

Pension credit cuts are linked to deaths

Government cuts to pension credits have been linked to an increase in death rates among older pensioners.

Austerity measures by the Conservatives could have fuelled a rise in death rates among those aged 85 and over, according to a study.

David Stuckler, of the University of Oxford, said: "This study suggests that even seemingly small cuts to support for vulnerable older persons can have a devastating effect — possibly even cost-

ing them their lives." Experts analysed Office for National Statistics data on the death rates of pensioners in England from 2007 to 2013. The number of people claiming pension credits, intended to boost income to a weekly minimum, was analysed alongside how much funding they received after cuts took effect. Death rates among people aged 85 and over in England had been falling, the study found, but began to rise in 2011. By 2013 rates were 4 per cent

higher than in 2010 among men and 6 per cent higher for women. During this period, average spending on the pension credit fell from £2,482 per claimant in 2011 to £2,349 in 2013.

Researchers found a significant link with rising death rates for declines in pension credit spending and the number of people claiming the credit. Each 1 per cent decline in pension credit spending per person was linked to a 0.86 per cent rise in death rates.

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