

SNP's welfare powers delay will punish 130,000 disabled Scots

The state of play

Nearly 130,000 disabled Scots could be forced to go through cruel Tory assessments because the SNP has delayed the transfer of social security powers to Holyrood.

More than 128,000 working-age Scots currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are due to be assessed for the new Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

These cruel assessments have stripped benefits from disabled people across the UK.

We can do things differently

The Scottish Government now has wide ranging powers over social security thanks to the 2016 Scotland Act – the post-referendum Vow delivered in full. It's an opportunity to build a social security system that is there for all of us in our time of need.

It means that these assessments can be scrapped in Scotland.

SNP ministers are dragging their heels

But since then it has emerged that the SNP government has asked the UK Tory government to retain control over certain benefits until 2020, effectively delaying the full transfer of welfare powers.

That means tens of thousands Scots still face an assessment under the current system.

Scottish Labour will strengthen the social security safety net

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Scottish Labour has more radical plans than any other party for social security, such as:

- Halting the roll-out of Universal Credit
- Kicking the private sector out of the welfare system
- Increasing Child Benefit by £240 a year by 2020
- Increasing the take-up of tax credits and housing benefit to ensure everyone gets what they are entitled to

Click the image below to learn more about our summer campaign For The Many

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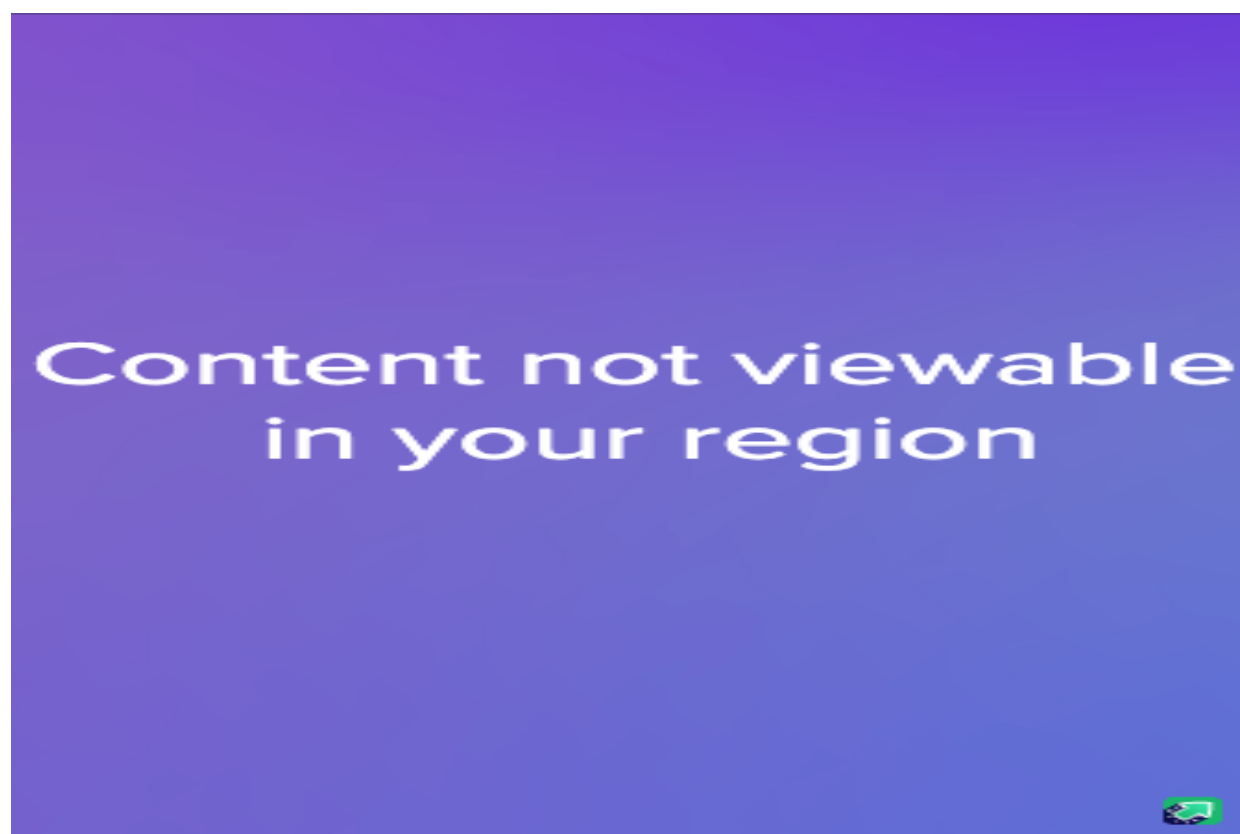


Tory benefits cap is an attack on single parents

In 2015, Labour MPs tabled amendments to exempt lone parents with young children from the Tories' benefits cap. The Conservatives refused to listen.

That cruel decision means thousands of families have been pushed into poverty as a result. Today, we can reveal the huge impact this has had.

Official analysis shows that two-thirds of capped claimants in Scotland are single parents – nearly all single mothers. That means of the 3,642 capped households in Scotland, 2,397 were single parents with at least one child dependant.



As we repeatedly warned, the impact of this and the Tories' other social security cuts is pushing more children into poverty, punishing them for their parents' circumstances.

The Tory cap places an annual limit on the total amount of benefit that working-age households can claim. The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2015 reduced the cap from £26,000 to £20,000.

The UK Government's Impact Assessment estimates that up to 5,000 Scottish households could be affected by the cap, and the average reduction in benefit entitlement is estimated to be around £60 per week.

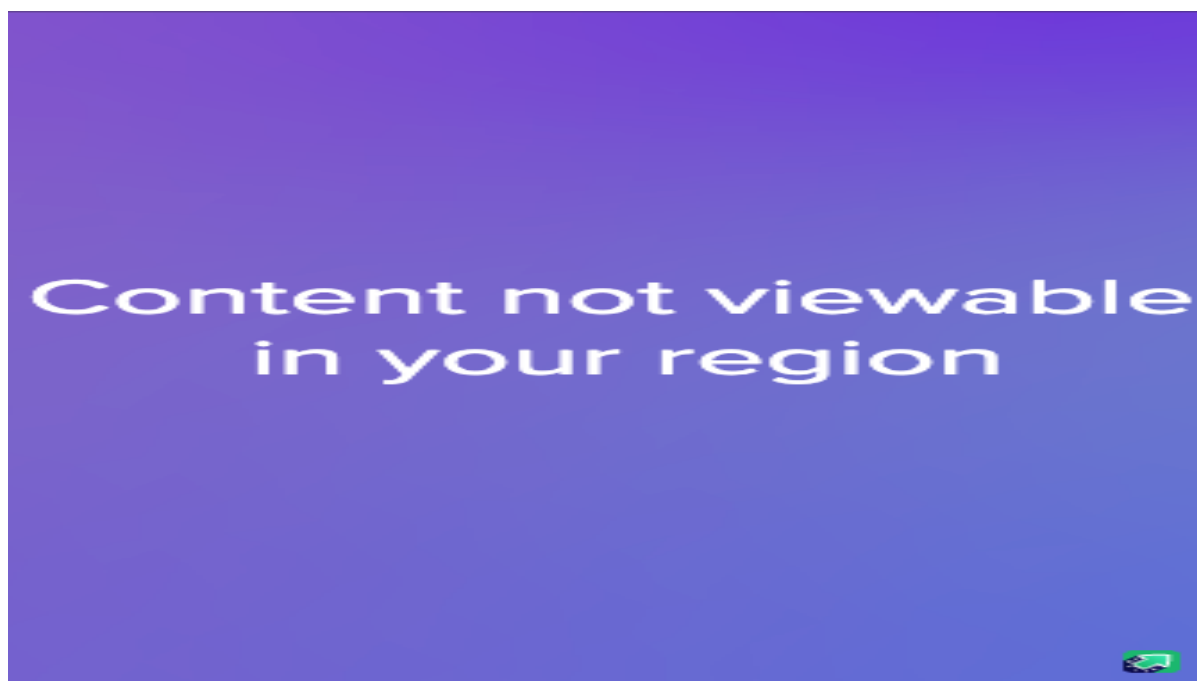
A High Court judgement on June 22 this year ruled that the benefit cap is unlawful and illegally discriminates against single parents with young children under the age of two.

The UK Government must listen to the High Court's judgement that this policy is discriminatory and unlawful, marking another blow in its failing austerity agenda.

A Labour government would examine ways to remove the £20,000 limit as part of plans to reform and redesign Universal Credit, which would also include ending six-week delays in payment and abolishing the 'rape clause'.

A Labour government will transform the social security system so that, like the NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need.

Scottish Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, is this week focusing on tackling inequality. Read more about our campaign by clicking on the image below:



[Tories must halt Universal Credit roll-out](#)

TORIES MUST HALT UNIVERSAL CREDIT ROLL-OUT

Scottish Labour deputy leader Alex Rowley has today demanded that Tory plans to roll-out Universal Credit are halted. Alex has written to Conservative Work and Pensions Secretary David Gauke, amid growing concerns that families are being pushed into poverty and debt. He has also challenged Scottish

Conservative leader Ruth Davidson to get behind our campaign.



Universal Credit, which will replace six existing benefits, is supposed to make access to social security payments less complicated. It has been rolled out in parts of Scotland and is due to be introduced in full across the country by the end of 2018 – starting this October. But there are particular concerns about the six-week waiting period for payments at the start of the process.

Since Universal Credit was introduced, Citizens Advice Scotland evidence in initial roll-out areas shows:

- A 15 per cent rise in rent arrears issues compared to a national decrease of 2 per cent.
- An 87 per cent increase in Crisis Grant issues compared to a national increase of 9 per cent.
- Two of five bureaux in impacted areas have seen a 40 per cent and a 70 per cent increase in advice about access to food banks advice, compared to a national increase of 3 per cent.

A Labour government would act immediately to end the worst excesses of the Tory government's changes, and would rebuild and transform our social security system.

Scottish Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, will this week focus on tackling inequality. You can read more about the campaign [here](#)

Read Alex's letter to David Gauke MP in full:

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you regarding the accelerated roll-out of Universal Credit. I have been in contact with organisations in my area, and have met with many constituents at local job clubs and heard first-hand some of the issues around the roll-out of Universal Credit. There is a very real concern that the system as it is operating is leaving many in poverty and debt.

The intention behind Universal Credit is supposedly to make access to social security less complex, and to further support people into work. This cannot be the case if it is leaving people without the vital support they need and drives some to have to rely on foodbanks simply to survive.

Of particular concern is the six week waiting period for payments at the start of the process. This is resulting in people ending up with rent arrears, increased reliance on crisis grants and relying on foodbanks for the very basic necessity of feeding themselves. The evidence to show all of this is now available from the pilot roll out areas as highlighted by Citizens

Advice Scotland in a recent publication.

People have also reported that they are finding the process particularly complicated, which is resulting in more time spent ensuring that the bureaucratic process has been followed to avoid sanctioning, and less time actually available to look for work, or to develop the skills needed for work. There are also serious problems with individuals struggling to manage their claims online due to lacking digital skills or access to a computer. It is for these reasons that I am asking that the accelerated roll-out of Universal Credit be halted until these problems can be resolved. If the system as it is operating puts more people in poverty or debt, or even increases the risk of these, then it should not continue in that form. Universal Credit must operate in a manner that helps individuals who need that support. Surely it cannot be right or acceptable that it hurts the very people it is designed to help.

Any changes to social security must be designed and implemented to support those individuals who rely on it. It can't simply be a rigid administrative process, it must look beyond the process itself and see what impact it is having for the lives of those that use it. With this roll-out of Universal Credit we are seeing the impact it is having on people's lives, and it is raising serious concerns.

I look forward to your response on how the DWP intend to resolve these worrying problems and I do hope in the meantime you will delay the roll out until assurances are in place that these concerns which are driving people into poverty are resolved.

Yours sincerely,
Alex Rowley MSP

[Labour's plan to boost school leaver opportunities](#)

OUR PLAN TO BOOST SCHOOL LEAVER OPPORTUNITIES

We want to improve opportunities for Scotland's young people.

They must be equipped with the skills they need to compete for the jobs of tomorrow.

That's why Labour is the only party opposed to Tory and SNP austerity. We would invest in Scotland's education system.



But we can only design policies to improve outcomes for young people once they've left school if they are based on better quality information. That's why we are today proposing an overhaul of the way that outcomes for 16-to-19 year olds are measured.

The Scottish Government's current 'positive destination' criteria is no longer fit for purpose.

For example, the current methodology used by the SNP considers a school leaver who ends up on a zero-hours contract to be in a 'positive destination'.

There's nothing positive about the rise in zero-hours contracts, yet that's how they are classified by the SNP.

The methodology also takes no account of insecure or temporary employment, or retention in education courses, because it fails to track the progress, or otherwise, of youngsters over a number of years – despite the current volatility of the employment market.

The number of people in insecure work in Scotland has increased by nearly a third since 2011 under the SNP.

So here's what we would do differently:

- Reintroduce the "longitudinal" approach of the previous Labour/LibDem Scottish Executive's Scottish School Leavers Survey, scrapped by the SNP, which tracked the progress of youngsters over several years.
- Remove zero hour contracts as a 'positive destination' for youngsters.
- Widen the methodology to include all 16-to-19 year olds.

A UK Labour government would ban zero hour contracts.



And we would introduce a £10-an-hour Real Living Wage.



If SNP ministers are serious about improving life chances for the next generation, they have to get serious about facing up to how well, or how badly, their policies are working.

It's time for a major overhaul. SNP ministers have been too distracted to focus on the day job and too ready to believe their own 'spin', so Labour is doing their job for them and putting forward a proposal that would transform the way we measure success.

The measures would tie in with our industrial strategy, unveiled earlier this summer.

We would:

- Invest in education to address skills shortages – particularly in Science,

Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and coding – so our young people have the skills they need to compete for the jobs of tomorrow.

- Commit to full employment with a focus on the industries and jobs of the future – including decommissioning and renewables, alongside the FinTech [Financial Technology] sector.
- Ensure public procurement doesn't reward companies and organisations that engage in blacklisting, operate zero-hours contracts, pay below Living Wage levels and other unfair employment practices.

You can read more about our industrial strategy [here](#):



Our proposals are part of our summer campaign, For The Many. As well as our industrial strategy, we have also launched a commission to address the staffing crisis in our NHS and a five-point plan to tackle poverty. Read more about our campaign [here](#)



[SNP's record in government exposed](#)

The SNP's record in government has today been exposed in a series of damning revelations:

Audit Scotland, the independent public sector watchdog, has highlighted the staffing crisis in our NHS. This is the direct result of Nicola Sturgeon's decisions when she was Health Secretary. Labour has been warning about this for months, and has created a workforce commission to address the challenges.

Read more [here](#)

Education Secretary John Swinney's team of international experts quietly sneaked out a paper-thin report, after spending tens of thousands of pounds flying them to Scotland. They point out that capacity in the education system is the key to improving our schools – no wonder when you consider that 4,000 teachers have been lost under the SNP.

Read more [here](#)

And new data has revealed that thousands of apprentices in Scotland are being paid less than the National Minimum Wage. A total of 14 per cent of apprentices across the country get less than £5.55 per hour – while 2.2 percent are earning less than £2.67 per hour. The SNP government should not certify Modern Apprenticeships if they are found to be paying less than the National Minimum Wage.

Read more [here](#)

The SNP government is failing. It's time for a country run for the many, not the few. Join our movement [here](#)