

Guide to
Winter Fuel
Payments
2009/2010



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What is the Winter Fuel Payment?

It is a yearly tax-free payment to help people aged 60 and over to pay for their heating in the winter. Getting the Winter Fuel Payment will not affect any other benefits you may get.

When you have received your first Winter Fuel Payment, we should pay it automatically every year as long as you still qualify. See 'What if my circumstances change?' on page 8.

Who qualifies?

You may get a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2009–10 if:

- you're aged 60 or over, on or before 27 September 2009, and
- on any day in the week 21–27 September 2009 you normally live in Great Britain or Northern Ireland (or, in some circumstances, in another EEA country or Switzerland).

Who does not qualify?

You won't qualify for a payment if, at any time in that week:

- you are in hospital getting free treatment as an inpatient and you have been doing so for more than 52 weeks
- you are in custody serving a sentence set by a court
- immigration control applies to you and you do not qualify for help from the Department for Work and Pensions (for example, you have been allowed into the UK on the understanding that you are supporting yourself and you are not entitled to public funds)
- you live in a care home, an independent hospital or Ilford Park Polish Resettlement Home (and have done so for the previous 12 weeks or more), and you are on Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance.

How much is the Winter Fuel Payment for 2009–10?

Circumstances	Aged 60 to 79 on or before 27 September 2009	Aged 80 or over on or before 27 September 2009
You live alone or are the only person in the household who qualifies	£250	£400
You get Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance	£250	£400
You live in the same household or at the same address as another qualifying individual	£125	£275 if you're the only person in the household who is aged 80 or over £200 if you and at least one other person are aged 80 or over
You live in a care home, an independent hospital or at Ilford Park Polish Resettlement Home and don't get Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance	£125	£200

How is it paid?

If you get State Pension or another benefit (except Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Benefit), you will receive your Winter Fuel Payment in the same way as you usually receive your State Pension or benefit.

If you don't get State Pension or another benefit (except Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Benefit), we'll pay your Winter Fuel Payment by the method you chose on your claim form.

We'll pay your Winter Fuel Payment:

- into your bank, building society or Post Office card account,
or
- by cheque or payable order sent to your address.

Couples who are both aged 60 or over who qualify and are receiving Pension Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance will get one payment. We'll pay it to the person receiving that benefit. The other person is not entitled to a payment.

If your partner is under 60 and receives certain benefits for you, they will receive the payment.

When will I get my payment?

If you qualify and make a valid claim on or before 25 September 2009, you should get your payment before Christmas 2009.

If you apply after 25 September, you may not get the payment until after Christmas. If you haven't received the payment by Christmas, please call the office that pays your benefit, or call the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline (see page 12).

Do I need to apply?

You should automatically get the Winter Fuel Payment **without applying** if you're aged 60 or over by 27 September 2009, and:

- you got a Winter Fuel Payment last winter and you still meet the conditions for getting it, or
- you get State Pension or another benefit except Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Benefit during the week of 21–27 September 2009.

Otherwise, if you think you qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment, you will need to apply. So this means you will need to apply if you don't get State Pension or if the only benefits you get are Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Benefit. Phone the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline for a claim form or print one from our website (see page 12).

If I need to apply, when should I do so?

You need to send your completed claim for the 2009–10 payment so that we receive it on or before 30 March 2010. The claim form will be available from late July 2009. Phone the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline for a claim form or print one from our website (see page 12).

After you have received your first Winter Fuel Payment, we should make the payment automatically every year if you still qualify and your circumstances don't change.

What if my circumstances change?

It's important to tell the office that deals with your payments if:

- you move home
- someone moves into or out of your household
- you change your bank account details
- you stop getting benefits except Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Child Benefit
- there are any other change of circumstances.

This will ensure you continue to get the right payment and we can keep you informed of any changes.

Will the qualifying age for Winter Fuel Payments change in 2010–11?

Yes, it will change, but only for people who first qualify for the payment in 2010–11 or afterwards. In line with changes to State Pension age for women, the qualifying age for Winter Fuel Payments will rise gradually from age 60 to age 65 between 2010 and 2020.

This means that from winter 2010–11, before we can consider a man or woman for their first Winter Fuel Payment, they must have reached the State Pension age for women by the end of the September qualifying week.

This change does not affect 2009–10 Winter Fuel Payments.

Can I apply for past winters?

You can claim for the winters 1997–98, 1998–99 and 1999–2000. Phone the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline for a claim form or print one from our website (see page 12).

For 2000–01 onwards, we can consider claims only if we receive them on or before the 30 March after the past winter for which you are claiming.

Can I receive a Winter Fuel Payment if I live in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland?

You may be able to get a Winter Fuel Payment if you live in the EEA or Switzerland, if you:

- previously qualified for the Winter Fuel Payment before in Great Britain or Northern Ireland, and
- left the UK after 5 January 1998.

If you live in the EEA or Switzerland, you can find out how to qualify for Winter Fuel Payments, and get claim forms, from the International Pension Centre (see page 12).

The EEA consists of:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Ireland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (who are all members of the European Union (EU)) plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway who are not EU members.

Switzerland is not a member of the EEA but has signed an agreement with EU countries.

Cold Weather Payment

You may qualify for a Cold Weather Payment for each week of very cold weather in your area if you get Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. Payments are made automatically without the need to claim. Tell your pension centre or Jobcentre Plus if you think you should have received a Cold Weather Payment but you haven't had one.

Other useful information

Winter Fuel Payment Helpline

Gives advice on Winter Fuel Payments and making claims.

Phone: **0845 9 15 15 15**

Textphone: **0845 601 5613**.

Lines are open from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

You can find further information and print and fill in a claim form from our website at **www.direct.gov.uk**

For information about payments for those living outside Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales) and Northern Ireland, contact:

Phone: **0191 21 87777**

Fax: **0191 21 83389**

Textphone: **0191 21 87280**

International code: **+ 44 191**

E-mail: **tvp.internationalqueries@thepensionservice.gsi.gov.uk**

You can write to them at:

International Pension Centre

Winter Fuel Payment Team

Room TC 201

Tyneview Park

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE98 1BA

England

UK

The Pension Service

You can contact The Pension Service for information about your State Pension, Pension Credit and other benefits.

Phone: **0845 60 60 265**

Textphone: **0845 60 60 285**

Website: **www.thepensionservice.gov.uk**

Keep Warm Keep Well

The Keep Warm, Keep Well booklet, published by the Department of Health, has advice on how to stay warm and well this winter. You should be able to get the booklet from your GP surgery and local chemist, or you can read it on the 'Directgov' website at **www.direct.gov.uk/keepwarm**

Call charges

Charges were correct as of the date on the back of this leaflet. Calls to 0800 numbers are free from BT land lines, but you may have to pay if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls to 0845 numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 4p a minute with a 7p call set-up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls to 0870 numbers from BT land lines should cost no more than 8p a minute with a 7p call set-up charge. You may have to pay more if you use another phone company, a mobile phone, or if you are calling from abroad.

Calls from mobile phones can cost up to 40p a minute, so check the cost of calls with your service provider.

You can ask our operator to call you back – just give them your telephone number.

Textphones – if you have speech or hearing difficulties

Our textphone numbers are for people who cannot speak or hear clearly. If you don't have a textphone, you could check if your local library or Citizens Advice Bureau has one.

Textphones don't receive text messages from mobile phones.

Important information about this leaflet

This leaflet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure the leaflet is correct as of July 2009. Some of the information may be oversimplified or may become inaccurate over time, for example because of changes to the law.

The leaflet is available in Welsh and other formats.

phone: **0845 7 31 32 33**.

If you can't speak or hear clearly, you can order our leaflets from our textphone service on **0845 604 0210**.

You can also see this leaflet on the internet, at **www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel**

We're always looking for ways of improving the information we provide, so we would welcome any comments and suggestions you have. Please email them to us at:

leaflet.feedback@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

However, we can't answer any questions about benefits from this email address.

ISBN: 978-1-84763-889-2

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produced by the Department for Work
and Pensions on behalf of HM Government.

Printed in the UK. July 2009. WFPL1

