



Former DWP boss says Winter Fuel Payment cuts being used to fund huge pay deals

Former Work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride says new Chancellor Rachel Reeves is "choosing to grant above-inflation pay deals for the public sector, paid for off the backs of pensioners who worked all their lives"

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 The former boss of the DWP has criticised Labour's move to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment so that 10 million pensioners are no longer eligible (Image: Getty Images/iStockphoto)



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The former boss of the [Department for Work and Pensions](#) has criticised Labour's move to cut eligibility for the annual Winter Fuel Payment. Mel Stride accused the new Government of slashing pensioners' finances in order to fund huge pay rises for the public sector.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves' decision to restrict the payment to those on [Pension Credit](#) and [some other means-tested benefits](#) from this winter is expected to reduce the number of eligible pensioners by 10 million, from 11.4 million to 1.5 million, saving some £1.4 billion this financial year. Ms Reeves said she had to take immediate action after discovering a £22 billion black hole left by the [Tories](#).

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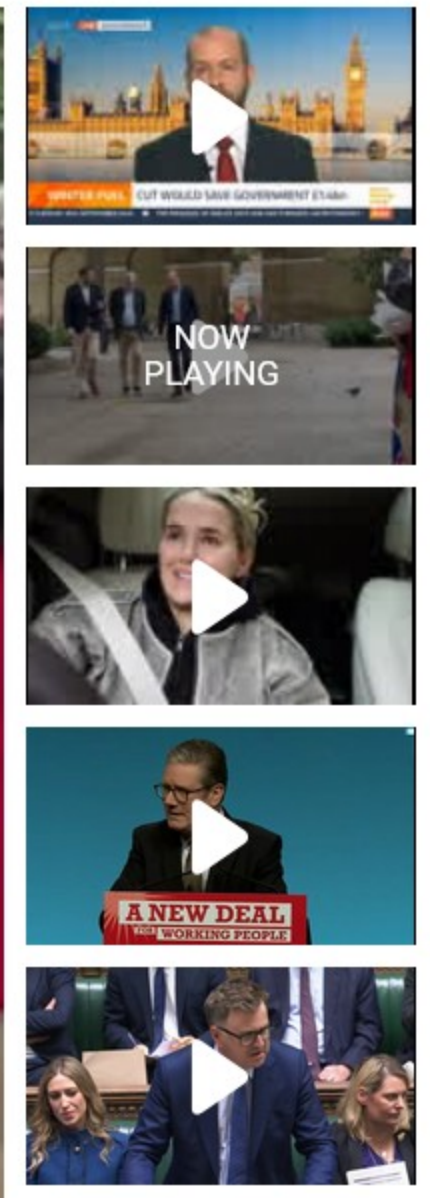
Mel Stride, former Work and Pensions Secretary under Rishi Sunak's Conservative Government and now the Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary in opposition, disagreed with the decision, saying: "Rachel Reeves is taking vital support from vulnerable pensioners, just weeks after an election campaign where Labour claimed to have no plans to do this. Pensioners will see that they simply cannot trust what Labour say."

"Even those who rely solely on the State Pension for their income will lose the payment, as will the hundreds of thousands who are eligible for Pension Credit but don't currently claim it. The Chancellor is choosing to grant above-inflation pay deals for the public sector, paid for off the backs of pensioners who worked all their lives."

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- [New changes to Winter Fuel Payment 'will force many into impossible choices'](#)
- [Winter Fuel Payment changes mapped - see how many will miss out in your area](#)

Chancellor Ms Reeves said she would be "accepting in full" the recommendations of the public sector pay bodies to give workers pay rises, and said this would be in the "best interests of our economy too." Among the pay offers was a deal agreed with junior doctors which will see them get a 20 per cent pay rise over two years in a bid to resolve their long-running pay dispute with the Government.



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Government departments will have to find savings of at least £3 billion to help fund the public sector pay rises, which will cost £9 billion this year. Cuts will also include stopping non-essential spending on consultancy and communications, Ms Reeves said.

Former pensions minister Baroness Ros Altmann accused Labour of "balancing the books off the back of pensioners", and said scrapping the fuel payments was worse than if the State Pension triple lock were being abolished. She said: "It's such a bad decision and needs to be rethought. I don't think the policy people realised how damaging this is. They think of pensioners as being well off, but millions – especially the over-80s – have either run out of savings, never had any, or don't have a private pension."

Meanwhile, Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar has said the announcement on the Winter Fuel Payment presents an "opportunity" to better target the allowance in Scotland. Speaking to journalists on a visit to a community project in Glasgow, he said: "This is a new devolved benefit that's going to come to Scotland this year now that the Winter Fuel Payment is going to be devolved. We have an opportunity to do that in a more progressive, fair way and I think the Scottish Government should take that opportunity."

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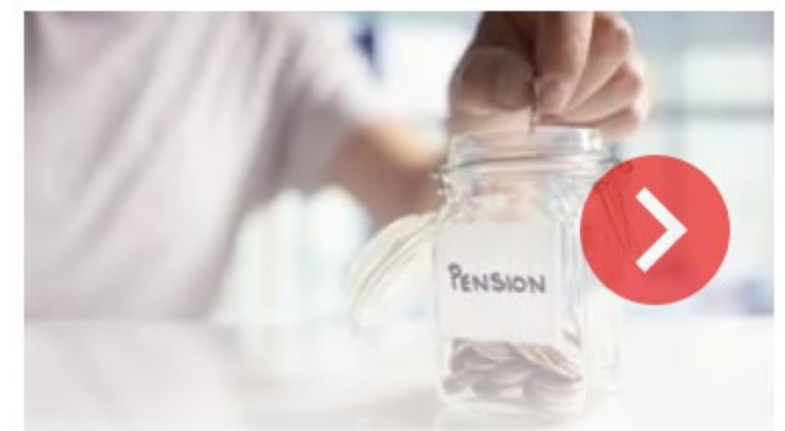


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"We're willing to work with them and representative charities to make sure those that need the payment, those that are going to genuinely be supported by that payment, receive that payment. I don't see the benefit in us giving a payment to those **that frankly are millionaires** and don't need the money at a time when people are struggling

to make ends meet and our public finances are in a difficult situation."

Mr Sarwar said he was "sympathetic" to those who will lose out because they are just over the threshold of being