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UK Government may abandon plan to freeze disability benefits



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Ministers in the UK are considering abandoning plans to freeze Personal Independence Payments (PIP) after facing strong opposition from Labour MPs. Initial reports indicated that PIP, a key disability benefit, would not rise in line with inflation for a year, but this proposal sparked protests within the party, leading to the reconsideration.

Although the government intends to tighten PIP eligibility and reduce welfare spending by billions, dropping the freeze could prevent a contentious vote in the House of Commons. Health Secretary Wes Streeting and Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall have emphasized the importance of supporting those in need. Streeting, commenting on the issue, urged patience until the full plans are revealed.

As part of the reform, Kendall is expected to unveil a “right to try” guarantee, which would allow disabled individuals to pursue employment without risking the loss of benefits if it does not succeed. This is part of a broader set of welfare reforms, including a proposal to help individuals with mental health conditions receive earlier support to stay in work.

However, Chancellor Rachel Reeves is preparing to announce significant cuts to welfare spending in her upcoming Spring Statement. Estimates suggest welfare spending will increase from £64.7bn in 2023-24 to £100.7bn by 2029-30, with PIP costs projected to nearly double.

The government plans to restrict PIP eligibility, but some MPs have been reassured that severely disabled individuals would not be required to work. The announcement of these changes follows the government's decision to dismantle NHS England, signaling a broader overhaul of public services.