

**-- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --**

**The race is on to encourage over-75s to claim the Pension Credit and free TV Licences they are due**

As the curtain fell on the free TV licence scheme for over-75s, the Government Pension Credit take-up figures show that around 3,500 older people in Oxfordshire are still failing to get the Pension Credit they are due. Pension Credit is a welfare benefit for people who are over state pension age on a low income.

Without the award of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, they will not be able to get a free TV licence either, which will leave people on already low incomes struggling to find an extra £150 this year and every year.

Age UK Oxfordshire is therefore calling on everyone aged over 75 to see without delay if they are eligible for Pension Credit, if they haven't already done so.

Some older people don't know they can claim Pension Credit, many struggle to apply and others feel too embarrassed to ask for a payment to which they are entitled to.

There have been few serious efforts by any government in recent years to encourage older people on very low incomes to claim Pension Credit. It is estimated that the Treasury gains up to £2.5 billion a year due to all the pensioners who fail to claim this means-tested benefit.

In a recent national survey by Age UK, a massive 81,240 people said that TV was more important to them since the outbreak of COVID-19 - more than nine in ten of all those who answered the question. The survey also found that many older people have relied on TV during lockdown as their main source of news and information about the virus – so crucial at this challenging time.

The free licence was a highly valued, universal entitlement for the over-75s, which helped millions to sustain their quality of life into late old age. Research for Age UK shows that even before the lockdown, television was the main form of company for two in every five aged over 75 and nine out of 10 in this age group watch TV every day.

Although the restrictions imposed by the virus are being gradually eased, we know that many people over 75 remain too worried to go out and about and are spending more time than usual confined within their own four walls. Their TV is unbelievably precious to them as a result.

Penny Thewlis, CEO of Age UK Oxfordshire said: *"We have campaigned against the loss of the free licence because we know how precious TV is to so many, never more so than during the pandemic. Sadly, that campaign has been unsuccessful.*

*People are now entitled to a free over 75 TV licence only if they are receiving Pension Credit Guarantee Credit. But we know that two in five people entitled to claim Pension Credit do not do so. We are urging people to waste no time in checking whether they might be eligible. Now is the time.*



*This will go some way to ensuring that those who can least afford to pay the licence fee have the help to which they are entitled. Even if people find they are only entitled to Pension Credit Savings Credit, then at least they will have some additional income to help them afford a licence.*

*And we are here to help, through our free advice line, website and by post."*

To check if you are eligible and to apply for Pension Credit, you will need to find the following:

- National Insurance number
- Bank account details
- Information about your income, savings and investments
- Information about your pensions (if you have any)
- Details of any housing costs (such as mortgage, interest payments, service charges)
- The same details for your partner (if you have a partner who lives with you)

If you can get online - the Age UK benefits calculator is easy to use:

<https://benefitscheck.ageuk.org.uk/>

If you already think you are eligible – you can apply online here [www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim) or call the Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234.

If you are unsure and need someone to check on your behalf – call our Age UK Oxfordshire helpline on **0345 450 1276** (10am – 4pm, Mon – Fri) or the national Age UK Helpline on **0800 169 65 65** (8am – 7pm daily).

Or you can write to us at: Age UK Oxfordshire, 9 Napier Court, Barton Lane, Abingdon OX14 3YT.

**-- ENDS --**

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Age UK Oxfordshire**

Age UK Oxfordshire is an independent local charity dedicated to giving older people in Oxfordshire support and opportunities to enable them to love later life. We provide free local information, advice and support. We work with our national partner, Age UK, and our local Age UK partners in England. You can find further information on all our services and volunteering opportunities by telephoning 0345 450 1276 or by visiting our website: [www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire). Age UK Oxfordshire is a charitable company limited by guarantee (registered charity number 1091529 and company number 4328143).