

# Public services that work from the start



This is a critical year for Labour to set out the case for change: for a fairer, greener and more dynamic Britain, where aspiration is rewarded, where working people succeed and where communities control their own destiny.

There can be no doubt that Britain faces serious challenges, nor that 13 years of Conservative government have left our country, our economy and our public services on their knees and vulnerable to those challenges. But there should also be no doubt that we can rise to them.

We believe in our country and our people. What they lack is a government that shares their ambition.

We need to show people that Labour would be that government. Show not just what the Tories have done to Britain but the Britain that Labour can build. A country run in the interests of working people, and where politics is once again a force for good.

This requires a bold and credible policy agenda – and the National Policy Forum plays a critical role in getting us there.

These will be the final NPF consultations before Labour finalises our manifesto for the next election, and they are a vital opportunity for us to hear from voices across the labour movement and country on some of the most pressing policy issues facing an incoming Labour government.

They look at the ways Britain can prosper by ensuring growth in every part of our country, by forging new, ethical trading relationships and by improving our everyday economy. They consider how better public services, focused on prevention and early intervention, can make us happier, healthier and safer. They look at how we can support families in all their wonderful diversity, and how by pushing power out of Westminster we can make our neighbourhoods and communities more cohesive and prosperous.

Please do contribute your thoughts and ideas. The strength of our movement is its diversity, and that is nowhere more apparent than in our democratic policymaking process. It is important that we are able to draw on the thoughts and experiences of our members, affiliates, stakeholders and supporters.

Together we can give Britain the fairer, greener future it deserves.

**Keir Starmer**  
Leader of the Labour Party

**Anneliese Dodds**  
National Policy Forum Chair

Thank you for taking part in the Labour Party's 2023 National Policy Forum (NPF) consultation. This is the final of four annual consultations before the next general election and will form a key input to the manifesto-drafting process.

As we further develop our policy platform, it is particularly important that we hear from people across the labour movement, including from local Labour Parties and affiliated trade unions. We also encourage external organisations, such as charities, think tanks, businesses and civil society bodies to submit their ideas.

Members should contribute to discussions and submissions through their constituency or branch party, as the commissions will not be accepting submissions directly from individuals in this final year.

The Labour Party is publishing six consultation documents this year. Each asks a set of seven questions on a specific policy area, followed by detail on the context and the challenges we face.

After the consultation closes on 17 March, all of the submissions from the four years' worth of consultations will be used to develop final year policy documents. Those documents will then be debated, amended and agreed by the NPF representatives in a final meeting on 21-23 July.

You may wish to look at the work of the Labour Party's policy roadmap, Stronger Together, which produced a final report, structured around the same six policy themes, in 2022: [www.labour.org.uk/stronger-together](https://www.labour.org.uk/stronger-together).

Alongside Stronger Together, the party commissioned three independent reviews which reported over the last year, which may be helpful to refer back to as you consider your responses:

1. *A New Britain: Renewing our Democracy and Rebuilding our Economy*, the final report of the Commission on the UK's Future, chaired by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, which made recommendations to reignite Britain's economy, rebuild trust in politics and reunite the country: [www.labour.org.uk/page/a-new-britain](https://www.labour.org.uk/page/a-new-britain);

2. *Start-Up, Scale-Up*, the final report of the Start-Up Review led by Lord Jim O'Neill, which explored what is needed to make Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a business: [www.labour.org.uk/startupreview](https://www.labour.org.uk/startupreview); and

3. *Learning and skills for economic recovery, social cohesion and a more equal Britain*, the final report of the Council of Skills Advisers, chaired by former Education Secretary Lord David Blunkett, which detailed how Labour's further education and skills agenda could improve growth, deliver quality jobs and prepare people for the future of work: [www.labour.org.uk/skillsreport](https://www.labour.org.uk/skillsreport).

You don't need to answer every one of the questions in this document, nor answer them in a specific way. We suggest using the questions to help structure your response and act as a prompt for your thoughts on the policy area.

You can submit a response on behalf of your local party, at branch or Constituency Labour Party level. You can also respond as an organisation, such as an affiliated trade union, socialist society or external stakeholder.

Once you have drafted your response, please submit it to us through the Labour Policy Forum: [www.policyforum.labour.org.uk](https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk). For more information on how to make a submission, see [www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation-submission-guide](https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation-submission-guide).

You can find all six consultation documents on the website, and explore other ways to get involved in the consultation such as online members' events, which you can find at [labour.org.uk/npf23/](https://labour.org.uk/npf23/).

Thank you again for taking the time to contribute to the NPF. It is through the contributions of members, supporters and stakeholders that Labour will develop the policy platform that will build a fairer, greener, more dynamic future for Britain.

## Want to know more about how Labour makes its policy?

You can learn more about the Labour Party's policy-making processes on our website: [www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/resource-hub](https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/resource-hub).

You can also follow us on Twitter [@labpolicyforum](https://twitter.com/labpolicyforum) for policy development news and information on members' 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](mailto:policydevelopment@labour.org.uk)** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

# Prevention, early intervention and better public services for all

## Introduction

The National Policy Forum (NPF) is entering the final year of the current policy cycle, which will culminate in a full, in-person meeting in July 2023 to determine Labour's policy platform. That platform will in turn contribute towards an election-winning manifesto for the next general election.

The Public Services that work from the Start policy commission and its predecessor commissions have consulted on a range of policy topics over the previous three years:

- In 2020, on The education system and the health and social care system after coronavirus;
- In 2021, on Tackling health inequalities to make the country the best place to grow up and grow old in; and
- In 2022, on Education and skills, health and mental health services, and social care.

For this fourth and final year, the Public Services that work from the Start policy commission has chosen to focus on prevention, early intervention and better public services for all. We welcome submissions on this issue – and specifically the seven consultation questions set out below – from Constituency and Branch Labour Parties, affiliated trade unions and socialist societies, as well as contributions from expert third party organisations such as charities, think tanks, businesses and civil society. Full details on how to make a submission can be found on **[www.policyforum.labour.org.uk](http://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk)**.

The outcomes of all four consultations will then be taken into account when the commission produces its draft policy document for consideration at the full NPF meeting in July 2023.

## Questions

1. How can Labour ensure our public health services prevent worsening population health, ensure pandemic preparedness, address widening health inequalities, and offer early intervention programmes that reduce pressure on our communities and other services (in conjunction with wider social policy)?
2. What should Labour do to strengthen primary care (including all primary healthcare professions) and to shift healthcare where possible into the community, while ensuring high quality hospital services?
3. How can education and children's care services support vulnerable children, and those who are disabled or have special educational needs (SEND), to thrive?
4. What should Labour include in a Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy?
5. How can Labour ensure public service buildings are designed to meet the needs of all their users?
6. What are the specific implications of policy proposals in this area for (a) women, (b) Black, Asian and minority ethnic people (c) LGBT+ people, (d) disabled people and (e) all those with other protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010?
7. What consideration would need to be given to policy proposals in this area when collaborating with devolved administrations and local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

## The context

As 2023 begins, public services are under immense pressure. The combined impact of 13 years of Conservative underfunding, neglect, and mismanagement, a global pandemic, soaring energy costs, and spiralling inflation is limiting services' ability to give security and support to communities around the country.

The NHS in England went into the pandemic with an acute staffing crisis and a waiting list that had soared from 2.4 million in 2010 to 4.4 million in 2020. Now, services are faced with a backlog of care and are not yet back to pre-pandemic activity levels. Preventative services are lagging behind; almost one million fewer women a year are being screened for breast and cervical cancer compared to a decade ago. Despite huge shortfalls and inequalities in women's healthcare, the Government has failed to deliver on its own women's health strategy. Urgent and emergency care is in crisis. Ambulance crews routinely queue for hours outside hospitals because A&E departments are full, and the average response time to someone who has had a suspected stroke or heart attack is 48 minutes.

Meanwhile, mental health services are facing extraordinary demand as people reel from the impact of isolation and hardship, with children and young people particularly affected. 44 per cent of children and young people who are referred for urgent treatment for an eating disorder wait three months or more. Community care services haven't got enough staff to prevent people from going into hospital, and neither do they have capacity to support all those who need continuing care after leaving. England has lost more than 4,000 GPs and a fifth of all GP practices over the last decade. Now, millions of people wait over a month to see their GP and public satisfaction with GP services has fallen to 38 per cent - the lowest level since records began and 39 percentage points below Labour's last year in government.

Long-promised social care reforms have been postponed again, leaving thousands unable to access care. Almost 35,000 people a year are estimated to die whilst waiting for social care, whilst almost 6,000 a year run out of savings paying for their own care. This leaves unpaid carers to fill gaps, with families forced to take time out of work and lose income in order to care for their loved ones, often with little support or respite.

In education, schools are being squeezed by soaring energy costs and will see no net growth in spending per pupil from 2010 – 2024. Schools cannot fill vacancies, school buildings are crumbling and attainment has suffered as a result of pandemic disruption. Children who are disabled and those with special educational needs (SEND) are particularly disadvantaged by the Conservatives' lack of ambition, with 1,500 children with SEND who should be in education still waiting for a place at school. Further education is suffering after a sustained period of Conservative neglect, while anticipating a predicted 160,000 extra students by 2024, and our world-class universities are becoming financially unviable, with standards driven down for staff and students as a result of the Government's broken funding system and failed higher education policies.

Children's social care is in a desperate state. Local authorities are often life lines for vulnerable children and families, but do not have the resources they need to reach those who could benefit from support and intervention. This leaves too many vulnerable children at risk and facing disadvantage simply because of the circumstances in which they were born.

Meanwhile, the dedicated staff in our public services are working overtime to fill workforce gaps and meet record demand, without the fair pay and recognition they deserve. Many public service employees are considering or taking industrial action as a result – for example, in winter 2022/23 the Royal College of Nursing in England took country-wide strike action for the first time in its history.



## The future under Labour

The next Labour government will address these challenges and secure first class public services for all.

### Health and mental health services

Labour has set out a guiding principle that it will protect an NHS free at the point of use and secure health care for all.

Using revenue raised through Labour's commitments to end tax exemptions for private schools and scrap a tax loophole enjoyed by a small number of private equity fund managers, the next Labour government will introduce an ambitious plan to improve mental health care. This includes guaranteed mental health treatment within a month of referral, the first ever long-term, whole-government plan to improve mental health outcomes, 8,500 new staff, fair funding for mental health services, specialist mental health support in every school, and an open access mental health hub for children and young people in every community.

Labour will tackle the root cause of capacity challenges in the NHS with the most ambitious expansion of the health workforce in history. The next Labour government will close tax loopholes for non doms and use the money to double the number of medical school places, train 10,000 new nurses and midwives each year, double the number of district nurses qualifying every year, and train 5,000 new health visitors a year. Labour is also committed to long term workforce planning for health and care, focusing on retention as well as recruitment, producing independent projections of the numbers of staff the UK needs to ensure our workforce is fit for a future of new health challenges and opportunities, creating new types of professionals that draw on a diverse skills mix, creating new career paths, and reviewing existing training pathways. A Labour government will also reform the pension rules that currently discourage senior clinicians from staying in the health service.

Labour will shift the focus of health care to prevention and early intervention, with a ten year plan for change and modernisation of the NHS to shift the focus out of hospital and into the community where possible. Labour is developing detailed policy in this area and is working on our approach to primary care, dental care, and public health in particular, with a focus on tackling health inequalities linked to gender, race and ethnicity, disability, sexuality, and income. Labour is keen to hear respondents' thoughts on these areas to feed into policy development.

### Social Care

Once in government, Labour will embark on a plan for reform that will act as a roadmap to a world-class National Care Service with just as much ambition as the 1945 government that brought in the NHS.

Labour has set out its priorities for reform:

- Transform access to care, making sure every older and disabled person who needs care and support can get it when and where they need it;
- Act on the principles of prevention and early intervention - a "Home First" approach;
- Give disabled adults choice and control over their support;
- Establish a New Deal for Care Workers to ensure they get the job security they deserve, and the rewards they have earned; and
- Establish a new partnership with families to ensure they don't put themselves at risk for looking after people they love.

Labour will recruit and retain more carers by ensuring full rights at work, decent standards, fair pay, and proper training. Adult social care will benefit from a Fair Pay Agreement as the first priority of a Labour government, negotiated through collective bargaining between unions and employer representatives.



A Labour government will ensure money invested in social care is spent on social care and will not tolerate poor quality, extractive providers. Under Labour, no private equity firm will be able to profit from running care homes while paying their care workers less than they need to live on. All providers will be required to demonstrate financial sustainability, responsible tax practices, and good employment conditions with high quality care for service users. Labour is keen to hear respondents' thoughts on next steps as we develop our policy in this area, including looking towards stronger national standards to reduce inequalities in access to care.

### Education and skills

Labour's vision for education is a system that can transform opportunities, grow our economy and provide a platform for a rewarding life. Every parent, no matter where they live, should be able to send their child to a high-quality school that prepares them for the future, and ensures they leave education ready for work, onwards education, and life.

The next Labour government will roll out an ambitious school improvement plan, investing in the people that keep schools running. Labour's National Excellence Programme will be paid for by ending tax exemptions for private schools and will recruit new teachers, refocus regulation to improve support to struggling schools, provide further continuing professional development for staff, and equip all school leaders with the knowledge and skills to lead outstanding organisations. Labour is working to develop policy that supports inclusion and high standards for vulnerable and SEND children and those who are disabled or have special educational needs, so that every child can go to a high-quality school that supports and prepares them for the future. Labour is keen to hear respondents' thoughts on priorities in this areas.

In order to ensure high standards across the sector, Labour will make the national curriculum compulsory, ensure all teachers have qualified status, and establish national standards for support staff. The next Labour government will require academies to cooperate with local authorities to ensure fair admissions and will introduce inspections for multi-academy trusts to ensure effective oversight. Labour will implement a national strategy with clear targets to close the attainment gap and will also work with local and regional government in England to review the school curriculum.

Labour has a plan to ensure every young person leaves school ready for work, onwards education, and life, funded by revenue raised from ending tax exemptions for private schools. Labour will reform citizenship education to include practical life skills, introduce two weeks' worth of compulsory work experience for every young person, and give every child access to quality careers advice at school. Labour will make sure all children have the level of functional computer skills they need, and will also invest in re-engaging 16-17 year olds who are not known to be in education, employment or training.

Adult skills policy is covered by the Better Jobs and Better Work Commission and will take into account the detailed recommendations made by the Council of Skills Advisors in its report to Labour published in November 2022.