without assessment if they are anxious about facing hardship. This approach would enable all who need it to easily access the funding – and would also generate useful data on the levels of felt need country-wide.
2. For future years, establishing a much more robust approach to means testing of Winter Fuel Payment, so that all those who need the support are able to get it.

While the previous universal policy led to some errors of inclusion, your new policy leads to very many errors of exclusion, and this is deeply concerning.



Ellie Chowns MP
Member of Parliament for North Herefordshire
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

I urge you not to introduce the Winter Fuel Payment policy change until you can be sure the policy will not worsen the situation for older people facing financial hardship. If you cannot be sure of this, then I believe universal eligibility should be reintroduced to avoid errors of exclusion.

I urge you to reconsider, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Chowns'.

Ellie Chowns MP, North Herefordshire.