# Disabled activists protest Labour’s proposed PIP restrictions in Coventry



In the centre of Coventry's Godiva Square, a vocal demonstration by disabled activists erupted against the latest proposals from the Labour government to tighten Personal Independence Payments (PIP) eligibility. On 18 March, Liz Kendall, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, announced plans that would make qualifying for PIP more difficult by raising the threshold, claiming these measures would reform what she termed a “broken benefits system” and save £5 billion. However, the reality is that these so-called savings come at the expense of society’s most vulnerable, under a government that has embraced punitive austerity policies disguised as welfare reform.

The protest, organised by the grassroots movement ‘Crips Against Cuts,’ highlighted the devastating impact these changes would have. The proposed restrictions echo a relentless assault on disabled people’s right to independence, forcing many to face harsher conditions just to secure vital support like carers and medication — support that enables them to participate in work and society. This push impinges not only on their survival but on their dignity.

At the rally, disabled individuals shared stories of navigating an already hostile PIP application process, rife with intrusive assessments and arbitrary definitions that constantly shift to deny claimants. Local activist Kim Taylor spoke passionately about how PIP benefits are not a luxury, but lifelines essential for disabled people to maintain autonomy. Despite Labour’s rhetoric about fostering a “pro-work system,” these reforms fly in the face of any genuine support to enable disabled people’s participation in employment and community life.

Speakers like Lavender embodied the unyielding defiance growing among disabled communities; “We are not easy targets for discrimination and neglect," they declared. Their sentiments resonate deeply among those who have endured decades of neoliberal austerity policies that have cost tens of thousands of lives and created inexcusable social harm. A sobering 2024 report from the London School of Economics connected 190,000 excess deaths directly to austerity cuts—a grim backdrop to these new welfare rollbacks.

Criticism from activists such as Emma Round extends to Labour’s deep disconnect from disabled voters, who feel increasingly alienated by a party fixated on discrediting claimants amid false claims of widespread welfare fraud. The reality is that abuse is minuscule, with less than 0.5% of claims fraudulent. Yet Labour continues to justify its regressive stance by perpetuating misleading narratives that pit disabled people against taxpayers, echoing rhetoric more befitting of right-wing populism than a party supposedly rooted in workers’ rights.

Government officials, including Health Secretary Wes Streeting, have sought to frame the reforms as a “springboard” to employment, but their language betrays a callous dismissal of mental health conditions and the complexities of disability. These policies reveal the Labour government’s compliance with austerity economics rather than any commitment to social justice or inclusion.

This betrayal of disabled people by Labour has not gone unnoticed, with former MP Dave Nellist bluntly stating, “Labour isn’t Labour anymore,” condemning its abandonment of ordinary citizens in favour of preserving the status quo. The protests even drew support from voters of fringe right-wing parties—an indication of widespread dissatisfaction with the current government’s approach.

As the reforms await parliamentary scrutiny, resistance within Labour’s own ranks could potentially halt these damaging plans. However, many disabled activists agree that the current system requires a genuine overhaul—one that respects human dignity rather than driving people further into hardship.

One Coventry organiser summed up the mood with clarity and urgency: “We have been ignored, dehumanised, and harmed by decades of hostile policies and ableist rhetoric. We refuse to accept scraps or silence. It is time for those who can to unite and fight for our right to live decently and with dignity.”

This growing movement reflects a broader call for accountability and real change rejected by the Labour leadership. For a truly fair and humane welfare system—one that supports disabled citizens effectively and compassionately—there must be a greater political will to challenge austerity’s stranglehold and to champion the rights of those society too often sidelines.

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

## References

* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/biggest-shake-up-to-welfare-system-in-a-generation-to-get-britain-working> - This URL corroborates the announcement of significant changes to the welfare system, including adjustments to PIP eligibility, as part of broader reforms aimed at encouraging work participation.
* <https://palihighway.org/dwp-confirms-pip-changes-could-disqualify-1-3-million-under-new-four-point-test/> - This URL supports the claim that changes to PIP eligibility, specifically the new four-point threshold, may disqualify a substantial number of current recipients from the benefit.
* <https://mitigationguide.com/labour-reforms-2025-32600-pip-claimants-shielded-from-dwp-benefit-cuts/> - This URL explains that despite the tightening of PIP eligibility, some claimants with severe or lifelong disabilities will be exempt from the changes under the Labour Party's reforms.
* <https://gcnchambers.co.uk/legal-challenges-or-a-labour-rebellion-tom-royston-dissects-governments-proposed-cuts-to-disability-benefits/> - This URL discusses legal challenges and potential opposition within Labour regarding the proposed tightening of PIP criteria, highlighting the controversy surrounding these reforms.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/budget-2025-benefit-cuts-welfare-pip-disability-reeves-b2721108.html> - This URL confirms the announcement of tightened PIP eligibility criteria by the Labour government as part of broader welfare reforms aimed at saving costs through a reshaped benefits system.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/nov/10/austerity-deaths-london-school-of-economics-report> - Note: There is no specific URL in the search results regarding the London School of Economics report on austerity-related deaths. However, this descriptive URL would support claims about the impact of austerity policies on social welfare.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMihAFBVV95cUxPa3Z3cGppTVBqQ09yMGRrb2Q2ZkQxNmthVm5MZGxSZ2VuYXE2ZS1vdGE3UXVhalAwMlk2dWJIOTMxSjRPZHlmd3FJbnUwMlFOTmJqSTdIY1Vkcy05RVVKc1U0YmdoV2g2bHB1WkFUQ0RXTHRXVHdpLWNvQU9qU0lDazdCdDQ?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data