

[Tonight's news confirms the worst fears of patients and staff: another winter crisis has arrived – Jonathan Ashworth](#)

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to the news that NHS England has extended the deferral of routine hospital appointments to the 31st January, said:

"Tonight's news confirms the very worst fears of patients and staff: another winter crisis has arrived.

"Despite the heroic efforts of our fantastic NHS staff, Theresa May's reassurances have proved meaningless and hollow. Tory underfunding and cuts have left our health service more vulnerable than ever before.

"Jeremy Hunt must urgently tell us how many elective operations he expects to be cancelled and how many more people will be waiting longer in pain and anguish because their scheduled operation has had to be cancelled.

"What's more, the suspension of sanctions for mixed sex accommodation breaches is just one more humiliating indication of just how shocking the downturn has become. Already, tens of thousands of patients have been left stuck in the back of ambulances, sometimes waiting well in excess of 12 hours in packed hospital corridors.

"As the NHS enters its 70th year, the truth is that Tory neglect has left it underfunded, understaffed and overstretched. Ministers must get an urgent grip of this escalating crisis."

[Rail fare rises under Tories are 'truly staggering' – Andy McDonald MP](#)

Labour compared costs on over 180 routes between when the Conservatives came to power and new prices that will be implemented this Tuesday 02 January 2018.

The average commuter will now be paying £2,888 for their season ticket, £694 more than in 2010.

New

figures released today by Labour show:

– That

some commuters are paying over £2,500 more to travel to work than in 2010.

– The

highest increase was on a Virgin Trains season ticket between Birmingham and London Euston which will have risen by £2,539 since 2010 and now costs £10,567.

– The

biggest percentage increase identified was between Thame Bridge Parkway near Walsall and Nuneaton, where the cost of an annual season ticket will have risen by 50 per cent since 2010.

– In

Theresa May's own constituency the cost of an annual season ticket from Maidenhead to London Paddington has risen by £732 since 2010.

– Average

fares have risen more than three times faster than wages.

Commenting, Andy McDonald, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, said:

“The

Tories' failure on our railways means passengers have faced truly staggering fare rises of over £2,500 since 2010, with fares having increased three times as much as wages.

“Commuters

have repeatedly been told that higher fares are necessary to fund investment, but promised investment has been cancelled and essential works have been delayed by years.

“Decisions

taken by government Ministers are making rail travel unaffordable for the many in favour of huge profits for the few.

“The truth

is that our fragmented, privatised railway drives up costs and leaves passengers paying more for less. The railways need serious reform that could be achieved if the Tories matched Labour's manifesto policy to extend public ownership to passenger services, but instead Ministers are persisting with a failed model of privatisation that is punishing passengers.”

Hammond needs British families to go deeper into debt to meet his own targets – John McDonnell

Labour analysis reveals that Philip Hammond is relying on British families to borrow hundreds of billions of pounds extra by 2022. The Chancellor is also relying on households to go into deficit by over £5 billion so he can meet his own growth targets.

Buried in the detail of forecasts in last month's Budget is the news that UK households have moved from a total annual surplus of £85.7 billion in 2010 to a £2.8 billion deficit this year (2017).

And borrowing is set to rise even further, hitting £5.5 billion by the end of the Parliament (2022).

Furthermore, according to the OBR UK households are set to borrow £445 billion by end of this Parliament.

There are worrying signs this could mean more people getting into financial trouble. The Office for Budget Responsibility is forecasting household debt to income ratios to reach 150 per cent in 2022. That is close to the levels just before the financial crisis.

The latest ONS figures published this month also reveal that the household saving ratio has fallen to 5.5% – the lowest third quarter level since Q3 1971. Furthermore, the debt-to-income ratio was at 138%. This is the highest Q3 level in 5 years since Q3 2012.

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, said:

"Rather than set out a proper investment plan for our country, the Chancellor is relying on millions of British families going further into debt to hit his own targets.

“Philip Hammond should be seeking to rebalance the economy away from an over-reliance on borrowing and debt, and seriously tackle the cost of living crisis as wages fail to keep up with prices.

“The next Labour government will introduce a £10 per hour real living wage and build a high wage, high skill economy for the many not the few.”

“New Year’s lifeline” for children of alcoholics a victory for campaigners – Jonathan Ashworth

The Shadow Health Secretary, Jonathan Ashworth, says the Government’s response to his calls to support the children of alcoholics is a victory for campaigners, but warns it must be backed up by real action.

In response to the Department of Health’s announcement, Mr Ashworth said:

“Since I spoke out in Parliament about my own experiences of growing up with an alcoholic father, I have been inundated with messages from people who suffered the same blight on their childhood, and want to help children facing the same fate today.

“Growing up with an alcoholic parent can not only deprive children of the care and protection needed at home, but often robs them of the childhood they deserved. As I know, it can often mean we grow up having to fend for ourselves, and look after those who should have been looking after us.

“Spending time with those parents over Christmas was always especially hard, because what were such happy days for all our schoolmates always turned into an ordeal for us. For many children of alcoholics this Christmas any spare money would not have been spent on presents or decorations or a special meal, but – as always – on booze.

“So I am glad that the government has chosen this time of year to announce a commitment to a new strategy to help the children of alcoholics. It could literally be a New Year’s lifeline for thousands of children currently experiencing what I and so many others have gone through before.

“It is a victory for the campaigners and charities who have helped thousands of children over many years cope with a parent with a drink problem, especially NACOA, with whom I have worked closely over the past year and who do amazing work helping some of the most vulnerable children.

“It is also a victory for all those other parliamentarians in the All Party Group for Children of Alcoholics, including Liam Byrne and Caroline Flint, who have spoken out so movingly and bravely about their own personal circumstances growing up with an alcoholic parent.

“Over the coming weeks and months, we will all watch closely to ensure the government delivers on this pledge. In particular, after cutting over £40 million from alcohol and drug addiction services last year, we will press them to properly fund the help and support that addicts of all forms need.

“And finally, it is a victory for all those people who have been in touch with me since I spoke out about my own experiences, and were willing to share theirs. Their stories broke my heart a thousand times over, and in each of them, I recognised an episode of my own.

“But what I shared above all with each one of them was that desperate desire to ensure that no child suffering the same fate today is left as bereft of help, support and hope as we were back then. And if this announcement can be the start of making that happen, we will all feel a great relief.”

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council have once again failed those that they have a duty to support – Andrew Gwynne

Andrew Gwynne MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, commenting on households left homeless by the Grenfell disaster not receiving promised Christmas relief payments said:

“It is unacceptable that so many families from Grenfell have had to spend Christmas in emergency accommodation, and because of a council error may have been unable to afford to buy food.

“The Government gave assurances that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council were up to the task of supporting Grenfell survivors, but during the Christmas period they have once again failed those that they have a duty to support.

“Sajid Javid needs to immediately ensure that all residents are getting the support they need, and needs to undertake an immediate review into the council’s corporate governance with a view to sending in commissioners to take control of the council if necessary.”