

Our approach to
**Promoting Pension
Credit take-up**

Who are we?

We are a national provider of retirement housing

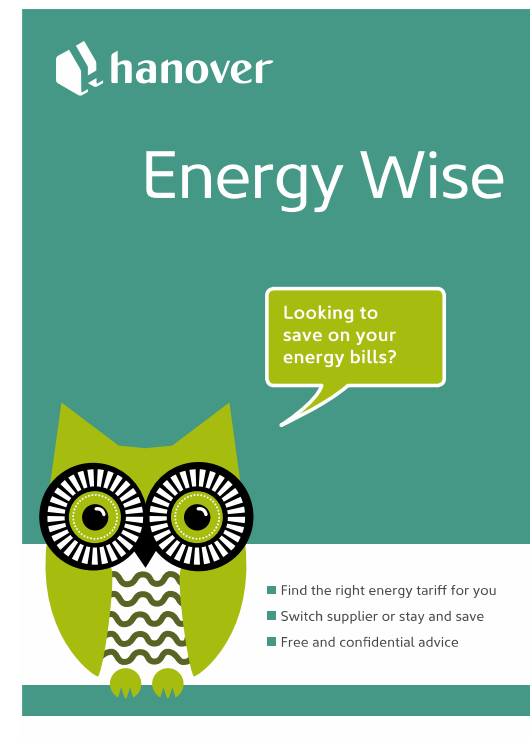


Encouraging benefits take-up

Part of our wider **Be Wise** initiative



**Dedicated
benefits
advice**



**Energy
switching
service**



**Help with
adaptations**



**Contents
insurance**

We aim to put more money into our residents' pockets and increase wellbeing.

What have we done to promote Pension Credit?

- **Hanover News**
Our twice-yearly resident newsletter magazine

page 22 Dementia Connect Look inside to find out more

page 26 Be Wise Could you be making savings?

page 32 Hanover in Bloom 2015 - entries are now open!

hanover news Summer 2015

The sky's the limit!

Brian Fox takes the leap and raises over **£600** for charity!

Q&A The Big interview: Residents' Council Chair Gubsie Agolia-Aspinall meets Dame Clare Tickell

Fitness with friends: Featuring walking football

Residents' Annual Report 2014-2015 inside on pages 13 - 20...

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Be Wise

Hanover's Financial Rights team

In this latest update from Hanover's Financial Rights team, we focus upon important changes to the pensions system. We also review how you can save money on Council Tax and look back at some recent savings success stories.

Pensions reforms: latest news

Pension changes may affect residents age 55 and over. Here's our guide to some of the changes.

New State Pension
The new single tier state pension starts in April 2016. It will be known as the **New State Pension**.
To prepare for this, the State Pension statement service is now extended to everyone aged 55 and over.

If you are below state retirement age, you can request a personalised statement now. This will set out how much you would be entitled to under both the current and new systems. Although the New State Pension aims to provide everyone with a higher single level of payment, not everyone will be entitled to the full amount. How much you may get will depend upon:

- Your level of National Insurance contributions (you need between 10-35 years to qualify)
- Any 'contracted out' pension you may have, as this will not count for the new pension.

Current pension levels may be greater than under the new scheme, and the higher of the two amounts should be paid instead. Telling people early on what these two amounts might be is intended to help everyone with pension planning before they retire. The statement should give more information on this.

Look out for our handy guide to benefits and how to claim, which will be on estates soon.

Do you know which **benefits** you could be entitled to?
NEW for 2015
It can be hard to know if you are maximizing your income by claiming everything you are entitled to.

New pension freedoms.
Anyone aged 55 or over can now decide when and how to spend a 'defined contribution pension fund' - including taking money from a fund now and not waiting for retirement.

Since April 2015, the fund no longer has to be held until retirement age and then used to buy an annuity to provide a retirement income.
Now you can still buy an annuity, but can choose to take an income or lump sum (or sums) out earlier. These new rights **only** apply to defined contribution schemes, not occupational or defined benefit pensions, where how much you get is linked to salary or pay.
However, anyone considering using their pension pot should be aware that how and when they access this money could affect entitlement to some means-tested benefits. Any new income or capital will count when calculating benefits, as may the overall value of the pot.
This makes decisions on what to do much trickier. Anyone thinking of using their pension in this way should always seek advice first.
Hanover can help explain how the new state pension will work and how extra pension may affect other benefits - but we cannot give individual or specific advice. A new government service can assist with individual advice on choices available and implications.
Find out more at www.pensionwise.gov.uk

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Council Tax - help with your bills

Over two million older people do not claim the help with Council Tax to which they are entitled - missing out on considerable savings. There may be more than one way to pay less Council Tax, depending on individual circumstances:

Council Tax reduction
Reduction schemes are now run locally to give help to those on low incomes. Any entitlement is taken off your Council Tax bill as a rebate, to reduce the amount you are expected to pay.
Anyone over minimum state pension age will continue to get the same level of help as they would have done via Council Tax benefit, but schemes vary between each local council for anyone of working age. It is always worth applying if you:

- Have low or moderate income or savings
- Receive a disability benefit, or care for someone who does

It does not matter if you rent or own your home.

Council tax discounts and exemptions
Discounts and exemptions reduce your total Council Tax bill, before any help with Council Tax reduction is worked out.
The most common discount for single people living alone is **25%**
Discounts are also possible for those getting high level disability benefits, or caring for someone who does.
Exemption from paying Council Tax will apply to someone living alone who is classed as having 'a severe mental impairment'. This requires a GP certificate, and may apply to anyone with severe dementia.

Exemptions are also possible for a home left empty because the occupier is permanently in hospital or care, or because they have left to care elsewhere for a disabled or older person.
Your local council can advise on eligibility, or you can contact our Financial Rights team on **0800 023 4477**.

On average £728 per year is unclaimed per person of pension age

Be Wise - how we have helped

Last year's Be Wise challenge to raise **£1.25m** in extra income for residents was well and truly beaten - generating **£1.5m!** Here are some of the happy stories.

Mrs L was helped by the Financial Rights team to complete her Attendance Allowance claim. She received the higher rate, which led to an increase in other benefits.
Her annual income has increased by over **£7,000**
Mrs L says: 'If Hanover hadn't advised me to try, and offered to help with the forms, I don't think I would have bothered. The extra income means that I can buy the things I need each week without having to worry, and without having to continually check whether or not I can afford it.'

Mr and Mrs G were struggling to cope with daily life and Mrs G's care needs. After talking to the Financial Rights team, they successfully applied for high rate Attendance Allowance for Mrs G.
This led to additional benefits, resulting in them being **£10,000 better off each year!**
Mrs L is now £25 per month better off after contacting Energy Wise, who advised her to switch supplier. Mrs L says: 'Energy Wise guided me through the process, switching was no problem and the saving makes a big difference!'

Contact us
If you think you're missing out on claiming everything you may be entitled to or want to check if you could save on your energy bills:
Money Wise: Call Financial Rights on **0800 023 4477**
Energy Wise: Call on **0800 023 2029**

What have we done to promote Pension Credit?

■ Direct mail

Sent to residents with their rent statements

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Are you near state retirement age?
There will be a new State Pension system from April 2016. If you are approaching state retirement age you may soon receive information about how you might be affected.

What the new pension will mean:

- A new single flat rate pension giving a higher basic income
- Occupational or private pensions are not affected
- You'll need to have at least 10 years National Insurance contributions to qualify

Worth at least
£148 PER WEEK

Who it affects:
Anyone reaching retirement age after 6 April 2016 (Existing pensioners or those reaching retirement age before this date are not affected and keep current pension levels)

What to expect in the mean time:

- A personalized estimate for anyone reaching state pension age between April 2016 and August 2021
- A new scheme will allow people to make extra contributions to top up their pension

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Housing Benefit

Are you getting all the help you can with your rent?
Many Hanover residents already get help towards paying rent and service charges, but some may not be getting their correct entitlement.

You can claim Housing Benefit if:

- You have a low or moderate income
- You have savings – limits depend upon your circumstances

Don't miss out! Up to 390,000 older people fail to claim Housing Benefit every year!

Don't forget that:

- Changes in your circumstances could mean that your Housing Benefit award is wrong, also rules can change over time
- Getting a disability benefit may mean that you are entitled to more Housing Benefit
- You will get an automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit if you get Pension Guarantee Credit

Contact our Financial Rights team on 0800 023 4477 for more information on Housing Benefit.

Are you already over minimum state pension age?
The current State Pension system means that many people can get extra help – even if you have some savings or an additional pension.

Pension Credit can be claimed by:

- Anyone over minimum state pension age on a low or modest income
- Rented tenants and homeowners

Has two types – Guarantee Credit for those on lowest incomes; and Savings Credit for those with extra income or savings. You can get either or both. Even a small weekly amount may mean extra help towards Housing Benefits, service charges, Council Tax and Warm Home Discount.

It only takes one phone call to claim
Call 0800 99 1234 or contact our Financial Rights team on 0800 023 4477 for more information on Pension Credit or state pension changes.

Don't be put off claiming
Couples where one partner is below Pension Credit age can still claim, but this will change at some future point – check if you are entitled and apply now!

Nearly 9 out of 10 claims made are successful

One third of older people are still missing out on an average of £33 PER WEEK

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Pension Credit

Are you getting all the help you can with your service charges?
If you are a homeowner on a low or modest income, help may be available towards your service charge, ground rent, and/or interest on a mortgage or improvement loan on your home.

There may be help via Pension Credit for anyone over minimum State Pension age
Help with housing costs may also be claimed by younger people entitled to certain working age benefits.

Did you know?

- The average Pension Credit award for mortgage interest is £16 per week
- Approximately 85,000 Pension Credit claimants get help with their mortgage

Don't forget that:
Circumstances can change over time, just because you didn't qualify a while ago does not mean that you won't now.

Contact our Financial Rights team on 0800 023 4477 for more information on Pension Credit or State Pension changes.

What have we done to promote Pension Credit?

■ Posters

Displayed on our estate notice boards

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Money Wise

Pension Credit

Have you thought about **Pension Credit**?
Over **£2million** goes unclaimed each year because 1 out of 2 people don't claim!

Don't rule yourself out, you can claim:

- If you or your partner are over minimum retirement age (61 or over at present)
- Whether you rent or own your home
- Even if you have savings
- If you have a low income

Changes are coming which mean both partners in a couple will need to be over this age, making it harder to claim. It can help you qualify for other benefits too – important as benefit rules keep changing. **Apply now to ensure you're not affected and keep your entitlement safe.**

Call 0800 023 4477
to speak to our financial rights advisors. Lines are open Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.
Alternatively, speak to your estate manager or contact the **Pension Credit helpline** on **0800 99 1234**.

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Money Wise

What are the numbers?

Through just **60** → more than **£450k** in potential benefits has been identified for Hanover residents.
De Wise events

A whopping!
2.3m older people fail to claim Council Tax Reduction.

Every year as much as **£5.5bn** of benefits are unclaimed by older people.

It is estimated that **390,000** older people fail to claim Housing Benefit.

It is estimated that **£2.8bn** is unclaimed in Pension Credit each year.

yet the average claim is worth **£2,444** per household.

If you own your property, the value of the home you are living in is disregarded when calculating benefits.

Don't miss out on Benefits that you're entitled to! Call the Financial Rights Team on **Freephone 0800 023 4477** for a benefits check.

What have we done to promote Pension Credit?

■ Guide to benefits

Our handy resident guide to explain which benefits may be available to them

Be Wise with Hanover
Your guide to and advice on benefits

Do you know which benefits you could be entitled to?

- Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction
- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Disability Living Allowance
- Carers Allowance

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Pension Credit

Pension Credit is an income related benefit to help increase the income of anyone who is no longer of working age.

This is a key benefit for older people which can open doors to other extra income; including help with housing costs. It does not matter if you rent or own your home – the important thing is having a low or moderate income. You can still qualify if you have some savings.

It is paid as either of two types – **Guarantee Credit** and **Savings Credit**.

Both are worked out and paid together, but have different rules. Depending on your age, income and capital **you may be entitled to either or both types.**

Who can claim Pension Credit?

Anyone over minimum state pension age – this is the state pension age for women, which is gradually increasing. The minimum age to claim Pension Credit is increasing at the same time, and you can find out your qualifying age at www.gov.uk or by contacting the Pension Service on 0345 606 0265.

For couples, only one partner needs to be above the minimum state pension age in order to qualify. This may change at some point in the future.

How is it claimed and paid?

You can claim over the phone by calling 0800 99 1234, or by downloading a form at www.gov.uk.

This form can be printed and completed by hand, or online.

You will need details of your income, savings and capital, any disability benefits, and your National Insurance number.

Pension Credit is usually paid along with your State Pension (if you are claiming this), and paid into your nominated bank account. Payment by cheque is possible in some circumstances.

If you make a claim, but would have been entitled if you had claimed earlier, this will be backdated for up to three months.

Any linked claim for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction will be backdated for the same time.

How is it calculated?

Pension Credit is worked out by comparing your income and savings with an amount which the rules say you need to live on. This amount varies depending on your personal circumstances.

There is a basic amount for single people or a couple, plus extra amounts can be added if you:

- Own your home and are paying a mortgage or loan, or pay service charges and/or ground rent as part of a lease agreement
- Receive a disability benefit such as Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment
- Are a carer for someone who receives a disability benefit

The total of all these amounts gives the figure which is compared with your income and savings. Not all income is taken into account in the comparison.

- Any money received in disability benefits is ignored;
- Any savings below £10000 are ignored, and there is no upper savings limit. Income from your savings above £10000 is calculated using a set formula

If your income has a shortfall against the comparison figure, you will be paid the difference as Pension Guarantee Credit.

The value of the home you live in is ignored. This will also usually be ignored whilst you are selling your home to move into a Hanover property.

Nearly 9 out of 10 claims made are successful

Pension Credit | 5

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What works?

- Simple messages
- Use of infographics
- Varying topics
- Specific target groups

