



10th October 2014

Over 50s more likely to give up universal benefits if the funds were used for health and care

- **Health related universal benefits most fiercely protected**

Universal age related benefits form part of the social contract between the generations. Contributions have been made throughout the working life of many older people and they now understandably expect support in later life.

For many these benefits are seen as sacrosanct, and few over 50s would be willing to give them up. However, a new poll published by Saga reveals that whilst many remain staunch supporters of universal benefits, the Saga generations are significantly more likely to consider agreeing to the loss of their age related benefits if they knew the money was going towards additional funding for health and social care.

The poll of 9,794 over 50s shows that the age related benefit most valued by the Saga Generations is free prescriptions. Just 7% of respondents said that they would be willing to give up or pay tax on free prescriptions; however this figure more than doubled to 15% if they knew the funds would be ring-fenced to pay for health or social care.

In contrast, a quarter of respondents would be willing to give up or pay tax on the Free TV licence and two in five (39%) would be willing to do so if the funds were ring-fenced. Similarly, 27% of respondents would be willing to give up their free bus pass and this figure increased to 38% if the funds were used to improve health and social care. Perhaps understandably, those in the higher social grades (AB) were almost three times more likely to consider this (30%) compared to 13% of those in social grade DE.

Saga's director of communications Paul Green commented "Clearly nobody wants something they already have to be taken away from them, however our research shows that a significant minority would be willing to have some benefits taxed or be focussed on poorer pensioners. Support for this has undoubtedly grown over the past year, and are more pronounced if they knew the money was ring-fenced for the NHS and elderly care. It appears that the reality of the funding crisis in the nation's social care system is dawning on many over Briton's over 50s.

“So while there remains a general distrust that the money will be spent wisely, if the funds were to be ring-fenced, the Saga Generations would be more likely to support changes to universal benefits.”

Benefit		NET: Likely		NET: Unlikely	
		May-13	Sept-14	May-13	Sept-14
Free prescriptions	WITHOUT knowing money would go to care for the elderly	8%	7%	83%	85%
	WITH knowing money would go to care for the elderly	15%	15%	65%	68%
Free eye tests	WITHOUT knowing money would go to care for the elderly	11%	11%	76%	75%
	WITH knowing money would go to care for the elderly	23%	26%	55%	54%
Winter fuel allowance	WITHOUT knowing money would go to care for the elderly	18%	22%	66%	59%
	WITH knowing money would go to care for the elderly	29%	34%	49%	45%
Free bus pass	WITHOUT knowing money would go to care for the elderly	23%	27%	61%	58%
	WITH knowing money would go to care for the elderly	35%	38%	45%	44%
Free TV licence	WITHOUT knowing money would go to care for the elderly	20%	25%	59%	51%
	WITH knowing money would go to care for the elderly	34%	39%	43%	37%

Ends

For further information please contact the Saga Press Office on 01303 774716

Saga populus panel interviewed 9,794 Saga customers, all aged 50+, online between 12th and 19th September 2014. Populus is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

Saga provides products, services and insight to help improve the lives of those over the age of 50. The Saga brand has been carefully developed over the past 60 years to become one of the most recognised and trusted brands among UK consumers aged over 50. Saga is synonymous in the UK with the over 50s market and is recognised for its high quality products and services. These include cruises and holidays, home and motor insurance, savings and share dealing and the UK’s award winning Saga Magazine. Saga also provides domiciliary and primary healthcare services through Allied Healthcare. In addition to more than 2.1 million active customers it has built a proprietary database of more than 10.4 million contactable names.