

BUILD AN NHS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Fixing the foundations to end hospital backlogs

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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.

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TO KNOW
MORE?**

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new website:



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

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.

