

## Welfare Reforms Face Scrutiny Amid Poverty Concerns

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The Prime Minister faced intense questioning from MPs at the Liaison Committee regarding controversial welfare reforms and the government's approach to tackling poverty. The session, marked by pointed exchanges, highlighted growing unease about the direction of policy, particularly its impact on vulnerable groups.

Debbie Abrahams, chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee, challenged the Prime Minister on the “fear and anxiety” triggered by the government’s welfare bill, particularly its initial proposals to tighten eligibility for Personal Independence Payments (PIP). In a recent interview with the committee, Abrahams stated that the original plans were “far removed” from traditional values, accusing the government of causing undue distress to disabled people. Although some of these measures were later scaled back, Abrahams argued that the damage to public confidence was significant, describing the anxiety caused as “impossible to underestimate.”

The Prime Minister defended the government’s approach, insisting that supporting disabled people remains “central” to the welfare agenda. He emphasised that enabling people to return to work is a key goal, suggesting that employers should play a greater role in facilitating this. However, his response drew further scrutiny when Abrahams pressed him on the risk of 50,000 newly disabled individuals being pushed into poverty due to the reforms. The Prime Minister sidestepped direct commitments, pointing instead to an independent review commissioned to explore ways to help people into employment, with recommendations expected later this year.

He also faced questions about the decision to freeze the Local Housing Allowance, a move critics argue will exacerbate financial hardship for low-income households. He stood by the policy, asserting, “We made the right decision,” though he offered little detail to justify the stance amid rising living costs.

When asked about his vision for the UK in three years, the Prime Minister spoke of a nation where people “feel better off” and the NHS functions more effectively for families. Yet, these vague assurances did little to quell concerns about the government’s ability to deliver tangible improvements, especially for those most affected by welfare changes.

The session underscored a broader tension within Parliament, with MPs like Abrahams voicing unease about policies that appear to diverge from longstanding commitments to social justice. For many, the Prime Minister’s responses failed to address the human cost of the government’s decisions, leaving questions about the long-term impact on the UK’s most vulnerable.