# Baroness Harman calls on Red Wall MPs to ditch two-child benefit cap for lasting progressive win



Baroness Harriet Harman has urged Red Wall MPs to prioritize the dismantling of the two-child benefit cap instead of wasting time opposing changes to winter fuel payments. Speaking on Sky's *Electoral Dysfunction* podcast, she argued that tackling the benefit cap could offer the group a "progressive win," moving beyond mere opposition to Sir Keir Starmer's leadership over issues that seem increasingly detached from the realities facing hard-hit families.

Recent feedback from Red Wall MPs, representing Labour's once unassailable strongholds in the north of England, highlights a growing discontent with the party’s leadership. Following a series of disappointing local election results, including the loss of Doncaster Council to a rising party focused on common-sense solutions, many MPs expressed frustration over a leadership that seems oblivious to the concerns of constituents. The reduction in winter fuel payments has been a hot-button issue on the campaign trail, yet it appears to have fallen on deaf ears.

Baroness Harman’s suggestion to shift focus to the two-child benefit cap is indicative of a party struggling to reconnect with its base. This cap, originally part of George Osborne's austerity policies in 2015, prevents families from accessing vital financial support for more than two children, perpetuating child poverty. Such a stance may reflect a desperate attempt to recapture the public's trust, yet one cannot help but wonder if this is merely window dressing rather than a genuine commitment to change.

Jo White, a Labour MP for Bassetlaw, echoed these sentiments by highlighting the alienation felt by core voter demographics as a result of the means testing of winter fuel payments. Her call for higher payment eligibility thresholds signals a recognition that the party must realign its welfare strategy or face further loss of public support.

Within Labour, tensions are escalating over these crucial policies. Sir Keir Starmer faces mounting dissent from his own backbenchers regarding the two-child cap, with critics, including notable figures like John McDonnell, labeling the cap as "cruel and punitive." Their calls for its immediate abolition underscore a growing urgency within the party to adapt to the dire needs of struggling families instead of clinging to outdated policy frameworks.

Reports suggest that as many as 50 Labour MPs are contemplating a rebellion against cuts to the winter fuel allowance, a situation exacerbated by Starmer’s insistence on adhering to a framework that many see as ineffective. The divisions within the party highlight the urgent necessity for a reevaluation of welfare policies, which must not only address electoral viability but, more importantly, the dire circumstances faced by vulnerable groups.

As Labour grapples with these critical welfare issues, it’s becoming increasingly clear that merely rehashing old plans will not suffice. For a party on the brink of losing touch with essential constituencies, tangible and meaningful policy changes are imperative. Addressing the needs of the most disadvantaged families could well be the key to reclaiming Labour's foundational support in the Red Wall.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.coastfm.co.uk/news/politics/red-wall-mps-should-focus-on-two-child> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.coastfm.co.uk/news/politics/red-wall-mps-should-focus-on-two-child> - Baroness Harriet Harman, former Labour Party chair, advised Red Wall MPs to prioritize lifting the two-child benefit cap over opposing the winter fuel payment policy. She suggested that focusing on the benefit cap could yield a 'progressive win' and align with strategies to combat child poverty, rather than merely protesting against Sir Keir Starmer's leadership over winter fuel issues.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/feb/05/labour-restores-whip-to-three-more-mps-who-opposed-two-child-benefit-cap> - Labour reinstated the party whip to three MPs—Ian Byrne, Imran Hussain, and Richard Burgon—who had been suspended for six months after voting against the two-child benefit cap. The decision reflects ongoing tensions within the party regarding welfare policies and the two-child limit on benefits.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/08/24/winter-fuel-payment-watered-down-pensioners-harman-charity/> - Baroness Harriet Harman suggested that the government's cut-off point for winter fuel payments should be adjusted to better assist pensioners. She expressed concern that the policy change would negatively impact lower-income individuals, highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach to support vulnerable groups.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/07/11/starmer-first-rebellion-labour-mps-two-child-benefit-cap/> - Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer faced his first backbench revolt over the two-child benefit cap, with MPs like John McDonnell and Kim Johnson advocating for its removal. They argued that the cap is 'cruel and punitive,' pushing struggling families into deeper poverty, and called for its immediate abolition.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/sep/08/up-to-50-labour-mps-could-rebel-over-cut-to-winter-fuel-allowance> - Up to 50 Labour MPs were considering rebelling against the government's plan to cut the winter fuel allowance, despite Prime Minister Keir Starmer urging support for the measure. The potential rebellion underscores internal party divisions over welfare policies and their impact on pensioners.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2024/08/24/winter-fuel-payment-watered-down-pensioners-harman-charity/> - Baroness Harriet Harman suggested that the government's cut-off point for winter fuel payments should be adjusted to better assist pensioners. She expressed concern that the policy change would negatively impact lower-income individuals, highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach to support vulnerable groups.