

Government threatens to break pre-election promise over winter fuel allowance

Britain's biggest older people's organisation, the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), has criticised the government for breaking pre-election promises by threatening to remove the winter fuel allowance from millions of pensioners.

Reports in the media have suggested that ministers are considering a number of options including:

Raising the age of entitlement to the allowance from 60 to 66 earlier than has already been proposed in 2020

Paying the allowance at 75, in line with the TV licence

Means-testing the allowance and paying it only to those on benefits

Dot Gibson, NPC general secretary said: "The winter death rate amongst older people is a national scandal and getting worse. Last winter over 36,700 pensioners died of cold related illnesses – a staggering 13 pensioners every hour. Yet the government is now considering taking the winter fuel allowance away from millions of households which will only make matters worse."

"This issue really goes to the heart of the debate as to whether the welfare state should be available to everyone. We have seen in pensions and care that a means-tested system is not as effective or efficient as a universal benefit in getting help to those who need it most. Of course wealthy pensioners get the winter fuel allowance as well as the very poorest – but the fairest way of dealing with the issue is to claw back that money using the taxation system."
