

Welfare War Erupts Within Labour: MPs Defy Starmer Over Benefits Cuts

Labour is facing its most explosive internal rebellion yet, as dozens of its MPs rise to block Keir Starmer's sweeping welfare reform plans. At the heart of the storm is a proposed bill that would overhaul disability benefits and change how millions receive support, but many inside the party believe it crosses a moral line. Around 100 Labour MPs, including senior backbenchers and former frontbenchers, are now backing a major push to delay the bill's second reading. They argue the reforms are being rushed through without proper consultation, particularly with disabled people, the very group that will be most affected.

Leading the charge is Treasury Committee chair Meg Hillier, who says the government is "ruling by spreadsheet" and failing to see the human cost. The MPs warn that the proposed cuts could strip benefits from up to 800,000 people and push an estimated 250,000 into poverty, including 50,000 children. Former shadow minister Vicky Foxcroft has already resigned her role as a government whip in protest, while whispers are growing that more resignations could follow if the Prime Minister refuses to rethink his stance.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves has shown no signs of backing down. She insists the reforms are necessary to repair Britain's battered public finances and frame them as a long-overdue push to help more people into work. Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall has echoed that message, saying unchecked welfare spending threatens the long-term future of the system. But for many Labour MPs, that argument doesn't wash. One called the plans "a betrayal of everything we stand for," while others accuse the leadership of trying to outflank the Conservatives by being even tougher on the most vulnerable.

Behind closed doors, tensions are rising. Starmer has held a series of urgent meetings with MPs in a bid to prevent a public rupture, urging them to trust that support systems will be rebuilt alongside the cuts. But critics say there's little clarity on what that "extra support" actually looks like, and many fear the most vulnerable will fall through the cracks long before any safety net is rebuilt.

With a key vote set for July 1, Labour is walking a tightrope. The party that promised to fight for working families now faces a painful question: can it be both fiscally tough and morally grounded, or is it about to tear itself apart trying?