

Scottish Water: Single Occupancy Discount



Members Business: S5M-14677 Jackie Baillie - “Scottish Government to penalise Scots for living alone”

Introduction

Age Scotland welcomes the opportunity to brief members ahead of Members debate regarding a proposal to cut Scottish Water’s single occupancy discount from 25% to 10%. This proposal is of huge concern to the increasing number of older people who live alone and are on low and fixed incomes.

Background

Forecasts from the National Records of Scotland have found that the number of households of someone aged 70 and over is projected to increase by 58%. Over the next 25 years, the number of older people who live alone is also expected to rise by nearly 50%.¹ This would lead to a huge proportion of older people having a higher council tax bill if the plans to cut the single occupancy discount go ahead.

Age Scotland’s Money Matters Project found that many older people struggle financially, with **four in ten people over the age of fifty reporting that they feel financially squeezed or struggling**, and Age Scotland’s survey on the housing needs of older people found that **six in ten pensioners who live alone reporting they have difficulty paying their fuel bill**.

Any proposal to reduce the discount to single occupancy homes should be avoided.

Our recommendations

- Urge the Scottish Government to revise this course of action, as the unintended consequences could lead to hardship for many of Scotland’s poorest older people.
- Raise awareness of benefits that older people are entitled to in order to maximise their income. It is estimated that 40% of people eligible for pension credit do not claim it. Our Freephone helpline which provides information, friendship, and advice identified nearly £600,000 extra for older people in unclaimed benefit and entitlements in 2017/18.
- Continued universal entitlements for older people to assist with their fuel bills such as Winter Fuel Payment, as well as other benefits such as Cold Weather payments which is a passported benefit.

¹ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/news/2018/scotlands-household-numbers-projected-to-increase-by-almost-a-third-of-a-million-over-25-years>

About Age Scotland

Age Scotland is the leading charity supporting older people and promoting their rights and interests. We aim to help Scotland's people enjoy a better later life. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to make the most of later life, whatever their circumstances, wants and needs.

That's why we work to make later life the best it can be. We think Scotland can and should inspire, engage, enable and support older people to change their later lives for the better and ensure that there is support for those who are struggling as they live longer to achieve better, happier and healthier lives.

We work in partnership with other charities within the Age Network – Age UK, Age Cymru and Age NI – to pursue these aims across the UK.

For more information:

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