# Labour faces fierce backlash over £5bn welfare cuts targeting disability benefits



In March 2025, the Labour Government revealed a reckless plan to overhaul the welfare system, aiming to cut an astounding £5 billion by the end of the decade. Central to this initiative are draconian cuts to disability welfare payments, a move that has sparked outrage from various political factions and advocacy groups.

The First Minister has taken a disturbingly passive approach, choosing to "reserve her position" on these harsh cuts while dismissing inquiries about their reasoning as "daft." This indecisiveness has drawn criticism from Plaid Cymru leader Rhun ap Iorwerth MS, who lambasted her for failing to stand against what he described as "cruel cuts" that will devastate vulnerable communities in Wales. He argues for stronger leadership—one that must defend those most harmed by these impending welfare reform's consequences.

These cuts are set to affect up to 1.2 million individuals relying on disability benefits. Changes to eligibility for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) particularly endanger those with mental health issues and less severe physical disabilities. Alarming data from the Department for Work and Pensions reveals that more than half of current claimants aged 40 and above may find themselves ineligible under the new, punitive criteria, deepening the vulnerabilities among already-struggling older demographics.

The government, under Prime Minister Keir Starmer, is facing substantial internal unrest. Many Labour MPs view these cuts as a political disaster, and after disappointing local election results—partly due to public backlash over welfare reductions—more than 100 Labour MPs may break ranks to oppose critical welfare legislation. This dissent has forced ministers to contemplate transitional financial support for affected carers, though independent assessments indicate these measures will fail to adequately address the widespread repercussions faced by those impacted.

In a desperate attempt to quell mounting criticism, the government has proposed a £1 billion job support programme aimed at those shifting from welfare. The Prime Minister is trying to frame these reforms as essential for establishing a sustainable welfare system, despite critics arguing that these measures fail to provide the necessary support to mitigate the impact of losing crucial benefits. Various charities and advocacy groups have condemned the proposed changes as not only punitive but potentially disastrous for the well-being of individuals struggling to meet stricter eligibility requirements.

Despite the growing opposition, the government is resolute in its commitment to proceed with the cuts. Finance Minister Rachel Reeves has defended this strategy, blaming the financial legacy left by the previous Conservative administration while framing the cuts as necessary for fiscal responsibility. Nevertheless, the palpable discontent within Labour raises serious questions about the viability of this strategy as the party grapples with the consequences of its decisions in the political arena.

The government's determination to implement welfare cuts amid substantial internal dissent marks a crucial moment for Labour—one that may drastically alter its relationship with its most vulnerable constituents and its standing in the broader electorate. The coming months will be critical as the party navigates this contentious political landscape, balancing economic imperatives against the ethical ramifications of its welfare approach.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25127146.backlash-first-ministers-daft-welfare-cuts-response/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/c24738fd-c500-4e55-be7f-c775ce620352> - The UK government is preparing minor concessions to ease the impact of significant disability benefit cuts set to take effect in November 2025. Around 150,000 carers, who currently receive an £80 weekly stipend, may lose this support as those they care for become ineligible under the new reforms. Ministers are planning transitional financial support for these carers. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer faces a major House of Commons rebellion from Labour MPs opposing these welfare cuts, especially following Labour's poor results in recent local elections. Over 100 Labour MPs may vote against the government or abstain when stricter criteria for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are voted on in June. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data show that more than half of current PIP claimants over age 40 would lose eligibility, particularly impacting older individuals. In response to mounting dissent, ministers hope to mitigate backlash with an impact assessment of a £1bn job support program. However, independent analysis indicates this program may help far fewer people than those losing benefits. Despite internal pressure, DWP ministers remain committed to the reforms, positioning them as essential to creating a sustainable and supportive welfare system.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/en/uk-wont-reverse-winter-fuel-payment-cuts-after-poor-election-results-pms-2025-05-06/> - The UK government, under Prime Minister Keir Starmer, has confirmed it will not reverse recent cuts to winter fuel and welfare payments, despite suffering losses in local elections. Labour Party members attributed the disappointing election results to public dissatisfaction over reductions in support for pensioners and the disabled. The cuts, implemented shortly after Labour came to power in July, eliminated universal winter fuel payments of up to £300 for many pensioners, unless they qualified for government benefits. Finance Minister Rachel Reeves defended the decision, citing the challenging financial situation inherited from the previous Conservative administration. Although The Guardian suggested the government might reconsider the policy, Starmer's spokesperson asserted there would be no changes. The government intends to announce further key policies in coming weeks, focusing on areas such as defense, housing, and immigration.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/b518a33e-97e1-4bf6-844e-69acf2f5f2b7> - Downing Street has confirmed it will not reverse the Labour government's decision to cut the winter fuel allowance for approximately 10 million pensioners, despite backlash from within the party after poor local election results. Labour MPs and party figures, including Welsh First Minister Baroness Eluned Morgan, have attributed the losses to unpopular welfare policies, particularly the cuts to winter fuel and upcoming changes to disability benefits. The move, introduced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves to address a fiscal deficit inherited from the previous Conservative government, is estimated to save £1.5 billion annually. Critics argue the policy is deeply unpopular and has significantly impacted public opinion. Some, including former MP Mike Amesbury and Labour MP Louise Haigh, have urged the leadership to reconsider the policy and push for tax increases to fund investment. Nevertheless, government officials, including Health Secretary Wes Streeting, defend the cuts as necessary for economic stability and redirecting funds to essential services. Downing Street emphasized the importance of difficult financial decisions to uphold broader policy goals like the pensions triple lock. The government now aims to regain political momentum with immigration controls and NHS reforms.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-targets-65-bln-welfare-disability-cuts-2025-03-18/> - Britain's government announced plans to cut 5 billion pounds ($6.5 billion) from the support provided to people with disabilities and long-term health conditions to manage the rising welfare costs. The initiative, outlined by Liz Kendall, the Minister for Work and Pensions, aims to reform the welfare system by encouraging people to enter the workforce and move away from dependence on government benefits. The targeted reduction is expected to save 5 billion pounds annually by the fiscal year 2029/30.
6. <https://apnews.com/article/b9d295a1eaa877eff7314eebb357a203> - Britain's Labour Party government has announced a significant overhaul of the welfare system, aimed at saving 5 billion pounds ($6.5 billion) to address the administration's financial challenges. The reform is intended to encourage employment among welfare recipients, with Secretary Liz Kendall emphasizing that the current system fails those it is meant to support. She criticized the previous Conservative government for harming the economy and health system. Proposed changes include stricter assessments for disability benefits and an increase in universal credit. Critics, including various charities and mental health organizations, argue that the reforms will adversely affect the most vulnerable, particularly those unable to work. The Disability Benefits Consortium condemned the changes as "cruel." Despite concerns, Kendall maintains the reforms are approached with "compassion" and aim to break the cycle of welfare dependency. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government faces declining popularity amidst economic struggles, and further public spending cuts may be outlined in the upcoming budget statement by Treasury chief Rachel Reeves. Labour lawmaker Imran Hussain expressed deep concern over the proposed cuts, highlighting the severe impact on disabled individuals.
7. <https://www.ft.com/content/0cc2d3f0-7ed8-4ee4-aa41-313fd3fb4463> - The UK Labour government, led by Sir Keir Starmer, announced cuts to disability benefits projected to save £5bn annually by the decade's end. The plan, presented by Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall, will affect up to 1.2 million people according to expert estimates, though ministers have not provided specific figures. The proposed changes include tightening eligibility for personal independence payments, particularly affecting those with mental health conditions and less severe physical difficulties, and removing incapacity benefits for most people under 22. The proposal has sparked significant backlash within Labour, with concerns over targeting society's poorest. Kendall argued the reforms are necessary to prevent welfare costs from ballooning and promote work incentives. The changes will require a vote in the House of Commons, potentially leading to a significant backbench rebellion. Alongside these cuts, Labour plans to invest £1bn in employment programs and offer stronger income protection for the unemployed through a new insurance system.