

British Gas writes to older customers in benefit drive after winter fuel row



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[British Gas](#) is writing to older customers urging them to take up pension credit, after [Labour](#) cut winter fuel payments for people not currently claiming the benefit.

The energy company said it is “our responsibility” to provide support on top of government help, which will reach an estimated 10 million fewer people this year as a result of the cut.

It will write to about two million people of pension age and above, encouraging them to take up the benefit if they are eligible.

British Gas will also reopen an annual winter scheme providing financial help for customers, with about £40 million more going towards measures like matching debt repayments and

support grants.

The company has also upped the maximum grant it will hand out, from £1,500 to £2,000. The announcement follows similar commitments from other suppliers. British Gas is the UK's second-largest power firm by customer numbers.

We are committed to ensuring that all pensioners are fully informed about their eligibility for pension credit, which can make a significant difference in their financial wellbeing

Chris O'Shea, British Gas parent firm Centrica

Chris O'Shea, chief executive of British Gas' parent firm [Centrica](#), said that while some cost-of-living pressures had eased, the crisis is "far from over" for many households.

"At the end of each week or month there will be those that have little, if any, money left after paying for life's essentials.

"We are committed to ensuring that all pensioners are fully informed about their eligibility for pension credit, which can make a significant difference in their financial wellbeing."

Under plans announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves in July, winter fuel payments will be restricted to those receiving pension credit.

It means the benefit will be taken away from all but the poorest pensioners in the country. About 11.5 million people used to receive it, falling to fewer than two million this year.

The [Government](#) says it is right to means test the benefit, worth up to £300, in order to tackle what it calls a "black hole" in the public finances, but it has also prompted anger from campaigners.

In August, Labour's energy consumers minister Miatta

Fahnbulleh held talks with suppliers including British Gas, asking for help alerting customers to bills support.

Minister for pensions, [Emma Reynolds](#), said: "Pension credit is a vital benefit. Not only is it worth £3,900 a year on average, but it also acts as a gateway to other benefits.

"This means even just one pound could passport pensioners to extra help including help with council tax, housing benefit and the winter fuel payment.

"I support British Gas' campaign to ensure all those who could be eligible are getting this help and urge all pensioners, and their friends and family, to check to see if they or their loved ones could be getting additional support via our online calculator."