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HM Treasury

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David Simmonds CBE MP
House of Commons

Our ref: MC2024/70402

27 September 2024

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 3 September to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on behalf of a number of your constituents regarding the decision to restrict Winter Fuel Payment eligibility. I am replying as the Minister for Pensions.

In face of the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices, including targeting the Winter Fuel Payment, to bring the public finances back under control. This decision means that the Winter Fuel Payment will be targeted to low income pensioners who need it.

Despite this very difficult decision, we are determined to protect the poorest pensioners and target support to those in greatest need. Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged over 80.

The Government wants those eligible for Pension Credit but not currently claiming it to receive the benefits they are entitled to, including the Winter Fuel Payment. As part of this, we have started a new drive to increase take-up of Pension Credit, which is currently far too low - with a third of eligible pensioners not claiming. We know there are low-income pensioners who are not claiming Pension Credit, and we really urge those people to apply.

Claims for Pension Credit can be made online at: www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim. The service is available to use 24/7, and provides those who may struggle to make their claim alone, the flexibility to have a friend or family to support them when making their claim, at a time that is most

convenient to them. Pension Credit claims can also be made through the Freephone telephone number 0800 99 1234, and there is an option to complete a paper application form.

I would like to stress that this Government is absolutely committed to pensioners - everyone in our society, no matter their working history or savings deserves a comfortable and dignified retirement. That is why through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit, with many expected to see their State Pensions increase by over a thousand pounds over the next five years. Protecting the Triple Lock even in the current economic climate shows our steadfast commitment to pensioners.

The Warm Home Discount scheme provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

The Household Support Fund (HSF) is also being extended for a further six months, from 1 October 2024 until 31 March 2025. An additional £421 million will be provided to enable the extension of the HSF in England, plus funding for the Devolved Governments through the Barnett formula to be spent at their discretion, as usual.

We are prioritising support for pensioners through our Warm Homes Plan which will support investment in insulation and low carbon heating - upgrading millions of homes over this Parliament. Our long-term plan will protect billpayers permanently, reduce fuel poverty and get the UK back on track to meet our climate goals. Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

Yours sincerely,

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

Emma Reynolds MP

Minister for Pensions