

Email: [susan.juned@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:susan.juned@stratford-dc.gov.uk)  
Our Ref: SJ/KC  
Date: 18th October 2024



The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP  
Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and  
Local Government  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

I am writing to request that Government urgently review its decision to cease winter fuel payments for those pensioners who are not in receipt of Pension Credit. If you are not prepared to reverse this decision, then please at least provide the Council with some support so that we can help as many pensioners affected as possible.

On 14 October, Stratford on Avon District Council debated this issue on the basis that I write to you 'ask for funding for a local advertising and outreach campaign to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting pensioners who may be eligible but not currently claiming'.

Stratford on Avon District Council has a high proportion of residents who are pensioners, over 35,000 of our residents are aged 65 or over. This move means that a significant proportion of which who have received the Winter Fuel Payments for the last 26 years, have been given less than 8 weeks' notice that they will no longer receive this valuable support. It is totally unreasonable to make such a change at this speed, there is insufficient time for pensioners to adjust.

Since the Government's announcement in relation to the future for "Winter Fuel Payments" the Council in partnership with the South Warwickshire CAB has been encouraging pensioners who we believe to be eligible for Pension Credit to apply as soon as possible. I am sure you are aware however, that the application form is 24 pages long and requires responses to 243 individual questions, this obviously is extremely daunting to several of our residents. To ensure that as many people are successful in accessing the benefits they deserve we need help.

Government already accepts that around 25% of all those individuals who are eligible for Pension Credit do not access this support this means that around 1,320 households of the most needy will not get the help they need. Whilst I accept that you have written to all pensioner households there will remain a significant proportion of residents who need this support that will not receive it. The short notice of the introduction of means testing simply does not give enough time for this to happen before this winter.

Targeted advertising and outreach would help to connect pensioners to the right support, first time, which for many vulnerable pensioners is essential to prevent them falling through the gaps. We are deeply concerned as to the impact this will have on the health and wellbeing of these pensioners, in some cases, this could be a matter of life or death.

The Council has already been supporting our communities with an annual cost-of-living fund of £250,000 to support our most vulnerable households, this includes helping to meet energy costs. We are a small district council and the support we can provide is limited. To further support and raise awareness therefore we would need funding from Government to help ensure that pensioners are not losing out on Winter Fuel Payments.

Therefore, once more, I urge the Government to consider providing such funding to Local Government.

Separately, I have written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging reconsideration of the decision to introduce means testing for Winter Fuel Payments this year. A copy of my letter is enclosed.

I am grateful for your consideration and look forward to your response which I will share with my Council.

Yours sincerely



**Cllr Susan Juned**  
**Leader**  
**Stratford-on-Avon District Council**

Elizabeth House  
Church Street  
Stratford-upon-Avon  
CV37 6HX

telephone 01789 267575

minicom 01789 260747

website [www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk)

DX700737 STRATFORD-ON-AVON 2

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**Stratford-on-Avon District Council**