

Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Pensioner poverty - digital exclusion

Written Submission by the Department for Work and Pensions, 12 March 2025

Pension Credit

Pension Credit provides financial support to people over State Pension age who are on a low income and are resident in Great Britain. Claims for Pension Credit can be made online at: www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim. The service is available to use 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and provides those who may struggle to make their claim alone the flexibility to have a friend or family member to support them when making their claim at a time that is most convenient to them. Claims can also be made through the Freephone Pension Credit claim line: 0800 99 1234, where an agent can guide a person through the application and claim process. Customers can also print the claim form or request one via the Freephone telephone number 0800 99 1234. Paper forms can be returned to: Freepost DWP Pensions Service 3.

Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance provides financial help towards the extra care/support costs of pensioners who have a disability or health condition, where these extra costs arose after they reached State Pension age. The Committee will be aware that Attendance Allowance is a devolved benefit in Scotland, and that it is being replaced by Pension Age Disability Payment (PADP). In areas where PADP is not yet available, Attendance Allowance is still available through DWP, which administers it under an Agency Agreement on behalf of the Scottish Ministers. Claims for Attendance Allowance are primarily made by post. Customers can print the claim form or contact the Freephone Attendance Allowance helpline on 0800 731 0122 and request a claim form which can be returned to: Freepost, DWP Attendance Allowance. A claim can also be made online at: www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim. The Department is currently testing this new digital claim process as a part of its wider Service Modernisation plans with the aim of providing a streamlined alternative to the current paper application form.

Universal Credit

Mixed-age couples (where one member of the couple is above, and the other below, State pension age) who wish to claim Universal Credit can do so either online at: www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-to-claim or via the Freephone Universal Credit helpline: 0800 328 5644. Information and support is also available through the free 'Help to Claim' service, which is provided by Citizens Advice and Citizens Advice Scotland. Trained advisers can provide practical help, guide customers through the process and help them make an online application.

Winter Fuel Payments and Cold Weather Payments

These are paid automatically to people in England and Wales who are in receipt of the relevant qualifying benefits, including Pension Credit. For winter 2024/25 only, DWP is also making Pension Age Winter Heating Payments to qualifying pensioner households in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Ministers under an Agency Agreement. These are also paid automatically.

Additional information

DWP is committed to providing the best possible support for all customers claiming benefits. For customers who are unable to complete forms themselves or for vulnerable customers, the Department offers support through the Visiting Service and a home visit can be arranged. For customers who are deaf and use British Sign Language a Video Relay Service (known as VRS) is available; any customers who cannot hear or speak on the phone can use Relay UK service. DWP staff are available to support customers with the application process and are trained to identify those who may need additional support. Jobcentres continue to provide face-to-face support for those who cannot access support through telephony and digital channels, and staff can also consider whether a customer should be referred to specialist support.