

Labour pledges more fruit and vegetables for children alongside new Wellbeing Act

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The Labour Party is today pledging to provide more fresh fruit and vegetables to poorer children as it announces plans for a Future Generations Wellbeing Act for England as part of a commitment to tackle widening health inequalities.

New figures released by the party today show that the number of women and children eligible to receive government 'Healthy Start' vouchers for healthy food and vitamins has fallen by 20 per cent in four years. Simultaneously, since 2012/13, funding for healthy start welfare food payments has been slashed by £36.6 million – just over a quarter.

Healthy Start vouchers are crucial in helping children from lower income families – who are at greater risk of obesity – get their five-a-day of fruit and vegetables. One in five children are obese or overweight by the time they start primary school, rising to one in three by the time they leave.

Speaking at the Fabian Society's Summer Conference, Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health and Social Care Secretary will today commit £26.8 million to the 'Healthy Start' programme to help provide children in the most deprived areas of the country with fresh fruit and vegetables.

That is the equivalent of an extra 42.4 million pints of milk, plus 33 million apples, 6.5 million kg of carrots and 4.3 million kg of peas for the very poorest children.

The measure is the latest announcement as part of Labour's strategy to improve health and wellbeing alongside a commitment in government to a new "Future Generation's Wellbeing Act" for England. Following the lead

of Welsh Labour, who implemented a Wellbeing Act, Labour envisages the Act will place duties on health services, public bodies in England and government to take account of population health and wellbeing, now and in the future, when making their decisions.

Labour will consult on the act which will:

- Enshrine a 'health in all policies' approach ensuring a 'health equality audit' of all government decisions;
- Enshrine meaningful high-level national standards for population health and health inequalities including commitments on ensuring life expectancy and health life expectancy match the best of our international peers and that children enjoy the best health and wellbeing outcomes possible;
- Place a new duty on local health services to reduce health inequalities, while ensuring public health services are fully funded and budgets ring fenced;
- Connect health services with Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring the NHS plays its part in tackling climate change;
- Recognises the NHS as an 'economic anchor' institution in communities and ensure it maximises the social value of local spending decisions.

Speaking at the Fabian Society's Summer Conference, Jonathan Ashworth MP will say:

"Today a baby girl born in Liverpool can expect to live 13 fewer years in good health than a baby girl born in Richmond. It's an injustice we cannot ignore.

"After nine years of Tory austerity, advances in life expectancy have ground to halt, and even gone backwards in some of the poorest areas. Shamefully, infant mortality rates – children dying before their first birthday – have risen three years in a row for the first time since the Second World War.

"Rates of premature deaths – including deaths linked to heart disease, lung cancers and COPD – are two times higher in the most deprived areas of England compared to the most affluent. While children and adults living in the poverty are up to three times more likely to develop mental health problems compared to those living in the highest income brackets.

“Poverty and deprivation mean people get ill quicker and die sooner. As socialists we should never settle for this, as Health Secretary I won’t.

“The next Labour government will adopt a comprehensive, cross-government national strategy to tackle health inequalities, attacking the wider determinants of ill health and putting prevention first.

“We will focus determinedly on improving the health and wellbeing of every child, ensuring children have access to nutritious food not just in schools but also by expanding Healthy Start. Labour will ensure the poorest children receive the milk, fruit and vegetables they need.

“And to guarantee government decisions fully take account of long term health impacts, we will introduce a Future Generations Wellbeing Act drawing upon best practice including in New Zealand and closer to home in Wales.

“It will mean local health services, alongside relevant public bodies, will always act to reduce health inequalities and promote overall wellbeing too. It will mean our NHS, as a local ‘economic anchor’ institution in communities, takes account of the social value of every pound spent and takes its obligations to climate change seriously.

“Our health policy will be driven not just by a focus on cure but on radically improving prevention and social wellbeing too. Our commitment is to help people live longer, happier, healthier lives.”

[‘No budget would be able to compensate for the damage of a reckless no-deal Brexit’ – John McDonnell](#)

John McDonnell MP, Labour’s Shadow Chancellor, responding to reports that

Boris Johnson is planning a No Deal emergency budget, said:

“No budget would be able to compensate for the damage of a reckless no-deal Brexit.

“But even Johnson is now waking up to the damage No Deal would wreak on an economy already weak after almost a decade of cuts and under-investment.

“Rather than attempting to manage the harm caused by this reckless policy, why not do what businesses and trade unions are telling him do, and rule out a no-deal Brexit?”

[Leaked Home Office Windrush review – Diane Abbott responds](#)

Diane Abbott MP, Labour’s Shadow Home Secretary, commenting on the leaked Home Office Windrush review describing the department as ‘reckless’ and ‘defensive’, said:

“This damning review details the terrible experiences of many of the Windrush generation under the Tories’ cruel and degrading hostile environment.

“The government is still failing to address the injustices they have caused: British citizens have lost their jobs, lost their homes and been deported.

“Until their hostile environment policy ends, we will continue to witness the awful legacy of these harmful policies.”

[50,000 freeholds owned in offshore tax havens – McDonnell responds](#)

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, responding to an investigation by Global Witness showing almost 50,000 freeholds across the UK are owned in offshore tax havens, said:

"It's disgraceful that so much control is being exercised over UK property by offshore companies based in tax havens.

"These ownership structures facilitate money-laundering and tax avoidance, and leave leaseholders in the UK at the mercy of powerful offshore freeholders.

"Labour is the only Party with a comprehensive plan for tax transparency, and we'll establish an Offshore Company Property Levy to ensure property-owning offshore companies make a contribution to the UK economy."

[45,000 more pupils in super-sized classes in a single year](#)

The total number of pupils in super-sized classes, those with 31 or more pupils, has increased by nearly 45,000 in a single year, a Labour analysis of official figures shows.

The statistics, published today by the Department for Education, reveal that the percentage of pupils in classes of 31 or more pupils has increased in both secondary and primary schools.

A Labour analysis of these figures found that:

- There are 6,234 more primary pupils in classes of 31-35 and 2,301 more in classes of 36+, a total of **8,535**
- There are 32,914 more secondary pupils in classes of 31-35 and 3,160 more in classes of 36+, a total of **36,074**
- **The total annual increase in school pupils in 'super-size' classes is 44,609**

This is the fourth year that pupil numbers in super-size classes have risen, an increase of 118,000 since 2015.

Commenting, Angela Rayner MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Education, said:

"Today's figures expose the consequences of the Tory cuts to our schools, with more and more pupils crammed in to super-sized classes that can only make it harder for them to learn.

"With class sizes soaring, teachers flooding out of the profession and heads reduced to begging parents for donations to buy basic supplies, it is clear that our children are still paying the price for this government's refusal to invest in education.

"The next Labour government will increase per pupil funding in real terms and cap class sizes at 30 in every primary school in England."