



SEEFA Policy Panel on Later Life and Ageing

The removal of non means tested benefits

- There was concern that as non means tested benefits can make a huge difference to the quality of life of many older people it could be false economy to remove them
- Their removal could also cause great anxiety
- We have examples of people depending upon a free bus pass to reach lunch clubs and friends. Removal would lead to greater risk, social isolation and poorer diet
- Similarly with the fuel allowance, we know many people already die through cold in winter and many more cannot afford to heat their homes sufficiently to prevent risk of ill health. Removing the benefit would exacerbate the problem (*the latest figures on winter deaths in the SE are available*)
- We believe free prescriptions save the lives of older people who would economise on medication if they had to pay for it. This would be a false economy for the county's health
- It is believed that the cost of these universal benefits is small compared with the cost of administering means tested benefits
- It is known that the take up of means tested benefits by some groups of older people is low, in part due to stigma.
- For wealthier people the non means tested benefits could be taxable and/or donated to charity
- **We would like to see these non means tested benefits retained**