

# Westminster Confidential

David Hencke's news, views, investigations and much more

*Political Journalist of the Year 2012*



## House of Lords slams scrapping of winter fuel allowance for 10.8 million pensioners in advance of Commons debate this week

Posted on [September 8, 2024](#) by [davidhencke](#)



Lord Hunt of Wirral, chair of the Lords secondary legislation committee and a former energy minister under Lady Thatcher's government Pic credit: Official Portrait House of Lords

**UPDATE:** Government got policy through the House of Commons by 348-228 on September 10. Tories, Lib Dems, Greens, Scot Nats, DUP, Alliance and Reform voted against. Some 53 Labour MPs abstained, one Labour MP voted against.

[ABOUT ME](#) [CONTACT ME](#) [G+](#)

### BLOG SEARCH



### RECENT POSTS

- Millions of pensioners on or just above the poverty line will lose winter fuel allowance – Age UK research
- How come an NHS Trust can win a national diversity award when its ethnic minority staff are reporting bullying and discrimination?
- My interview on the 50swomen pensions scandal and the scrapping of the pensioner's winter fuel allowance
- Time for a full scale investigation into the abusive and bullying behaviour towards women by Judge Philip Lancaster
- Ministry of Justice and Lady Chief Justice Dame Sue Carr refuse to explain the lawfulness of withholding official ET court records
- Winter Fuel Allowance: Equality statement reveals the scale of Rachel Reeves nasty blow to poor and disabled women pensioners

### FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER

David Hencke @davidhencke · Nov 4, 2019  
Follow my blog [davidhencke.com](#) and byline times for my latest blogs on Westminster, Whitehall, new forensic investigations and the campaign I am running on #50sWomen and their lost pensions

[davidhencke.com](#)  
Westminster Confidential

82 805

David Hencke @davidhencke · Aug 18, 2019  
A retirement age of 75 would be the highest in the world. In China it is 50 for women 60 for

### Follow me on Mastodon

**SECOND UPDATE: A Conservative motion regretting the means testing of the winter fuel allowance and the lack of transparency by Labour was passed by 164 votes to 132 in the House of Lords on Wednesday evening. An attempt by a former Tory pensions minister, Baroness Altmann to annul the cut was heavily defeated.**

## Infected blood victims may also face further delay for compensation say peers

Peers have slammed the government's planned means testing of this year's £200 and a £300 winter fuel allowance for the over 80s which will leave 10.8 million out of 12.3 million pensioners with no money before Christmas.

The Lords secondary legislation committee – which scrutinises laws introduced by government by issuing new regulations which have to be approved by Parliament -is severely critical of the changes, the lack of information, the by passing of proper scrutiny by a government appointed advisory committee and lack of evidence of any research by the Department for Work and Pensions of the effect of the changes.

The committee represents a wide range of peers in the House from Tories, Labour, Liberal Democrat and crossbench peers Including former Labour minister, Tom Watson.

Peers see no need for the urgency to get the change into law by September 16. "We are unconvinced by the reasons given for the urgency attached to laying these Regulations and are particularly concerned that this both precludes appropriate scrutiny and creates issues with the practicalities of bringing in the change at short notice," the report says.



baroness Altmann

The criticism comes as Baroness Ros Altmann, a former Tory pensions minister, has said she will move a fatal motion in the Lords next week , a drastic power rarely used, to block the government implementing it.

The report points out that winter fuel allowances will continue to be paid this year for people who quit the UK to live in an EU country before 2021. It is likely to be abolished after this year for people who moved to Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland.

Come follow me at <https://mastodon.social/@davidhencke1>

Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts by email.

Sign me up!

Join 22.6K other subscribers

## TOP STORIES



Millions of pensioners on or just above the poverty line will lose winter fuel allowance - Age UK research



How Starmer and Reeves pension savings are deliberately driving the elderly to an early grave



The extraordinary failure by the Solicitors Regulation Authority to police lawyers who misuse non disclosure agreements to silence whistleblowers and employees



House of Lords slams scrapping of winter fuel allowance for 10.8 million pensioners in advance of Commons debate this week



How come an NHS Trust can win a national diversity award when its ethnic minority staff are reporting bullying and discrimination?

## CATEGORIES

- abuse
- BBC
- berkhamsted
- business
- coronavirus
- defence
- education
- environment
- equality
- food
- health
- history
- housing
- immigration
- international news
- jobs
- justice
- media
- NHS
- pensions
- phone hacking
- police
- politics
- prison
- prisons
- privatisation
- riots
- satire
- security services
- sexual abuse
- sport
- town hall
- travel
- uncategorised
- Uncategorized
- unions
- welfare
- whistleblowing
- Whitehall

## TRANSLATE

Select Language

Powered by [Google Translate](#)

The government are trying to mitigate its effect on the poorest pensioners by encouraging the 880,000 who are entitled to pension credit, to claim. To do this they have to fill in a 243 question form and if they have over £10,000 savings -including money hidden in their homes – get a reduced form of pension credit. So far there has been a five per cent increase in uptake according to the DWP.

The Lords are scathing about this situation."We are concerned that the Regulations may cause potential inequalities between low income pensioners claiming benefits and low income pensioners not claiming benefits, and it is not clear whether DWP has assessed this risk," says the report.

The campaign to attract more pension credit claimants is causing admin problems for the DWP with the result that other people due to get pension credit are facing a nine week delay in getting the money, the report reveals. So the government are penalising the poorest as a result of the campaign.

The report also reveals that those on Universal Credit or who live abroad may need to make a claim for the Winter Fuel Payment. The deadline for making a claim for 2024–25 is 31 March 2025, and claims can be made by post from 16 September 2024 or by phone from 10 October 2024."

The report also highlights that all pensioners will be hit by the rise in energy prices and many more will start paying tax because of the freezing of personal tax allowances which will go on until 2028.

Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves are both breaking traditional consultation and withholding information of the effect of the policy change from MPs and peers.

The report says: "All benefits regulations are required by law to be considered by the independent Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC). This is generally done in advance of the legislation being laid. In this case, the Minister has opted for the urgency provision that allows SSAC consideration to be retrospective. Since this might be perceived as bypassing SSAC scrutiny, we asked the DWP what, if any, effect an adverse report from that Committee would have after the Regulations have already come into effect. DWP responded that, in line with their legal duty, ministers would lay the report before Parliament, and should the report contain recommendations, lay a statement before Parliament alongside the report. **It remains unclear what the practical impact of any statement might be on Regulations which will have already come into effect.**"

## Compensation for Infected Blood victims

Peers in the same report have slammed the government regulations permitting compensation payment to infected blood victims, promised with great fanfare by ministers.

The committee's report said: " We found the Explanatory Memorandum (EM) to the Regulations overly complex and technical, while lacking basic information about the policy such as how those infected can apply and from when, how long claims will take to be processed, when successful applicants can expect payments to be made, and the basis on which each claim will be assessed."

The peers castigate the civil servants for not producing a report in simple, plain English and cast doubt on whether promises by the new government to start payment by Christmas will be fulfilled.

They also accuse the Cabinet Office of withholding information about the process.

“We are concerned that the Cabinet Office is withholding information on the impact and cost of the Regulations until after the time for Parliamentary scrutiny has passed, which is unacceptable and circumvents proper scrutiny of the Regulations. We have not been given a reason why the costs could not be published ahead of the budget. The House may wish to pursue the issue of costs further.”

The lesson from both the issues raised in this report is that this new government is not in control of Whitehall and allowing civil servants to evade proper scrutiny on the measures they are introducing. Either ministers are being inept in not following proper procedures or this is a deliberate decision not to provide MPs and peers with information allowing them to scrutinise the new government’s decisions.

Sir Keir Starmer says he is expecting to be the most unpopular Prime Minister of modern times. He is certainly knows how to go about it.