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Are you missing out on what you are entitled to? Thousands of Greater Manchester's over 65s and carers urged to claim extra help this winter

Older people and carers across Greater Manchester are being encouraged to check if they are entitled to extra income to help them live well this winter.

This is part of Greater Manchester's wider Live Well movement for community-led health and wellbeing. This brings together a wide range of public services and other partners to provide simple support and advice to help residents improve their physical and mental health and deal with the problems they may have.

The call comes as new figures from Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) reveal that **nearly 40,000 local people are missing out on their share of over £368 million** that goes unclaimed across the city region every year.

Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance all provide extra income for people that qualify, but thousands of Greater Manchester residents are not claiming despite being eligible.

Pension Credit is usually available for anyone aged 66 or above in receipt of their state pension who has a low income or a disability.

They can claim if living alone or with a partner, and even if they have income other than their state pension, savings or own their own home.

Getting Pension Credit also unlocks many other financial benefits, including a free TV licence for over 75s, support to insulate your home and money off your council tax bill. This year, claiming Pension Credit also allows older residents to continue receiving the Winter Fuel Payment to help towards their heating bills.

Around a quarter of Greater Manchester pensioners are able to claim Pension Credit. But 4 in 10 of these are not doing so, each missing out on around £3,400 each year.

Attendance Allowance is also available to people of state pension age who have a severe physical or mental disability and need help or supervision. Over 30,000 people who are eligible in Greater Manchester do not claim this Attendance Allowance.

By taking up their Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance, each eligible pensioner could receive thousands of pounds extra a year.

In addition, anyone aged 16 and above who spends at least 35 hours a week caring for someone with an illness or disability could get £81.90 a week through **Carer's Allowance** but figures suggest nearly 33,000 local carers are passing on their chance for the money.

Anyone can check eligibility using the Independent Age website (www.independentage.org/get-advice/money) or by calling their freephone helpline on 0800 319 6789.

The eligibility criteria differ between the different benefits, so people may be eligible for some but not others. The only way to know for sure is to check all of them.

The call for people to claim the support they are entitled to is backed by partners across Greater Manchester. It is coordinated by the city region's Ageing Hub, a wide collaboration of organisations working to improve the lives of local older people.

Residents who are not eligible for Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance or Carer's Allowance could access other support from Live Well partners this winter – including GMCA, local councils, the NHS and community organisations. This includes council tax relief, access to white goods like fridges or ovens, or help with essential costs such as food and energy bills through the Household Support Fund.

Paul McGarry, Head of the GM Ageing Hub at Greater Manchester Combined Authority said:

“Greater Manchester is driving forward a pioneering approach to ensure everyone here can access the support they need to Live Well. For tens of thousands of pensioners and carers, that means helping them to claim additional money they are missing out on.

“We know that for many people asking for more is not comfortable and the processes aren't always easy. That's why we're here to help everyone in Greater Manchester get the support they're entitled to.

“If you're getting your State Pension or know someone who is, check the gov.uk website or contact Independent Age to find out what you can get. Those few minutes could be worth thousands to your bank balance and make a big difference in helping you live well this winter and beyond.”

Paul Dennett, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester said:

“We will continue to do everything possible to tackle poverty in Greater Manchester and as part of this work, we want to help people of pensionable age with their bills this winter. There's an estimated £368million in benefit support going unclaimed across Greater Manchester, which is a colossal sum of money, and is money that our pensioners need and deserve after working and paying into the system their whole lives.

“Our residents' health and wellbeing are central to the Live Well programme, so we're urging residents to act now, to check what support they're entitled to and apply as soon as possible so they don't miss out.”