

Pressure mounts on Rachel Reeves to justify 'terrible blunder' that'll cause untold misery

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Chancellor Rachel Reeves is under increasing pressure to justify her "terrible blunder" of snatching cold weather cash from 10million OAPs.

Regulations ending universal Winter Fuel Payments come into force on September 16 in a means-testing move that will plunge many into misery.



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The Treasury and Department for Work and Pensions have been repeatedly asked to reveal the impact assessment behind the move, but has refused.

The DWP said it is incorrect to say none was carried out.

But The Social Fund Winter Fuel Payment Regulations 2024 and laid before Parliament makes clear: "A full impact assessment has not been produced for this instrument as no, or no significant, impact on the private, public or voluntary sectors is foreseen."

In addition, proposals will not be referred to the Social Security Advisory Committee because of the "urgency of this matter".



Chancellor Rachel Reeves has failed to produce her sums on axing the Winter Fuel Payment
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Ministers want to penalise pensioners, and claw back £3 billion, claiming there is a £22 billion black hole in the public finances that needs to be plugged.

One former minister said: "This beggars belief - how can they say it will have no impact?"

Only those in receipt of Pension Credit - a payment almost 900,000 OAPs do not claim - or certain other benefits will be entitled to the cash. The allowance remains unchanged at £200 for those aged between 66 and 79 and £300 for those over 80.

▶ Related video: Chancellor defends winter fuel payment decision (Metro)



The Daily Express asked both departments to confirm whether any assessment had been carried out. We also asked to see the document, if it exists.

Labour has promised to "be honest with the public" but has yet to produce its homework on a policy that has sparked widespread anger.

Baroness Ros Altmann, 68, the campaigning peer, former Pensions Minister and Saga director general, has separately tabled a written Parliamentary question asking the Government "what impact assessment it has made of the effect of removing Winter Fuel Payments, without warning, from pensioners whose incomes are a small amount above the Pension Credit threshold and on those who do not claim their entitlement". She has yet to receive an official response.

She said: "Pensioners are understandably angry at the sudden announcement that their Winter Fuel Payment will not be paid in a few weeks' time, as expected. Of course, some can manage fine without, but millions can't. This is not the way to fix the nation's budget, yet there seems to be a determination to try to balance the nation's books on the backs of pensioners. There should be a considered review of all aspects of how this country supports its elderly citizens, before making this kind of draconian change - £300 does not sound like much to most of us, but for pensioners it is significant.



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"Surely it is time for an independent or cross-party review of all aspects of pensioner support. Meanwhile, the Winter Fuel decision should be reconsidered urgently."

The Government has been accused of being disingenuous in saying no regulatory impact assessment is necessary as the effect of the cash-grab is on individuals and private households, rather than businesses or voluntary sector organisations. It claims this is different from other types of impact assessments, like Equalities Impact Assessments.

A Government spokesman said: "We are absolutely committed to supporting pensioners and giving them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement. That's why through our commitment to protect the triple lock, over 12 million pensioners will see their State Pensions increase by almost one thousand pounds over the next five years.

"But given the dire state of the public finances we have inherited, it's right that we target support to those who need it most while we take the difficult decisions needed to fix the foundations of our economy. Over a million pensioners will continue to receive the Winter Fuel Payment and eligible pensioners will also be able to benefit from the £150 Warm Home Discount scheme from October to help with their energy bills over winter.

"We are urging pensioners to come forward and check their eligibility for Pension Credit to ensure as many people in need as possible have