



## THE RT HON VICTORIA ATKINS MP

Member of Parliament for Louth and Horncastle

The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
The Correspondence & Enquiry unit  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Rachel,

I am writing with serious concerns about the Government's decision to stop the Winter Fuel Payment for 10 million pensioners. I strongly urge you to reconsider this decision.

I have been inundated with correspondence and stopped countless times across Louth & Horncastle by constituents who are desperately worried about your decision and the impact it will have on them. Several told me that your change will mean they cannot afford to heat their homes this winter.

The changing of the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Allowance comes at the same time as the Cost of Living Payment ending and the Energy Price Cap increasing from Tuesday 1 October. All of these changes mean most pensioners will now have to find hundreds of pounds more than last winter to heat their homes.

This will have ramifications for millions of households and our health service. We know that cold weather can lead to serious health consequences particularly for older people; it exacerbates circulatory, respiratory and mental health problems, drives health inequalities and for the most vulnerable can be deadly.

The population in my constituency of Louth & Horncastle is the 10<sup>th</sup> oldest in the UK and covers much of the East Lindsey district. As a result of your decision to change the eligibility criteria for the Winter Fuel Allowance, it is estimated that around 35,000 pensioners in East Lindsey will not receive a Winter Fuel Payment this year. It is also estimated that more than a third of those eligible in East Lindsey for Pension Credit are not receiving the entitlement.

I am, therefore, working closely and at pace with my District Council and other local agencies to encourage those who are eligible for Pension Credit to apply. I have done this throughout my time as their MP, however, and it is naive of the Labour government to assume that an awareness campaign will lead everyone eligible to sign up. An added complication is not all pensioners eligible for Pension Credit will have signed up in time to receive a Winter Fuel Payment this year and now, as a result of the Government's choice, will go without this vital, and in some cases life-saving, support.



We are also concerned for pensioners in our area who will 'just miss out' on the winter fuel payment as they are just over the Pension Credit eligibility threshold. Pensioners living with conditions such as motor neurone disease will also face additional financial pressure due to the costs of living with and managing such complex conditions.

It is astonishing that the government is rushing this decision through with no full impact assessment being carried out as referenced in the Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024 laid before Parliament. There is confusion as to why the Department for Work & Pensions has stated publicly an assessment has been carried out yet is refusing to publish it. Why the secrecy?

Given the serious consequence this decision will have for the NHS and millions of pensioners including 35,000 in my local area I call on the Government to confirm;

- Whether a full impact assessment has been carried out;
- What impact this policy decision will have on the NHS during its most challenging months of the year and the estimated cost implications for this;
- How many fully staffed beds in hospitals and care packages for patients leaving hospital have been added to the existing plans for the NHS in winter to mitigate the consequences of your decision?
- That it will publish any impact assessment by DHSC or NHSE and lay a copy in the House of Commons Library;
- The dates by which eligible pensioners for means-tested benefits must have applied to qualify for the Winter Fuel Allowance; and
- Whether the government will provide support to local authorities to help vulnerable pensioners who will no longer qualify for the Winter Fuel Allowance and when this funding will be announced.

I would be grateful if these questions could be addressed urgently and for you to reconsider this rushed decision. Do the right thing for millions of our most vulnerable constituents.

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Yours regretfully,  
Victoria*

The Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP  
Member of Parliament for Louth & Horncastle