

# Public services that work from the start



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](http://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk). For more information on how to make a submission, see [www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation-submission-guide](http://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](http://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](mailto:policydevelopment@labour.org.uk)** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

# Securing first class public services for all

## Questions

1. What principles should underpin Labour's approach to the provision of public services?
2. How can Labour ensure the NHS and social care deliver a first class service for all?
3. What do mental health services need from a Labour government?
4. How can Labour ensure high-quality education for every child and young person that secures the skills they need for work and for life?
5. How can Labour deliver high-quality vocational and academic training routes?

## The context

Strong public services are a vital component of Labour's contract to provide people with the security, prosperity and respect they deserve. Schools, colleges and universities give children the chance to grow into thriving young adults and prosper. Youth services prepare children for life and help guarantee security in our communities. Primary care, hospitals and mental health services give people the security of knowing their health and wellbeing needs will always be met. A functioning social care system empowers those that access it – and their families – to live the life they choose, giving everyone the dignity and respect they deserve.

Nye Bevan said when he introduced the National Health Service that it would “lift the shadow from millions of homes”. Labour believes the same should be said for every public service.

But today, those who rely on public services and those who provide them are being let down. People are waiting months and even years in pain and discomfort for planned NHS treatment with waiting lists at record highs. Too many are finding it difficult to see a GP, and Accident and Emergency departments are overrun, with trolley waits and ambulance delays putting lives at risk. Cancer care has worsened: compared to five years ago, the proportion of women seen by a hospital doctor within two weeks of an urgent referral for suspected breast cancer has fallen 35 percentage points (from 94 per cent to 59 per cent).

At the same time, 40 per cent of young people are leaving education without the qualifications they need to get on. Access to youth services has been severely restricted with the average English council experiencing a 68 per cent reduction in funding for youth services since 2011. Almost half of the 50 English local authorities with the highest crime rates are also among the 50 with the deepest cuts to youth services since 2011. Local authorities, which play a vital role in the delivery of many public services, had their central government funding cut by 63 per cent in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20, which has forced many councils to restrict non-statutory service provision.

The pressure on our public services is leading to worse and more unequal outcomes. Life expectancy is going backwards in some areas of the UK and health inequalities are widening, with Black women four times more likely to die in childbirth than White women. In 2019 the infant mortality rate increased, bucking a long trend of decline. The progress of children on free school meals going onto university has stalled since 2016 after 15 years of advancement and the attainment gap is growing again, hampering children's life chances.

The need for Labour to focus on securing first class public services for all couldn't be clearer. This will, therefore, be the focus of this commission's consultation this year.

## The challenges

The last two years have underlined the importance of our public services, and the vital role they play in giving security and support to communities up and down the country. They faced enormous additional pressure during the pandemic and after a decade of Conservative neglect and mismanagement they were ill-prepared and lacking resilience.

The NHS went into the pandemic already on its knees with record waiting lists, 100,000 staff shortages, and 17,000 fewer beds than in 2010. Hospitals were crumbling, public health funding had been cut and GP numbers were down. As a consequence, there are now a record 6.2 million people waiting for elective treatment, and they are waiting longer than ever before. Heroic staff who have gone above and beyond for the past two years are exhausted, overstretched, and there simply aren't enough of them. Furthermore, the UK population is ageing. By 2033/34, there are projected to be 4.4 million more over-65s than there were in 2018/19, putting unsustainable demand on a social care system that is already in crisis.<sup>1</sup>

Mental health services are also on the brink of collapse after a decade of decline under the Conservatives. Since 2010 a quarter of mental health beds have been cut, undermining access when people are most in need. Over a third of children were turned away from mental health services last year alone, and there are currently 1.6 million people waiting for mental health treatment.

Young people have had three years of disrupted education and thousands are missing out on the recovery support they need academically and socially. Even before the pandemic, too many young people were leaving education without the academic and life skills they need to get on. Fewer than half of British employers believe young people are leaving full-time education with sufficient advanced digital skills and four in ten 19 year-olds don't hold a Level 3 qualification. These outcomes are no surprise when between 2011 and 2019, the proportion of teachers leaving the profession within one year increased by 25 per cent – a potential loss of over 3,500 new teachers. Pupils are now more likely to be in overcrowded classes, with the ratio of pupils to teachers in state-funded secondary schools at its highest point since 2011.

Meanwhile, the number of teacher vacancies has more than doubled since 2011, with over 1,000 teaching posts currently unfilled. This will make supporting young people to recover the lost learning and wellbeing of the last two years even more difficult. After a decade of neglect, reinvigorating our education system is a key challenge for an incoming Labour government.

People who use our public services often feel like they work in siloes, failing to pass information between them, leaving those who rely on them feeling like they are falling between the cracks. Public services should also be easily accessible for everyone, including those who may not have easy access to digital devices.



## The way forward

Labour wants to address these challenges to secure first class public services for all. We need to think imaginatively about the purpose of those services, and how we can ensure they deliver. Too often they deal with crisis, when they should take a more holistic approach, focusing on prevention and early intervention.

Keir Starmer has set out a vision of how Labour will achieve this across health, mental health, social care and education. Labour's policy platform will build on top of this.

### *Health and social care*

Labour's health contract with the British people will tackle the immediate crisis to bring down waiting times by recruiting, training and retaining the staff we need; by making mental health as important as physical health; and by shifting the focus of healthcare towards prevention as well as cure.

Labour has set out a guiding principle that we will protect an NHS free at the point of use and secure health care for all. In practice, this means bringing down waiting lists and securing the future of our NHS by providing the staff, equipment, and modern technology needed to treat patients on time. As well as addressing the most urgent issues facing the health service, Labour would seek to strengthen early intervention and prevention, to ease the downstream pressure that arises from the failure to tackle the underlying causes of ill health.

Labour has also set out a ten-year plan of investment and reform to transform social care. We would make sure that every older and disabled person who needs care and support can get it when and where they need it. The care system would take a 'Home First' approach – also operating on the principles of prevention and early intervention – and would give disabled adults choice and control over their support. At the same time, we would establish a New Deal for Care Workers – who are often overworked and overlooked – to ensure they get the job security they deserve, and the rewards they have earned. Finally, Labour would establish a new partnership with families to ensure they don't put themselves at risk simply by looking after the people they love.

Everyone should be able to access the mental health services they need, and not be made to wait months or even years to receive support. The next Labour government would treat mental health as seriously as physical health. That is why we have committed to guaranteeing mental health treatment in less than a month and recruiting over 8,500 more mental health professionals to support a million more people every year. With Labour, every school will have a specialist mental health professional, supporting young people right from the start, and every community will have an open access mental health hub for young people. As part of this package to transform mental health services, spending on mental health will never be allowed to fall under the next Labour government.

### *Education and young people*

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 and ready for life.

To secure that vision, Labour is committed to rolling out an ambitious school improvement plan that would see investment in recruitment, training, and the people that keep schools running. Labour will deliver a National Excellence Programme for schools, paid for by ending the tax exemptions for private schools. This includes recruiting and training over 6,500 new teachers, establishing a teacher development programme, and rolling out an Excellence in Leadership programme, to support new senior leaders throughout their first years on the job and enable all leaders and teachers to access continuing professional development.



Teachers, school leaders and support staff are key to securing children's education, but so too is what is taught in schools. Labour wants young people to leave education ready for work and ready for life. That is why Labour will reform the national curriculum to prioritise key life skills such as understanding a rental contract, how to do a mortgage application and communication and problem solving. We would also introduce two weeks' worth of compulsory work experience to give all young people real life experience of the workplace, whatever their background. To support children to get the most out of these initiatives, Labour will give every child access to quality careers advice in their school by recruiting over 1,000 new professional careers advisors, ensuring young people get the information, advice and guidance they need to make informed choices.

The world of work is constantly and rapidly evolving and it is vitally important that young people leaving school today have the digital skills they need in a changing economy. Labour would embed digital skills across the curriculum, so children are developing throughout the school day in all their classes, and we will reform the compulsory computing curriculum so that it teaches basic digital skills as well as computer science. Finally, to ensure no child is left behind, Labour will guarantee every child has access to a device at home, by enabling local authorities to provide for children without adequate access.