

Rename pension credit to help older people in the cost-of-living crisis, says Tory peer

'The name pension credit is not well understood – perhaps calling it a Pensioner Top-Up would have more resonance'



Baroness Altmann said there should not be hundreds of thousands of older citizens living in poverty (Photo: Simon Dawson/Bloomberg/Getty)



By Serina Sandhu

Senior Reporter

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Pension credit should be renamed “Pensioner Top-Up” as too many **older people** are unaware of the benefit, which could help with the **cost-of-living crisis**, a former minister has said.

Warning that many older people were facing **pensioner poverty**, Conservative peer **Baroness Ros Altmann** said rebranding the benefit, **which tops up their weekly income to £182.60**, would have more “resonance” with the public.

Although pension credit helps **1.4 million people of state pension age who are on low incomes**, take-up remains low in comparison to other means-tested benefits.



Around **850,000 families who were entitled to pension credit did not claim** it in the financial year ending 2020, meaning up to £1.7bn went unclaimed.

In a recent article for *Politics Home*, pensions minister Guy Opperman said claims were up by 30 per cent in 2021 compared with 2019, adding that the Government’s new campaign to boost take-up would use traditional advertising in local media as well as written reminders to pensioners in their annual state pension uprating letter.

Baroness Altmann welcomed the Government’s campaign, saying “there should not be hundreds of thousands of older citizens living in poverty unnecessarily”.

But she said pensioners were “notoriously reluctant to ask for what they see as handouts” and may be put off by the application process. Others may be unaware that they can get extra help even if they receive the state pension.

“The name ‘pension credit’ is not well understood – perhaps calling it a Pensioner Top-Up would have more resonance,” she said.

“Many pensioners who live alone, especially elderly women who are not online and have perhaps become even more isolated over the past couple of years due to the pandemic, do not know what pension credit is and don’t realise how much money they are missing out on.

“This will lead to more pensioners in poverty, which will cause serious hardship as food and heating bills have gone through the roof, but benefits have not kept up.”

Receiving pension credit also gives claimants access to other benefits such as the Warm Homes Discount and free **TV licences** for people aged 75 and over.

A Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spokesperson said: “We welcome the widespread support to encourage take up of Pension Credit which follows the launch of our campaign last month, aimed at pensioners and their loved ones.

“Pension Credit provides a vital financial boost and we encourage anyone who thinks they may be eligible to use our online Pension Credit calculator or to get in touch via our Pension Credit claim line.

“As well extra help with living costs, Pension Credit also opens up access to other support including help with rent and council tax, heating bills, free NHS dental care and free TV licenses for the over-75s.” 