

# Labour's National Policy Forum

# ANNUAL CONSULTATION 2025

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Our Labour government was elected on the promise of change – to deliver a decade of national renewal and put the country back in the service of working people.

The hard work of the National Policy Forum in the years before the 2024 election set us on the path to an election-winning manifesto, a manifesto at the heart of our historic election win.

Security and renewal are our twin tasks, and now, we are getting on and delivering that change for working people.

We've fulfilled our pledge to deliver over two million extra NHS appointments – seven months early. We've delivered pay rises for 3.5 million people through a rise in the minimum wage, and average wages are growing at their fastest rate in three years.

We have launched Great British Energy to provide clean, secure, homegrown power. We've established a National Wealth Fund to fuel growth, we've overhauled planning laws to make the dream of home ownership a reality and we've delivered a £1 billion boost to police funding to keep our streets safe. Thanks to Labour, free breakfast clubs are being rolled-out in every primary school, starting with the first 750 from this April, saving parents up to £450 a year.

But the work has just begun. Our Plan for Change sets six clear, measurable milestones that the British people can expect to see delivered by the end of this Parliament: higher living standards; 1.5 million homes built; hospital backlogs ended; police back on the streets in every community; a record proportion of children starting school ready to learn; and secure, home-grown energy.

This can only be delivered with the strong foundations of economic stability, national security, and border security.

The National Policy Forum is a vital part of Labour's democratic policy-making process. We look forward to hearing from you and invite you to get involved in the NPF, to support the Party's policy priorities and build towards the next General Election.

**Keir Starmer**  
**Leader of the Labour Party**  
**Prime Minister**



Having spent 19 years on the National Policy Forum in a number of different roles, I am delighted to return to the NPF as Party Chair and to have been elected as NPF Chair. It is an absolute privilege now to take up this position to guide our first NPF in Government in more than 14 years.



The strength of our Labour movement produced our brilliant general election victory. But the work doesn't stop there.

Our Labour Government inherited unprecedented challenges, with crumbling public services and crippled public finances. This Government will not shy away from tough decisions: we will always put service before politics.

In this context, the NPF's Annual Consultation 2025 will focus on fixing the foundations to deliver change.

The consultation documents reflect some of the vital areas we must fix if we are to deliver Labour's decade of national renewal and make working people feel more secure. We are getting our economy back on track, boosting living standards, tackling the housing crisis and modernising our public services. We are building a more secure country at home while building our strength abroad.

We all have a role to play in responding to the challenges the country faces. As Party members, supporters and stakeholders your voice plays a vital role in these debates, from sharing your lived experiences, to expertise, knowledge and insight. We are stronger together and it is vital we maintain a strong link between the Party in government and the Party in the country. We encourage you to get involved and play your part in supporting the new Labour Government.

Please consider submitting your views either individually or as part of your CLP or organisation. We also invite you to attend one of the online members' events to hear from my Cabinet colleagues.

Together, our long-term work will deliver a decade of national renewal and a more secure and prosperous Britain.

**Ellie Reeves**  
**Party Chair and NPF Chair**  
**Cabinet Office Minister**

**Thank you to everyone who got involved in the previous cycle of the National Policy Forum (NPF) and helped us produce an election-winning manifesto.**

The new cycle of the NPF was launched in January 2025. We were delighted to welcome NPF reps from across the Labour movement to the first online meeting of the full NPF where we heard from the Prime Minister and Cabinet members.

The NPF is made up of the following six policy commissions:

- **Kickstart economic growth**
- **Build an NHS fit for the future**
- **Make Britain a clean energy superpower**
- **Safer streets**
- **Break down barriers to opportunity**
- **Britain reconnected**

This year's consultation runs from 31 March to 8 June.

The theme for this first-year consultation is **'fixing the foundations to deliver change'**. During the consultation, each commission will consult on fixing the foundations to enable the Labour Government to deliver the milestones set out in the Plan for Change and identify future challenges on the path to delivering the decade of national renewal that Labour promised in the 2024 Manifesto.

Each commission has produced a set of questions to guide discussions, as well as details on the policy context, our inheritance from the previous Conservative Government, and what the new Labour Government is already doing to deliver security and renewal for working people.

You don't need to answer every question in the document, nor answer them in a specific way. These questions are intended as a guide to stimulate discussions on the main issues in each policy area. When considering these questions, it may be helpful to consider examples of best practice in the policy areas, perhaps from your own experience and your local area, or the blockages to policy implementation which need to be overcome.

We welcome submissions from members of the public, Constituency and Branch Labour Parties, trade unions and socialist societies, as well as contributions from expert organisations such as think tanks, businesses and civil society.

Please submit your responses on our new website here:

**<https://nationalpolicyforum.labour.org.uk/>**

This website also provides further information about this year's consultation and other ways to get involved, including our programme of members' events.

Finally, we recommend looking at our FAQs here

**<https://nationalpolicyforum.labour.org.uk/about/>** if you have any questions.

Thank you again for getting involved with the NPF. It is through our collective work that we will deliver a decade of national renewal for working people.

**WANT  
TO KNOW  
MORE?**

Scan here to explore our new website:



And follow us on Twitter/X here:  
**@labpolicyforum**

The Labour Party is an inclusive, member-based organisation that prides itself on being accessible to all. 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.

# KICKSTART ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Fixing the foundations to deliver higher  
living standards and 1.5 million new homes**

1. What are the key challenges in delivering higher living standards across the UK?
2. How could Labour reduce regional economic inequalities to improve living standards?
3. What steps could Labour take – including in the industrial strategy – to increase private investment and create good jobs across the country, boosting living standards?
4. What are the key challenges in delivering 1.5 million homes across this Parliament, and how could they be tackled?
5. What steps should the Government take to ensure that major infrastructure is approved and developed quickly, in line with Labour's commitment to approve 150 major infrastructure projects this Parliament?
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, combined authorities and other local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?



**Securing economic growth to boost living standards is Labour's primary goal in the Plan for Change, and it's our core mission for government. Through economic growth we will be able to boost funding for our public services, secure the jobs of the future, and most importantly put more money into the pockets of working people.**

This National Policy Forum consultation recognises that economic growth is intrinsically linked to another Plan for Change milestone – to get Britain building 1.5 million homes by the end of this Parliament. Through delivering on this milestone, we can tackle the housing crisis and restore the dream of home ownership whilst delivering vital investment and hundreds of thousands of good jobs.

There is no single lever that can kickstart economic growth. Through our growth mission, Labour will aim for the highest sustained growth in the G7, which requires a whole-government approach and a relentless focus on economic prosperity across Whitehall.

Our winning manifesto promised a mission-driven government that delivers by working in partnership with business, trade unions, civil society, faith groups, and communities. In his Plan for Change, Keir Starmer was clear that growth can only be achieved when we work in partnership across the whole country. That change in approach has already started across government and this commission will work on how we can further develop this partnership and identify key opportunities for closer collaboration.

Labour was elected by the British people to deliver a decade of national renewal, and to consign the Conservative sticking-plaster approach to the history books. This commission will therefore be broad in its approach, considering immediate policy priorities alongside longer-term reform and development to drive economic growth.

This commission seeks to work alongside the Labour Government in developing policy that spreads economic growth – and the opportunity that follows it – in every nation and region of the United Kingdom. Through regional growth, devolution and investment, we can ensure that every community feels the benefit of Labour's Plan for Change.

# THE INHERITANCE

## **In July of last year, Labour inherited the most challenging set of economic circumstances in living memory.**

Under the Conservatives, the previous Parliament was the first in modern history where living standards fell. By the time the 2024 General Election was called, the average worker in England was close to £700 worse off than they were in 2010.

The Conservatives pitted workers against businesses, leading to the worst strike disruption in decades and an economy in dire straits. This approach was bad for workers, bad for businesses, and bad for the economy.

This came alongside a reckless approach to the public finances – encapsulated by the disastrous mini-Budget of 2022 – which sent average monthly mortgages skyrocketing by more than £200 and working people once again footing the bill for Conservative incompetence.

When Labour came into government, a litany of unfunded promises were uncovered – promises that the Tories had no intention of keeping. Paper thin infrastructure programmes, fantasy departmental budgets and half-baked plans all merging into a £22 billion black hole in the public finances.

A combination of political chaos and the lack of a coherent and long-term industrial strategy left Britain languishing behind comparable nations for business investment. Since 2019, the UK has been in last place for business investment in the G7, holding back economic growth and costing jobs in communities right across Britain.

This lack of investment has been compounded by a failure to build the infrastructure necessary to turbocharge economic growth. The Tories missed every single one of their housing targets, supporting the blockers and not the builders. Labour therefore not only faces an acute housing crisis, but also a planning system that has hamstrung development and prevented Britain from growing its economy.

Labour is therefore operating in a unique context from previous governments – a fact recognised by its Plan for Change, and Labour's wider mission-led government. By economic necessity Labour will need to ensure that investment is impactful, that our public institutions are operating as effectively as possible, that regulation is facilitating rather than restricting innovation, that workers are treated with respect and supported to thrive, and that business is incentivised to invest and back Labour's growth agenda.

This is also the context that will influence the policy development of this commission. Any one of these problems in isolation would present a challenge to an incoming government. Together, they require nothing less than a fundamental rewiring of how government operates and a relentless focus on delivering long-lasting change to improve the lives of working people.

**As set out above, the challenge this Labour Government faces is great, but so too is the opportunity. Britain has the fundamentals it needs to thrive in the form of incredible talent and entrepreneurs, world-leading technology, fantastic universities and growth sectors with strong foundations.**

As the Labour Government has already demonstrated, what Britain has been lacking is political will and mission-led government. In less than a year, this Labour Government has already achieved more than the previous government managed in fourteen years, but we know that there is much more to do.

The Chancellor's Autumn Budget took the tough but necessary decisions to put the economy back on a sustainable footing, while prioritising vital investment in our public services and infrastructure.

Labour has already delivered a pay rise worth £1,400 on average to more than three million of the lowest-paid workers by raising the minimum wage, and wages across the economy are growing at their fastest rate in three years.

Labour's Employment Rights Bill will ban exploitative zero-hour contracts, end fire and rehire practises, and provide several day-one rights whilst also strengthening collective redundancy rights. This bill recognises that fairness, equality and well-being are fundamental to a modern and thriving economy.

Labour's first Business Investment Summit sent a clear message that Britain is open for business, securing more than £63 billion of private investment and creating more than 38,000 jobs, and in January of this year the Chancellor made it clear that no stone would remain unturned in the pursuit of growth.

Labour has acted where the Tories failed by launching a modern industrial strategy to power a range of high growth sectors from advanced manufacturing to digital industries and expanded opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses. We have also launched Skills England to provide businesses with the skills they need to thrive.

As part of Labour's commitment to build 1.5 million homes by the end of this Parliament, planning guidance has been overhauled and more than £5 billion allocated for housebuilding in this year's budget.

This is alongside long-overdue reforms to Right to Buy to protect social housing stock, and the launch of the independent New Towns Taskforce to create large-scale communities of at least 10,000 homes each.

This is the difference that Labour in government makes.

For the first time in more than 14 years, we are operating this NPF cycle with the Labour Party in government, and our work must reflect the ambitions of this mission-led government. That means developing policy that builds on the work that Labour has already done while looking to the future in our ambition for a decade of national renewal.

# MAKE BRITAIN A CLEAN ENERGY SUPERPOWER

**Fixing the foundations to secure  
home-grown energy**

1. What are the key regulatory and delivery challenges in securing home-grown energy and clean power by 2030?
2. How can we ensure that Labour's clean energy transition delivers for working people by lowering consumer energy bills and creating high-quality jobs, skills and opportunities?
3. How can we protect and enhance our natural environment as we deliver secure home-grown energy and clean power?
4. What steps should the Labour Government take to deliver the infrastructure necessary to facilitate the transition to clean power, whilst supporting low-carbon hydrogen and the UK's future clean energy mix?
5. What measures need to be taken to ensure that the Government's Clean Power 2030 Action Plan is successful and facilitates the mass deployment of clean energy sources for decades to come?
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, combined authorities and other local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

**In his Plan for Change, Keir Starmer has set a clear and ambitious milestone: securing home-grown energy, protecting billpayers and putting us on track to at least 95% clean power by 2030, while accelerating the UK to net zero.**

Britain has been left exposed to volatile international fossil fuel markets for far too long and, as a consequence, families are vulnerable to price spikes and rising bills.

Britain's energy independence has been overlooked by previous governments, and we have failed to grasp the significant economic opportunity of accelerating to net zero. The renewable energy sector is one of the fastest growing parts of the UK economy and therefore should be supported to grow and thrive.

Our long-term mission to make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower is therefore not just an environmental necessity, but also essential to our economic and national security.

Labour has a vision of good, clean jobs being delivered across the country, reigniting our industrial heartlands while protecting the planet for generations to come and billpayers from future shocks. Through its Plan for Change, Labour will make the most of Britain's rich natural resources, unleash the power of technological innovation and secure billions of pounds worth of investment. Labour will support high-quality jobs, while also ensuring that workers across Britain benefit from job opportunities in the clean energy sector.

Over the course of this consultation, we will explore how Labour can meet its ambition to make Britain a Clean Energy superpower by 2030, identify the key policy challenges facing the Government, and hear from clean power experts on the significant opportunities of this agenda.

This consultation forms party of a multi-year process which not only seeks to respond to immediate and evolving challenges, but also to consider Labour's long-term ambition to deliver a decade of national renewal.

**Under the Tories, approval for vital renewable infrastructure moved at a glacial pace, Britain took a backseat on the world stage, and billpayers were left at the mercy of international gas market volatility.**

After Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, gas markets fluctuated wildly causing energy bills to rise. British billpayers were uniquely exposed to price rises due to Conservative failure on energy security.

The previous government made rash decisions with no consideration of the impact it would have on Britain's wider energy resilience, effectively banning the development of onshore wind and neglecting our climate obligations. In short, they chose to prioritise internal ideological squabbles and short-term political expediency over Britain's energy independence and security.

Research shows that under the Conservatives, 10,000 fewer jobs were delivered in the onshore wind sector, with renewable energy capacity around a third smaller than it otherwise would have been. Under the previous government, around 2,500 renewable energy projects were blocked in the last five years alone - at a rate of more than one per day.

Carbon Brief estimates that the Conservative failure on green energy and infrastructure added close to £22 billion to energy bills over the last decade. Even senior Shadow Cabinet Members have admitted that - following their interventions - "it's more difficult to build critical national infrastructure projects than it was when we came into power, and costs more."

This Labour Government recognises that it must work quickly to turn the page, unblock the planning and grid system that has stymied renewable energy development, and ensure that the British renewable energy sector gets the support that it needs to flourish amid challenging economic circumstances following 14 years of Conservative mismanagement.

This Government also faces the challenge of protecting our natural world after years of Tory inaction which has seen biodiversity suffer and the shameful pollution of our precious waterways. Labour recognises that our natural world has an important role to play in meeting our clean power target, including in carbon storage and sequestration. The Government therefore has a core responsibility to prevent damage to our vital ecosystems and is working to ensure that the natural world not only survives, but thrives, in Britain.

**Since being elected, this Labour government has moved at pace to create the good, green jobs of the future, whilst approving and investing in the infrastructure needed to meet our clean energy ambitions.**

Within the first 72 hours of government, this Labour Government lifted the Conservatives' onshore wind ban, harnessing our natural resources to protect our energy independence. This Government then went on to secure a record-breaking 131 renewable energy projects through the latest auction, enough to power more than 10 million homes.

Great British Energy – our publicly-owned clean energy company – has been launched and is already working to generate vital investment in clean, secure and homegrown power. This has already been evidenced by a multibillion-pound agreement between GB Energy and the Crown Estate to unleash vital investment and protect Britain's energy security. Alongside this work, the Government has also announced the creation of a Marine Recovery Fund to deliver strategic and co-ordinated environmental compensation measures.

This work comes alongside the creation of a new National Wealth Fund to drive low carbon investment into key renewable sectors, and £22 billion of funding to create an entirely new industry in the UK with carbon capture and Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS) enabled hydrogen products. This will breathe new life into Britain's former industrial heartlands and create tens of thousands of jobs across the North over the next decade.

This Government has also recognised the link between the acceleration to net zero and the opportunity to improve living standards, with new legislation to ensure that private and social rental properties meet minimum energy efficiency standards alongside funding to roll out energy efficiency upgrades across the country.

Labour has also taken immediate action to clean up our waterways, with legislation to put failing water companies under special measures.

This consultation seeks to build on the work that this Labour Government has already done, to recognise the challenges to our ambitious Plan for Change Milestone, and to ensure that the Government is supported as it works to decarbonise our energy sector and boost Britain's energy security.

Over the course of these consultation sessions, the commission will develop a policy platform that supports the Government in its mission to deliver a decade of national renewal and drive down bills for people across the country.



# SAFER STREETS

**Fixing the foundations to put police  
back on the beat**

1. How can Labour ensure police are visible in every community, deterring and preventing crime?
2. How can we protect our town centres and high streets from retail crime, such as shoplifting, and anti-social behaviour?
3. How do we increase public confidence in the police to keep neighbourhoods safe, restoring the link with communities?
4. How can we ensure that neighbourhood policing is integrated with other local public services so they can better protect our communities?
5. How can we improve diversionary outcomes where appropriate to reduce crime and make our streets safe?
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, combined authorities and other local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

### **Keeping the public safe is the first duty of any government.**

Police ought to be visible in every community, deterring and preventing crime as well as responding to emergencies.

Yet, over the past 14 years, successive Conservative governments have failed to deliver on this basic duty. Under the Conservatives, 90% of crimes went unsolved, shoplifting was at a record high and antisocial behaviour was rampant and ruining lives.

As a result, confidence in policing and our criminal justice system has plummeted.

That's why Labour has made Safer Streets one of its key missions, with a pledge to put police back on the beat at its heart.

At the end of 2024, the Government outlined its Plan for Change, which set a milestone to place 13,000 additional police officers, police community support officers (PCSOs), and special constables into neighbourhood policing roles over the course of this Parliament. This will mean more bobbies on the beat in every corner of the country and will ensure that each neighbourhood has a named, contactable officer dealing with local issues.

We know that anti-social behaviour is one of these key local issues.

In contrast to previous governments, Labour believes it is not merely a low-level nuisance. It hits the poorest and most vulnerable communities hardest and, if left unchecked, leads to more serious offending.

The Safer Streets commission is therefore central to supporting Labour deliver on this key milestone.

## **Under the Conservatives, confidence in policing plummeted.**

In October 2024, more than half of adults reported that they had no or not very much confidence in the police to tackle crime locally, compared to less than four in ten in October 2019.

Community policing has been weakened, with neighbourhood officers taken off our streets to meet vacancies elsewhere, eroding relationships within the communities they have a duty to protect.

Since the Tories came to power in 2010, the number of people who regularly see police in their local area has dramatically reduced, and the number of PCSOs has been cut by half.

Furthermore, trust in the police amongst marginalised communities has been damaged by a number of high-profile cases of misconduct and criminality perpetrated by a minority of officers.

At the same time, many types of crime within our communities have risen, with shoplifting and retail crime having reached record levels.

In the last year, there were almost 8,000 shoplifting offences per week, which follows the Tories' decision to introduce a £200 threshold, which meant police forces would not be investigating the theft of items less than £200. Anti-social behaviour has also remained persistently high, blighting communities right across the country.

The Conservatives' record tackling violent crime is equally poor. They promised 16 times to ban dangerous weapons from Britain's streets, yet over 55,000 instances of knife crime were recorded in the year to September 2024.

Furthermore, despite all the rhetoric to treat violence against women and girls with the seriousness it deserves, it continues to plague our society. The scale of the challenge is stark: 1.1 million people experiencing sexual assault in the past 12 months, 2.2 million people experiencing domestic abuse, and 1.5 million people experiencing stalking.

It is not just our police and emergency services that have felt immense pressure. Our justice system has also been allowed to grind to a halt.

Under the Conservatives, just 500 new prison places were added to prison capacity in response to a rising prison population, despite pledges to create an additional 20,000 by the mid-2020s. This has led to unprecedented levels of overcrowding, with the system operating at an unsustainable level of 99% capacity.

Around 80% of crime is now reoffending, exposing the system wide failures to monitor, manage and rehabilitate ex-offenders released back into the community.

With our police under pressure, our justice system at the point of collapse and a litany of failures to tackle crime in our communities; the Conservatives have lost control of our streets.

**Since coming to office, the Labour Government has worked at pace to begin addressing the failures inherited across the policing and criminal justice landscape.**

To deliver on Labour's plan for change, the Government has already invested £200 million to kickstart the recruitment of 13,000 more neighbourhood police officers and PCSOs and has delivered a vital £1 billion funding boost to policing.

Furthermore, to provide the police with greater powers to tackle anti-social behaviour and retail crime, the government has introduced major legislative reform through its Crime & Policing Bill – delivering on our manifesto commitments. One of the new measures included is the introduction of Respect Orders. These will have the power to ban persistent offenders from town centres, where they are causing misery to local people. The Bill also contains stronger powers for the police to crack down on dangerous and deafening off-road bikes by allowing officers to seize vehicles being used antisocially without having to give a warning first.

Tackling knife violence is another key priority for this government. In September 2024, the Prime Minister launched a new coalition to tackle knife crime, bringing together campaign groups, families of people who have tragically lost their lives to knife crime, young people who have been impacted and community leaders – all united in their mission to save lives and make Britain a safer place for the next generation.

The Government is already taking dangerous weapons off our streets, with a ban on the manufacture, supply, sale and possession of zombie-style knives and machetes having come into force in September last year, and work currently underway to deliver a ban on ninja swords as part of 'Ronan's Law', which will also see a major crackdown on unlawful online sales.

With Labour also setting the ambitious target of halving violence against women and girls over the next decade, the Government has already taken significant steps to transform the policing response to these heinous crimes.

These include announcing Raneem's Law, which will see domestic abuse specialists placed in 999 control rooms, new measures to tackle spiking and stalking, changing the law to put controlling or coercive behaviour on a par with other domestic abuse offences, and the long-overdue roll-out of the pilot for new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders.

The Government has hit the ground running with major new measures to start delivering on its Safer Streets mission to halve the most serious violence and to rebuild public confidence in policing. To ensure it can meet these important milestones, this commission will creatively consider how to overcome any obstacles and challenges that may arise during the delivery phase of this ambitious agenda.

# BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO OPPORTUNITY

**Fixing the foundations to give  
children the best start in life**

1. What are the main challenges in improving school readiness and meeting the key Plan for Change milestone of 75 per cent of five-year-olds in England being ready to learn when they start school?
2. How can Labour give children the best possible start in life and break the unfair link between a young person's background and their future success?
3. How can we close the opportunity gap and help all children – including those from a disadvantaged background and children with special educational needs and disabilities – to achieve and thrive in school?
4. How can we ensure that families have the support they need during the crucial first 1,001 days of a child's development?
5. How can early years services be better integrated to improve families' security and boost children's life chances?
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, combined authorities and other local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

**Opportunity is at the core of Labour's values. Boosting life chances, tackling the scar of child poverty, raising school standards, and striving for economic security for families have been defining pursuits of every Labour Government.**

Through its ambitious Plan for Change, the Labour Government of today is tightly-focused on breaking down barriers to opportunity and giving all children the best possible start in life.

Under the last Conservative Government, opportunity was too often stifled, and life chances were diminished for far too many. After 14 years of Conservative failure, 700,000 more children were growing up in poverty.

The Conservatives left a trail of devastation across education – for too many children, standards were falling, and far too many children were not ready for school. As a result, the link between family background and future success became even stronger.

It's only by breaking this unfair link between a child's family background and their future success that Labour can create a fairer Britain in which all children have the opportunity to achieve and thrive.

The Labour Government has set about fixing the foundations so it can achieve just that and – through its Plan for Change – deliver on the milestone of 75 per cent of five-year-olds in England being ready to learn when they start school. That means more children with the key skills needed to be emotionally and physically ready to start school.

To achieve that, Labour is ushering in a new child-centred approach to Government that works to support families and bring security during the crucial early years of a child's development.

This consultation – and the work of the 'Break Down Barriers to Opportunity' NPF Policy Commission this year – is focused on supporting the Labour Government to deliver on its ambitious Plan for Change.



**Successive Conservative Governments left a trail of devastation across education, presided over declining living standards and entrenched lifelong inequalities that link future success to family background.**

When the Conservatives left office, schools were crumbling and standards were falling. On their watch, 12 children in every class of 30 were leaving primary school having failed to meet core expectations in reading, writing and maths.

The Conservative Government's failure allowed a number of 'baked-in' inequalities to take hold, including a widening of the disadvantage attainment gap and 700,000 more children growing up in poverty compared with 2010.

In addition, the pandemic deprived young children of normal social interactions, and widened differences in the quality of home-schooling between those with access to IT equipment and parents with the time and skills to help them learn. The Conservatives did nothing to help those who most needed support.

Across the education and early years landscape, 14 years of Conservative failure have been to the detriment of children's life chances, making it harder for families to get on in life and more difficult for children to achieve and thrive.

Compared with 2010, the number of teacher vacancies in England rose from just 355 to 2,500, while the Conservatives' failure to invest meant they left 234 schools facing the scourge of RAAC concrete (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete).

The number of students severely absent and missing more than half of school has almost quadrupled since 2010, while one in five children are missing a day of school a fortnight or more.

At the same time, the Conservatives presided over ballooning childcare costs and a 34,000 fall in the number of childcare places since 2010.

On top of unaffordable childcare, over 80 per cent of parents have said they've struggled to access vital early years services such as antenatal classes, health visitors, parental support, and baby and toddler groups.

As a result, the Labour Government inherited an early years and education system in crisis; one that wasn't working for families and one that was failing to give children the start in life that they need.

The Labour Government has set out how it plans to meet the scale of this challenge in the face of the appalling inheritance on schools and life chances left by 14 years of Conservative failure.

Through the Plan for Change, Labour is clear that opportunity starts with children's crucial early years, which means delivering integrated services through the first 1,001 days and high-quality early education and childcare.

From that platform, Labour will help every child to achieve and thrive at school with excellent teaching and high standards, and help build skills for opportunity and growth so that every young person can get on in life.

It is through the ambitious, long-term Plan for Change that the Labour Government will give children the best possible start in life and break the unfair link between success and background.

**Despite the appalling economic and social legacy left by the Conservatives, the Labour Government has begun delivering on the change promised at the General Election, as it sets out on a decade of national renewal.**

The Labour Government is delivering on its promise for free breakfast clubs in every primary school in England, starting with 750 early adopter primary schools from April 2025.

Breakfast clubs are proven to boost children's attendance, attainment, readiness to learn, wellbeing and behaviour. But, under the Conservatives, just one in ten primary schools across England received any government support to provide breakfast clubs.

Labour is making free breakfast clubs available for all primary children to give parents more choices with half an hour of free childcare before the school day starts, saving families an estimated £450 a year, and helping close the opportunity gap and boost life chances.

As promised, the Labour Government has also begun recruiting 6,500 extra teachers, who will focus on subjects with shortages and those areas that have faced the biggest recruitment challenges.

The Government has also committed to investing £1.4 billion to rebuild crumbling schools, with £1.8 billion also confirmed to support the expansion of government-funded childcare.

Labour has unveiled plans to deliver 3,000 new school-based nurseries, providing thousands of additional childcare places where they are needed most, with the first round of funding launched for up to 300 school-based nurseries.

To better support families during the crucial early years of a child's development, the Labour Government has set about strengthening and joining up family services, including investing in Family Hubs and Start for Life programmes.

Labour is investing to drive high and rising standards in early years and schools. That includes extra early language support, rolling out Maths Champions, and a boost to reading and writing skills that will benefit thousands of pupils across England.

As well as raising school standards across the board, delivering high-quality teaching and ensuring that no family is priced out of the support they need, tackling child poverty is a top priority for the Labour Government.

No child should be left hungry, cold, or have their future held back. That's why Labour has launched a cross-departmental Child Poverty Taskforce, focusing on reducing the number of children in poverty.

Labour is committed to bringing about lasting change on child poverty and the Government has set out its approach towards developing a 10-year strategy that will reduce costs, increase incomes and improve early years support for struggling families.

Despite the challenges inherited, Labour is pressing ahead with plans to support families, reform childcare, tackle child poverty, and make sure that every child can access the high-quality education they deserve.

Through the Plan for Change, Labour will have a relentless focus on delivering for Britain's children so we can ensure tens of thousands more children are school ready every year and that every child can have the best possible start in life.

# BUILD AN NHS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

**Fixing the foundations to end hospital backlogs**

1. How can we shift the focus of healthcare out of hospitals and into the community to help cut hospital backlogs?
2. How can we improve technology across health and social care to treat patients more quickly and accurately?
3. How can we effectively tackle the causes of ill health so people stay healthy for longer, taking pressure off health and care services?
4. How can we support NHS staff to deliver faster routine care for patients and bring down waiting lists?
5. How can we improve access to mental health care and reduce backlogs in care?
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, combined authorities and other local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

**The NHS is broken but not beaten. We know that fundamental and necessary reforms are needed for our health services so that people get the care they need, when they need it. After 14 years of the Conservatives, the NHS not only needs to be put on the road to recovery, but rebuilt so that it is fit for the future. An NHS that prevents ill health in the first place, that shifts towards a model where more services are delivered safely in local communities, and where we can harness the power of technology to transform services.**

This will take time. Labour inherited an NHS on its knees, with waiting lists at a record high, and patient satisfaction at a record low. Too many people are languishing on waiting lists, unable to get the care and support they so desperately need.

That's why our immediate priority has been to cut hospital backlogs. Labour's Plan for Change has set out the ambitious but achievable target of cutting waiting times to a maximum of 18 weeks for elective care. This standard was achieved under the last Labour government, and will be again. This offers real hope to people currently waiting, to all of those who have their lives on hold.

Labour is already delivering on this milestone. We have kept our promise to deliver two million extra NHS appointments as a first step to cutting the backlog, and did so seven months early. This means thousands of patients have received vital operations, scans, treatments, and consultations, helping them get back to work sooner. Waiting lists are down by over 190,000 since July.

But we know that the job isn't done yet. We are determined to keep pushing to deliver more appointments and faster treatment to cut waiting lists for good.

This consultation, and the work of the Build an NHS Fit for the Future Policy Commission, will focus on delivering this milestone of Labour's Plan for Change. Specifically, how Labour can end hospital backlogs by meeting the NHS standard of 92% of patients waiting fewer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment.

Labour rescued the NHS when it was last in government and the Plan for Change means we will do it again, and work towards building an NHS that is fit for the future.

**We have all seen the effects of 14 years of Conservative Government, leading to crumbling public services and crippled public finances.**

This is no more evident than in our NHS. Under the Tories, patients and NHS staff alike have been let down by a decade of underinvestment, by a disastrous top-down reorganisation, and by ditching the reforms made by the last Labour Government.

The result is millions of people waiting in pain. By the time the Conservatives left office, the NHS waiting list had hit 7.6 million, with 300,000 people waiting longer than a year for treatment.

This is why one of the first acts of Labour in government was to ask Lord Darzi to produce an honest report on the state of our health service – and his findings should shock us all. The referral to treatment waiting list target has not been met since November 2015 – almost a decade.

Not only this, the Tories left an NHS lurching from winter crisis to winter crisis, without ever addressing the root cause. Too many patients saw their treatment affected by strikes, with Tory failure to make a deal with the junior doctors and put them back on the front line treating patients. There is clearly a long road ahead.

The Plan for Change milestone is ambitious. By the time the Tories left office, just 59% of patients received their first treatment within 18 weeks of referral. Labour is committed to raise this to 92% of patients by the end of the Parliament, and with a whole system approach we believe that is achievable.

It will take time to undo the damage that has been done to our NHS, but Labour can put the NHS back on its feet.



**Labour's Plan for Change has set clear goals so that the Government can deliver measurable change in this Parliament, on the path to a decade of national renewal. Labour has wasted no time getting to work on the Plan for Change, with our pledge to deliver two million extra NHS appointments delivered seven months early, kickstarting the NHS on its road to recovery.**

Labour has hit the ground running, negotiating a deal with the junior doctors to end the strikes within the first three weeks of government, so that staff are back on the front line treating patients.

The Government has had to make difficult decisions. The Tories left a £22 billion black hole in the nation's finances, meaning tough choices at the Budget. Labour has chosen to invest in Britain's future so we can fix our NHS, with £26 billion of funding to support delivery of an extra 40,000 elective appointments a week, as well as AI-enabled scanners and funding to open new mental health crisis centres. This cash injection will help to fix the foundations of our most cherished public service.

That investment will only deliver if it is linked to reform, and this will take time. Labour are working with staff, patients, experts and the wider public to develop a 10-year plan to consider the three big shifts our NHS needs – from analogue to digital, from hospital to community, and from sickness to prevention. The NHS is in a critical condition, but this transformative plan can lift it off its knees and make it fit for the future.

The Prime Minister has put us on the path to achieving change by setting out radical reforms to elective care, so that millions of patients are able to access more appointments closer to home and have more choice over their treatment. This includes the expanded use of Community Diagnostic Centres and new surgical hubs, as well as harnessing technology to support staff and the NHS to do things more efficiently.

We also know that the current social care system is in crisis, not just failing to meet people's needs, but also piling huge pressures on our NHS. People are stuck in hospital waiting to be discharged because there isn't social care available for them. That's why the Government has launched an independent commission on social care to help build a cross-party consensus on adult social care, so that people can live active and fulfilling lives.

Labour has started to fix the front door to the NHS and focus on shifting care from hospitals and into the community, cutting red tape to recruit an extra 1,000 GPs, an extra £889 million of investment, and greater flexibility for GPs to bring back the family doctor so GPs can spend more time with their patients.

We said that we'd turn the NHS around, and that's exactly what we're delivering. While we're already making progress, we know that the job isn't done yet. Through the Plan for Change, we can end hospital backlogs for good and get the NHS back on its feet.

# BRITAIN RECONNECTED

**Fixing the foundations to ensure a safe,  
secure and resilient UK**

1. What are the main threats to national security facing this Labour Government?
2. What are the main lessons Labour can learn from the last Conservative Government's failings on national security and resilience?
3. What lessons can Labour learn from our close allies and key partners' approach to national security?
4. How can we ensure our national security strategy responds effectively to possible future threats and rapidly changing global events?
5. How can Labour best ensure investment in defence and national security drives growth across the UK?
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, combined authorities and other local governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

**The first duty of any government is to protect its citizens and keep the country safe. Labour recognises that peace and security are hard earned, and require constant vigilance.**

The world is a different place to when Labour last left office, with military conflict present once again on the continent of Europe. Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has challenged European security, with a direct impact on the security and cost of our energy supply. Threats to our safety and security have diversified greatly, including from increasingly sophisticated cyber-attacks.

The Conservatives' response left us weaker. They spent fourteen years damaging our international reputation, treating our closest friends as foes, and abandoning our values by undermining international law. By their own admission, they hollowed out and underfunded our Armed Forces.

Labour is proudly patriotic. As the new party of government, Labour has put national security at the heart of its agenda. No policy commitment matters unless we uphold our duty to keep the country safe. It is the foundation underpinning the Plan for Change.

Labour is already stepping up, setting out plans to meet this generational challenge through the biggest sustained increase in defence spending since the Cold War.

As one of the original founding members of NATO during the post-war Attlee Government, Labour's unshakeable commitment to the alliance is driving this approach. Our commitment to the UK's nuclear deterrent is absolute, it is a safeguard for the UK and our NATO allies. We are working more closely with our European neighbours on defence and security, and have already secured a landmark defence agreement with Germany.

There is much more to do. Technology is developing rapidly and changing the nature of warfare, while the climate crisis continues to unfold.

Working people in Britain are paying the cost of global instability, whether through increased energy bills, or threats to British interests and values. Labour is committed to making the country safer, more secure, and increasingly resilient against these interconnected threats.

For this reason, the Britain Reconnected policy commission will focus this year on fixing the foundation of national security.

**The Labour Government inherited a national security framework that had become increasingly outdated, with major events over the last decade highlighting an urgent need to update our approach.**

Both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine highlighted the exposure of our supply chains and energy supplies to global events, while the pandemic itself exposed an alarming lack of preparation for a major health crisis.

As global threats multiplied and diversified, successive Conservative Governments each played their part in undermining our national security, leaving us exposed and increasingly at risk.

In 2020, the Intelligence and Security Committee's Russia report showed how the Tories had failed to act after allegations of Russian interference in British politics, despite clear evidence.

Most damagingly, the Conservatives had by their own admission 'hollowed out and underfunded' our Armed Forces, with plenty of evidence to support this.

Defence spending was cut from 2.5% of GDP at the time the last Labour Government left office, and was not matched by the Tories in 14 years. By 2024, the number of full time personnel was down by almost 50,000, with the British Army at its smallest size since the Napoleonic Wars.

Our Armed Forces personnel and their families were forced to live in shameful accommodation, with nearly half of all serving personnel living in the lowest grade Single Living Accommodation.

By the time the Tories left office, morale across the Armed Forces was at record lows of 40 per cent, down a third from 2010. The Conservatives' failure on defence had led to a crisis in recruitment and retention, and they had missed their recruitment targets every year in government.

In increasingly unstable times, it falls to Labour to strengthen our national security.

## **Our Plan for Change can only be delivered with strong foundations of economic stability, national security and border security.**

Labour has immediately set to work on fixing the foundation of national security and delivering for defence, with targeted action right across government. This is led by the largest sustained increase in defence spending since the Cold War, with a commitment to spending 2.5% of GDP on defence from April 2027.

The Labour Government is conducting a Strategic Defence Review at pace to understand the threats we face and the capabilities our Armed Forces need, and has launched a Defence Industrial Strategy to ensure defence is an engine for jobs and growth across the UK.

Our mission to reconnect Britain with global friends and partners is fully underway, including a reset on our approach to the Global South that prioritises partnerships.

We are working more closely with European partners on security and defence, including a landmark agreement with Germany that will boost industry and jobs here in the UK.

We are demonstrating our unshakeable commitment to NATO with a leading role in new NATO exercises, and stepping up support for Ukraine by increasing our defence spending alongside European partners.

And we are renewing our contract with those that serve, securing the largest pay rise for service personnel in over 20 years, legislating for an Armed Forces Commissioner to improve life for service personnel, and bringing 36,000 military houses back into public ownership.

These are vital steps towards delivering a decade of national renewal. But to ensure we are secure at home and strong abroad, we need to fully understand the full range of the threats we are facing, and the impact that global events are having here in the UK.

We must build a national security framework that is fit for purpose for the unstable times ahead, learns the lessons of the recent past and fixes the failures we inherited from the Conservatives.

This is on top of our unwavering commitment to securing our borders. The Tories broke our immigration system with net migration at record levels and dangerous criminal smuggling gangs costing lives and undermining security. Labour has already started the work to crack down on these vile gangs and restore order to the asylum and immigration systems.

Given the pace and scale of changes in the international system, our approach must be responsive and agile, working across government in coordination with our goals.

