

Sarwar says he would “reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment”

Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, announced today that he would reverse the UK Government decision to cut the Winter Fuel Payment for some pensioners and would reinstate it for all in Scotland.

At last week’s by-election in Colinton/Fairmilehead the Labour vote collapsed completely. Scott Arthur who resigned to take up a position as MP for Edinburgh South West had won the seat on two previous occasions. In 2022 he had 33.4% of the first preference votes, an increase on the 20.6% he won in 2017 (when the SNP had marginally more at 20.7%). Some critics said this collapse must be attributed to the UK Government’s actions since elected in July – and one of the headline grabbers has been to cut the Winter Fuel Allowance for pensioners. That might affect the Scottish Parliamentary elections in the same way in 2026, although of course there is some time before that election.

This year, the Winter Fuel Payment was to be replaced by a devolved Scottish benefit called [Pension Age Winter Heating Assistance](#) (PAWH) but The Scottish Government has said it could not deliver this payment in 2024 and instead called on the Department of Work and Pensions to pay it on their behalf.

The Scottish Government followed Westminster by means testing the PAWH in the same way as the Westminster government will. This means that only people with a State Pension and who qualify for certain other benefits are entitled to PAWH.

Scottish Labour said that the criterion for pension credit was too low and called on The Scottish Government to use its devolved powers and additional resources, made available to it through the Household Support Fund, to take a different approach in Scotland.

According to Scottish Labour, the SNP government received £41million of consequential from the UK Government's extension of Household Support Fund. This is designed to support low-income households with their energy bills, but Scottish Labour say this money was not passed on to those in need in Scotland by The Scottish Government.

The first UK Government budget under Sir Keir Starmer delivered an additional £1.5 billion in block grant this year and £3.4 billion more next year.

Scottish Labour has said it would take the power back from the DWP and reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment for Scots if they are elected in 2026 as a devolved benefit. The party has said that devolved tax and welfare powers could then be used to taper the level of support given to wealthiest households.

Scottish Labour say that taking this approach would avoid the limited criterion of pension credit, ensuring every pensioner who needs support receives it and deliver a fairer system for all.

Mr Sarwar said: "A Scottish Labour government will reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment for pensioners in Scotland.

"The Winter Fuel Payment was supposed to be a devolved benefit this year and there were additional resources available to the Scottish Government through the Household Support Fund.

“That meant we could have taken a different approach in Scotland to support more households this year – instead, the SNP decided to hand the power back to the DWP.

“For months I have said that the eligibility criterion of pension credit is too low and called for a Scottish solution to this issue.

“That’s why Scottish Labour will take back this devolved power from the DWP, reinstate the Winter Fuel Payment, and deliver a fairer system to ensure that everyone who needs support gets it.

“A UK Labour government is clearing up the mess left by a chaotic Tory government – here in Scotland, people are demanding a new direction and in 2026 we have the opportunity to deliver it with a Scottish Labour government.”



23/5/2024 Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar took to the campaign trail during the General Election just off Leith Walk Edinburgh. Picture Alan Simpson