

Pension Credit

EXTRA MONEY IF YOU
HAVE LOW INCOME



What is Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is a means-tested benefit for older people. There are two parts to Pension Credit: Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit.

You may be able to claim either or both depending on your circumstances.

Can I claim it?



Guarantee Credit

You could be eligible for Guarantee Credit if:

- You have reached the qualifying age to claim. This is the same as the State Pension Age which is 65 and 3 months in April 2019 and is increasing every month during 2019. It will be 66 by October 2020 then 67 by 2028.
- Your income, either as a single person or a couple, is less than the minimum amount set by the Government for someone in your circumstances. You may receive an additional amount if you have a severe disability, are a carer or have certain housing costs.
- You have capital of £10,000 or less as this will be ignored. There is no savings limit for Pension Credit so if you have capital over £10,000 you may still be eligible to apply but the amount you get will be reduced.

Changes for some couples from May 15th 2019

A couple is of ‘mixed age’ when the oldest reaches State Pension age, but the youngest is still of working age.

At present, a “mixed age” couple can claim Pension Credit when the oldest reaches their State Pension age, but can choose whether to claim Universal Credit instead. Both Pension Credit and Universal Credit top up income to a level set by the Government but the level of Universal Credit is much lower than the level of pension credit.

The Welfare Reform Act 2013 included amendments to the State Pension Credit Act 2002 which, when introduced, will mean that a mixed age couple making a new claim will not be able to claim Pension Credit until the younger of the couple reaches State Pension age.

In January 2019 the Government announced that this rule will apply from 15th May 2019. If the mixed age couple needs means-tested support they will need to claim Universal Credit instead until both are State Pension Age.

If they claim Universal Credit, the younger of the couple will be subject to Universal Credit “conditionality”, needing to prove (for example) that they are a carer, that they are seeking work for 35 hours a week or that they are not well enough to work.

The weekly rate of Universal Credit is significantly lower than the rate of Pension Credit.

Couples claiming Pension Credit or pension-age Housing Benefit before 15th May will not be affected by this when it is introduced but may be affected if they make a new claim for housing benefit in a different council area after this date.

If you are in a couple and think you may be entitled to Pension Credit, make sure you claim before 15th May 2019. Call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** for information and advice.

Savings Credit

Savings Credit cannot be claimed by people who reach their State Pension age on or after 6th April 2016.

You could be eligible for Savings Credit if:

- You are 65 or over, and had reached State Pension age by 6 April 2016
- You have some savings or have a pension above (single person) £140.67 2018/19 or £144.38 2019/20 or (as a couple) £223.82 2018/19 or £229.67 2019/20, and your income is between certain limits

If you are not sure whether you will be eligible call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** and speak with an adviser.

How much is Pension Credit?



Guarantee Credit will top up your income to a minimum of £163.00 2018/19 or £167.25 2019/20 per week if you are single and £248.80 2018/19 and £255.25 2019/20 if you are a couple. These rates may be higher if you have a severe disability, are a carer or have certain housing costs.

If you qualify for Savings Credit you can get up to £13.40 2018/19 and £13.72 2019/20 per week if you are single and £14.99 2018/19 and £15.35 2019/20 if you are a couple.

How do I apply?

The easiest way to claim is by phoning the **Pension Credit** claim line on **0800 99 1234**.

You can also request a paper application via the claim line.

You can also contact them via textphone on **0800 169 0133**.

It will be quicker if you can have the following details to hand:

- Your National Insurance Number
- Information about your income, savings and investments
- Details of any housing costs
- Partner's details (if you have a partner)
- Bank account details

You can apply up to four months before you want to start receiving Pension Credit.

You can also request that your claim is backdated for a period up to three months.

What if my application is turned down?

If your application is turned down, or you are not happy with the decision, you can ask for a mandatory reconsideration. This gives you the opportunity to say why you think their decision is wrong.

Ask an advice agency such as your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Council Welfare Rights Office for help to challenge the decision. Do this quickly as you only have one month to challenge the decision from the date it was sent to you.

If your circumstances have changed since you received the decision refusing benefit, and the change means you may now be entitled to Pension Credit, then you should make a new claim.

Other help available if you are receiving Pension Credit

Pension Credit does not just top up your income, it is also a passport to other benefits:

If you are receiving Guarantee Credit you will be entitled to the full amount of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction (this may not cover all your costs if other people live with you). If you own your home you may be eligible for help with mortgage interest (as a secured loan), and for payment to help with ground rent and service charges.

You will get a Cold Weather Payment if you receive either part of Pension Credit and the average temperature is 0°C over a seven day period. The payment is currently £25.

You can claim a funeral payment if you or your partner is receiving Pension Credit and you are responsible for funeral expenses.

If you are receiving Guarantee Credit you will be entitled to help with health costs, for example free dental treatment and travel costs to hospital.

Call The **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** for more information.





Useful organisations

Age Scotland helpline **0800 12 44 222**

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our publications list or download copies from our website at **www.agescotland.org.uk**.

Pension Credit helpline

Call the Pension Credit helpline team to make a claim

Tel: **0800 99 1234**

Textphone: **0800 169 0133**

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can provide you with face-to-face information and advice. To find your local Bureau, contact

Citizens Advice Direct on **0808 800 9060** or see the **Citizens Advice Scotland** website **www.cas.org.uk/bureaux**.



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