

A future where families come first



Great opportunities are within our country's reach.
Only Labour can seize them, and build a new Britain which
guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

As we emerge from the pandemic, find a new place in the world outside the European Union and transition to a carbon neutral economy, we need a Labour government that would rise to the moment with ideas that meet the aspirations of the British public. A Labour government that is on your side. A Labour government that would give people much greater power over the issues that affect their lives. A Labour government that would tackle the cost-of-living crisis head on, get Britain growing again after 12 years of failure and improve public services so they deliver for the people paying for them.

This year's National Policy Forum, alongside Stronger Together – the policy review led by our Party Chair Anneliese Dodds – is a vital opportunity for us to develop the ideas that will form an election-winning platform on which a Labour government would build that new Britain.

The six consultation documents demonstrate the scale of the challenges we face but also the breadth of the opportunities available to us. They range from harnessing the potential of the green and digital revolutions to making sure the workplace of the 2020s offers working people the security and prosperity they deserve. They look at how the criminal justice system can keep our communities safe and secure, and how we can build first-class public services fit for the future after years of Conservative neglect. They consider how we can guarantee families up and down the country financial, social and housing security, and how we can protect our national interest while promoting Labour values abroad.

As Party members, supporters and stakeholders your voice in these debates is absolutely critical, and I encourage you to get involved. Please consider submitting your views either individually or as part of your CLP or organisation, or perhaps attending one of the online members' events to hear from one of my Shadow Cabinet colleagues. The strength of our movement is its diversity, and the breadth and depth of our collective knowledge, passion and insight. It is by working together that we will develop the ideas that underpin our vision of a new Britain – one that guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

Keir Starmer
Leader of the Labour Party



Thank you for getting involved in the Labour Party's 2022 National Policy Forum (NPF) consultation. It's a really important opportunity for us to hear from our members, supporters and stakeholders on how the next Labour government can build a new Britain which guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

This paper is one of six policy documents published by the Labour Party as part of this year's consultation. Each document will ask a set of questions on specific policy issues, followed by detail on the context, the challenges we face and Labour's proposed way forward to help inform your answers. For further information, you may wish to refer back to the relevant sections of the two reports we published at Conference 2021 looking at the same six themes:

- *Britain in 2030*, which contrasted life at the end of the decade under continued Conservative rule with how things could look under a Labour government: <https://labour.org.uk/stronger-together/britain-2030/>
- *Labour Works*, which showcased inspiring examples of the difference Labour is already making across the country where we are in power: <https://labour.org.uk/stronger-together/labour-works/>

You don't need to answer every one of the questions in the document, nor answer them in a specific way. We suggest using the questions to stimulate your thoughts on what you think the main issues are in the document's policy area.

You can write your response as an individual, or as a collective through your local party or organisation. Once you have drafted your response, please submit it to us through Labour Policy Forum: www.policyforum.labour.org.uk. For more information on how to make a submission, see www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation-submission-guide.

On the Policy Forum website you can find out about other ways to get involved with the consultation, including our programme of online members' events. You can also read this year's five other NPF consultation documents which might be of interest. If you have an idea on an issue or topic that isn't covered by a specific consultation, then you can submit those too – the website lists which policy areas are covered by which NPF commission.

Thank you again for taking the time to take part in the NPF. It is through the contributions of members, supporters and stakeholders like you that Labour will develop the policy platform that will build a new Britain which guarantees security, prosperity and respect for all.

Want to know more about how Labour makes its policy?

You can learn more about the Labour Party's policy-making processes on our online Resource Hub: www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/resource-hub.

You can also follow us on Twitter [@labpolicyforum](https://twitter.com/labpolicyforum) for all of the latest policy development news and events.

Accessible Materials

The Labour Party is an inclusive, member-based organisation that prides itself on being accessible to all who share its values. If you would like an accessible version of these documents, please email us at **policydevelopment@labour.org.uk** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

Delivering financial, social and housing security

Questions

1. What changes are needed to the social security system to help tackle the cost of living crisis and to ensure the system tackles poverty, makes work pay and provides genuine security?
2. What can be done to ensure secure and decent housing for all?
3. How can the next Labour government give children the best start in life and what changes are needed to ensure all children have access to high-quality, affordable childcare?
4. How can we ensure young people have choices and chances and are able to take the steps they want towards economic and social independence?
5. How can we ensure equalities are at the heart of all of our policies and that equality impact assessments are fully utilised?

The context

Labour is on the side of families, in all their wonderful diversity. Successive Conservative governments have failed to put families first, whether that's by raising taxes on working people, cutting support for disabled people, single parents or pensioners, or failing to recognise the intersectional inequalities that cut across our society. Too often, the incomes, rights and prospects of families have been curtailed under Conservative Governments.

Labour will do things differently. We know that families need security, prosperity and respect. They need security in their finances, at work and at home. They need the prosperity that comes from a good, well-paid job that doesn't require moving away from home and from access to high-quality, affordable childcare that gives children the best start in life. They need the right to be treated with respect in a tolerant society.

Under the current government, however, families are increasingly insecure. The cost of living crisis means millions of families are struggling to make ends meet. Price rises, especially the costs of childcare, energy, food, fuel and rent are far outstripping wage growth. The Government is presiding over the biggest fall in living standards ever recorded and 1.3 million more people, including half a million children, are forecast to be pushed into poverty in this financial year.

Higher taxes, rising interest rates, falling real wages, and real-terms reductions to Universal Credit and other forms of social security that were already woefully inadequate, such as Sick Pay and Carer's Allowance, mean that families are seeing substantial falls in their income. As a result, a growing number of families face food or fuel insecurity and many are having to rely on food banks.

Disabled people have long been facing these pressures but fuel increases, social care charging and the failure to retain the uplift to Universal Credit and expand it to people on legacy benefits, have compounded things immeasurably. Women have also faced a disproportionate impact by bearing a greater share of the burden of social security cuts, as well as through the Government's failure to close the gender pay gap or address the gender pensions gap. The systemic inequalities faced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic people must also be addressed.

Families have been left exposed to the current cost of living crisis because of the Government's failure over the last decade. Real wages are lower now than they were fifteen years ago and jobs have become increasingly insecure. Families have too often not been supported at work and too many places have seen good jobs leave without being replaced, meaning young people, in particular, have had to move away from their homes to find decent opportunities.

Over the same period, the Government has presided over a housing crisis. Housing has become less affordable, with house prices rising nearly three times faster than wages over the last decade. The cost of private renting has soared too, with renters in England now paying nearly £50 billion a year in rent, £11 billion more than a decade ago. Homelessness has doubled over the last ten years. There are now 120,000 children living in temporary accommodation, an increase of 80 per cent since 2010 and women escaping domestic abuse have often been left at risk of homelessness.

Childcare has also become less available and affordable over the last ten years. Surveys show over 40 per cent of parents are having to cut down on their working hours or stop working altogether due to soaring childcare costs. Many parents, particularly mothers, are not getting enough time with their family and existing employment policies to support family life are weak and not available to all workers.

The challenges

The challenge for Labour is to put forward costed, practical measures to support people through the devastating impact of the current cost of living crisis. At the same time, we must develop a policy platform that addresses the long-term causes of falling living standards and widening inequalities so we can bring lasting security, prosperity and respect to families and communities across the country.

Our ten principles for social security from last year's policy cycle emphasise that the social security system should give adequate and timely support when needed, should support those on low incomes and be available to, and accessible for, all those who need support. Under the current system, that has too often not been the case. As a result, over the last decade, we have seen growing numbers of people on Universal Credit turning to food banks and pushed into debt.

Over the last financial year, more than two million emergency food parcels were distributed by Trussell Trust food banks. One of the key drivers behind soaring food bank use is the delays, inadequacy and reductions in Universal Credit. Our challenge is to tackle this head on by fundamentally reforming the social security system so that – rather than pushing people into hardship – it tackles poverty and makes work pay.

Too many young people feel that, in order to get on, they need to move away from home because there aren't good jobs in their area. As well as forcing people to move away from their families, this has the effect of reducing spending power, causing high streets and local institutions to struggle and transport networks to close down. Our policies must spread opportunities, prosperity and power across the country so that families aren't left behind.

Two major barriers to people getting on in life are the soaring costs of housing and of childcare. The cost of both, relative to prices and wages, have risen sharply over the last decade, making it more difficult for families to lead fulfilling lives. Tenants' rights have been stripped away, rents have become increasingly unaffordable, there is a chronic shortage of social housing and the Government has failed to fix the broken housing market. In order to give families the security and prosperity they need, we must tackle the housing crisis, including the soaring cost of private renting and the lack of recognition of the true value of care, and we must ensure families have secure and affordable housing.

Spiralling childcare costs, including the cost of after-school clubs as well as nursery provisions, have far outstripped wage increases. That's put incredible financial pressure on families and forced many to cut down on their working hours or stop working altogether. The challenge for Labour is to deliver high-quality and affordable childcare and bring about stronger family-friendly workers' rights so that children have the best start in life and families can have a good work-life balance.

The way forward

In last year's policy cycle, the Work, Pensions and Equality Commission consulted and took evidence on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19. It was clear that inequalities across society have become further entrenched because of the Government's failure to address the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, disabled people and LGBT+ people. Labour will tackle the intersecting inequalities that cut across our society and address the immediate challenges people are facing.

Our calls for an Emergency Budget would help ease the cost of living strain that families are facing now by reducing home energy bills, making homes easier to heat and scrapping the Conservatives' tax hike. We know from last year's policy cycle about the need to replace Universal Credit as agreed at Annual Conference, as well as to tackle chronic low pay and build a social security system that reduces poverty, makes work pay and provides security.

Our plans to Buy, Make and Sell More in Britain and invest £28 billion a year in combating climate change would help to create quality jobs across the country, reducing regional inequalities and boosting living standards. Labour will also give everyone the security that comes with a good quality, affordable home. We will empower first-time buyers to afford a home of their own, as well as building new, affordable homes, ending rough sleeping and tackling the causes of homelessness.

We will give children the best start in life and have set out how, as we recover from the pandemic, Labour would have put in place plans to ensure all families have access to high-quality, affordable childcare. Our Children's Recovery Plan would increase the early years' pupil premium more than four-fold, delivering high quality childcare for our youngest children. As parents know, childcare needs do not stop when children start school so our plan would be delivering breakfast and after-school clubs for every child, to boost social development as well as attainment post-pandemic.

Our New Deal for Working People will strengthen family-friendly rights and, in particular, the rights of women. We will extend statutory maternity and paternity leave, review the failed Shared Parental Leave system and tackle maternity and pregnancy discrimination. Flexible working will be a day one right and we will bring in the right to switch off. We will also introduce statutory rights for trade union equalities reps to ensure they have the time to support colleagues facing inequalities and discrimination and contribute to positive changes in workplaces.

We will build a tolerant and respectful society by putting equality at the heart of everything we do. Covid-19, and the Government's response to the pandemic, had a disproportionate impact on women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, disabled people and LGBT+ people. Yet, the Government still refuses to address the inequalities their policies have created. Labour will uphold the Equality Act, activating the Public Sector Equality Duty, and publish meaningful Equality Impact Assessments for every major fiscal event.

We have set out the foundations to tackle the inequalities that are holding the country back and to ensure that all families are treated with respect. We now need to build on these foundations to develop a policy platform that matches our ambitions for the British people. One that guarantees security, prosperity and respect, and creates a future where families come first, in all their wonderful diversity.