

A future where families come first



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.

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;

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; 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.

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. For more information on how to make a submission, see 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/.

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.

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** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

Supporting families

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 A Future Where Families Come First 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 after coronavirus;
- In 2021, on Making Britain the best place to grow up: How to ensure children are at the heart of our recovery from Covid-19; and
- In 2022, on Delivering financial, social and housing security.

For this fourth and final year, the A Future Where Families Come First policy commission has chosen to focus on supporting families. 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.

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 the next Labour government best deliver a modern and affordable childcare system that supports families from the end of parental leave to the end of primary school? How should Labour ensure that a new childcare system helps to tackle child poverty?
2. How can the next Labour government ensure all young children enjoy a childhood that enables them to thrive?
3. How can the next Labour government defeat the scandal of rising poverty and end the soaring demand for food banks?
4. How can Labour's reforms to social security and employment support ensure people of working-age and pensioners have security throughout their working lives and in retirement?
5. How can Labour make home ownership a reality for more families, give private renters the security they need and tackle the scourge of homelessness? How can the next Labour government build more social and council housing and ensure greater investment in genuinely affordable homes?
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

Labour celebrates and cherishes the wonderful diversity of all families and households across Britain. The Labour Party wants to build a Britain that supports family life and brings genuine security to everyone. A country that gives our children the best possible start in life, enabling them to thrive in childhood and beyond; an economy that supports families to have a decent home, a good job and to lead a healthy, well-balanced life; and an inclusive society that treats people with fairness and respect and that guarantees security and dignity in retirement.

Thirteen years of managed decline by the Conservatives has made this much harder to achieve. Families have been left exposed to worsening living standards, deteriorating public services and cuts to social security. People's concerns over their household budgets are even more acute after the Conservatives crashed the economy and sent the cost of mortgages soaring. Inflation having been at a forty-year high, combined with anaemic economic growth, means that wages are now lower in real-terms than when the Conservatives came to office in 2010.

Before 2010, few people had even heard of a foodbank; now, they're being set-up in hospitals where some NHS staff can't keep pace with the spiralling cost of living. More than two million emergency food parcels were distributed by the Trussell Trust last year. Over 800,000 of those parcels were for children, a clear indication that child poverty has risen and deepened over the last thirteen years and remains worryingly high under the Conservatives. Levels of poverty among disabled people have also soared under the Conservative government and poverty is forecast to rise even further over the coming years.

With families feeling a squeeze on their living standards, it's even more essential that childcare is affordable and accessible. Yet, under the Conservatives, the cost of childcare has soared, forcing many parents to cut back on their working hours or leave the labour market entirely. The rising cost of before- and after-school clubs means they too are out of reach for many families, contributing to a widening attainment gap between those families who can afford for their children to attend and those who can't. Moreover, parents with atypical working hours, single parents and parents of disabled children face additional barriers finding accessible childcare.

The country is also in the grip of a housing crisis under the Conservatives. Average house prices are nine times higher than average earnings and home ownership is a distant dream for millions of families. People living in the private rented sector face insecurity and have seen their rents sky-rocket. The Conservatives have failed to build the number of homes needed and failed to sufficiently invest in social and council housing. Meanwhile, more than 120,000 children are living in temporary accommodation, a rise of two-thirds since the Conservatives came to office.

The future under Labour

The next Labour government will build a better future for families by addressing these challenges. On childcare, early years, social security, housing and equalities, Labour has set out ambitious and credible policies to secure the fairer future that families deserve. Labour's challenge now is to ensure this policy offer is fully developed and refined and that the party responds as circumstances and the economic climate changes.

Labour will support families by making childcare available and affordable as a Labour government moves Britain towards a modern childcare system that supports families from the end of parental leave through to the end of primary school. As a first step on that road, a Labour government will deliver breakfast clubs, which are crucial for children's learning and development, in every primary school in England. Labour will fund these breakfast clubs and their workforce from the money raised by removing the non-domiciled tax status, a clear indication that, with Labour, children and families will come first, not the privileged few.

As part of Labour's plans to ease the pressure on parents struggling to find childcare places, Labour will also remove legal barriers to councils delivering new childcare facilities, and ensure local authorities can use their revenue raising powers to support them. Labour will build on this with ambitious plans to expand early years support for families.

Labour will reform social security so that it works for families and works to defeat child poverty, rather than entrenching it. Labour will develop a culture of respect and dignity across the social security system, rather than one of threats and punitive sanctions. In government, Labour will overhaul Universal Credit so that it provides genuine financial security, prevents and reduces poverty, reduces inequalities and promotes and protects women's financial independence.

Labour's social security system will ensure that older people have the security and dignity in retirement that they deserve. Pensioners have been at the sharp end of the cost of living crisis due to soaring energy bills and the real-terms value of the state pension falling significantly over the 2022/23 financial year. While the Government repeatedly wavered, Labour remained steadfast in our commitment that the state pension should be uprated by inflation for the 2023/24 financial year.

The next Labour government will support families into decent work, helping people find high-quality and fulfilling employment. Our ambition is for Britain to have the highest employment rate in the G7. Labour will achieve this by reforming Jobcentres and employment support to make work pay and to offer specialist and localised help. The Labour Party will give local areas the tools they need to deliver universal jobs support and to tackle the rising tide of economic inactivity.

This was an important recommendation by the Commission on the UK's Future, led by Gordon Brown, whose final report was published in December 2022. The commission emphasised that a new, local approach to employment support could help people find the right opportunities and help businesses find the skilled workers they need. The commission also recommended making Jobcentres more open, including to those looking to upskill or to run their own business.

The commission also proposed a package of basic rights regarding health, education, poverty and housing. On tackling poverty, it proposed a basic right that no child, family or elderly citizen need live in poverty, that every person legitimately present in the UK should be entitled to social assistance and that no person should be left destitute. On housing, the commission proposed that it should be a basic right that every person be entitled to decent accommodation.

Labour agrees that housing is a fundamental human right and that homes should be safe, secure and genuinely affordable. That's why the next Labour government will be the first in a generation to restore

social housing to the second largest form of tenure, bringing homes back into the ownership of local councils and communities. Labour will also close loopholes that developers use to wriggle out of affordable housing commitments, ensuring that local councils have stronger powers to deliver the affordable housing that's needed, not the housing that will make the most profit for developers.

To support more families into owning their own home, Labour will set a new home ownership target of 70 per cent. Labour will aim to reach this target by building more homes and stopping foreign buyers from buying homes off-plan before local people get a look in. Under Labour, first time buyers will have first dibs on new build homes and will be supported through a mortgage insurance scheme, enabling more families to secure a mortgage without having to save eye-watering deposits or rely on gifts from family members.

The next Labour government will also bring security to families who are renting. Labour will introduce a powerful new Private Renters Charter that will make renting fairer, more secure and more affordable. Labour will achieve this through a higher-quality and properly regulated private rented sector. Labour will also set out an ambition to re-establish the link between genuinely affordable housing and average earnings, bringing affordable rents and the dream of home ownership closer for those locked out today.

Equality will be at the heart of all of Labour's policies for families, as the party look to build a more inclusive, more tolerant and more accessible society. A Labour government will make it illegal to make a new mother redundant from notification of pregnancy until six months after their return to work, except in specific circumstances, and Labour will urgently review the failing system of shared parental leave.

Labour believes in a social model of disability and the next Labour government will remove societal barriers that restrict opportunities for disabled people. Labour supports the principle that policies for disabled people should be produced in partnership with disabled people. A Labour government will replace the current system of disability assessments with a more humane framework that treats people with dignity and respect and we will tackle disability discrimination in employment, including taking action to close disability pay gaps.

Building on Doreen Lawrence's report, *An Avoidable Crisis*, the next Labour government will introduce a Race Equality Act and a race equality strategy in order to tackle structural racial inequality at source. As part of our New Deal for Working People, A Labour government will also introduce mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting that will mirror gender pay gap reporting.

Labour will ban conversion therapy in all its forms, modernise the law on gender recognition to remove indignities, and uphold the Equality Act, including its provision for single sex spaces and protections for LGBT+ people and everyone with a protected characteristic. Labour will also enact the socio-economic duty of the Equality Act and strengthen and equalise the law so that every category of hate crime is treated as an aggravated offence, meaning perpetrators of anti-LGBT+ and disability hate crime can no longer dodge longer sentences.