

Starmer reverses cuts to winter fuel payments amid mounting backlash



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UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has announced a reversal of controversial cuts to winter fuel payments, following growing criticism from unions, pensioner advocacy groups, and within his own party. Speaking during Prime Minister's Questions, Starmer confirmed that eligibility criteria will be revised in the upcoming autumn Budget to allow "more pensioners" to qualify for support.

Introduced in 1997, the winter fuel payment provides £200 annually to pensioners under 80 and £300 for those over 80 to help with heating costs. Last year, the Labour government restricted the payments to those receiving pension credit or other income-related benefits affecting over nine million pensioners and saving an estimated £1.4 billion. The move, implemented shortly after Labour took office, sparked widespread backlash and was blamed by some Labour MPs for losses in recent local elections.

Starmer maintained that any revision will be fiscally responsible. However, it remains unclear how many pensioners will benefit or when the changes will take effect. Currently, the income threshold for pension credit stands at £11,800 for individuals and £18,023 for couples posing potential administrative hurdles ahead of winter.

Opposition leaders criticized the initial cuts and demanded urgency. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch called the original decision “cruel” and urged the government to provide details well before winter. Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey described it as the “longest U-turn” and called for a full reinstatement of the payments.

Charity Age UK welcomed the reversal but stressed that any revised system must ensure support reaches pensioners with low and modest incomes. Downing Street has not confirmed whether the changes will be implemented in time for this winter, stating that final decisions will depend on

securing affordable funding.