# Controversial DWP policy under scrutiny as low-income pensioners face increased bank account checks



The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in the UK is preparing to implement a contentious new policy that will involve increased scrutiny of the bank accounts of thousands of low-income pensioners, specifically those receiving benefits such as Pension Credit, Universal Credit, and Employment and Support Allowance. This move is portrayed as an effort to combat benefit overpayments, yet it raises significant concerns regarding privacy and the treatment of some of society's most vulnerable individuals.

Under the new policy, the DWP plans to use automated systems to examine financial transactions of claimants without any prior suspicion of fraud. This unprecedented step has elicited strong reactions from campaigners and civil liberties groups, with many asserting that it undermines the principle of presumption of innocence. Critics fear that the initiative could lead to excessive monitoring of individuals’ financial activities, resulting in wrongful benefit cuts due to errors or misinterpretations of the data.

Disability Rights UK has vocalised alarm over the potential consequences of this new policy, labelling it an encroachment on individual privacy rights. A spokesperson for the organisation stated, "Using algorithms to trawl a large number of accounts at once removes our right to be presumed innocent. False positives could leave innocent claimants without vital income." Similarly, Big Brother Watch has raised concerns about the implications of mass surveillance, warning that vulnerable populations could be adversely affected, potentially causing them significant distress and upheaval.

Despite the criticism, the DWP maintains that such measures are necessary to protect public funds and reduce the estimated £8.3 billion lost to fraud and error last year. They assert that there will be "human oversight" in the scrutiny process, an assurance that has not convinced many sceptics who fear the consequences of automated decision-making.

Notably, the state pension has been excluded from these enhanced scrutiny measures, a decision some commentators view as a politically strategic move aimed at avoiding backlash. Nevertheless, advocates highlight that many pensioners still rely on additional financial support like Pension Credit to meet their essential living costs.

Since the announcement of the impending changes, there has been a significant uptick in claims for Pension Credit, with approximately 50,000 new applications processed since the previous summer, indicating a rise in financial need amidst the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Furthermore, recent adjustments in Pension Credit payments have seen per week payouts for couples increase from £332.95 to £346.60, amounting to an additional £4,300 annually for eligible recipients.

While the DWP insists that the enhanced scrutiny will not interfere with the processing of new claims, experts warn that the spectre of banking surveillance may deter some eligible older adults from applying for much-needed assistance. The potential intimidation stemming from these new algorithms poses concerns that many seniors could remain unaware of their entitlement or too reluctant to seek help due to fear of unwarranted investigation.

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

## References

* <https://www.gbnews.com/money/dwp-bank-accounts-state-pensioners-intervene-remove-benefits> - This URL supports the claim that the DWP plans to scrutinize bank accounts of low-income pensioners to combat benefit overpayments, raising concerns about privacy and surveillance.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_7PKpUEBBQ> - This video corroborates the DWP's new policy of bank account checks to ensure the correct allocation of state pension funds and prevent fraud, though it highlights concerns about potential impacts on recipients.
* <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/dwp-plans-bank-account-surveillance-likely-breach-privacy-law-and-could-amount-unlawful> - This article explains how Disability Rights UK and other civil liberties groups are critical of the DWP's plans, citing privacy breaches and potential harm to vulnerable individuals.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VqRUiBP-Lw> - This video provides details on the DWP's two crucial bank account checks for pensioners, which aim to verify income and detect unusual transactions, amidst concerns about privacy and financial scrutiny.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2p1uwQD2TA> - This video further explains the 2025 DWP rules, focusing on the financial scrutiny and the need for pensioners to be aware of these changes to avoid issues with their benefits.