# Labour government's proposed cuts to disability benefits spark outrage



In a recent announcement that has sparked significant concern among disabled individuals in Merseyside, the Labour government revealed plans to implement substantial cuts to the welfare budget, including changes to disability benefits. This move is seen as a profound shift, leaving many claimants feeling anxious about their financial future.

Hollie Thistle, a 26-year-old from Everton, is one such individual grappling with the implications of these announced cuts. She has been reliant on disability benefits and Universal Credit due to her struggles with autism, ADHD, and ongoing mental health issues. Following her dismissal from a previous job due to taking a number of sick days, she voiced her fears regarding the government's intentions. "I don't believe for a second any of this is about getting people back into work," she remarked, highlighting a lack of supportive measures aimed at aiding disabled individuals in securing employment.

The anticipated cuts were publicly addressed by Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall in the House of Commons last Wednesday. Kendal outlined plans to save £5 billion from the welfare budget, with the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) undergoing tightening eligibility criteria from November 2026. The proposed changes could potentially reduce the payments that many disabled individuals currently rely on, as eligibility for the daily living component, starting at £72.65 per week, is set to become more stringent. Additionally, existing claimants of incapacity benefits under Universal Credit could see their payments frozen from April next year, a move that raises alarm amidst rising inflation.

The announcement has ignited a furious backlash from disability charities and some members of the Labour Party itself. James Taylor, director of strategy for the disability charity Scope, described the measures as “the biggest cuts to disability benefits on record” and called for accountability. Liverpool Riverside MP Kim Johnson condemned the cuts as ‘sadistic', urging the government to reconsider.

One of Thistle's main concerns extends beyond immediate financial implications; she also feels that such announcements exacerbate societal stigma towards disabled individuals. She expressed her dismay over the growing lack of empathy observed in public discourse surrounding disability, stating, "I just wonder when everyone lost their empathy for other people."

In response to the government's plans, Pippa Sargent, CEO of The Brain Charity, articulated that the proposed changes to PIP threaten to dismantle a vital system that supports many with neurological conditions. She pointed out that PIP is not merely a financial aid but a critical tool that enables individuals to navigate various barriers in society. Sargent underlined that many who receive PIP are actively participating in the workforce, and removing essential support risks driving them out of employment, which contradicts the government's stated goals.

The welfare reforms will particularly impact regions with high disability benefit claims, such as Birkenhead. Data from the 2021 Census indicates that nearly 21% of individuals in central Birkenhead are long-term unemployed or have never worked, with a significant portion relying on disability benefits. Birkenhead Councillor Pat Cleary of the Green Party expressed that the cuts will only exacerbate the existing struggles faced by vulnerable community members, labelling the approach as cruel and heartless.

Jenny Carter, a member of the disability advocacy organisation Together All Are Able, conveyed feelings of anxiety and upset in anticipation of the cuts. She voiced concerns that such changes could lead to increased poverty and homelessness among disabled individuals, stating, “There’s going to be more people in poverty, and we are going to have a situation where more disabled people will end up homeless."

In light of the mounting criticism, Employment Minister Alison McGovern, who is also the Labour MP for Birkenhead, defended the government's approach. She highlighted enhancements made to jobcentres, an increase in Universal Credit, and investments aimed at making life more affordable. McGovern also pointed to discussions led by the Prime Minister regarding job opportunities in areas like Birkenhead, aiming to bolster community prosperity through various local initiatives.

As plans for the future of disability benefits continue to unfold, the government faces increasing scrutiny from disability advocates and concerned citizens alike.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)