



Full Council – 19 September 2024

Motion for Non-Cabinet Member debate

Cutting of Winter Fuel Payments

This Labour government is planning to scrap the Winter Fuel Payment (WFP) which will impact 10 million pensioners including over 30,000 in Brent, despite promising to protect the benefit during the general election. One in five winter deaths are directly attributable to cold homes, and one in ten to fuel poverty. While some pensioners currently in receipt of WFP may not require it, many thousands across Brent just sit above the cut off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.

Just weeks after the election, the Labour Chancellor Rachel Reeves has announced a cut to the WFP which will reduce it by up to £300, money that would have helped pensioners with heating bills during winter.

Between 2010 and 2023, the Conservative Government lifted over 200,000 pensioners out of absolute poverty. The Conservative governments unprecedented cost of living support following Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine also prevented 400,000 pensioners from falling into absolute poverty in 2022 to 2023.

The WFP was introduced in 1997 by Gordon Brown. Ironically it is now a Labour government that is withdrawing the same WFP.–Previously paid to all pensioners it is now being restricted to those on income related benefits or tax credits to ease fiscal pressures. This is a shameful betrayal of British pensioners.

For two and a half years, Labour have accused the Conservatives of making people choose between 'eating and heating'. As a pensioner you are now being penalised for not claiming benefits. Labours policy will mean more pensioners will unnecessarily die in Brent from the cold this winter.

This council therefore notes:

- The Labour government decision to restrict the WFP to only pensioners in receipt of means tested benefit, which disproportionately affects Brent's most vulnerable residents.
- That all pensioners deserve to live in warm safe homes, and that removing support will increase the risk of cold related illnesses and excess winter deaths among the elderly population.

- The criticism from Age UK, Countryside Alliance and other charities highlights the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.

This Council resolves:

- (1) To request the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor, urging a review of the decision to means test the WFP and to ask the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit are protected from fuel poverty.
- (2) To condemn the removal of WFP from pensioners who do not claim means tested benefits recognising the disproportionate impact this will have on our most vulnerable residents.
- (3) To write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to seek funding for local advertising and outreach campaigns to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting pensioners who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.
- (4) To recommend that provision is made in Brent Council's finances to support struggling residents with 'top-ups' to the loss of the WFA either through the Resident Support Fund or similar provision.

Cllr Jayanti Patel
Queensbury ward