**District Dispatch**

Making sure that people are accessing the support that’s available to them is a top priority for us, and as Monday marks the start of Pension Awareness Week it seems like the perfect time to talk about Pension Credits.

Pension Credit is separate from the State Pension and offers extra money to help with living costs. It tops up weekly income to a guaranteed minimum level of £218.15 a week for single pensioners or £332.95 for couples. It's a tax-free payment for those who have reached pension credit qualifying age and live in Great Britain. You might get extra help if you care for another adult (£45.60 a week), are severely disabled (£81.50 a week), or are responsible for a child or young person (from £66.29 a week).

The Government has created a pension credit calculator at: [www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator), where people can see if they are eligible and find out how much Pension Credit they could get without giving any personal details.

The Government is keen to help dispel some common misconceptions that might deter people from claiming Pension Credit. This includes making people aware that even though someone may have modest savings, retirement income or own their home, they may still be entitled to claim this. The scheme can also provide access to a range of other benefits such as help with housing costs — from housing benefit (if you rent the property you live in) to support for mortgage interest (if you own the property you live in). Other benefits could include help with council tax, heating bills and for those aged 75 or over, a free TV licence.

We know that a nudge from a loved one can be a powerful motivator. If you are talking directly to friends and family of people over State Pension age, please encourage them to talk about Pension Credit and the other benefits that come with claiming it. This can help open up important conversations that could make a real difference to the lives of loved ones.

To find out more about Pension Credit, you can visit: [www.gov.uk/pension-credit](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit). If you would like further advice on this, our Supporting You team is available to assist you. They are a dedicated team of trained advisors who work hard to make a difference to the lives of many people living across our district by helping to deal with a range of challenging issues at once. They work with services across the council to help people access a range of assistance including financial help to pay bills; help with housing; and health and wellbeing support.

You can find out more about the team at: [www.chichester.gov.uk/supportingyouteam](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/supportingyouteam), and you can contact them by emailing supportingyou@chichester.gov.uk or calling 01243 534860.

You can also find lots of useful information on our Supporting You campaign web pages, at: [www.chichester.gov.uk/supportingyoucampaign](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/supportingyoucampaign). On these pages, you will find a link to a free benefits and budgeting calculator. The calculator helps you estimate your entitlement to a range of different benefits. Anyone can use this to see what support they may be eligible for. For example, it can be used by residents to compare income under both their current situation and Universal Credit. People can also save and download information about benefits and how to maximise income, and they can also see the benefits that couples can claim to maximise joint income. People can then choose to share this information back to an advisor, who can give additional support and provide tips on how to make savings.

Times are tough for many people across the district at the moment, but there is lots of support available and every little helps. So, whether you need help with household bills or have concerns about a debt, need guidance on housing or would like health and wellbeing support, I would really encourage you to get in touch with our Supporting You team — we’re here to help!

Best Wishes

Cllr David Betts,

Cabinet Member for Housing, and Revenues and Benefits

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