

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**Easy  
Read**

# **Social security in the UK**

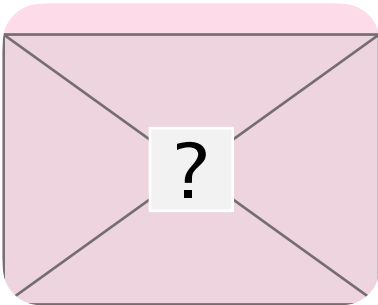
## **What needs to change**



# Easy Read



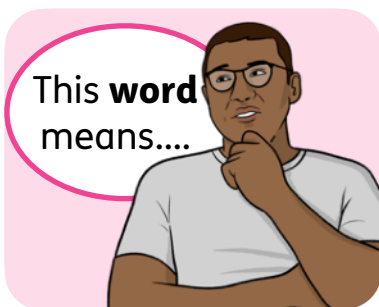
This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



Some words are in **bold** - this means the writing is thicker and darker. These are important words in the booklet.



Sometimes if a bold word is hard to understand, we will explain what it means.



[Blue and underlined](#) words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

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# About this report



**Amnesty International** is a big charity that helps people who do not have rights.



We have written this report about **human rights** and **social security** in the UK.



**Human rights** are the things that every person should have or be able to do, by law.



**Social security** is money and support from the government to protect people who are in need.



We think that social security needs to be a human right in the UK.

# How we wrote this report



We listened to people who get money from the government, to find out what they think.



Some people filled in surveys for us.



We spoke to other people in person.



We mostly spoke to people aged between 16 and 64.



We also worked with groups that speak up for people who need social security.

# Human rights



The **United Nations** is a big group of all the countries in the world.

Sometimes, they are called the **UN** for short.



They work together to make the world a better place.



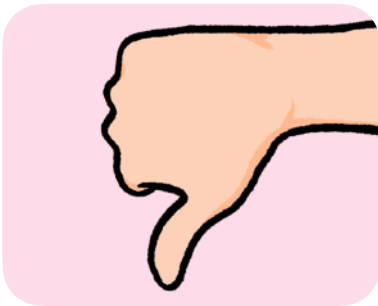
The UN has rules and laws about human rights.



The UK is not following all of these rules.



The UN has told the UK many times to follow all of the rules and laws about human rights.



But the UK government has not done this.



This means that some people in the UK do not have the same rights as everyone else.

# Social security

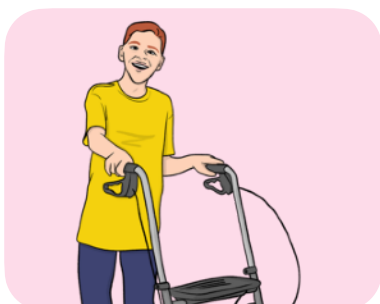
There are many types of social security in the UK. Some of the money includes:



- **Pensions** – these are for older people.



- **Universal Credit** – this is for people who do not have a job or do not have enough money to pay for the things they need.



- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)** – this is for disabled children.



- **Personal Independence Payment (PIP)** – this is for disabled adults and adults with health conditions.





24 million people in Britain get social security.



This includes:

- 13 million older people.



- 9 million people aged between 16 and 64.



- 750,000 children under 16 who get Disability Living Allowance.



**£315.8 billion**

The government is going to spend £315.8 billion on social security this year.

The UN has rules about social security.  
They say that it should:



- Protect you from things that go wrong in life.



- Make sure you have enough to live on.



It is against these rules to make social security harder to use.



The UK has not fully agreed to all of these rules.



The UK government has written a new plan for social security.



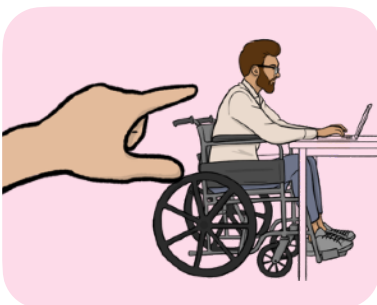
But this plan will make it harder for people to get help.



The government does not have enough information about how many people get help.



Their plan is not about making sure people have enough money to live on.



It is more about getting people into jobs.



Without social security, not everybody can afford the things they need to live.



When the social security system is not good enough, this mostly affects:

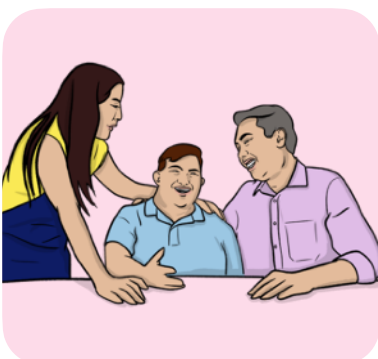
- Children.



- Disabled people.



- Families who do not have much money.



The government should make social security a human right.

This will mean that everybody can have a chance to live well.

# Is social security good enough in the UK?



The UN's rules say that social security should be enough for people to have a good life.



But the law in the UK does not say how much social security must be.



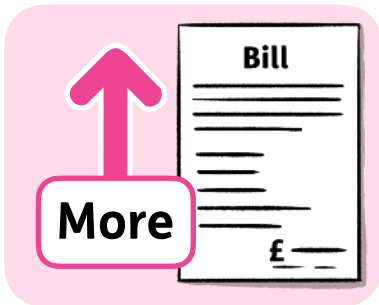
So, the government can give people less than they need.



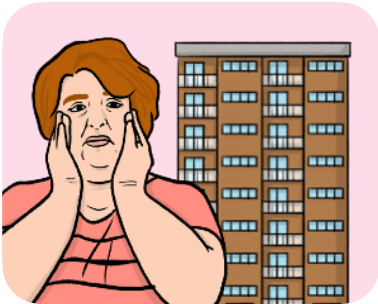
This means that they do not follow human rights laws.



The government's plan for social security could mean that some people get less money.



But things are costing more than they used to.



Many people are still finding it hard to pay for things like heating and rent.



So, the government's changes may mean that people will not be able to afford to live a good life.

# Is it easy to get social security?



The UK government has to make sure that everyone can use the social security system easily.

They must do this by:



- Making it clear and easy to understand



- Making sure that the people who need help are part of making decisions.



But the UK's social security system has problems.



It is hard to apply for social security online.



There is not much help for people who need to apply for social security.



People need to have health checks to get some disability benefits. But these are not done well.



People have to wait a long time to get help.



If people are told that they cannot get social security, it is not always clear why this is.





The government punishes people who break its rules. This is called **sanctions**.



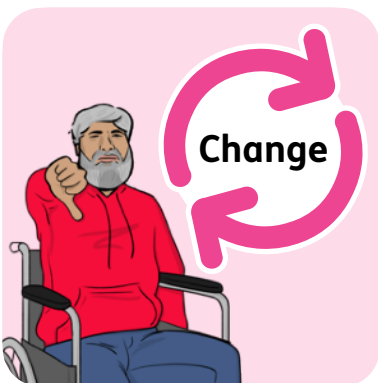
Sanctions can be unfair and make life much harder for people.



The government's changes to social security will make it harder for some groups of people to get help.



The government does not always listen to people about its changes.



The government has not made enough changes to support disabled people to apply for social security.

These changes are called **reasonable adjustments**.

# Does the UK's social security system treat people with respect?



The government is not doing a good job of treating people with respect.



The government says that their staff will help people and be polite and fair.



But we found out that they do not treat people kindly.



Many people feel worried and scared when they try to get social security.



The government needs to make big changes to treat people fairly.



The government's rules for social security hurt some groups more than others.



The government is not doing enough to fix this problem and treat everyone fairly.



This is unfair to those groups.

# What needs to change



The social security system in the UK does not work.



It keeps people poor and does not treat them with respect.



This is because the government does not understand that all human rights are important.



We have some ideas to make the social security system better.

# What the government should do



The government should make a new organisation, called a **commission**, to make big changes.

The commission should:



- Make big changes to the law.



- Work with other parts of the government and people who are affected.



- Write a clear plan for the government, so it follows the UN's human rights rules.

The government should also:



- Look at getting more money to spend on social security.



- Look at writing laws that follow the UN's human rights rules.



- Help the courts to make sure the government follows human rights rules.



- Check that they are following their plan to follow the UN's human rights rules.



- Support the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to follow the rules too.

# What the Department for Work and Pensions should do



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

The **Department for Work and Pensions** is a part of the government. It is in charge of social security.

Sometimes it is called the **DWP** for short.

They should:



- Get rid of rules that hurt people.

These include rules about how many children in a family can get benefits.



- Talk to lots of different people before they make any changes.

They should hear from the people who will be affected by the changes.

The DWP should also:



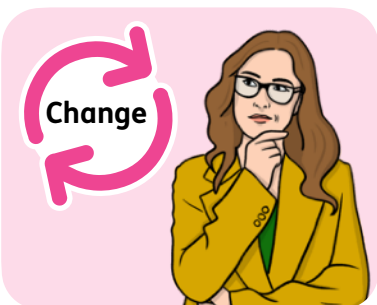
- Check that they do not hurt people's human rights when they make changes.



- Write new rules to make sure that social security helps people to live well.



- Set up local groups where people can speak up about how they can do better.



- Change how they decide how much money to give people, to make sure it is enough to live on.



The DWP should also:



- Think about the extra help that disabled people need.



- Stop giving out sanctions that make it hard for people to get what they need.

# What the UK Parliament should do

**Parliament** is where politicians vote on new laws. They should:



- Find out why the government has not checked how its new rules affect human rights.



- Look at how the DWP does health checks for people who apply for benefits.



- Look at how well it works when people want to say the DWP has made the wrong choice.



- Look at whether there should be a new **independent** group to check on sanctions.

**Independent** means it is not part of the government.

# Find out more



You can look at our website here:  
[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)

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