

[Sarah Champion commenting on the Government's failure to act on cross-party recommendations to reduce the gender pay gap](#)

Sarah

Champion MP,

Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, commenting on the Government's failure to act on cross-party recommendations to reduce the gender pay gap, said:

"The cross party Women and Equalities Committee's recommendations aim to improve working conditions for women of all ages and sectors right across the country.

"But, sadly, it seems that their recommendations are again falling on deaf ears.

"The Government has systematically ignored the evidence the Committee, charities, experts and individuals have worked so hard to produce.

"This Government continues to ignore the voices and lived experiences of thousands of women in chronically low paid, under-valued sectors of the economy such as care, hospitality and retail. Industries where zero hour contracts and bad practice have been allowed to run rife.

"The structural causes of the gender pay gap must be addressed, otherwise women will simply continue to be left behind.

"The lack of meaningful response to the Women and Equalities Committee shows that when it comes to tackling the serious, underlying causes of gender inequality in our country, this Tory Government isn't willing to take the bold action needed."

[Misuse of sanctions is further](#)

evidence of the Tory Government letting vulnerable groups down – Debbie Abrahams

Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow

Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting

on the findings of the Public Accounts Committee report on sanctions, said:

“Two years after the Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry the Government has failed to implement even their limited actions to address sanctions failings.

“This report makes it clear that sanctions have been used inconsistently to punish those struggling to get by with seven wasted years of austerity.

“This deplorable misuse of sanctions is further evidence of the Tory Government letting vulnerable groups down.

“Labour has committed to scrapping the Tories' punitive sanctions regime, under our plans to transform the social security system to ensure that, like the NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need.”

Former work safety chief sentenced to 15 years in prison

Yang Dongliang, former head of the State Administration of Work Safety, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for accepting bribes and embezzlement on Tuesday by a court in Beijing.

Yang accepted the verdict and will not to appeal.

According to the verdict by the Second Intermediate People's Court of Beijing, from 2002 to 2015 when Yang was vice mayor of Tianjin and a member of the standing committee of the Communist Party of China Tianjin municipal committee, head of the State Administration of Work Safety and other posts, he help others in running businesses, promotions, tenders and other issues, illegally accepting assets worth 28.5 million yuan (US\$4.1 million).

In 1999, as head of Tianjin's economic commission, Yang bought an apartment with public funds of 270,800 yuan.

Yang was shown leniency as he pleaded guilty, expressed remorse and returned his illegal gains.

2 die in China factory blast

At least two people have died and four injured after an explosion at a chemical factory in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, local authorities said Tuesday.

The blast occurred at 9 a.m. at Lixin Chemical in Alashan League, Inner Mongolia, according to the local safety bureau.

No chemical leaks have been discovered.

An investigation is underway.

SNP must "mind the gap" on tax

21 Feb 2017



The Scottish Conservatives are warning the SNP that they must "mind the gap" with the rest of the UK ahead of today's key vote on tax rates.

The warning comes as the Scottish Parliament prepares to vote for the first time to set new rates of income tax, following the successful implementation of the new Scotland Act.

The SNP Government – under pressure from the Greens – has decided to reject a plan to lift middle earners out of the higher rate of tax, as proposed elsewhere in the UK.

It will instead freeze the rate – dragging police officers, senior teachers and nurses into paying it.

The Scottish Conservatives will today step up their call for the SNP Government to prioritise economic growth by setting competitive tax rates no higher than the rest of the UK.

Scottish Conservative shadow economy secretary Dean Lockhart said:

"Over the last 18 months, Scotland's growth rate has been around a third of

that for the UK – with the result that employment is now falling in Scotland.

□“The SNP’s plans to set tax rates higher than the rest of the UK will only worsen this growing divide we are seeing, deterring investment and reducing new jobs.

“Our message to the SNP today is clear: it needs to mind the gap. Higher taxes in Scotland means lower growth, which will deliver less cash for government to spend on our vital public services.”

“Derek Mackay’s handling of the business rates crisis has shown that this Scottish Government simply does not understand business and the economy.

“It is must start to listen to job creators who need a Government which goes for growth, not one which punishes aspiration.”