

We will transform the social security system so that, like the NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need – Abrahams

Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, commenting on today's figures on the estimated impact of the household benefit cap on parents by age of youngest child, said:

"Today's figures highlight the huge impact the new, lowered household benefit cap has on lone parents who make up well over half of households affected, with nearly 80% having children under five."

"As we warned, the impact of this and the Government's other social security cuts is pushing more children into poverty, punishing them for their parent's circumstances."

"The Government must listen to the High Court's judgement that this policy is discriminatory and unlawful, marking another blow in their failing austerity agenda."

"Labour has stood against the reduction of the benefit cap. We need to tackle our struggling economy, labour market inequalities and the high cost of housing rather than penalising children."

"We will transform the social security system so that, like the NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need."

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- Today's figures can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/benefit-cap-estimated-impact-on-parents-by-age-of-youngest-child>.
 - Lone parents make up 63% of households estimated to be in scope for the lower cap and of these lone parents 78% have a youngest child under the age of 5
 - The High Court judgement on the 22nd June ruled that the benefit cap is unlawful and illegally discriminates against single parents with young children under the age of two.
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NEWS FROM LABOUR: Jeremy Corbyn Speech – British Chamber of Commerce

***CHECK AGAINST
DELIVERY***

**Jeremy Corbyn MP, Leader
of the Labour Party**, speaking at the British Chamber of
Commerce, said:

Thank you to the British
Chamber of Commerce for inviting me to speak to you again today.

This is an important
conference, on a crucial subject business and education which goes to the
heart
of building that better economy, which we all know is not only possible but
necessary if our economy is to thrive.

During the general
election campaign I travelled to every part of Britain, campaigning for real
change in Britain on the basis of a popular manifesto that offered hope to
millions of people, and won support from every region and nation.

Our manifesto offered a
comprehensive plan for a new direction in our economy. Based around
investment
in the economy and the jobs of the future, and the public services that
sustain
them, and a new settlement with business, that would benefit you, and the
whole
country.

It is that programme of
change, which won a huge increase in Labour's support, and means that we are
now not just the official opposition, but a government in waiting.

So we need to be
engaged, and in dialogue about the country's future, far more closely than we
have before.

Britain has been living
through a lost decade.

A decade of lost growth,
a decade of stagnant living standards, a decade when investment and
productivity fell so far, that it takes a worker five days to produce what
takes four days in Germany and France.

Britain can't afford
another lost decade.

We have investment
levels that are described by the Governor of the Bank of England as "markedly
weak".

We have productivity
that lags far behind our main competitors ... and that fell further behind on
yesterday's official statistics.

We have an explosion of
low-paid, insecure jobs, the Bank of England's Chief Economist has now said
that 7% of the entire workforce could be on zero hours contracts within a
decade.

We've had a period of
lost wage growth and falling real terms pay that the Institute of Fiscal
Studies describes as "completely unprecedented".

We have unsecured
household debt rising to record levels.

And now we have economic
growth, that has slowed to just 0.2% in the latest quarter, the worst in the
G7.

It's against this
backdrop that Labour set out our vision to change our society, and invest in
our economy.

To build a strong,
sustainable economy in which no region or nation of the UK is left behind,
and
where everyone shares in the wealth that we create together.

At the heart of that
vision is education.

Education must be at the
heart of the drive to raise productivity, increase our economic dynamism, and
allow our businesses to compete on the world stage.

Investing in our
education system, will be central to halting the spread of low-paid,
low-skilled, insecure work.

By providing the skilled
workforce that businesses need, if they are to create high-skilled, better-
paid
jobs.

And there is a payback

for government too. In creating a labour market where work pays, with higher revenues from income tax and national insurance, and lower payments in tax credits and housing benefit.

Education allows individuals to realise their full potential, and participate fully in our economy and society.

But if education is to bring those benefits, we need an education system that responds to the needs of our economy, and which allows people to make a smooth transition from education to the workplace.

This is something that we, the next Labour government, business, and educators need to do together, in partnership.

Working together on this is vital, and by being here today, I know you recognise that.

And I know there are many great initiatives already happening.

From the Young Chamber Initiative, for example, which allows schools and colleges to tap into the expertise of business, and prepare their students for the world of work.

To the many excellent work experience programmes, and careers advice services, provided by our education institutions.

But government also has a vital role to play.

So let me set out what a Labour Government would do.

There are no shortcuts if we are to create a high skilled, high wage and high productivity economy.

We're going to have to invest more.

To upgrade our economy for the 21st century and that will mean businesses pay a bit more tax, to invest in education, while still maintaining low tax rates by historical and international comparisons.

We know that early year's education plays a crucial role in attainment, and cognitive

development.

That it's in our schools
that children become young adults, ready to face the world.

That our universities
are the birthplaces of the ideas and inventions that will define our economy
and society in the 21st Century.

And that education now
has to continue throughout people's lives, to allow all of us to grow and
develop, and meet the needs of a rapidly changing economy.

That's why our manifesto
set out plans to build a National Education Service. Providing lifelong
education and training, free at the point of use, for every single person in
this country.

Our National Education
Service will be a key institution of fairness and prosperity for the 21st
Century, just as the NHS transformed people's prospects in the 20th
century.

We believe education is
a public good.

That business, large and
small, prosper when education, skills and training are given laser-like
attention by a committed government.

And individuals benefit
too, bringing them opportunities they wouldn't possibly otherwise have.

Through our National
Education Service we will extend 30 hours of free childcare to all 2 to 4
year
olds.

And, unlike the
Conservative Government, we will put the funding in place ... to make sure that
we actually deliver on our promises.

And by making the
transition to a supply-side system and a graduate-led workforce, we will give
every child access to high quality early years education, that research shows
is crucial to educational attainment and social capabilities later in life.

This won't be achieved
overnight; it will be part of a five year programme to develop higher quality
and universal childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

We will properly fund
our schools.

We now have an utterly unacceptable situation, in which schools are forced to beg parents for donations just to cover costs, or even shorten the school day, just so that they can pay their staff.

And we will scrap the public sector pay cap that, along with rising stress levels, is causing good teachers to leave the profession, leading to a recruitment and retention crisis.

But equipping children for the world of work is not just about the necessary funding for schools.

In the age of the fourth industrial revolution, employers deciding who to hire do not look for automatons, schooled in arcane forms of grammar, learning for tests, and reciting the names of past kings and queens by rote.

They're looking for people with the soft skills that keep every business going, and the creativity that helps firms to innovate and grow.

That's why the next Labour Government will reverse the narrowing of the curriculum that has taken place under this Government.

Including through a new Arts Pupil Premium to give every child access to the arts, and we will put more trust in teachers' professionalism and experience, by giving them more of a say in how children are taught.

We will also consult on introducing teacher sabbaticals, and placements in industry, as a way to encourage interaction between education and business, and to introduce broad experiences into the classroom.

I've often been impressed by teachers who have come to the profession later in life, having worked in other sectors, and their experience benefits their teaching.

As you may well have heard, we have promised to scrap university tuition fees, and reintroduce maintenance grants, for students from low income households.

With graduates now due to leave university with £57,000 of debt that will last a lifetime, we risk deterring working class students, leaving talent wasted, and potential untapped.

Our plans for a

high-skill, high productivity economy, rely on a large graduate workforce, and that means no one should be discouraged from going to university because of debt.

Our universities are among the best in the world. But while they are the birthplace of many world-changing ideas, it is all too common for those ideas to be taken up and commercialised by businesses based in other countries.

We want to work with you to bridge this gap between innovation and product building links between universities and business. To ensure that the benefits of Britain's great research centres, are not halted at the walls of the ivory tower.

It's a similar story for the talent our great universities produce. Our world-leading universities are spread across the country, from St Andrews to Exeter.

But the regional imbalances in our economy mean that disproportionate numbers of graduates seek to build their adult lives in London. This is a great loss to local economies in the rest of the country.

That's why Labour is committed to a National Investment Bank and a network of Regional Development Banks.

To ensure that every region and nation of the UK has a strong economy, using our £250 billion National Transformation Fund to boost and rebalance investment across the country.

Creating economic opportunities for all.

Technological change, from automation to decarbonisation, means that many jobs and industries will disappear or shrink in the coming years and decades.

But I am not one of the doom-mongers, who believe that will inevitably herald an era of mass unemployment.

At every stage of economic and industrial history, jobs, industries and skills have been lost, replaced and transformed.

But whether that happens at huge social cost, as it did for example in the early days of the industrial revolution and the Luddites.

Or is embraced and
benefits everybody depends on managing and planning for technological change.
We can't simply leave it to the market.

We need public
institutions, public investment and public enterprise to work with business
to
manage the social and economic effects of rapid technological change ... so
that
it benefits the many not the few.

We need to ensure that
everyone, workers, government, and businesses, share in the benefits that new
technology brings.

As in every other
technological revolution, disappearing jobs will be replaced by new, as yet
unforeseen, forms of work.

But there will be churn,
as these new forms of work will often require a different set of skills to
those they replace.

That means we will need
to invest in a step change in skills and training.

To upgrade the skills of
the existing workforce, and make sure everyone is able to retrain at any
point
in life, to meet the changing needs of the economy.

That's why Labour has
made a flagship commitment, to make all further education courses free at the
point of use for everyone, at any stage of their lives.

There has been quite a
bit of focus on our policy to scrap university tuition fees.

Which now appears to be
under consideration by the government, or at least some members of it.

But perhaps of even
greater significance and certainly less discussion, is our policy to scrap
fees
for adult education courses in colleges too.

Vocational training has
long been the poor relation in our education system.

Successive governments
have paid lip service to the desire to achieve parity of esteem between
academic and technical education.

While leaving the deep-rooted historical snobbishness of Britain's two-tier education system fully intact.

One thing I am passionate about, as the child and sibling of engineers, is the development of engineering and science skills.

Which have to start earlier, before children get to secondary schools, and we all have a role in tackling the gender imbalance in STEM subjects.

Labour will correct the historic neglect of the further education sector.

By finally giving it the investment in teachers and facilities it deserves, giving college lecturers greater job security, making all courses free at the point of use, to ensure the sector continues to be a world-leading provider of adult and vocational education, meeting the skills needs of their local economies.

Right now we have a Government that often behaves as if all businesses want is lower wages.

That thinks jobs should be measured by quantity rather than quality, and that reckons competitiveness is simply a matter of driving down costs.

As I hope I've made clear, that is not Labour's view or vision of our future.

We want to use our myriad talents and resources to make Britain the most prosperous and dynamic economy in the world.

A Labour government will invest in the future, both in our physical infrastructure, and our workforce.

Our Business team, led by Rebecca Long-Bailey, is developing plans to deliver a game-changing industrial strategy.

That will rebalance our economy and drive up the quality of work across all sectors.

Our Education team, led by Angela Rayner, will be setting out more detailed proposals to invest in a National Education Service, to equip our workforce with the skills they need to do those jobs.

I've set out the

framework for what a Labour Government would do.

But turning that vision into practice cannot be the job of government alone.

Making our plans a reality will require the collaboration of everybody here today, business, educators and politicians.

That's why I want to end with a final pledge: a Labour Government will trust in your experience, listen to your expertise, and work with you, in partnership.

To create an education system that delivers for our economy, and an economy that works for the many, not the few.

Thank you.

[Andrew Gwynne MP speech to the Local Government Association's Conference 2017](#)

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Andrew Gwynne speaking at Local Government Association Conference 2017, said:

Thank you for inviting me here to speak today.

It is a privilege to be here with you this week, I want to begin by thanking the LGA for all the work you do championing local voices on the national stage – and I want to thank the thousands of councillors and council officers and staff who demonstrate the commitment you have to your communities through all your hard work.

I wish to also echo the comments of the Chair, Lord Gary Porter, who in his speech to conference this week commended councils who speedily undertook new safety checks on their high-rise buildings. This is a difficult and challenging time for local authorities, but one which the sector has responded to with the urgency that it requires.

Although we are not in the same party, I want to say clearly to you Gary, that Labour will work to back you up as you continue to champion the cause of local government here at the LGA.

I hope you will continue to see me as a strong ally, standing up for local government in Westminster.

I'm sure you will agree that ensuring local government has appropriate mechanisms for financing, and that clarity from central government on how this funding will be delivered should not be a party political issue.

My message to government is this: You cannot empower local government if you impoverish it.

We share with you your concerns on cuts to local government.

I also want to pay tribute to the work of Mayor Sir Steve Bullock and Councillor Sharon Taylor, who have both played a leading role in local government and as Deputy Leaders of the LGA Labour Group. I want to thank them for their long service to Labour in local government.

I also want to thank leader of the LGA Labour Group, Nick Forbes – as council leader in Newcastle he has demonstrated the difference a you can makes – investing in projects that are good for the economy of the city, good for the profile of the city, but also help the council's finances in the longer term. Last year he said, and I think it's worth repeating, as central government appears to not be filling many with confidence:

"If you want to see economic credibility, if you want to see an ability to govern, if you want to see leadership, look at what Labour is doing in power now, look at what we are achieving in local government right now, and look at what Labour Councillors are doing for the communities across the country."

In Liverpool – they have set up their own not for profit energy company – Liverpool Leccy.

Lewisham have developed new ways of developing housing for the homeless – in place/ladywell with pop up housing and community facilities.

Bristol 'works' giving every young person a quality work experience placement.

Thanks Nick, and I look forward to working with you to make sure that the voice of local government continues to be heard on a national scale.

I want to start by expressing my concern at the comments made by the Secretary of State on this stage earlier this week.

He has failed as your 'champion' in central government.

I want to be very clear on this –

I have not met a local government officer or councillor who has underplayed the tragedy of Grenfell or not asked searching questions about how this could have been avoided.

However, what I have seen is leadership, competence and empathy that has been

sorely lacking in central government, and from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

He told you that local government faced a looming crisis in confidence – he's wrong. It is his government that are facing the looming crisis in confidence.

Councils of all complexions, and their staff, from across London have come together to help.

We all know our local government has seen an overall budget cut of 40% and we all must agree that when authorities are forced to cut back on core services, collecting waste, running children's centres and libraries in order to plug growing funding gaps – there is something seriously wrong with the management of finances in central government.

And yet the we find ourselves now in an even worse situation –

Even if councils stopped filling in potholes, maintaining parks and open spaces, closed all children's centres, libraries, museums and leisure centres, turned off every street light and shut all discretionary bus routes, they still would not have saved enough money to plug the funding gap.

The LGA has been warning of the impact of these cuts on councils for the past 7 years of Tory Government – but these warnings have fallen on deaf ears in whitehall.

Back in 2012, Sir Merrick Cockell, the LGA's then Chairman, warned that by the end of the decade councils could be forced to wind down services unless we saw urgent action on the crisis in adult social care funding.

Five years later, the crisis is even worse – the funding gap now £5.8 billion – and yet the Secretary of State stood in front of you all 2 days ago and claimed that 'Whitehall is listening'.

The fact is social care is in crisis – everyone is saying this now. These are people's families. What kind of society are we when we can't prioritise decent care and help when people need it.

I know and appreciate that Local Government is filled with expertise, talent and leadership – and his department's lack of awareness highlights how detached the Government is from the real people making changes throughout our communities.

Local government has long been recognised as one of the most efficient parts of the public sector, leading the way on innovation, transformation and shared services.

They do an incredible job in often difficult circumstances. I say that having been a councillor on Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council for 12 years. My wife has been a Tameside councillor for 17 years, and I know the very difficult decisions she and her colleagues have had to make, and continue to have to make as a result of the rigid adherence to austerity.

Why is it this government can find money for the DUP to prop them up in a shoddy deal but can't find the money for our public services.

My political career began in Local Government.

I first entered politics as a councillor in my home ward of Denton West and spent 12 years there serving my community like many of you. The first political campaign that I got involved in as a newly elected councillor in 1996 was against the decision to close Denton post office, which was located on the market square. We lost that battle and overnight that market lost 25% of its footfall and never recovered.

I know whichever party you may represent you will be able to tell me a similar story in your ward.

When I took on the post of Shadow Secretary of State for Local Government I thought I would look back to the maiden speech that I made 12 years ago – it was during a debate on communities.

In the speech I spoke of the honour and pride I felt to represent my community – first in local government and then in Parliament – the area where I have always lived, where I grew up, went to school and am now bringing up my own family.

I know all of you share the same pride in the areas you serve, day in day out, dedicating your own time to help people in need.

Today, I'm proud to stand here representing a party that is committed to giving you and your communities more power to shape the town centres that you represent.

We will put communities at the heart of planning and will update compulsory purchase powers to make them more effective as a tool to drive regeneration and unlock planned development and lift the cap to ensure councils can build the affordable homes we need.

The next Labour Government will also strengthen powers to protect our high streets – protect post offices, pharmacies, banks, pubs and independent shops and put in place measures to reduce the number of vacancies on our high-streets.

These sorts of locally owned businesses play a major role in serving our communities and it is with pride I can say that the next Labour Government will end the closure of Crown Post Office branches. We will also set up a commission to establish a Post Bank, owned by the Post Office and providing a full range of banking services in every community.

As your Shadow Secretary of State for Local Government I will show the Government what can be done when local government gets more freedom to innovate to meet the needs of their communities – and then as your Secretary of State I will work with you to make it happen. I will be your champion around the cabinet table.

Your role as local politicians will be central to making that happen.

It is not enough to say that Whitehall is listening.

With Brexit must come genuine and meaningful devolution, and regional and local leaders need to be involved in the process of leaving the EU and shaping what post-Brexit Britain will look like.

Voters did not vote to leave the EU to take back control from Brussels only for it to be held in Whitehall. Any local powers must be given back to local decision makers.

Andy Burnham made this clear to conference yesterday – Greater Manchester, like other regions, is ready to play a part and make a constructive contribution to the process of leaving the European Union.

It was claimed after local elections in May that regular meetings will be held with regional leaders, but yet again, local leaders appear to have been sidelined by this Government.

This is not the only example where those working in local government are being under-appreciated – and often also forced to take the blame when poor decisions are made in Whitehall.

With the Secretary of State shifting blame to local government – my first priority in this job is to ensure that you have a champion in Westminster – in me –

This conference has demonstrated that certainty over local government finance is not a party political issue – and I will be joining the LGA and many other voices calling for an end to an ideologically driven approach to the way the government is managing its budgets.

There is a growing consensus in all parties that the austerity experiment has failed and is over – but in its place have emerged political and economic black holes in the government's plans for local government finance.

Last week I asked Sajid Javid three times as I sat opposite him in the Commons to clarify the Government's position on the missing local government finance bill, and I know the LGA have been asking for similar clarifications.

He has not responded.

We heard no further details from the Secretary of State during his speech to conference this week. I wrote to the Secretary of State today again asking for clarification and I will share the response with the LGA.

Following the Grenfell fire, I know many local authorities have been undertaking safety checks in your housing and installing fire prevention systems and I know many Labour councils have gone beyond that by looking at other public buildings like schools and hospitals.

Councils could face a bill of at least £600m because Government is failing to

commit to funding the extra fire safety measures.

We have also been urging clarity from the Secretary of State on the support that will be provided to local authorities to ensure that housing is safe. There has been a suggestion that funding support will be offered, whilst only on a 'case by case' basis.

This is simply not good enough.

Councils have been warning that if no further funding is provided from Government other schemes like housebuilding could be impacted.

And yet the only response we have had from the Secretary of State was during his speech to you at this conference where he passed the buck and refused to admit it is his Government that has got a lot to answer for.

The immediate and efficient response to this crisis from many councils across the UK has been in stark contrast to the woefully inadequate response from central government. Local Government should not be required to make even more 'difficult decisions' after years of austerity to ensure that properties are safe for residents following this disaster.

Labour is urging Government to provide 'emergency funds' for councils to check cladding and install sprinklers in tower blocks around the country – and drawing on some of the practice of councils across the UK in the past week, central government must make safety of residents the priority in its response.

We've been through some testing times recently with horrific terrorist attacks on Westminster, my own city of Manchester, at Borough Market and Finsbury Park.

I pay tribute to the way all our communities pull together in the immediate aftermath of these terrible events.

Terrorists will seek to sew division in society but we will always stand tall and face down those who want to breed hatred.

And I pay tribute to the way our councils coordinated the emergency responses with the police, fire, NHS and others and I want to say a genuine, heartfelt thank you to our local leaders Sadiq Kahn, Nickie Aiken, Andy Burnham and Sir Richard Leese, Peter John and Richard Watts and all who came together.

I have children and I can't begin to imagine what these families have gone through.

Many of the challenges we are facing will not be solved if austerity continues.

The current government have kicked the can down the road on the issue of adult social care. This crisis made solely in Downing Street – but now it is your street that is having to pay for it.

Ensuring that our local government has adequate funding to provide core services is not something that should be up for debate.

Labour wants to see a country based on hope and shared prosperity and Councils everywhere are already working to achieve that.

Working with you in local government, we want to take further the good work you already do – leading the way on innovation, transformation and shared services – and building a sense of pride in the cities, towns and villages you represent.

So I this to you Secretary of State stop talking down our councils and councillors, the failings of one council should not be used as an excuse to talk down those councils rising to the challenges every day.

Saj – it's your job to work with councils and support the work they do. To be their voice in Government.

If you wont – step aside – because I will.

[The Government's promotion of a 'sell first, think later' approach to the custodianship of state assets has meant that the public are constantly short-changed – McDonnell](#)

John McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on the revelations in the FT today that taxpayers may have lost out to the tune of £15bn due to the underselling of RBS assets under the Tories, said:

“This raises further serious questions over the Tories' ability to get value for money for the taxpayer. Their promotion of a 'sell first, think later' approach to the custodianship of state assets has meant that the public are constantly short-changed.

“It is beyond irresponsible for the government to allow public assets to be sold far below their real value. For example, if they had got value for money for the public purse, then the government could have had more money to reinvest in our infrastructure or not go ahead with a pay freeze for nurses, teachers, soldiers and other key public sector workers.”

2% fall in real household disposable income is bad news for working families – Dowd

Peter

Dowd MP, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, commenting on today's figures

showing a 2 per cent fall in real household disposable income, said:

"Falling household incomes are just the latest example of the economic failures of this government.

"The largest fall in household income per head in six years is deeply concerning as it further suggests that wages are not keeping up with prices, and the government have no answers to this serious problem.

"Along with stagnant GDP per person, it's more bad news for working families. And it further exposes the economic record of the Tories, who have overseen falling living standards since coming to power in 2010.

"It's clear we need investment to create the high skill, high wage economy of the future. The Tories could start to help ease the burden on hard working people by lifting their public sector pay cap, and end the cuts to in-work benefits."

Ends