Understanding the relationship between the barriers and triggers to claiming Pension Credit

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A report of research carried out by IFF Research Ltd on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
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Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the individuals who took part in this research who took time to attend group discussions or participate in depth interviews to discuss their experiences and opinions with us. We would also like to express our thanks to Clare Talbot and Robert Lilly in the research team at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for their support and assistance in the design, sampling and planning of this study.
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Summary

Introduction

This report documents the findings from a large-scale qualitative research project designed to provide insight into the barriers that exist to claiming Pension Credit and the ways in which they can be overcome. The research covered both potential eligible non-recipients of Pension Credit as well as those who had recently made a successful claim.

The results from the research will be used to assist the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in working towards its Public Service Agreement (PSA) which includes a target of 3.2 million households to be in receipt of Pension Credit by the end of February 2008.

Methodology

Eight group discussions were conducted with potential eligible non-recipients; two with older people eligible for Guarantee Credit only, two with older people eligible for Savings and Guarantee Credit and four with those eligible for Savings Credit only. In addition, ten face-to-face depth interviews were carried out with potential eligible non-recipients who were in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) or Council Tax Benefit (CTB). Potential participants were identified from the DWP’s marketing database and screened to establish their income and savings levels (to verify that they appeared to be eligible for Pension Credit).

Forty face-to-face depth interviews were conducted with recent recipients of Pension Credit. These interviews were structured to ensure coverage of those who applied as soon as they became eligible, those who resisted making a claim for a moderate amount of time (between three and ten months) and those who resisted for a longer period. Interviews were also structured to ensure a spread by age and type of Pension Credit received.
Barriers to take-up of Pension Credit

This research adds to our previous knowledge about barriers to claiming. It suggests that there are three primary barriers that prevent older people from making a claim for Pension Credit: a belief that they are not eligible, a concern about how the receipt of Pension Credit would interact with other benefits that they are currently receiving and a lack of awareness of Pension Credit. The latter was a barrier for only a small number of respondents; overall awareness of Pension Credit was high.

The most common of these primary barriers was a perceived ineligibility. Older people felt that they would not be entitled to Pension Credit for a wide variety of reasons including that they were working, that they were receiving a (small) occupational pension, that they were able to ‘manage’ and that they had been turned down for other benefits in the past. This backs up quantitative research conducted by the Department.

Where respondents were concerned about interaction with other benefits this was because they thought that their other benefits would be reduced to the point where they would be net worse off. This also improves our understanding by highlighting that the issue about other benefits is the misconception of being worse off (and is not about more intricate interactions, for example, that a reduction in HB might mean the claimant has to juggle their budgets and arrange to pay more rent to their landlord).

A number of secondary barriers worked to reinforce decisions not to apply. The majority of these surrounded the nature of the process for making a claim for Pension Credit – including an unwillingness to disclose financial information, fear of submitting documents, a complicated application form/process and fear of (the impact of) making mistakes in an application. These dissuaded older people from making ‘speculative’ applications but most admitted that they would be prepared to go through the application process if they knew they were eligible (or at least felt that they had a very good chance of being eligible).

In highlighting these barriers, the evidence suggests that the primary set of barriers override a larger set of secondary barriers associated with the process of claiming. This is important in helping us to focus on the key barriers and also helps to address the possibly simplistic view that in all cases, if Y process can be designed to overcome X barrier then people who experience that barrier will claim. These findings suggest the primary barriers need to be the focus.

Triggers to take-up of Pension Credit

A personal visit from the DWP/The Pension Service was the most common trigger to making a claim for Pension Credit, as has been found in other recent DWP social research. In most cases, a visit had been arranged specifically to discuss Pension Credit, but in some cases there were other primary reasons for the visit (for example,
to discuss arrangements for Attendance Allowance (AA) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA)). Visits from The Pension Service tackled perceptions of ineligibility (by explaining to older people the criteria for entitlement to the benefit) and also served to tackle several secondary barriers through assisting with the application process.

These visits have usually been offered proactively (respondents would not have requested one themselves because they assumed they were not eligible or that claiming would have a detrimental impact on their overall income from benefits).

In some cases, a letter from The Pension Service was a trigger to a claim being made – these were letters that older people had interpreted as telling them that they would be entitled to the benefit.

Advice/encouragement from third parties or from relatives also served to trigger a claim for some older people. Family members sometimes assisted with making an initial enquiry to establish the pensioner’s eligibility as well as assisting with the completion of an application. It seems that in these cases, the family members were more convinced of the likelihood of the pensioner being eligible than the older people were themselves. This was because they felt that the degree of financial hardship that the older people were experiencing prior to their application was greater (relative to other people) than individuals felt themselves.

For some (who usually applied relatively soon after they became eligible), the trigger to making an application was a change in circumstances that caused them to review their financial situation. Others were transferred from Income Support when they reached age 60.

**Application process**

Potential eligible non-recipients had a reasonable grasp of what an application for Pension Credit would involve. In a few cases, they overestimated the amount of financial information that they would be expected to provide, for example, some thought that it would be necessary to provide income data going back over a number of years and others thought that they would have to provide details of their weekly expenditure. They were largely unaware of the extent of help and support that was available to make an application, which was also found in recent quantitative research by the DWP. In particular, they were unaware that it was possible to arrange a home visit – this was of considerable interest to those who wanted to establish their eligibility before making an application.

Recent recipients had largely found the application process more straightforward than they had anticipated before they claimed. Those who had received a personal visit were particularly positive about this. It seems that misconceptions about the process may be delaying people from making a claim.
Modifications for encouraging take-up

Potential eligible non-recipients and recent recipients were asked for their opinions on some ideas for possible changes to the Pension Credit process which might be considered for the future by DWP:

- an anonymous helpline to allow respondents to find out about their eligibility for Pension Credit without having to provide any information that would enable them to be identified;
- using information held by the DWP and other Government departments to pre-populate an application form prior to sending it out to older people;
- guaranteeing to give all older people putting in an application for Pension Credit £5 a week for six months after they lodge their claim, regardless of whether their claim is successful or not;
- ignoring all earnings from work when calculating Pension Credit eligibility;
- awarding Pension Credit as an annual lump sum rather than a weekly amount;
- providing additional assistance to those in receipt of HB or CTB to help them with the impact of adjustments made to these awards as a result of receiving Pension Credit.

Of these suggestions, respondents were most likely to feel that an anonymous helpline would encourage them to make a claim (or would have encouraged them to make a claim sooner if they had recently started to receive Pension Credit). This met the need that respondents expressed spontaneously for some means of finding out whether or not they were eligible before making a claim (a perceived lack of eligibility was a key barrier). A small number had attempted to use Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL) in this way and been frustrated that it was not possible to find out about eligibility criteria without starting the claims process.

Pre-populated forms would also help to tackle the key barriers of perceived ineligibility (and also lack of awareness of Pension Credit) and also secondary barriers around the complex nature of the application process. However, some respondents had reservations about data being accessed from other Government organisations without their permission (although whether or not they would question this if a pre-populated form simply arrived on their doorstep is difficult to establish).

Views on receiving Pension Credit

The majority of recent recipients feel that it has been worthwhile making an application. Even some of those who only received very small awards feel some satisfaction in having made a successful claim; receiving some money helps them to feel that they ‘have not been forgotten’.
Conclusions

The key conclusions that can be drawn from the research are:

• lack of awareness of Pension Credit is only a barrier for a small number of those eligible;

• the key barriers to take-up are an assumed ineligibility and concern over interaction with other benefits and concern that interaction with other benefits will make them worse off if they claim Pension Credit;

• these primary barriers are reinforced by a number of secondary barriers concerning the perceived complex/intrusive nature of the application process;

• it is uncommon for older people to decide not to make a claim on the basis of the amount of Pension Credit that they would be likely to receive (few have a concept of the range of awards possible). However, some recent recipients of very small awards felt negatively about the sums involved (relative to the hassle of the application process) after they had made their claim;

• most of the successful triggers to making a claim tackle perceived ineligibility;

• the most common trigger for recent recipients who have ‘held off’ claiming for a while is a personal visit from the DWP offered proactively;

• letters which give a strong indication of eligibility can also serve to trigger a claim (recent recipients responding to these letters interpreted them as stating that they would definitely be eligible);

• assistance or encouragement from third party organisations or family members can also act as a trigger for a claim;

• a confidential helpline to establish eligibility may help to encourage take-up. It will be important to market this to families, letting them know that they can use it to establish a relative’s eligibility without having to identify them;

• there are no significant barriers to such a service being offered through PCAL;

• in the longer term, pre-populated application forms are likely to have a greater impact on take-up rates but there may be some negative reaction to this approach from older people who feel that accessing data on their behalf is an invasion of privacy.
1 Introduction and methodology

1.1 Introduction

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is committed through its Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets to combat poverty and promote independence in retirement and to modernising welfare delivery to improve the accessibility of services. Pension Credit was introduced on 6 October 2003 and replaced the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG). It has two components: the Guarantee Credit (topping up to a minimum income) and the Savings Credit (rewarding those with modest savings); older people can receive one of these elements or both. From April 2005 Pension Credit guarantees everyone aged 60 and over an income of at least:

- £109.45 a week if they are single; or
- £167.05 a week if they have a partner.

It also rewards some of the savings of people aged 65 or over. This extra money can be as much as:

- £16.44 a week if they are single; or
- £21.50 a week if they have a partner.

Additional amounts are payable for additional needs such as severe disability, for carers and for certain housing costs (such as mortgage interest payments).
To claim Pension Credit, potential recipients can call the Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL), using a freephone telephone number. People may also be visited at home by the Local Service, part of The Pension Service¹. As with any income-related benefit, complex rules apply and provision of detailed financial information is required.

DWP is committed to increasing take-up to hit its PSA which includes a target of 3.2 million households to be in receipt of Pension Credit by the end of February 2008. Initial estimates indicate that take-up among those eligible for the Guarantee Credit only is high but lower for the Savings Credit. In order to support its efforts to increase the take-up of Pension Credit, the DWP commissioned IFF Research Ltd to undertake a programme of qualitative research to help to understand the barriers that older people face to claiming Pension Credit and how these can be overcome.

A large body of work already exists on the barriers to take-up of Income Support (IS) and MIG (the predecessors of Pension Credit) as well as one specific project by DWP looking at Pension Credit. Much of this work is quantitative in nature and hence, has collected relatively ‘topline’ responses to the barriers experienced. This research project was designed to build on this knowledge by investigating exactly what individuals mean by these barriers, finding out how combinations of barriers work together and also looking at the triggers for making a claim and how these relate to the barriers experienced. In this sense it is trying to overcome the potentially simplistic view that each barrier can be tackled separately. It is important to get a sense of how barriers may interrelate with each other and the triggers to claiming.

The study also explored reactions to a number of modifications to the process and eligibility criteria for applying for Pension Credit that may help to increase take-up.

### 1.2 Methodology

The study consisted of work among both recent recipients (RRs) of Pension Credit and potential eligible non-recipients (PENRs). Slightly different approaches were taken for each of the two groups and we discuss each in turn. Fieldwork was undertaken in the summer of 2006.

**1.2.1 Research among recent recipients**

Research was conducted among recent recipients of Pension Credit through face-to-face depth interviews lasting up to an hour each. Interviews took place at the

¹ The Pension Service was established as an executive agency of the DWP in April 2002 and aims to provide information on and deliver pension-related benefits and entitlements to current pensioners, and their representatives (as well as forecasts of future pension entitlements to future pensioners). Its main structure is contact centres, known as Pension Centres for customer telephone enquiries and for more vulnerable customers there is a Local Service undertaking home visits.
respondents’ homes. This approach was taken (rather than using group discussions) to maximise the amount of detail that it was possible to obtain about the ‘journeys’ that individual older people go through to claim Pension Credit. Understanding these journeys fully, and the particular elements at play at each stage, required an understanding of the individual’s circumstances and considerable probing which is easier to facilitate in a one-to-one, rather than a group, environment.

The sample for the research was drawn from the DWP records of those who had made a successful application for Pension Credit in April or May 2005. All those selected in the sample were sent a letter informing them that the research was taking place and giving them the opportunity to opt-out.

When people apply for Pension Credit their claim can be backdated for up to a year. The sample was structured by the amount of backdated claim that individuals received as an indicator of the length of time that they had ‘resisted’ making a claim for. A total of 40 interviews were conducted, split between those who appeared to have applied immediately after becoming eligible (defined as those who had received between zero and eight weeks of backdated payments\(^2\)), those who appeared to have delayed making a claim for a moderate amount of time (and hence had received between three and ten months’ worth of backdated payments) and those who had resisted for a relatively long time (defined as those who had received in excess of ten months of backdated payments)\(^3\). This split was defined after looking at the distribution of claims in terms of the amount of backdated payment received. There was a definite peak around the year mark, hence, we took the decision to set the ‘long-time’ group at over ten months. Throughout the rest of this report we refer to these different groups as:

- **low resistors** (those receiving zero and eight weeks of backdated payments);
- **medium resistors** (those with between three and ten months of backdated payments);
- **high resistors** (those with more than ten months of backdated payments).

Interviews were further split to ensure:

- coverage by type of Pension Credit received (Guarantee only, Savings only or both);
- coverage by age (using two broad age bands – 60-74 and 75-84);
- the inclusion of some older people in receipt of small amounts of Pension Credit (less than £5 per week);

\(^2\) It was felt to be likely that backdated payments of two months or under simply reflected administrative or processing delays rather than any form of ‘resistance’ to making a claim.

\(^3\) Backdated payments are made for a maximum of 12 months.
the inclusion of some older people who were also in receipt of either Housing Benefit (HB) or Council Tax Benefit (CTB) as well as Pension Credit.

In brief, the interviews covered:

- how respondents become aware that they may be entitled to claim;
- their preconceptions about Pension Credit and barriers to claiming;
- the train of events that triggered a claim being made and the obstacles that were in play at each stage;
- factors that might have encouraged them to claim earlier;
- experiences of the claims process;
- impact of receiving Pension Credit, including benefits and drawbacks and whether they have/would encourage others to take-up the benefit.

Interviews were conducted across six areas covering a number of different local authority areas. This was important because we wanted to ensure we spoke to individuals living in areas covered by different Local Service area teams. This was to ensure that differing levels and types of activity between Local Service teams would not have too great an impact on the overall findings.

1.2.2 Research among potential eligible non-recipients

Research among potential eligible non-recipients was conducted using a series of group discussions. Group discussions were felt to be a more useful format for research among this group since some of the lines of questioning were hypothetical (particularly around whether they would be likely to claim if certain changes were made to the system for applying for Pension Credit) and therefore, were more conducive to the dynamics of group discussion (and some respondents may find it difficult to respond to these ideas in a one-to-one environment).

The sample for the group discussions was obtained from a database of individuals thought to be eligible for Pension Credit constructed from administrative records by DWP analysts working on the Pension Credit campaign. All those in the initial sample were sent a letter notifying them that the research was taking place and giving them the opportunity to opt-out. At the recruitment stage, individuals were screened to enable a judgement to be made about their likelihood of qualifying for Pension Credit. This process asked them to provide a figure for their monthly income (in £10 bands) and then also to disclose the amount that they held in savings. From their responses to these questions it was possible to establish (to within a reasonable degree of accuracy) whether or not they would be entitled to Pension Credit and what type of Pension Credit they would be likely to receive (Guarantee only, Savings only or both).
A total of eight group discussions were held as follows:

- among those eligible for Guarantee Credit only – two groups with those aged 60-84;
- among those eligible for Guarantee and Savings Credit – two groups with those aged 60-84;
- among those eligible for Savings Credit only – two groups with those aged 65-74 and two groups with those aged 75-84.

The group discussions were held in two locations (Brighton and Birmingham). Within each area, the sample was again drawn from several different local authority districts to ensure that the respondents’ exposure to Pension Credit (in terms of marketing activity, etc.) was not limited to the activities of one particular Local Service team.

Among potential eligible non-recipients, those who were already receiving HB and/or CTB were of particular interest. There was a strong interest in seeing if such people were resistant to claiming Pension Credit because they feared the impact it may have on other benefits. For example, this may lead to a reduction in the amount received in other benefits and in the case of HB they would have to arrange to make up and pay the shortfall in their rent from their new Pension Credit award. Importantly, people cannot be net worse off if they claim HB/CTB and then claim Pension Credit.

A couple of these individuals were included in the eight group discussions outlined above. However, it was necessary to boost this sample in order to be able to comment on the views of HB/CTB recipients specifically and to allow some ideas for adjustments to the system for claiming Pension Credit that would specifically impact on these older people to be explored. Ideally, we would have conducted additional group discussions among HB/CTB recipients. However, it was not possible to draw a sample within a small enough geographic area to make this possible and therefore ten face-to-face depth interviews were conducted with this group of older people. These interviews were conducted across two locations (Croydon and Leeds).

The group discussions and the depth interviews with potential eligible non-recipients covered:

- awareness of Pension Credit and what they understood about the benefit;
- the different reasons that they had for deciding not to make a claim;
- their understanding of what the application process would involve;

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4 There was not a sufficient sample available to conduct separate groups with older and younger pensioners.
• factors that might encourage them to make a claim;
• exploration of reaction to possible changes to the delivery or eligibility criteria for Pension Credit.

All fieldwork took place in August and September 2005.

1.3 Report structure

This report draws together the findings from the research with both recent recipients and potential eligible non-recipients. Each chapter incorporates findings from the two audiences (although some chapters draw more heavily on findings from one group in particular). The report is organised into six subsequent chapters as follows:

• Chapter 2 – Barriers to claiming Pension Credit;
• Chapter 3 – Triggers to making a claim;
• Chapter 4 – Experiences of the applications process;
• Chapter 5 – Reactions to possible ideas for increasing take-up;
• Chapter 6 – Views on receiving Pension Credit;
• Chapter 7 – Conclusions.
2 Barriers to claiming Pension Credit

This chapter details the barriers to claiming Pension Credit that older people experience. The findings are based on information provided by potential eligible non-recipients about their reasons for not making a claim for Pension Credit as well as the reasons given by recent recipients for delaying making a claim.

The Department for Work and Pension (DWP) has conducted research into the barriers to take-up of Income Support (IS) for older people, Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) and a little on Pension Credit. Research on the new benefit, with its wider pool of eligibility, has been largely through quantitative research which has been designed to show the proportion of older people experiencing each individual barrier. The aim of this research was to explore exactly what is meant by some of these barriers and, critically, to try to understand the way in which they interact with one another and with triggers to claiming.

2.1 Primary barriers

There were three key barriers that prevented older people from making a claim for Pension Credit: a belief that they were not eligible, a concern about how the receipt of Pension Credit would interact with other benefits that they were currently receiving and a lack of awareness of Pension Credit. A range of other barriers existed to reinforce the decision not to make a claim but, in nearly all cases, one of these key barriers was acting as the key obstacle to making a claim.

The most common of these primary barriers was a perceived lack of eligibility. This was a very powerful barrier for many because it meant that they viewed all information that they received about Pension Credit (from the DWP or elsewhere) from the perspective that it was unlikely to be relevant to them making it very difficult for any marketing messages to get through. In nearly all cases where perceived ineligibility was the primary barrier, this was about older people feeling that they would not be eligible for Pension Credit at all rather than not being eligible.
Barriers to claiming Pension Credit

enough to make claiming worthwhile (as there was very limited knowledge of the amounts of Pension Credit that it is possible to receive). This is an important distinction. Hitherto evidence has not been clear but this research suggests the perception of a small amount being awarded is certainly secondary to perceived ineligibility. This reflects findings from previous DWP quantitative research which also showed a perceived lack of eligibility to be the most commonly mentioned barrier to take-up of Pension Credit. This research also showed that, of those (in social grade classes C1-E) who initially said that nothing could be done to encourage them to claim Pension Credit, 44 per cent stated that they would apply if they knew they were definitely entitled to up to £5 per week and 67 per cent if they knew they were entitled to £15 or more). Therefore, this research adds to our knowledge by squarely placing perceived ineligibility as the primary barrier.

A few older people taking part in this qualitative research believed that they had been told that they were ineligible for Pension Credit either by the DWP or by a third party (such as their local council, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or Age Concern). Often, these conversations about their ineligibility appeared to have taken place quite a long time in the past meaning that it was possible that the respondent had been ineligible for Pension Credit at that stage (even though the screening for the research indicated that they would be eligible now) or that these discussions had actually concerned another benefit (in some cases it seems likely that it had been the MIG that had been under discussion, i.e. the predecessor to Pension Credit with different eligibility rules). However, in the majority of cases individuals had formed their own opinions about their perceived ineligibility. There were a whole range of different reasons given for ineligibility which include:

• that they were still working on a part-time basis. Some of these older people felt that the fact that they were paying tax on their earnings in itself meant that they could not be eligible for any form of financial assistance (feeling that the Government would not ‘take’ money from them if they were going to ‘give it back’ in benefits);

‘If you get Pension Credit then it inhibits your right to go and find some work on the side like I do from time to time. If I claimed Credit then I would be breaking the law and I would be liable to prosecution.’

(75-84, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

• that they had savings (either savings per se or too many savings);

‘They said if you’ve got above £8,000 you need not bother to apply because you can’t get it which is very basic information but very helpful.’

(75-84, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

Encouraging take up: awareness of and attitudes to Pension Credit. DWP Research Report No 234.
‘[When] I saw the advert, I didn’t think I would be entitled to anything…because I had got my state pension, and had a little bit of savings in them days, which has disappeared since…I didn’t put in a claim because I didn’t think I would get anything.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

- that they were receiving an occupational pension;
- that they were in receipt of another benefit (such as Housing Benefit (HB) or Council Tax Benefit (CTB)). Interestingly, it was more common for those receiving HB or CTB to feel that this would preclude them from being eligible for Pension Credit than for them to feel that eligibility for one benefit might signal likely eligibility for another;
- that they were able to ‘cope’ (and that Pension Credit was only for those who could not cope);
- that they were aged under 75 (and that Pension Credit was only for older pensioners);
- that they had been turned down for other benefits in the past (in some cases this was for benefits such as IS and had taken place a long time ago).

‘I just don’t think I would get anywhere. I am so used to people in offices giving you a book to fill in, claiming it is a form and then at the end of it saying no you are not eligible.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee and Savings Credit)

Those that were prevented from making a claim for Pension Credit because of a concern about the implications for the other benefits that they received, felt that there was a danger that they could end up **net** worse off if they made a claim. These respondents felt that other benefits would be reduced so that their overall income would be lower (i.e. it was not simply a concern about the ‘hassle’ that adjustments to their various sources of income would involve but a belief that these adjustments could impact negatively on their overall income). Respondents were concerned that claiming Pension Credit would lead to reductions in HB or CTB or even their State Pension that would outweigh any additional income. Some respondents felt that if they received Pension Credit then this would bring them up to a tax threshold which would ultimately mean that they would be worse-off. This is an important finding as it clarifies the specific nature of the concern people tend to have regarding interaction with other benefits: that they would be net worse off, which, in itself, is a misconception (i.e. like perceived ineligibility it signals confusion). This evidence helps to dampen the hypothesis that people on other benefits will not claim because of the perceived hassle (e.g. lead to a reduction in HB thereby meaning they have to arrange to pay the shortfall). It squarely places the misconception of believing they will be net worse off as a primary barrier.
'I say to anybody before filing in those forms – get some advice from someone who knows because I was advised and quite rightly I believe not to send it in because I would have ended up worse off.’

(65-74, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

‘What they’re after is information because you have to disclose your savings and income and all this sort of thing, list all the bonds and national, I can’t think of the names of them now, but all of them down, and at the end of the day you’ll be worse off, they’ll stop your pension.’

(65-74, entitled to Savings Credit only)

While the majority felt that interaction with other benefits would leave them worse-off if they claimed Pension Credit, a small number of HB/CTB recipients acknowledged that they would perhaps be slightly better off if they made a claim but felt that the difference in their income would be marginal (quoting figures of £5 per week or under).

‘If they are going to give me £12 of Pension Credit and because you have to declare it, the council are going to come along and say we are going to take £5 to £6 off your Council Tax Benefit then that would be worse. It would have to be a bigger difference to make it all worthwhile.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

With all those for whom the potential interaction with other benefits was a primary barrier to making a claim, there was an underlying assumption that once the claims process for Pension Credit was initiated, it would be impossible to withdraw an application or to decide not to accept the benefit. This is not the case.

Of the three primary barriers, the least common was a lack of awareness of Pension Credit. Most potential eligible non-recipients had seen television or press adverts or had received more personalised information through the post. Often, they had paid very little attention to this information (largely because they assumed that they would not be eligible). However, a small number of potential eligible non-recipients had not made a claim simply because they had never heard of the benefit. These individuals had not made any attempt to find out what financial support the Government provided for older people because they either assumed that they would not be eligible for any assistance and/or that they would be notified if they were. The fact that the majority of potential eligible non-recipients were aware of Pension Credit was to be expected given that previous DWP research has shown high levels of awareness among those not in receipt (81 per cent)6.

As well as those who had not heard of Pension Credit at all, there were one or two respondents who had heard of the name but thought that it was some form of

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6 Encouraging take up: awareness of and attitudes to Pension Credit. DWP Research Report No 234.
Government savings scheme that individuals could elect to pay into (rather than a benefit that they could claim).

2.2 Secondary barriers

As mentioned above, an individual’s decision not to make a claim for Pension Credit tended to hinge around one of the three key barriers outlined above. However, in most cases there were also a number of secondary barriers in play that served to reinforce the decision not to make an application. These barriers concerned a number of aspects to do with the process of applying for Pension Credit as well as difficulties in understanding the rules on eligibility and attitudinal barriers around ‘asking for’ benefits. Previous research has highlighted these issues as barriers. Our understanding here is enhanced as it suggests these additional barriers are secondary to the primary barriers outlined already. They are important but this implies they are surmountable if the primary barriers can be overcome. Therefore, it is argued that all the help possible with making the claim process easier may have negligible effects if primary barriers such as perceived ineligibility are not dealt with.

Figure 2.1 illustrates how these barriers link to the three primary barriers as well as how they link to each other. The dark blue circles indicate primary barriers, the mid-blue circles indicate secondary barriers and the light blue circles indicate minor barriers. The size of the circles are designed to give some indication of the relative numbers of older people experiencing each barrier (although this was a qualitative exercise and hence, these relativities should be treated as indicative only).

Figure 2.1 Map of barriers to claiming Pension Credit
2.2.1 Difficulty in establishing eligibility criteria

One of the most commonly mentioned secondary barriers was the difficulty that older people found in understanding the rules about Pension Credit eligibility. Many found it very hard to understand why it was not possible to simply set out a level of income below which individuals would be eligible for Pension Credit and similarly the amount of savings that it is possible to hold and still qualify for the benefit. The majority did not understand that this would not simply be a matter of publishing two figures (because of the interaction between income and savings which determines eligibility for Pension Credit). A few had attempted to get an answer on the levels of income/savings that they could have before becoming ineligible for Pension Credit from the Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL) but been frustrated that call-handlers were not able to provide this information without an application being completed.

‘They make the rules up! You need to know – if you’ve got so much in the bank – don’t bother. If you’ve got so much a week – don’t bother. Give a definite answer before you apply.’

(60-74, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

‘The booklet gives you examples of what people are entitled to. You look at it and says, Mr and Mrs Jones get the state pension and are entitled to x amount. Then you get someone living on his or her own, etc. At the back, there is a chart with earnings and age, which you have to find yourself on; it says if you are eligible or not. You have to try and work out where you fit, which I found very difficult.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

Widespread confusion about the rules for eligibility for Pension Credit has also been shown in previous DWP quantitative research which involved asking non-recipients a number of questions about issues concerning eligibility for Pension Credit. Responses to these questions showed high levels of ignorance (‘don’t know’ answers) as well as a reasonable degree of misunderstanding (wrong answers)\(^7\).

For the older people taking part in this research, the difficulty in understanding the eligibility rules for Pension Credit was a secondary barrier serving to reinforce decisions made not to claim on the basis of perceived ineligibility. This enhances the previous quantitative research\(^8\) by showing perceived ineligibility is firmly linked to this confusion over the rules. If respondents had felt that there was a reasonable chance that they would be entitled to Pension Credit, then they would have been prepared to put in an application simply to find out even if they could not understand from the literature exactly what the rules for eligibility were. Most had attempted to

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\(^7\) Encouraging take up: awareness of and attitudes to Pension Credit. DWP Research Report No 234.

\(^8\) Encouraging take up: awareness of and attitudes to Pension Credit. DWP Research Report No 234.
try to understand the qualification criteria after having formed a view that they were unlikely to be entitled simply as a ‘double-check’ that they had made the right assumption. Because they found it difficult to tell who was or was not entitled to Pension Credit from the literature that they had received, this served to reinforce their belief that they were probably not entitled (and hence, it was not worth them making a claim).

2.2.2 Barriers concerning the application process

A number of negative comments were made by older people about the process for claiming benefits. However, most admitted that, while the processes were definitely off-putting, they would be prepared to go through them if they felt that there was a reasonable chance that they would be entitled to receive Pension Credit. This is reinforced by findings from interviews with recent recipients discussed later in this report. A number also admitted that, while the application procedures seemed bureaucratic and intrusive, the processes involved were not that dissimilar to the processes that they went through to organise various aspects of their day-to-day affairs (taking out insurance policies, opening a bank account, etc.). If the application process was perceived to be very quick and easy then some of those who assumed that they were ineligible for Pension Credit may have been tempted to make a ‘speculative’ application but the fact that they see a lot of ‘hassle’ in the process reinforces their decision not to claim. Again, this adds to our knowledge as it warns we should not see the ‘hassle’ of claiming in isolation. It is linked to confusion about eligibility and perceived ineligibility. Perceived hassle can prevent attempts to overcome this confusion about eligibility.

Of the process-related barriers, the most commonly mentioned was that the need to provide financial information was viewed as personal or private. Nearly everyone was aware that making a claim would involve disclosing income and savings information. As well as this data, some (incorrectly) also thought that they would need to disclose information about their patterns of expenditure and that the DWP might then give (unwanted) advice about how to curb spending.

“They’ll want to know how much money you’ve got, what your outlay is, what your income is and they’ll say “Well you can do away with that and that” and then you’d have no luxuries in life whatsoever.’

(65-74, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

Those whose primary barrier was the fact that they felt that they were ineligible, were unwilling to disclose information that they viewed as personal or private ‘unnecessarily’ (because they felt their claim was unlikely to be successful anyway). Some of this group were concerned that if they were to make an application, then a record would be held of their income/savings data leaving them exposed to interrogation about how savings had been spent if they made a subsequent application at a later date. It was deemed ‘safer’ to wait until their income/savings were at a level that they considered likely to make them eligible.
‘I don’t want to tell them that I have x amount of pounds and then later on they turn around and say, “well what have you done with x amount of pounds because last time you applied you had £50K and now all of a sudden you don’t”. I’d have to tell them what I’ve done with my money.’

(65-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

Those whose primary barrier was a concern about interaction with other benefits, were unwilling to disclose financial information just in case this was to be used to show that they were not entitled to the other benefits or that their other benefits should be reduced.

Several older people (whose primary barrier was a perceived lack of eligibility) stated that they were unwilling to make an application for Pension Credit simply because the process was too complicated. This worked in the same way as an unwillingness to disclose financial information in that it made those who had already decided that their application was unlikely to be successful more convinced that they should not bother to make a claim. Some assumptions that were made about the application process were grounded in some ‘truth’ – such as the perception that the form would be quite long, it would contain many similar questions and that they would have to include a lot of different financial information. Other assumptions were incorrect. A few were under the impression that even if they were to be successful in claiming Pension Credit they would have to reapply for the benefit each year (betraying some confusion with Working Tax Credit (WTC)). Some also thought that it was only possible to make an application in person at a DWP office, betraying a lack of knowledge about the configuration of delivery in The Pension Service (see Chapter 1).

Some also stated that the need to send documents with an application was a barrier to making a claim for Pension Credit. In a small number of cases this was because they were concerned that these documents would get lost in the post (particularly building society withdrawal books that they might want to use in the meantime). For the most part, this barrier was simply part of a more general unwillingness to disclose financial information. However, the need to provide documents does add another element to the application process that contributes to its perception as ‘complex’. Again, this evidence is useful as it contextualises what it a much quoted barrier as being secondary.

‘It would be OK if you didn’t have to go to the jobcentre amongst the riff raff and amongst the drop outs. If it was a separate office it would be different.’

(65-74, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

Because the application process was seen to be complex, some older people were concerned that they would inadvertently make mistakes in their application that would lead to them making a fraudulent claim and even having to pay money back. This fear is linked to the fact that the rules for eligibility are complex and hence older people cannot work out for themselves whether or not they are eligible (leading them to fear ‘getting it wrong’ on the form). The recent publicity about the clawing back of overpayments for WTC also served to heighten these concerns.
2.2.3 Unwillingness to ‘ask’ for benefits

One further secondary barrier was a sentiment among older people that they should not have to ask for financial assistance that they needed. There was a widespread view that older people were not treated well by the Government in relation to other groups in society who receive financial support (such as asylum seekers, the unemployed or parents of young children). The Government was frequently described as treating older people as ‘second class citizens’. Older people commonly felt that, to have to ask for financial assistance that they were entitled to was demeaning and that, as a reflection of the contribution they had already made to society, benefits should be paid automatically without them needing to apply. For some, the fact that the process of ‘asking’ for Pension Credit involved disclosing personal information, made it particularly off-putting. In this way, the desire not to have to ask for benefits was linked to the other secondary barrier of unwillingness to disclose financial details. A few felt that the DWP already had access to all the information that they needed to determine whether or not an individual was entitled to Pension Credit but used the application process as a means of putting people off claiming/controlling the amount that they had to pay out, i.e. that there was no real need for an application to be made.

For some older people, their particular concern about having to apply for a benefit was the embarrassment that they would experience if they were turned down (which they felt would make them seem ‘greedy’). Hence, this attitudinal barrier reinforced decisions not to apply on the basis of perceived ineligibility.

2.3 Minor barriers

There were a couple of minor barriers that were also mentioned (see the barriers map). These were:

• a belief that the amount that they would receive in Pension Credit would not make an application worthwhile;

• that they were able to ‘manage without’ and hence, should not claim.

These barriers only affected a small number of older people and, even in these cases, only played a small part in their decision not to make a claim.

As mentioned above, the fact that older people thought that they would not be eligible for Pension Credit at all was a primary barrier for a large proportion. The amount of Pension Credit that they would be eligible for only played a role in the decision not to apply for a very small number (and even these older people thought that they probably would not be entitled at all). This is useful as it advances us past the theory that perceptions of receiving a small amount is a major barrier. Older people had very limited awareness of the range of Pension Credit entitlements available and several were unaware that it could be awarded at different levels. For the most part, older people felt that if they knew that they were entitled to something, then an application would be worth making even if they would only
receive a very small amount of Pension Credit per week (although a reasonable number felt that if their likely award was below £1 a week then they might not be prepared to go through a very complicated application process).

The older people participating in the research largely found it a struggle to make ends meet. As referred to already, they felt that they received poor treatment from the Government in relation to other groups in society. As a result, there was a only a very small number of older people who felt that they could manage adequately without Pension Credit and had, therefore, decided not to make a claim. Even these older people largely thought that the fact that they could manage without meant that they were probably ineligible for the benefit anyway.

2.4 Sub-group differences

There were no differences in the types or numbers of barriers reported by age or the type of Pension Credit that potential eligible non-recipients were likely to be able to claim. The numbers of older people stating that they did not believe that they would be eligible and the strength with which this tended to be felt, was at a similar level for those likely to be able to claim Guarantee Credit as for those likely to be entitled to Savings Credit.

It is worth bearing in mind that DWP estimates of take-up⁹ levels appear to differ by the type of Pension Credit that older people are entitled to but this research would seem to indicate that, among those who have not applied, the reasons for not doing so are similar. This is interesting as it has been speculated that the group newly entitled to income-related benefits, via the savings reward, may be more likely not to claim because the amount is too small. These findings appear to show this may not be the case. Similarly, the quantitative research referred to earlier showed that older pensioners are more likely to be resistant to claiming but this research indicates that among those who do not claim the reasons for not doing so are the same.

That said, it is worth bearing in mind that this was a qualitative exercise and relatively subtle differences in the proportions of different sub-groups experiencing each barrier would be hard to detect through work of this nature.

It was also the case that the factors that recent recipients stated had discouraged them from making a claim were the same as those that were currently preventing potential eligible non-recipients from making a claim. This is encouraging in the sense that it would seem to imply that exposure to the same ‘triggers’ to claiming that recent recipients have experienced, could also encourage potential eligible non-recipients to claim. We look at triggers to claiming in the next chapter.

3 Triggers to making a claim

This chapter looks at the ways in which the barriers to claiming Pension Credit that were faced by recent recipients have been overcome. It looks at the relative importance of these triggers and the differences by sub-groups in the triggers to making a claim.

3.1 Primary triggers

The key events that triggered older people to make an application were:

- a personal visit from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)/The Pension Service specifically;
- a letter from The Pension Service;
- advice from a third party organisation;
- involvement of a family member;
- a change of circumstances;
- encouragement from friends;
- automatic transfer by the DWP.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the relationship between these triggers and the barriers to claiming that individuals had experienced. The dark blue circles show the primary barriers discussed in the previous chapter and the mid-blue circles show the secondary barriers. The triggers are shown in red boxes; the relative size of the boxes is designed to give an indication of the number of older people responding to each trigger. The thick red arrows show linkages between triggers and the primary barriers that they overcome while the thin red arrows show secondary barriers that the individual triggers also helped to tackle.
3.1.1 Personal visits from the DWP or The Pension Service

A personal visit from the DWP/The Pension Service was the most common trigger to making a claim for Pension Credit. In most cases, a visit had been arranged specifically to discuss Pension Credit, but in some cases there were other primary reasons for the visit. In some cases, the initial premise for the visit was a need to review arrangements for Attendance Allowance (AA) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). In these cases, the DWP representative conducting the visit discovered that the pensioner was not claiming Pension Credit, persuaded them that they could be eligible and put the claims process in motion.

‘The next time we thought about Pension Credit was when John…came here from Pensions on another issue and I said to him what about this Pension Credit – this was to see about AA…he knew his subject very well – I brought Pension Credit into it and he looked baffled that we weren’t getting it and said we are going to go for this and he filled in the forms and we got it.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

In cases where a visit was made specifically to discuss Pension Credit, the visit was preceded by a phone call which most respondents interpreted as informing them that they were likely to be eligible. Sometimes this phone call was made following a request for application forms that had not led to a claim being made. In some cases, a personal visit from The Pension Service had been initiated by a change of
circumstances, for example as a result of informing The Pension Service of the death of a spouse.

Visits from representatives of the DWP/The Pension Service were particularly effective in encouraging claims because they helped to tackle all three of the primary barriers to the take-up of Pension Credit. Older people were reassured by representatives that they were (at least very likely) to qualify for the benefit and that putting in an application could well be worth their while. Hence, these visits helped to combat the perception of ineligibility (which was the most common primary barrier to take-up). Furthermore, DWP/The Pension Service representatives were able to reassure older people about the impact that making a claim for Pension Credit would have on other benefits that they received. Personal visits also helped to encourage a claim in cases where older people had no previous awareness of Pension Credit (these personal visits tended to be those that were made primarily to discuss another benefit).

Personal visits were particularly powerful in tackling barriers to making applications for Pension Credit because, as well as addressing the primary barriers to claiming, they were also able to address some of the secondary barriers at the same time. The application process was simplified for the respondent because the DWP representative was able to assist with completion and answer queries about the meaning of particular questions. Representatives were also able to verify documents during their visit, meaning that older people did not have to send them in the post. To some extent personal visits also helped to address worries over the disclosure of financial information because respondents were reassured that they were not ‘going on the record’ with this information needlessly (because they felt that the DWP representative confirmed their eligibility). It was also the case that some respondents simply felt more comfortable parting with this information to someone that they were able to see face-to-face and had been able to build up a rapport with. This has been found in other DWP commissioned research:\textsuperscript{10}:

\begin{quote}
‘I wouldn’t have made the claim if she hadn’t been there to help me because I didn’t think I was entitled and because I cannot fill in forms without difficulty.’
\end{quote}

(High resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

The following boxes provide details of three examples where a personal visit from the DWP helped to tackle multiple barriers.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{10} Understanding the service needs of vulnerable pensioners: Disability, ill-health and access to The Pension Service. DWP Research Report 263.
\end{footnotesize}
One pensioner had sent four Pension Credit forms but had not completed them because of a combination of the fact that they did not think they would be eligible, illness and a resentment of having to ‘ask’ for benefits. A phone call from The Pension Service to check on his progress with the forms prompted him to accept their offer of a visit.

‘I thought to myself, I can’t be bothered with this paperwork. Let somebody come along and I’ll show them…it seemed to be comparatively easy. I showed her all our bits of paper. But we got £4 or whatever it was.’

(High resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

A female pensioner had initially been called by The Pension Service asking lots of questions and asking if she would fill in a form for Pension Credit. She did not send the form back because she did not feel she would be entitled. They then contacted her by telephone again and offered to send someone out to help her go through the forms.

‘She felt sure I was entitled to a little bit of PC so I agreed…My concerns were overcome because the lady who rang to ask if she could come and see me was so pleasant. It didn’t lessen my feeling that I wasn’t entitled – I still thought I was wasting her time but she said “Well, let’s see you may be right.”

(High resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

A male pensioner was also initially unwilling to claim because of a belief that he would not be eligible and also a resentment of having to disclose his personal financial information (particularly if he had to do so in an office). He did not recall sending for the forms although some arrived, followed a few weeks later by a phone call from a man from The Pension Service, eventually resulting, after some persuasion, in a visit and a successful claim for a small amount.

‘Two or three months after a chappie phoned and we said we don’t want to bother because I’m sure we wont be able to get anything. So he said well I’m sure you’ll benefit. Can you bear with me for half an hour and we will go through it…He kept saying, look, there is benefit. If you don’t apply for it I can’t send it to you.’

(High resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)
3.1.2 Letters from The Pension Service

Where letters had proved to be the key trigger to making a claim, these were letters that older people had interpreted as informing them that they would definitely be entitled to Pension Credit if they made an application. Hence, these letters obviously helped to overcome perceptions of ineligibility. The case study outlined below details a situation whereby a letter helped to trigger a claim for Pension Credit.

A female pensioner who was a naturalised British citizen in receipt of a small US pension had assumed that she would not be eligible for Pension Credit. She had no detailed awareness of Pension Credit, although the name was familiar to her from radio or television adverts. After receiving several leaflets about Pension Credit, she received a letter stating (as she interpreted it) that she was entitled to the benefit:

‘I received something in the post; they wrote to me…I think it came from the same people in Newcastle who sent me the [state] pension…I received the letter in March of this year…the letter was in great detail. It said “this is what we’re paying you now, and this is what you are entitled to if you want to claim it. If you do please set up an appointment...” they said they thought I was entitled to it, and they left blanks in the letter for my US pension.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

3.1.3 Advice from a third party organisation

Some older people had only made a claim for Pension Credit when they had been advised to do so by an organisation other than the DWP. Sometimes this contact with third party organisations was brought about as a result of a change in circumstances (and hence, the two triggers worked in tandem). Specific third parties mentioned included local authorities and Welfare Rights. Local authority staff had suggested that it might beneficial to make a claim for Pension Credit during the course of their dealings with older people regarding Housing Benefit (HB) or Council Tax Benefit (CTB). One respondent had come into contact with Welfare Rights through a general presentation about benefits and rights at her sheltered housing. These organisations either encouraged respondents to put in an application themselves or initiated the claims process on their behalf through assisting with the completion of application forms.

In cases where third parties were the key trigger to a claim being made, they managed to convince older people that they stood a good chance of being eligible for the benefit (even though these older people had previously assumed they would be ineligible). By talking older people through the criteria for eligibility they also helped to address the secondary barrier of difficulty in establishing the rules for eligibility. In cases where they assisted with the claim they also helped to make the application process seem less complex.
‘I finally put it in just before I was 65, because I was going away, and someone interviewed me at Stamford Hill library. He said he would put it in when I was actually 65. I reached that, and the next day I phoned up and it hadn’t even gone on the computer yet, but later that day someone phoned back, and he told me what I would get.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

One female pensioner initially made an enquiry about Pension Credit through the advertised telephone number but was put off claiming by the attitude of the member of staff who she found unhelpful. This largely seems to have been because she wanted to know whether or not she was likely to be eligible before putting in a claim. She was also put off by the number of documents she would be required to produce and the fact that she would have to send them through the post. She thought nothing more about Pension Credit until she received a letter from her doctor earlier this year telling her to contact her local Welfare Rights organisation because she may be entitled to some financial assistance. She telephoned the Welfare Rights office who helped her put in a claim for Pension Credit and verified her documents at their office.

‘I telephoned the Welfare office and she asked for all the details of our finances and said that because my husband was getting Attendance Allowance that I should be entitled to carer’s premium. I didn’t have to send all my documents through the post – I took them down and they photocopied them while I was there. If I had known I could have done this – take them to Welfare office and get them copied – I might have made a claim earlier. But this was not mentioned to me as an option.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

3.1.4 Encouragement or assistance from family

For a number of older people, pressure from family members acted as the trigger to making a claim. In some cases this was simply vocal pressure but often, it involved assistance in making the first steps to lodging an application. In some cases relatives assisted with the completion of forms or made an application using Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL) (with the pensioner’s permission). Occasionally the involvement of a family member in the pensioner’s financial affairs was itself triggered by a change in circumstances (such as the death of a partner).

Where family members made initial enquiries on behalf of older people, this helped to establish that the individual was eligible for Pension Credit combating their own perception of ineligibility. It seems that in these cases the family members were more convinced of the likelihood of the pensioner being eligible than the older people were themselves. This was because they felt that the degree of financial hardship that the older people were experiencing prior to their application was greater (relative to other people) than individuals felt themselves. This is an interesting
finding and fits in with other evidence that older people may be more likely to downplay their situation or have different conceptions of hardship (for example, older people tend to have lower levels of material deprivation than working-age people on the same incomes). This may be a result of a wider network of contacts with other people in different financial situations than those (younger) relatives had.

Even where family members did not establish that the pensioner was definitely eligible, they were able to assist with understanding the rules for eligibility and to convince their relative that they stood a reasonable chance of being eligible. Relatives commonly approached the process of making a claim with the belief that the pensioner concerned should be entitled to financial assistance of some sort (i.e. they were convinced that their relative should be eligible even if the pensioner themselves had assumed that they would not be).

‘After my husband died, she [step daughter] helped me to do it, she helped me with all the paperwork. And she has been so good, she has helped me every step of the way.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

A couple were in receipt of HB but did not think they were eligible for Pension Credit. They, therefore, ignored the TV adverts and the leaflets which were sent to them. Eventually their daughter made an enquiry on their behalf and helped with the forms.

‘It was probably three or four years ago when we first saw it on the telly…I didn’t take much notice of it because I didn’t think I would fall under that…We didn’t know who it was for. Maybe for somebody who wasn’t getting the state pension…But one time I took the number down…one of our girls phoned for it…she said, “if you want me to find out Dad, I will try for you…” My daughter sent away for the form, and she filled it in. I’m not sure how she got it.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

3.1.5 Encouragement from friends

In a small number of cases, hearing about the experiences of others had triggered a claim for Pension Credit. Hearing that friends had been successful in making an application for Pension Credit led some older people to question whether their assumption about their own ineligibility was correct. Sometimes friends had also stated that they had found the application process more straightforward than they had expected, helping to address the secondary barriers around the complexity of the claims procedures.
'It was not until I spoke to a friend about it...I still thought I wouldn’t be likely to get it. By then I had already had two to three of the fat forms through the post, which I just thought was a waste of paper. But she was working at the time and she was successful so I thought why not.'

(Low resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

3.1.6 A change of circumstances

As already mentioned, a change in circumstances sometimes served as a trigger to a claim for Pension Credit because it was the prompt for the involvement of family members, the DWP or third party organisations who encouraged a claim to be made or assisted in making a claim on the pensioner’s behalf.

However, sometimes a change in circumstances simply prompted the pensioner themselves to review their financial situation and investigate what support they might be entitled to. Usually these older people had assumed that they would not be entitled to Pension Credit but a change in circumstances made them question whether they had been right in this assumption (particularly in cases where their change in circumstances was likely to mean greater financial hardship).

The changes of circumstances that were mentioned as a trigger to action were:

- turning 65;
- death of a partner;
- a partner needing to move into residential care;
- themselves or their partner stopping work.

3.1.7 Automatic transfer

Some respondents were transferred automatically from Income Support (IS) when they reached pensionable age. Some of these respondents had no previous awareness of Pension Credit. Even where respondents were aware of Pension Credit, this process of automatic transfer meant that individuals did not even have to consider whether or not they would be eligible or what the application process would involve.

3.2 Secondary triggers

Secondary triggers were not, on their own, enough to prompt a claim being made but they did play a role in ensuring that Pension Credit was periodically brought to the front of older peoples’ minds. These continued ‘reminders’ served to maximise the effectiveness of the primary triggers when they came into play. Secondary triggers included:
• hearing about **experiences of others** who have put in an application, for example, talking to friends who had been successful (while this was a primary trigger for some, it was more commonly a secondary trigger);

• **general letters** from The Pension Service encouraging them to apply, sometimes including application forms. These letters were reported by older people as informing them of the amounts that individuals can receive through Pension Credit and the ways in which a claim can be made. They were different to those which acted as primary triggers in that respondents did not **perceive** them to confirm eligibility for Pension Credit. It may well be that these letters were the same or similar to those that acted as primary triggers and that the difference lay in the individual’s interpretation of them;

• **encouragement from family** members/friends/others to claim (again, sometimes this was a primary trigger but commonly family members helped to keep respondents thinking about Pension Credit until a primary trigger came about).

These triggers all work against a backdrop of a general awareness of Pension Credit, stemming from extensive advertising campaigns (particularly television adverts). Even though respondents had often not interpreted the adverts as advertising a benefit that was appropriate for them, the adverts had at least made many aware that Pension Credit was a benefit offered by the DWP.

‘I had watched it on the telly – “Pick it up, it’s yours.” – but I never took any notice of that.’
(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘“Pick it up it’s yours.” That was the bit they did on the TV, even blokes on the allotments saying, “Go on, pick it up, it’s yours”.’
(High resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘I saw the advert but I thought it was for people in dire need and on the bread line.’
(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

### 3.3 Key differences by sub-groups

Those who had been transferred automatically from IS were (understandably) all ‘low resistors’, i.e. there was a very small gap (if any) between them becoming eligible for Pension Credit and starting to receive it. All of these older people were eligible for Guarantee Credit (either on its own or in combination with Savings Credit).

Similarly, those who had been prompted to make a claim by a change in circumstances that had led them to reinvestigate their financial situation, also tended to be low resistors. In a few cases they were medium resistors, i.e. there was
Triggers to making a claim

a few months’ gap between them becoming eligible and making a claim – these largely tended to be situations where the change of circumstances involved the death of a partner and the older person had taken some time to grieve before reviewing their financial situation. Most of those for whom a change in circumstances had been the key trigger were eligible for Guarantee and Savings Credit or Savings Credit only (but of course this is not a representative sample so this should be taken as indicative).

In cases where the key trigger to a claim being made was action by a family member, the older people involved tended to be medium resistors. They were also more likely to be eligible for Guarantee Credit (either on its own or in combination with Savings Credit). This may be because it is easier for family members to identify cases where older people are likely to be entitled to Guarantee Credit (perhaps because it is more obvious that they are living with a degree of financial hardship or simply because the ‘rules’ around eligibility for Guarantee Credit may be easier to comprehend and less clouded by the confusion of eligibility criteria such as levels of income and savings).

Those for whom a personal visit or a letter (deemed to confirm eligibility) were the key triggers tended to be the higher resistors (i.e. those with a gap of at least ten months between becoming eligible and making a claim). Those who received a personal visit were particularly likely to be entitled to Savings Credit only (but again, this data is not based on a representative sample and should be treated as indicative only).
4 Application process

This chapter looks at the knowledge that potential eligible non-recipients had about the application process and what it would involve (and their reactions when the detail of the process was explained to them). It also looks at recent recipients’ experiences of this process and how it compared to what they were anticipating. This is useful to focus on as it may help the Department learn more about how the application process could be improved.

4.1 Potential eligible non-recipients’ expectations of the application process

Only a small number of potential eligible non-recipients claimed to have detailed knowledge of what the application process for Pension Credit would involve. The small number of individuals who had already been exposed to the application process for Housing Benefit (HB) or Council Tax Benefit (CTB) assumed the process of applying for Pension Credit would be broadly similar to the application process for these benefits.

‘If you go for council tax, it’s exactly the same. You fill in more or less the same form for Pension Credit I would say. They would be looking for the same information.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

Despite the fact that few had detailed knowledge, all assumed that it would be a complicated process and not one that would be worth embarking on unless they could be assured that they would be likely to be eligible. The large number of potential eligible non-recipients who had assumed that they would be ineligible had, therefore, decided that it was not worth investigating the application process in too much detail.

In addition to basic information such as their name, age, national insurance number, etc., the majority of older people assumed that they would have to provide details of their income and savings from all sources (and those of their partner where appropriate). Most assumed that they would need to provide historical data about their finances going back over several years.
As mentioned earlier in this report, there was widespread discomfort about providing this financial data (although this was largely a ‘secondary barrier’ to making a claim for Pension Credit).

‘I don’t want to do it. They will have it on record and they will have copies of your bank statements, everything. The Government will have those, that’s why I don’t want to do it.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

Particular irritation was expressed about the need to provide savings data which respondents were particularly likely to view as ‘their own business’. Respondents felt more sensitive about this data because they often felt that it was something that no Government departments would currently have access to (where as the HMRC had income data) and hence, it seemed more ‘private’.

On the other hand, a few older people stated that they would not object to providing this information because they had nothing to hide and felt that the Government would already hold this information anyway.

Most assumed that they would have to make an application by post and that this would involve completing a complex application form. There was a widespread view that the application form would contain questions designed to catch them out (by asking for the same information in lots of different ways). There was also the assumption that the questions would be technical and not in plain English, which would be difficult to understand. Some were also aware that they might need to send documents in the post with their form and were concerned about loss or damage to these documents in transit or that they might need them in the meantime.

‘You would have to send in your bank books. I use mine all the time so I wouldn’t want to do that. What if they lost it?’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

A few thought that they would have to make an application in person at a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) office. This was seen as negative partly because older people were unwilling or scared to mix with the type of people that they felt they would meet in a DWP office and partly because they thought that it would take a long time to be seen. This indicates a lack of awareness of the delivery model of The Pension Service (see Chapter 1).

4.2 Potential eligible non-recipients’ reactions to explanation of application process

After older people had given their spontaneous views on what the applications process would involve, they were given a brief explanation of the options available for making a claim for Pension Credit and asked for their reactions. The description of the process that they were given was as follows:
Stages of application for Pension Credit

You need to complete a form by post, phone or internet (Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL) can help fill in the form over the phone). If the application form is completed over the phone or internet, the form will be posted back for you to check, sign and return. Alternatively, someone from The Pension Service can come to your house to help complete the form in person.

Basic information is needed, such as your name, age, address and NI number, as well as financial information such as income from occupational or personal pensions and the details of any savings or investments you may have.

Supporting documents such as birth certificates and evidence of income and savings (if this totals to £6,000 or more) are required.

A letter detailing the amount of Pension Credit you will be entitled to will be sent in the post along with a claim form that will need to be signed and sent back before the Pension Credit is paid into your account.

This description of the information required to make a claim for Pension Credit was broadly what older people had anticipated in the majority of cases.

However, most were unaware of the extent of assistance in making a claim that was available and this was viewed very positively. The majority of potential eligible non-recipients were not aware that it was possible to be guided through the claim form over the phone with PCAL or that it was possible to arrange a personal visit from a Pension Service representative. This backs up DWP’s quantitative research.

‘If you can fill it in over the phone and then just sign it, I can’t see how that would be difficult.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

Despite the fact that the presence of telephone-based assistance was generally viewed positively, some concerns were expressed about the quality of the call handlers (particularly in relation to whether or not the call centre would be based overseas). A small number of potential eligible non-recipients had already made tentative enquiries about Pension Credit through PCAL. They were largely negative about this service because they had been looking for advice on their likely eligibility and resented being ‘launched’ straight into an application.

While some older people felt that they would not need a home visit to assist them with making a claim for Pension Credit, several felt that this would be very useful (for other older pensioners even if not for themselves). Those that were interested in the

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11 Encouraging take up: awareness of and attitudes to Pension Credit. DWP Research Report No 234.
possibility of a home visit felt that a DWP representative would be able to explain the eligibility rules to them (and hence, prevent them from making unnecessary claims), help them fill in a form and reduce the risk of providing incorrect information.

4.3 Recent recipients’ experiences of the application process

Overall, recent recipients found the process of applying for Pension Credit relatively easy.

Those who had applied through PCAL were very satisfied with the service that they had received and thought the staff were friendly, helpful and not patronising.

‘All I can say is that not once was anyone nasty, or not helpful, no matter who I phoned.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

‘I rang this number and it was amazing they were so helpful and friendly and not at all patronising as I imagined they would be. They talked me through it.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

However, a few had found the style of questioning of PCAL staff a bit abrasive, largely because they were not used to dealing with a ‘scripted’ discussion and would have preferred to have asked some questions themselves before starting the application process.

In some cases, respondents had initially contacted PCAL but been offered a personal visit to help to complete their application. These respondents were pleasantly surprised by this offer.

A female pensioner was in receipt of the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) while her husband was alive. After his death, the benefit stopped and she had to reapply. She made an initial phone call and was offered a visit, which she readily accepted because she did not like completing forms.

‘I phoned them, and they said they would send a form through. I thought, “Oh, no not again, not more forms”. They asked if I would like someone to visit.’

(Mid resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

In other cases where respondents completed the claim form with a DWP representative, this took place as the result of proactive action by DWP staff (either ‘cold calling’ or chasing up unreturned claim forms). All recent recipients who had received a visit from a DWP representative report they were extremely satisfied with
the process, and most stated that they would not have made an application for Pension Credit without this assistance.

‘I’d not have made the claim otherwise. It would have been onerous and difficult to fill in the form and make the initial claim. I thought they’d want to go back over an unlimited amount of time.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘When someone goes through it with you, it makes it all seem very simple…we sat down and went through the list and crossed out what was not necessary.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

Those recent recipients who applied by post and filled in the form themselves tended to be those who had had previous dealings with Government departments and were familiar with this type of application process. However, even some of this group stated that they found the form long and off-putting and some of these had contacted PCAL for assistance with filling in the form.

‘It was quite easy because we have done this sort of thing over a number of years. It wasn’t difficult for us…it was just a standard sort of form you always get for other things.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘She said would you like us to fill them in, or are you able, and I said “oh no, send the forms through and I will fill them in” so that’s what they did. I found no problems at all.’

(Mid resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘It is just so long-winded. They ask your name, date of birth, National Insurance number, and then they ask you all the other questions; what your income is, what your outgoings are. I thought why are they asking income when I’m only getting £140 a week because that is all they need to know…I think the form is what will put people off; they want to know all your business. If you are a pensioner, you should just have to prove that, and how much you have coming in. They want to know how long you have been living here. It is just too many questions.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘There were too many technical words, it needed to be more explicit, there were phrases I didn’t understand at all. They asked the same questions in different ways.’

(Low resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)
Overall, most recent recipients found the application process easier than they had hoped. This was for one or more of the following reasons:

- expectations had been based on previous (difficult) experiences of claiming benefits (or trying to claim benefits on someone else’s behalf);
- they had not anticipated receiving a home visit and this made the process much easier;
- the processing of the claim was quicker than they had thought it would be;
- the questions on the claim form were easier to answer or less obtrusive than they thought they would be.

One or two recent recipients suggested improvements to the application process which focus on:

- making the questions on the claims form easier to understand by phrasing them ‘in plain English’;
- if the form is part-completed over the phone, crossing out the parts of the form that are not relevant and highlighting where additional information is required before sending it out;
- allowing verified photocopies in place of original documents.

‘I think they should make it easier for other people…it is the wording, which is not in English that everyone understands…I can’t think of an example, but when you read [the forms], you have to read them a few times, which is why I think a lot of old people do not apply…I think if the form was easier more people would apply.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘Enable you to send photocopies of important things – things that can’t be replaced. I don’t understand the point of verification. If you make a photocopy of a document it is just that – a photocopy – you can’t forge it. Or as a last resort have them verified by somebody.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

4.4 Understanding claim outcomes

Very few recent recipients had difficulties in understanding the notification that they received about the amount of Pension Credit that they would receive, with most finding the information detailed but clear. Most found that this notification arrived relatively quickly after they lodged their claim. One or two encountered a problem in understanding exactly how much they were likely to receive (although the fact that their claim had been successful was clear).
'It happened a couple of weeks after her visit. They sent me five pages with a breakdown of what I had been getting and what I was entitled to. It was very thorough…they did change the amount of pence a couple of times…it was not a problem, I think they just kept rechecking their figures, but it was always £22 something.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

‘I didn’t understand the letter from PC – it said I was getting so much per week then it went down to £46. I took it to Brun House and they said something was wrong. I couldn’t understand how much we were getting a fortnight. I’ve been getting £300+ a fortnight and now at the bottom it says I’ll receive a pension of £46 a week. Then they told me that’s for your wife. It was all very confusing. I thought the £46 was all I was going to get.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)
5 Ideas for encouraging take-up

Potential eligible non-recipients and recent recipients were asked for their opinions on some ideas for possible changes to the Pension Credit process which might be considered for the future by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – particularly whether:

- an anonymous helpline to allow respondents to find out about their eligibility for Pension Credit without having to provide any information that would enable them to be identified;
- using information held by the DWP and other Government departments to pre-populate an application form prior to sending it out to older people;
- guaranteeing to give all older people putting in an application for Pension Credit £5 a week for six months after they lodge their claim, regardless of whether their claim is successful or not;
- ignoring all earnings from work when calculating Pension Credit eligibility;
- awarding Pension Credit as an annual lump sum rather than a weekly amount;
- providing additional assistance to those in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) or Council Tax Benefit (CTB) to help them with the impact of adjustments made to these awards as a result of receiving Pension Credit.

This chapter looks at reactions to each of these ideas in turn.

5.1 Anonymous helpline

It was suggested to respondents that an anonymous helpline could be provided to help to give older people an indication of whether or not they would be eligible for Pension Credit without them having to provide any details that would identify them personally (such as their name, address and national insurance number). It was explained that in order to establish eligibility, they would need to provide details of their income and savings.
This idea was generally viewed very positively by both potential eligible non-recipients and recent recipients of Pension Credit. Some potential eligible non-recipients spontaneously mentioned that this sort of service should be available so that older people can find out whether they are entitled to Pension Credit without having to go through the hassle of making a claim and risking the embarrassment of having a claim rejected. As mentioned earlier, some non-recipients had attempted to use Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL) to clarify the rules around eligibility without disclosing their personal details and been frustrated that it was not possible to find out likely eligibility without going through an application.

‘That’s just what you want actually, to find out without giving your national insurance number. As we’ve all said, you don’t want to go through the whole application and then find out you won’t get anything.’

960-74, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

Despite the fact that spontaneous suggestions were for this type of service to be offered by a third party organisation (such as the Citizens Advice Bureau), respondents were comfortable with it being provided by the DWP if it was anonymous.

‘I’d be happy to know I was eligible and then I’d be prepared to take the next step. I’d expect the helpline to tell me what to do next and where to go and then I would do it.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘DWP would be fine. If they haven’t got your name, it wouldn’t matter.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

The concept of the anonymous helpline was viewed positively (and note the emphasis on anonymity in some of the quotes above) because it would help to address the most common primary barrier to a claim being made – a perceived lack of eligibility. It also addresses the secondary barriers of difficulty in understanding the rules for eligibility and an unwillingness to give out personal financial information (unnecessarily) since respondents would not need to put any of their financial details ‘on record’ if the helpline indicated that they would be unlikely to be eligible for Pension Credit. An anonymous helpline would also tackle the secondary barrier concerning an unwillingness to ‘ask’ for benefits to some extent, since respondents would not risk the embarrassment/discomfort of having an application turned down if the helpline indicated that they would not be eligible. However, a few felt that even to be told that they would not be eligible over the phone anonymously would cause them some discomfort.

Respondents were asked whether they would expect or need such a helpline to provide information on the likely amount of Pension Credit that they would be eligible for. The most common reaction was that this would be helpful but not necessarily essential (reflecting the fact that, for the most part it, was not a concern that they would only receive a small amount of Pension Credit that was deterring a claim but simply a perceived lack of eligibility for anything at all).
I think it would encourage people. I don’t think it would matter [that they don’t tell you the exact amount] because at least you might know that you will get something...even a little amount would make a difference.’

(Low resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

‘A helpline would have been a great help. You wouldn’t have revealed your financial situation for no reason. It would help to know if I was eligible or not and to know it would be as little as 24p – knowing this would help me decide whether to apply or not.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘That’s a good idea that one, because that’s what people want, a relatively instant answer.’

(75-84, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

Despite this positive reaction, it is worth noting that these positive reactions may be difficult to translate into action. There will be a marketing challenge in promoting this service to older people who believe that they are ineligible and who (as a result) do not necessarily read any information that they receive about Pension Credit in full.

The only negative comments expressed about the idea of an anonymous helpline were from respondents who had difficulty comprehending how the helpline could establish eligibility without the disclosure of any personal details (and hence, were worried that the helpline staff might provide misleading information) or from those who were uncomfortable using the phone for any form of discussion about their financial situation (or even more generally). Respondents with these views were in the minority.

‘How are you going to know how much you are getting if you don’t give your name?’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘…but a lot of old people are still frightened of the phone.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

5.2 Pre-populated application forms

Respondents were asked how they would feel if the DWP accessed information about their income and savings from other Government organisations (such as the HMRC or local councils in the case of recipients of HB or CTB). It was explained that this information could then be used to complete a Pension Credit application form for those who appeared to be eligible and the completed form could then be sent to the pensioner to be verified. This would essentially mean that the claims process
would not need to be instigated by the older people themselves. Respondents were asked whether they would prefer to return their verified form by post, to be able to make a telephone to state whether or not the information is correct or to receiving a visit from the DWP to go through completed form. They were also asked how they would feel if they did not need to return a form at all but were simply sent a letter informing them that they would receive Pension Credit (with payments then being made into their account automatically).

On the face of it, the concept of having a pre-populated form appealed to both recent recipients and potential eligible non-recipients. A pre-populated form indicating that they would be entitled to Pension Credit would remove primary barriers about perceived ineligibility (and lack of awareness for those who had not heard of Pension Credit). It would also remove a lot of the secondary barriers about the nature of the application process: the difficulties in working out who is eligible, the need to collect financial information, the overall perceived complexity of the application process and the need to provide documentary information. It would also help to tackle the concerns about having to ask for benefits since older people would not have to start the claims process themselves.

‘That seems a good idea because they would have all the information and they would only be targeting the people who are actually entitled to it…’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘Yes, if someone had a letter that came through the door saying you were entitled to it with the form completed, then people would be more likely to send it back. It would cut out all the people who fill the forms out but are not entitled; that is a waste of time. At the moment someone who is entitled to it might be at the back of the queue because of all the other people.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘I think I’d do it. The full facts are there in front of them without you telling any lies or making any mistakes.’

(65-74, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

‘Yes I think it would encourage people to make a claim – it’s took the hard work out of it – hard work is making sense of the form – anyone who uses a form – young or old – straightaway there is a fear that I won’t be able to fill it in and if it’s all done for you and the information is there and correct you have the option to fill it in or not fill it in.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

However, despite initial positive responses, a good number of older people were uncomfortable about the perceived invasion of their privacy that accessing information from other Government organisations would represent. Older people held a full
spectrum of views on the extent of personal information that the DWP (and the Government more generally) could access. Some believed that the DWP could already access details of all their income and savings while others thought that it was impossible for any Government organisation to access information from banks about their savings. It seemed possible that some of those raising these concerns about data being accessed from other organisations, would not actually have queried the DWP’s right to have this data unless it was specifically pointed out to them that it had been collected in this way.

‘It does smack of Big Brother. We all think mistakenly that our business is private, but it isn’t really, but I think that’s taking things a bit too far.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘No, I think a lot of people would not apply because of that…they don’t want people to know what they have got…they are looking into your affairs without your authority. It is wrong…a lot of people don’t even tell their families what they have got, so why should the Government look into your affairs like that?’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

Because of concerns about invasion of privacy, when asked directly, most older people stated that they would prefer to be asked for their permission prior to the DWP accessing information from other organisations. However, it seems likely that those who believed that they would not be eligible for Pension Credit would not approve such a request (or even read it in much detail) since they would not believe that it would be worthwhile.

As well as concerns about their privacy, the concept of a pre-populated form led some older people to worry about the likelihood of information collected from other departments being incorrect and who would take responsibility if mistakes were made. Some older people were concerned that they would not notice any mistakes in a pre-completed form, sign it and then find out at a later date that the information had been correct. They were concerned that this sort of scenario would put them in a situation where they would be expected to pay back large sums of money to the Government. In part these concerns were fuelled by recent press coverage of individuals being asked to pay back money awarded to them incorrectly under the Working Tax Credit Scheme.

‘Well I don’t know that the Inland Revenue would necessarily have all the information about somebody – all the information about somebody’s shares and all the things they have. I mean I haven’t filled in a tax form for years.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

HB or CTB recipients were particularly concerned about the idea of a pre-populated form. Because they had the understanding that it would be possible for them to be net worse off as a result of receiving Pension Credit, they were concerned about the
idea of a claim being ‘out of their control’. These fears could be allayed if they could be reassured that there would be no risk of them being net worse off.

Despite these concerns, it is interesting to note that there is some evidence from other research that people may not, in the event, be overly resistant to the linking of data. For example, respondents to the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing were asked if they minded the Department of Health and the DWP releasing administrative data on the respondent’s health and economic-related data respectively to the researchers analysing their responses. Of those asked, 79 per cent gave permission for economic data to be linked to their survey responses. This is obviously a different context but shows resistance to data linking may not be overly strong.

In terms of the mechanism for confirming that information on a pre-populated form was correct, respondents were happy with the idea of returning a signed form in the post. Having the option to telephone to confirm the information on the application form is correct or receiving a visit from a DWP representative to complete the claim were seen as ‘nice to have’ alternatives but most did not view these options as a significant improvement on simply posting the form back.

‘Telephone would be easier – I always find it easier to pick up the phone than post a letter.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘The trouble is you don’t know who you are speaking to. You call places like the council, and when you call back that person is not there. This is the same thing, if you do this on the telephone. In writing is better…when you sign your name that means that you have accepted it.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

Older people had split views on whether or not they would be comfortable about Pension Credit awards being paid into their account without them having had to sign a claim form. Some felt that this would be a good approach, while others have concerns over accuracy of payments, who would be responsible for overpayments and the uncertainty that they would feel if they did not know how their Pension Credit entitlement had been calculated. Discussing this option caused some respondents to question whether it would not simply be easier to pay a higher basic state pension (i.e. one single financial benefit to older people), rather than several different benefits awarded automatically.

‘There’s always that element that you might be allowed more – I’d still like to see someone – they might give you too much and want to claw it back in 12 months – take a whole lump off you at one time – you see all these doubts creeping in all the time.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)
‘You must have it down on paper – you must tell people otherwise it’s too easy and people who don’t need it might get it.’

(Low resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

5.3 Guarantee of £5 a week for six months for completing an application

A further idea that was put to older people was that those who had not made an application for Pension Credit could be sent a letter stating that if they completed an application, they would be guaranteed to receive £5 a week for six months regardless of whether or not they were entitled to Pension Credit on an ongoing basis. At the end of the six-month period, they would either receive a backdated lump sum payment if they were entitled to more than £5 a week or a reduced amount (or nothing) if they were found to be entitled to less (or not entitled to Pension Credit at all).

For the most part, respondents reacted with disbelief and suspicion to this idea – it simply seemed ‘too good to be true’. Part of the suspicion that respondents had about this concept stemmed from the fact that they did not believe that the DWP would be interested in increasing its expenditure on benefits (believing instead that the Department would want to reduce costs). In this context, they believed that, if the Government was prepared to consider an incentive for simply completing an application form, then this must indicate that the information collected was to be used for some other purpose. Those respondents in receipt of other benefits were concerned that information might be used to prove that they were ineligible for the benefits that they were already receiving and hence, work to their long-term loss. Some of this group were also worried that the £5 a week payments would be counted as income and hence, serve to reduce their other benefits.

‘But you don’t get anything for nothing – they’d take it off my Attendance Allowance – they’d get it back some way definitely.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

‘The trust is not there. You see these poor people that have been paid these credits and now then the Inland Revenue comes back saying they have made a mistake and want the money back. I would think that something like that could happen here.’

(65-74, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

‘Somebody offers you money, there’s always something behind it. That’s my way of thinking.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)
Some older people found it difficult to believe that they would not need to pay anything back from their £5 a week payments if they turned out not to be eligible. Others were simply concerned that such a scheme would be a waste of taxpayers’ money. It should be noted that other initiatives discussed with older people (for example, not including earnings when calculating income for Pension Credit purposes, would also cost money. However, it seems that this idea particularly resonated with respondents as being a waste of public money.

‘I think people will question why they get it at all if they might not be entitled to it in the end.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘But then what is going to happen if you are not. They couldn’t claim it back? But that is rather a waste of taxpayer's money. I don’t think that is a good idea to be honest. It may encourage people to apply but as an ex taxpayer I think it would be quite a waste of taxpayers money.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘They keep coming up with these ideas of doing this and that which is costing money. They don’t want to take the ultimate step of raising the pension.’

(65-74, potentially eligible for Savings Credit only)

If this idea were to have a chance of working it is clear that a lot of work would have to be done to minimise people’s suspicion and make it clear that there were ‘no strings attached’. However, as this report and other evidence makes clear, it is a challenge to get across clear messages to older people about Pension Credit.

That said, a few respondents stated that it would have encouraged them to make a claim (sooner). The recent recipients who found the concept appealing tended to be those receiving low levels of Pension Credit (who had some questions over whether or not it had been worthwhile them going through the application process). Some potential eligible non-recipients acknowledged that it would perhaps help to make it worthwhile going through what was seen to be a complex and time-consuming application process. For these respondents, the approach would help to combat the barrier of perceived ineligibility by reassuring them that they would at least be eligible for the £5 a week payments. However, it was more common for respondents to state that such an offer would actually put them off applying.

‘Excellent! At least I’m getting something! As long as they didn’t have to give the money back.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)
‘Yes absolutely I’d do it. And then if they found out you weren’t entitled to it, okay, they won’t want it back. I’d be chuffed with that.’

(65-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee and Savings Credit)

One or two of those who viewed the concept positively thought that because the guaranteed sum was fixed, these guaranteed payments would be issued more quickly then if they were waiting for an exact entitlement to be calculated.

‘I suppose it is something to be getting on with, you would feel that the wheels are turning, and there’s a chance of you getting something – you might get more in the end, and if you already receive some, well that is just a bonus.’

(Low resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

When asked directly, respondents stated that this scheme should be available to all older people and not just those who receive notification from the DWP in the interests of fairness. However, for potential eligible non-recipients, this, in part, reflects the fact that many did not feel that they were eligible for Pension Credit and hence, would not expect to receive the offer if it were limited to those the DWP thought were likely to qualify.

5.4 Receipt of Pension Credit as an annual lump sum

Another idea that was put to respondents was that those entitled to Pension Credit could opt to receive it as an annual lump sum (in arrears) rather than a weekly amount, particularly if they were only entitled to small weekly amounts of Pension Credit.

The majority of older people did not find this an attractive proposition as they would prefer to receive their entitlement weekly. Despite the fact that all welcomed Winter Fuel Payments and found the fact that these payments are made in a lump sum beneficial, most older people felt that this approach would not be appropriate for Pension Credit. They felt that it was appropriate for Winter Fuel Payments to be paid in a lump sum because they are for a specific purpose while Pension Credit is intended simply to increase the regular budget available for day-to-day living. For Pension Credit to be paid as an annual lump sum was felt to be ‘out of keeping’ with a benefit designed for those whose basic pension is inadequate.

‘I think they would want it every week, because you have bills to pay every week...I don’t think getting a lump sum would encourage anybody, because if you are in our circumstances, you live from day to day. We couldn’t afford to wait...’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘You would get this benefit because you need the money, it’s not a gift. If you need it, you need it every week to get by.’

(65-74, potentially eligible for Guarantee and Savings Credit)
‘It would only work if people had a certain bill that came around at a certain time of year, and this might pay for it…I think people would want it weekly…No, I don’t think this would encourage more people.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

In addition, older people were concerned that, if Pension Credit was paid annually in arrears, then their entitlement would be lost if they were to die before the year was out.

‘No, I would prefer it weekly…for a start we are all over 60, and you don’t know what is going to happen to you in the course of that year. If something did happen to you, that money would be gone; your family wouldn’t get it either.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

A few older people felt that if they were only eligible for a small amount of Pension Credit, then they might prefer to receive a lump sum payment. These older people felt that it would overcome the minor barrier of not receiving enough to make an application worthwhile. However, these were mostly recent recipients who had already made their application. Potential eligible non-recipients tended to have very little concept of how much Pension Credit they might be entitled to and hence, most were not able to weigh up whether they would prefer to receive their award weekly or annually.

‘£3 a week is nothing really so to save that [£130] that would be handy. Would be more encouraged to apply but anything is worth claiming for.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

‘It wouldn’t encourage me to apply but £150 a year is better than £3 a week.’

(65-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)

5.5 Extra support for those receiving Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit

Those already receiving HB or CTB were asked for their views on the concept of the DWP offering additional support to assist people with adjusting their budgets, etc, if the amount that they received in HB or CTB was likely to change as a result of claiming Pension Credit. This extra support could take the form of a member of The Pension Service guiding potential Pension Credit applicants through the application process, explaining how their other benefits might be affected and answering any questions that they had about this. A specific example given was that if a reduction in the level of HB meant that people had to adjust to paying part of their rent to their landlord themselves (rather than having it paid in full direct to the landlord) then The Pension Service representative could provide advice on the best way to arrange this.
The idea of having a Pension Service representative to talk through the Pension Credit application process had some appeal for some potential eligible non-recipients. However, the main appeal was being able to discuss whether or not they would be net better off by making a claim (since several non-recipients who were receiving HB/CTB did not feel that this would be the case) rather than the finer points of managing adjustment in different income streams. This is a useful finding as it helps to lessen the possible perception that the link with other benefits is not about other, more intricate, interactions, for example, juggling budgets, we can be clearer from this research that it is more fundamental and relates to a misconception that they would be worse off. If simply used to establish whether or not individuals would be worse off, then such a service would be tackling the primary barrier of concern about other benefits being reduced so that they ended up net worse off.

Essentially, because most potential eligible non-recipients were not aware of the potential complications that this type of approach would be designed to address, they did not understand fully why such a service would be necessary. As a result, offering such a service would be unlikely to increase take-up of Pension Credit. If anything, offering such a service might serve to make the system for determining eligibility and claiming for Pension Credit appear even more complicated.

5.6 Ignoring earnings from work when calculating Pension Credit eligibility

The final idea that was explored with respondents was adjusting eligibility criteria so that earnings from work were ignored in calculations to establish entitlement to Pension Credit, i.e. only income from pension payments and notional income from savings and investments worth over £6,000 would be counted as ‘income’. The idea of ignoring earnings from work up to £75 per week in Pension Credit calculations was explored alongside the idea of ignoring all income from work.

This approach was felt to be ‘fair’ by the majority as it meant older people would not be penalised because they chose to work in their retirement. It would allow older people to earn a little extra money in retirement without it affecting benefits they would otherwise be entitled to.

‘A lot of people my age go back to work, and it is part-time. They are not earning anything like they did before retirement so I think it would be lovely if they did not include those earnings. There is an 80 year old woman who works around the corner, and I would hate to think that whatever she earns is taken into consideration.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

‘I think it would be good for people who want a bit of extra money because what is the point of going to work if you’re going to lose any benefits you’re getting, which is what happens at the moment.’

(60-84, potentially eligible for Guarantee Credit only)
'I think they should be ignoring it anyhow. You have paid into that state pension for all that time, why should you be penalised for wanting to work a little longer?'

Respondents felt that such an approach would increase the number of older people choosing to continue working after drawing their pension. However, as only a few respondents were working or would like to work, the vast majority were speaking ‘hypothetically’. However, they did not feel that it would actually increase the number of older people claiming Pension Credit.

It is worth noting that those potential eligible non-recipients who were still working had assumed that they would not be eligible for Pension Credit simply because they were working at all. The screening process for the research established that their income from work was not sufficient to take them over the Pension Credit threshold. However, they had not explored the eligibility rules in detail and had simply assumed that older people who worked were not eligible. From this perspective, raising the threshold for earning and still receiving Pension Credit would be unlikely to do much to convince them to put in an application.

When asked directly, respondents felt that all income from work should be discounted for the purposes of calculating Pension Credit eligibility rather than just all earnings over £75 a week.

5.7 Relative merit of different propositions

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate respondents’ views on the relative effects of the various ideas on likely take-up of Pension Credit and the barriers that each idea helps to combat. The chart which looks at barriers follows the same principles as that in Chapter 3. The dark blue circles show primary barriers, the mid-blue circles show secondary barriers and the light blue circles show minor barriers. The relative sizes of the circles are designed to give an indication of the proportion of older people to whom they apply.
Figure 5.1 Perceived relative merit of different propositions

Figure 5.2 Barriers tackled by each proposition
Ideas for encouraging take-up

Older people generally felt that an anonymous helpline would be an addition to the Pension Credit process that would be most likely to encourage take-up (although it may be difficult to translate this enthusiasm into action given that these individuals are reasonably convinced that they are ineligible for Pension Credit). The use of forms pre-populated with data collected from other Government sources was also thought likely to have quite a significant impact on take-up. As Figure 5.2 illustrates, these approaches tackle the most barriers to take-up that potential eligible non-recipients experience. Both approaches help to tackle the most common primary barrier of perceived ineligibility. They also tackle the secondary barriers around the complicated nature of the application process and the difficulty in working out the rules for eligibility. Pre-populated forms would also help to encourage the small proportion of older people who are still unaware of Pension Credit to apply.

The guarantee of £5 a week for six months if an application is received was only felt to encourage a few additional older people to make a claim. The option to receive Pension Credit as a lump sum rather than a weekly amount was likely to have an even smaller impact.

The older people taking part in the research felt that extra support for HB/CTB recipients and discounting income from work when calculating eligibility would both have a limited impact on levels of take-up. In the case of extra support for recipients of other benefits, this was simply because of a lack of awareness of the potential complications of claiming Pension Credit in combination with other benefits (the only interaction that older people were concerned about was other benefits being reduced to the point where they would be net worse off for having claimed). In the case of ignoring income from work, this was simply because only a few respondents were in work and these had assumed that the very fact of working at all made them ineligible (however, they did acknowledge that adjusting the rules around income from work would make more people eligible for Pension Credit and hence, increase the number of claimants in this way).
6 Views on receiving Pension Credit

This chapter explores how recent recipients feel about Pension Credit now they have made a successful claim. We look at whether they feel applying for Pension Credit has been worthwhile and the impact, if any, it has had on their lives. We also discuss attitudes towards encouraging others to apply for Pension Credit.

6.1 Views on amount of Pension Credit received

The majority of recent recipients consider the process of applying for Pension Credit to have been worthwhile.

Those least likely to feel that applying has been worthwhile are those in receipt of small amounts of Pension Credit (£2 or under per week). Some of these feel that if had they known in advance how little they would receive, they would not have bothered making an application. It is interesting to note that this concern does not appear to act as a barrier to applying (because older people have very little concept of the potential levels of award prior to making an application) but that it can cause some resentment after a successful application has been made.

‘24p a week won’t even buy me a postage stamp.’
(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘When they told us what we were getting, to be really honest with you, I thought, “well that was a waste of time”. That was exactly what I thought, but then again if you save £2 a week it will add up, but all that form filling for £2. Was it worth it? No it wasn’t.’
(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

Around half of recent recipients had made their claim for Pension Credit with no idea of what level of award they would be likely to receive. Those who had formed some expectation about the likely level of their award were more likely to have received
more than they were expecting than less (to some extent because they had assumed they would not be eligible at all and hence, were surprised to be awarded any Pension Credit at all). This may reflect a tendency among non-recipients to underestimate the value of any award.

‘To get something – It was a bit of a shock – I expected them to say they were sorry…’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘I didn’t think I would get that…if I got £15-20 I would have been happy.’

(High resistor, 65-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

Those who did receive less than they expected either felt they had been led to believe they would get a higher award by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) staff during the claims process, or felt their standard of living was considerably below an acceptable level (leading them to expect to be entitled to a greater amount).

‘I thought I would have got more money because I have to pay £16 rent, and mostly I can’t afford to buy things like meat. I have to borrow money, and pay it out of my money on the Monday, which then leaves me short again, and each weekend I don’t have any money.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘It was less because the man said I was probably going to get around £14.’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

6.2 Impact of Pension Credit

Most recent recipients state that receiving Pension Credit has made a positive difference to their day-to-day lives. For some, it is a large and essential part of their income, while for others it means that bills are now less of a worry and their weekly budget does not feel quite so stretched. Some of those receiving less than £5 a week in Pension Credit state that although the difference to their income has been negligible, they still feel satisfaction in the fact that they have received some Pension Credit because it makes them feel that they have ‘not been forgotten’.

‘We’ve got bills to pay and that extra £9 a week well it’s there and I know I’ve got it for extra food or gear to clean the house with. I don’t spend it on enjoying myself or anything.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)
“Before the Pension Credit I used to have to watch my balance. I kept it on my computer so I knew exactly where I was to avoid going into overdraft. Now I actually have a balance. I could pay for a haircut with a debit card because I knew there was money in there.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

‘It’s not made a big financial difference but there is satisfaction of having done it and been eligible – realising that you’ve not been forgotten.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

For some, the biggest difference has been in receiving additional passported benefits as a result of their Pension Credit award. This is particularly the case for those who found out that they were eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) and/or Council Tax Benefit (CTB) as a result of their Pension Credit application.

‘We would have to go without a lot without that, and if we didn’t get this we wouldn’t get our rent and council tax either.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘The biggest difference is that I can claim Housing Benefit and Council tax relief and these have helped me enormously, together they have made a difference and I can go on holidays!’

(Low resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)

‘Yes it has been worthwhile. One of the reasons is that I now get a voucher for my glasses which cost £300.’

(High resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)

6.3 Encouraging others to apply

As mentioned earlier (Section 3.1.5), a minority of recent recipients have tried to encourage others to apply. They have tried to let others know that there is nothing to be lost by making an application.

‘I have told a couple of my mates about the credit thing…if they have applied, they haven’t told me…I told them what my daughter said – they can only say no to you.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Savings Credit only)
‘Yes – but it is difficult – you get into the realms of prying to some extent but I try to manoeuvre a conversation into it when I realise they are of an age and say this guy is brilliant – give him a ring – I felt like I was on a crusade for a while – I felt aggrieved that other people could be sat there with their name on it basically – I do this anywhere – if I have a moment and it comes up.’

(Mid-resistor, 75-84, receiving Guarantee and Savings Credit)

However, the majority simply do not feel comfortable discussing finances and benefits with other people and hence, have not tried to encourage them to apply. Some still feel that there is some shame attached to receiving benefits and they feel that it would be inappropriate to suggest that someone else might be entitled for fear of offence.

‘Not really. It is not something you really talk about. Perhaps people feel beneath others if they do put in for all these benefits. Perhaps it makes you feel poor…it is benefits in general…you get people who look down on you if you say you are on benefit.’

(High resistor, 60-74, receiving Guarantee Credit only)

‘To my mind it’s a touchy delicate subject because in a sense you are sort of saying well, I don’t think you can manage, apply for this, and I mean it’s a subject that you’d have to approach very very carefully for fear of insulting people.’

(Mid-resistor, 60-74, receiving Savings Credit only)
7 Conclusions

Lack of awareness of Pension Credit is only a barrier to take-up for a few potential eligible non-recipients. The majority have seen some form of advertising about Pension Credit; most commonly, television adverts but letters and leaflets have also reached a large proportion.

This in-depth exploration has added to our knowledge on primary and secondary barriers. The key and primary barriers preventing take-up are a perceived lack of eligibility and a fear over interaction with other benefits, i.e. they are ‘knowledge’ or ‘understanding’ based barriers. Potential eligible non-recipients are unclear on the rules for qualifying for Pension Credit and assume they are ineligible for a wide variety of reasons. Some of those who have tried to find out exactly who is entitled have encountered problems in understanding the literature. They find it difficult to comprehend the fact that eligibility is determined by examining both savings and income levels and hence, it is not possible to give a single figure for the income threshold for receiving Pension Credit. Because older people assume ineligibility for a wide variety of reasons, there are no ‘easy’ messages to convey to tackle this barrier.

Older people who have made a decision not to apply for Pension Credit because they are concerned about interaction with other benefits have assumed that this interaction could leave them net worse off. This is a key finding as it highlights that it is not the budgetary adjustments that they would need to make as a result of receiving different amounts from different income streams that is a concern but simply the fact that their income will be lower overall. It is not simply Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB) that respondents feel are at risk of being reduced – some also thought it was possible that their state pension could be reduced. Hence, the fact that individuals cannot end up being net worse off as a result of making a claim for Pension Credit, still needs to be effectively communicated to potential eligible non-recipients. This reflects the confusion people have about Pension Credit, for example, in relation to eligibility rules, that feeds into the primary barrier of not perceiving themselves to be eligible.
While most non-recipients have negative associations with the Pension Credit claims process (particularly with the need to provide financial information and the perceived complexity of the forms), these barriers are largely secondary. They serve to reinforce a decision not to apply but they are not, in themselves, reasons for not applying.

It was uncommon for older people in this study to decide not to make a claim on the basis of the amount of Pension Credit that they would be likely to receive (few have a concept of the range of awards possible). However, some recent recipients of very small awards felt negatively about the sums involved (relative to the hassle of the application process) after they had made their claim.

Most of the triggers to making a claim that were successful with recent recipients of Pension Credit tackled perceptions of ineligibility.

The most common trigger to a claim was a personal visit from a representative of The Pension Service. In most cases, these visits had been arranged specifically to discuss Pension Credit (set up either through a ‘cold call’ or to follow-up a request for an application form that had not resulted in a claim), but in some cases there were other primary reasons for the visit (such as the need to discuss arrangements for another benefit). During these visits, respondents have been persuaded of their eligibility and/or that their overall income from benefits would not be adversely affected by claiming while, at the same time, tackling some of the secondary barriers concerning the application process by assisting with the completion of forms and verifying documentation. While, obviously, very resource-intensive, proactive action of this nature seems to have been effective in reaching some of those who initially resisted making a claim for Pension Credit (and this is triangulated with evidence from other Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) research).

However, intervention by third party organisations (such as local councils and Welfare Rights) and encouragement by family and friends, have also played a role in persuading some recent recipients to put in an application.

Family members can be effective in finding out about the qualification criteria for Pension Credit and persuading older people that there is a good chance that they would be eligible. On this basis, it may be worth considering more marketing activity aimed specifically at the families of older people. The research indicates that families are more likely to play a role in prompting Pension Credit take-up among those who are eligible for Guarantee Credit. This may be because it is more obvious to relatives that these older people are experiencing financial hardship. It may be worth promoting the savings element of Pension Credit to relatives.

When given a description of the application process for Pension Credit, potential eligible non-recipients tended to feel that it seemed more straightforward than they had anticipated. Similarly, recent recipients who had gone through the process had found it easier than they had expected. Both groups were surprised by the extent of help and support that was available to guide them through the process. The fact that
it was possible to request a personal visit to assist with a claim was a welcome surprise to many. It would appear that there is value in promoting the availability of personal visits more, particularly to emphasize that visits can be made to help determine eligibility as well as to assist with the process of actually making a claim.

Potential eligible non-recipients would welcome a confidential helpline that they would be able to use to establish their eligibility for Pension Credit without having to disclose any personal details. This would help to tackle barriers of assumed ineligibility as well as reducing fears of applying for the benefit and being turned down. This could be operated by the DWP and offering it through Pension Credit Application Line (PCAL) may be the most cost-effective channel. However, this would need to be marketed as a separate service (possibly with a separate contact number). There will be a marketing challenge in promoting this service to older people who believe that they are ineligible (and who have already been exposed to a large amount of Pension Credit marketing activity). If such a helpline were to be offered, it would be worth promoting it to the family of older people and suggesting that they could use it to establish the eligibility of elderly relatives. It would also be worth marketing it to third party organisations to use on their clients’ behalf.

Sending out application forms pre-populated with data acquired from other Government organisations is perhaps the approach that is most likely to be effective in promoting take-up in the longer term, since this would tackle the barrier of perceived ineligibility as well as many of the secondary barriers surrounding the nature of the application process. However, when asked, the majority of older people had concerns about data being accessed without their permission.

Approaches such as offering Pension Credit as a lump sum instead of a weekly amount or offering a guaranteed sum for six months if an application is completed are unlikely to significantly increase take-up.

The majority of recent recipients of Pension Credit felt that the application process has been worthwhile and that receiving Pension Credit had had a positive impact on their day-to-day lives.
Appendix
Technical appendix

The tables below shows a detailed breakdown of the 40 interviews conducted among recent recipients.

Table A.1 Breakdown of 40 interviews conducted among recent recipients – Pension Credit type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pension Credit type</th>
<th>Guarantee only</th>
<th>Savings only</th>
<th>Guarantee and savings</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Low’ resistors</td>
<td>6 interviews</td>
<td>4 interviews</td>
<td>4 interviews</td>
<td>14 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 0 and 8 weeks backdate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Medium’ resistors</td>
<td>2 interviews</td>
<td>4 interviews</td>
<td>4 interviews</td>
<td>10 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 3-10 months backdate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Long’ resistors</td>
<td>1 interview</td>
<td>7 interviews</td>
<td>8 interviews</td>
<td>16 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 months+ backdate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9 interviews</td>
<td>15 interviews</td>
<td>16 interviews</td>
<td>40 interviews</td>
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Table A.2  Breakdown of 40 interviews conducted among recent recipients – other considerations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Other considerations</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Receipt of HB/CTB prior to PC</th>
<th>Amount of PC</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Aged 60-74:</td>
<td>HB/CTB receipt:</td>
<td>Less than £5:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>10 interviews</td>
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<td>Between 0 and 8 weeks backdate</td>
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<td>5 interviews</td>
<td>11 interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Medium' resistors</td>
<td>Aged 60-74:</td>
<td>HB/CTB receipt:</td>
<td>Less than £5:</td>
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<td>5 interviews</td>
<td>8 interviews</td>
<td>3 interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between 3-10 months backdate</td>
<td>5 interviews</td>
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<td>7 interviews</td>
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<td>'Long' resistors</td>
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<td>HB/CTB receipt:</td>
<td>Less than £5:</td>
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<td>11 months+ backdate</td>
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<td>HB/CTB non receipt:</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>9 interviews</td>
<td>15 interviews</td>
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