

# Topical Digest

## **Proposed reform to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Universal Credit**

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## **Proposed reform to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Universal Credit**

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The 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper, published by the UK Government on 18 March 2025, details the UK Government's proposals to reform PIP and Universal Credit in the coming years. This topical digest provides Members and their staff with a range of reading materials and sources of information relating to the proposed reforms. The digest includes a selection of Northern Ireland Assembly questions and local media and other articles that explore the potential impact of the reforms in Northern Ireland.

Should MLAs or their constituency staff have suggestions for information they would like to see in the guide, or have links to useful sources that they would like to share, please feel free to contact the Research and Information Service at:  
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# 1 Introduction

The [2025 Spring Statement](#) set out plans for what the UK Government [describes](#) as the 'biggest shake up to welfare system in a generation'. At the centre of these reforms is the Department for Work and Pensions Green Paper, [Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working](#), which outlines proposals for significant changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and the health element of Universal Credit.

The UK Government's reform proposals have drawn particular concern in Northern Ireland due to the [higher uptake](#) of disability benefits here and the impact on claimants (including those who are in work) and carers. Given that social security is devolved, the application of the UK Government's proposals in Northern Ireland will be determined by the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly.

This Topical Digest provides a reading list on the issues surrounding the welfare reforms set out in the Spring Statement 2025. It includes a range of sources from the UK Government, House of Commons and Northern Ireland Assembly, in addition to reactions and responses from UK think tanks, UK and Northern Ireland organisations and other media articles. Statistics for Northern Ireland, including PIP and Universal Credit claims statistics, are also signposted.

# 2 Department for Work and Pensions and UK Government Spring Statement 2025

- Department for Work and Pensions, Green Paper, [Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working](#) (18 March 2025).
- Department for Work and Pensions, Press Release, [Biggest shake up to welfare system in a generation to get Britain working](#) (18 March 2025).
- Department for Work and Pensions, Press Release, [Disability Benefits system to be overhauled as consultation launched on Personal Independent Payment](#) (29 April 2024).
- Department for Work and Pensions, Pathways to Work [Green Paper FAQs](#) (27 March 2025).
- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, House of Commons, [Statement on Welfare Reform](#) (18 March 2025).
- Department for Work and Pensions, [Shaping future support: the health and disability green paper](#) (20 July 2021 – published under the previous UK Government).

- Department for Work and Pensions, Equality Analysis, [Spring Statement 2025 health and disability benefit reforms – Equality Analysis](#).
- Department for Work and Pensions Impact Assessment, [Spring Statement 2025 health and disability benefit reforms – Impacts](#).

### 3 House of Commons

- Work and Pensions Committee, [Government's welfare reform proposals subject of new Committee inquiry](#) (3 April 2025). Terms of reference available [here](#).
- Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, [Funding and delivery of public services: Follow up](#), (7 April 2025). UK Government response due 7 June 2025.
- House of Commons Library, [Constituency Data: people claiming unemployment benefits](#) (15 April 2025).
- House of Commons Library, [UK Labour Market Statistics](#), (15 April 2025).

### 4 Northern Ireland statistics

- Department for Communities, [Personal Independence Payment Statistics](#), November 2024.
- Department for Communities, [Universal Credit Statistics](#), August 2024.
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, [Disability Employment Gap in Northern Ireland 2020](#), 7 October 2021.
- Department of Health, [Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics](#) (inpatient, outpatient, diagnostic, emergency care), no date.
- Department of Health, [Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: cancer waiting times October – December 2024](#), 3 April 2025.

### 5 Northern Ireland Assembly

- Northern Ireland Assembly, Private Members' Motion, Official Report [Social Security and Economic Inactivity](#), (1 April 2025).
- Assembly questions for the current 2022-2027 mandate are key-word searchable using the [AIMS portal](#).
- Alternatively, Assembly questions asked by all Members to all Ministers during the 2024-2025 session, containing the term 'PIP', can be viewed [here](#).

- Research and Information Service (RaISe), [Briefing Paper – Economic inactivity, key employment barriers and childcare costs potentially impacting those barriers: initial considerations for Northern Ireland](#) (17 May 2024).
- RaISe, Research Matters Blog, [Spring Statement 2025 – Understanding the relevance of Spring Statement 2025 for Northern Ireland](#) (11 April 2025).
- RaISe, Research Matters Blog, [Chancellor’s Spring Statement 2025 and subsequent developments: What do they mean for Northern Ireland’s public finances and economy?](#) (11 April 2025).

## 6 Northern Ireland Executive

- Department for Communities, [DWP consultation on reform of health and disability benefits available on DfC website](#), News Release, (1 April 2025).
- Department for the Economy, [Economic Inactivity in Northern Ireland](#), (23 October 2023).

## 7 Think tanks

- [A dangerous road – examining the ‘Pathways to Work’ Green Paper](#), Resolution Foundation, 19 March 2025.
- [IFS response to announced reforms to disability and incapacity benefits](#), Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), 18 March 2025.
- [Living standards of working-age disability benefit recipients in the UK](#), Institute for Fiscal Studies, 6 July 2022.
- [Starmer's missed milestone? The outlook for living standards at the Spring Statement](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 22 March 2025.
- [How health-related benefit cuts add up](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 25 March 2025.
- [Cuts to push 250,000 into poverty as living standards for the poorest under continuing assault](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 25 March 2025.
- [Government fails to make moral choice if cuts rob disabled people of a dignified life](#), Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 18 March 2025.
- [Nuffield Trust response to the Spring Statement](#), Nuffield Trust, 26 March 2025.
- [Chancellor's cuts risk compromising people's health](#), Nuffield Trust, 26 March 2025.
- [Disabling People](#), Common Weal Scotland, 20 March 2025.
- [Welfare Reform: Why Labour Must Go Further](#), Centre for Policy Studies, 7 April 2025.
- [Labour’s welfare plans neglect key areas, says new CPS briefing](#), Centre for Policy Studies, 7 April 2025.

- [For Whose Benefit? Proposals to Reform Health and Disability Benefits & To Create a New Social Contract](#), Policy Exchange, 6 March 2025.
- [Pathways to Work Response](#), Disability Policy Centre, 18 March 2025.
- [Our Analysis on Welfare Reforms](#), Disability Policy Centre, 19 March 2025.
- [A dangerous road?](#), Resolution Foundation, 19 March 2025.
- [Delivering the undeliverable](#), Resolution Foundation, 6 March 2025.
- [Estimating the impacts of extra employment support for disabled people](#), Learning and Work Institute, 17 April 2025.

## 8 UK-wide and GB organisations

- Disability Rights UK, [PIP Reform Green Paper's clear agenda is reducing financial support to disabled people](#), no date.
- Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), [Response to Pathways to Work Green Paper](#), 19 March 2025.
- Carers UK, [Briefing on Pathways to Work Green Paper: Impact on unpaid carers](#), 21 March 2025.
- PTSD UK, [response to the Green Paper](#), no date.
- Epilepsy Action, [Welfare reforms – our position on PIP and what you can do](#), 11 April 2025.
- MS Trust UK, [What do the government's disability benefits proposals mean?](#), 28 March 2025.
- Disability News Service, [Labour's cuts to PIP will drag a quarter of a million people into absolute poverty, DWP figures show](#), 27 March 2025.
- SAGA, [Personal independence payment news: what PIP rule changes mean for you](#), 25 March 2025.
- Contact GB, [Your questions on disability welfare reform answered](#), 20 March 2025.
- Child Poverty Action Group (GB), [Cuts to disability benefits would undermine government plans to tackle child poverty, warns charity](#), 13 March 2025.
- Mencap, [Mencap responds to the Spring Statement](#), 26 March 2025.
- Mencap, [Mencap responds to Green Paper impact statement](#), 26 March 2025.
- Disability Rights UK, [Labour's Betrayal of Those in Greatest Need](#), 9 April 2025.

## 9 Northern Ireland organisations

- Advice NI, [Advice NI Urges NI Executive to 'Keep an Open Mind' on Protecting Sick and Disabled from Welfare Cuts](#), no date.
- Advice NI, Briefing Paper: [Potential impact of 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper in NI](#), 8 April 2025.
- Law Centre NI, Frequently Asked Questions on '[Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to get Britain Working Green Paper](#)', April 2025.
- Law Centre NI, [Policy change to Welfare Supplementary Payments](#), 31 March 2025.
- Law Centre NI, [Social Security Case Law Summer 2024 Bulletin: HH v Department for Communities \(PIP\)](#), no date.
- FactCheck NI, [Mental Health in NI: Does Northern Ireland have the highest rate of people claiming disability benefits and the highest prevalence of mental ill health in the UK?](#), 25 April 2025.
- FactCheck NI, [Welfare reform in NI: Are Personal Independence Payments \(PIP\) unrelated to whether someone is in work?](#), 27 March 2025.
- My Way Access, [Press release: Protest against disability benefit cuts](#), 26 March 2025.
- Practice and the Participation of Rights (PPR), [Nothing About Us Without Us? Or Plenty of Harm Without Asking?](#), 26 March 2025.
- PPR, [Pathways to Work: A closer look at the proposed changes](#), 26 March 2025.
- PPR, [How do the proposals stack up against human rights standards?](#), 28 March 2025.
- PPR, [The People's Proposal: what "good" would look like](#), 28 March 2025.

## 10 News articles (GB)

- [Deep cuts, Pip and 'right to try' work: the key changes in UK benefits overhaul](#), The Guardian, 18 March 2025.
- [What are the PIP and Universal Credit changes and who is affected?](#), BBC News, 17 March 2025.
- [Iain Duncan Smith: Labour's welfare 'reforms' are nothing of the sort – and they don't go anywhere near far enough](#), Independent, 21 March 2025.

## 11 News articles (Northern Ireland)

- [Stormont to 'Work out implications for Northern Ireland' of benefits shake-up](#), Independent, 18 March 2025.

- [How will changes to disability benefits affect Northern Ireland?](#), BBC News, 18 March 2025.
- [How will the proposed welfare cuts affect people in Northern Ireland?](#), Belfast Telegraph, 20 March 2025.
- [Welfare cuts will be managed in 'compassionate way', says minister](#), Belfast Telegraph, 27 March 2025.
- [PIP, universal credit and pension rises come into effect in Northern Ireland](#), The Irish News, 7 April, 2025.
- [Cross-border health scheme will return to help with waiting lists – Nesbitt](#), The Irish News, 8 April 2025.
- [Fears welfare cuts will hit Northern Ireland's 'most vulnerable' young people](#), The Irish News, 30 March, 2025.
- [Northern Ireland's public services 'at risk of collapse'](#), The Guardian, 7 April 2025.
- [Benefits changes 'being done over our heads', says Hanna](#), BBC News, 20 March, 2025.
- [Health Minister Mike Nesbitt says final sum to tackle health waiting lists 'still to be determined'](#), ITV, 5 March, 2025.
- [Anger in Northern Ireland at welfare cuts to balance budget books](#), The Irish Times, 26 March 2025.

## 12 Podcasts and other media

- [BBC Sounds – Access All: Disability News and Mental Health, Benefits reforms: Emergency episode](#), 18 March 2025.
- [Benefits Newscast – The Benefits Training Company](#), April 2025.

This information is provided to MLAs in support of their Assembly duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual or organisation. Inclusion of a resource does not imply endorsement of any particular viewpoint. Whilst we strive to ensure that the information provided here is up to date, the information on external websites referred to may change frequently. This leaflet should not be relied upon as providing legal or professional advice, nor as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

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