

Older residents can give up their Winter Fuel Payment for others in Test Valley

- Residents should only donate if they genuinely don't need it
- People in need of support are being urged to come forward
- TVBC will match the donations made

People in Test Valley who receive a Winter Fuel Payment, but don't necessarily need it, are now able to donate it locally to support those most in need.

All residents who are over the age of 66 before September 25, get an annual payment from the government of between £250 and £600, depending on their age and living situation.

This year there's an extra £300 for all households, which will be paid at the same time, to help tackle the rising cost of living.

To support those most in need, Test Valley Borough Council has joined forces with Citizens Advice Test Valley and local charity, Unity, to offer those who genuinely don't need their full Winter Fuel Payment, and would like to redistribute it locally, an opportunity to donate the money to other pensioners living in Test Valley.

Citizens Advice will then distribute the donated funds to people of pensionable age who are struggling the most to pay their bills.

Anyone wishing to donate some of their Winter Fuel Payment is asked to contact Unity on 03304 004 116, or visit www.unityonline.org.uk/winter-fuel-payment-donations.

Anyone in need of additional financial support is also being urged to contact Citizens Advice as soon as possible on 0808 178 6882 or go to their website www.testvalleycab.org.uk.

Leader of Test Valley Borough Council, Cllr Phil North said:

"As the cost of living continues to rise, we're keen to ensure that those people over the age of 66 who are in need of extra support this winter can get it. We would be incredibly grateful to anyone who is in a comfortable enough position, to donate part

of their Winter Fuel Payment to help others in their community. This kind of scheme works really successfully in other areas and we're keen to roll it out here. I have also agreed that Test Valley Borough Council match funds donations, initially up to £5,000. I must stress that we are not asking people to donate any money if there is any doubt whatsoever about whether they need it. We don't want people to cause themselves financial difficulties while trying to support others."

Chief executive of Unity, Terry Bishop said:

"This is such a challenging time for so many people across the community and we want to do all we can to help those in greatest need. Unity is proud to be able to work with Test Valley Borough Council and Citizens Advice on this initiative, and together we hope to make a real difference."

Ange Moon, chief officer at Citizens Advice Test Valley, added:

"As the cost of living crisis takes hold we all find ourselves in different situations. Some people who have received the government help may be able to pass it on to others in the community, and we will help to get that money to those who really need it. If you would like to donate and re-gift your Winter Fuel Payment then please get in touch."

In order to help even more people across Test Valley get the support they need, Test Valley Borough Council has also agreed to match fund any donations, **up to £5,000**.

Information about the Winter Fuel Payment for this year can be found at

www.gov.uk/winter-fuel-payment.

ENDS

For more information contact Jack Deery, communications officer at Test Valley Borough Council, on 01264 368414 or jdeery@testvalley.gov.uk.