

COUNCIL	AGENDA ITEM No. 12
16 OCTOBER 2024	PUBLIC REPORT

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

1. Motion from Councillor Alexander Rafiq

Council notes that:

- The Labour 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.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners 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 Peterborough and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, 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.

Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Peterborough 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 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.

Council resolves to:

- Support the Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write 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.

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

2. Motion from Councillor Imtiaz Ali

Council notes that:

There are many households in Peterborough that are currently affected by the two-child limit to benefit payments. At the same time, 25% of local children are living in poverty. Council strongly believes that the two-child limit to benefit payments is a damaging policy that should be scrapped.

Research from the University of York has shown its introduction has had no positive impacts on employment and earnings. Instead, it has dragged thousands of local families into poverty.

Council notes that the Greens have consistently opposed the two-child limit to benefit payments since it was introduced – calling for it to be axed in their most recent manifestos.

Council notes with concern the stance of the Labour Government, who are committed to keeping the cap – going as far as suspending the whip from MPs who rebel against this position.

Council resolves to:

- Invite the Leader of Peterborough Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister indicating Peterborough Council's strong belief that the two-child limit to benefit payments should be scrapped – which would help significant numbers of children living in Peterborough.
- Further invite the Council Leader to write to both of Peterborough's MPs, asking them to commit their public support to the campaign to end the two-child limit to benefit payments and ensure the number of children a family has is considered when a hardship grant is given out by the Council.