

## [It is getting harder and harder for ordinary young people to access higher education – Gordon Marsden](#)

**Gordon Marsden MP, Labour's Shadow Universities Minister**, commenting on the University and College Union (UCU) report into student loan repayments, said:

"The Tories have tripled tuition fees, abolished maintenance grants for poorer students and frozen the repayment threshold, hitting graduates on the lowest incomes. This report confirms yet again that the impact has been deeply unfair and it is getting harder and harder for ordinary young people to access higher education.

"It is professions such as nurses and midwives that are being hit the hardest, and if the NHS can't recruit the staff it needs then we will all be worse off as a result.

"The Government needs to decide if they think it is fair that the debt burden should fall so heavily on the very people our society relies so heavily on."

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## [It is deeply concerning that the size of the Army has fallen yet again on this Government's watch – Nia Griffith](#)

"It is deeply concerning that the size of the Army has fallen yet again on this Government's watch.

"Since Michael Fallon became Defence Secretary in 2014, the number of fully trained soldiers has fallen by over 7,000. That trend is simply not sustainable and it has very real consequences for the UK's defence capabilities.

"We know that satisfaction with pay and service life are some of the biggest reasons why servicemen and women are leaving the Armed Forces in their droves.

“If

the government was serious about tackling this crisis in recruitment and retention, they would agree to lift the public sector pay cap to give our Armed Forces the pay that they deserve.”

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## [Today's announcement confirms that the Tories have been taking people for a ride – Andy McDonald](#)

**Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow**

**Transport Secretary**, commenting on the Government's scrapping of plans to electrify the Great Western Mainline between Cardiff and Swansea, said:

“The Tories have been promising the electrification of the Great Western Mainline from Paddington to Swansea since 2012 and today's announcement confirms that they have been taking people for a ride.

“The cancellation of works means passengers will be denied the faster, greener, more reliable train journeys they were promised, and South Wales will miss out on the economic activity that improved rail services deliver.

“The decision betrays a promise to South Wales and the Transport Secretary sneaking out the news on the final day before he goes on his summer holidays adds insult to injury.

“The Tories do not act in the interests of the whole UK. They have put their own survival, finding £1 billion for a deal with the DUP, ahead of everything else and it's communities like those in South Wales that pay the price.”

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## [Chris Williamson response to the Home](#)

## Office's statement on adding fire and rescue inspections to HMIC's responsibilities

**Chris**

**Williamson MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Fire and Emergency Services,** commenting on the Home Office's statement on adding fire and rescue inspections to HMIC's responsibilities, said:

"After an unclear Home Office statement, Ministers must tell the public exactly what extra resources, staff and expertise will actually be provided.

"If

today's statement is really a cloak for cuts to existing fire and rescue inspectors, and over-stretching the inspectors of the police services, it will

be strongly opposed. The police and the fire service both need expert and thorough inspection, and the public will be right to demand that they have it.

Labour will oppose any cuts to the inspection regimes under the guise of efficiency and savings."

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## Five weeks on from the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government's system of fire safety checks is not fit for purpose – John Healey

**John**

**Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing,** responding to the release of new information on fire safety tests of tower blocks, said:

"Five

weeks on from the Grenfell Tower fire, the Government's system of fire safety checks on tower blocks is not fit for purpose.

"The

latest statement from Ministers, smuggled out yesterday evening as the

Commons

finished for the day, confirms that there are still 52 tower blocks with the same type of cladding as Grenfell Tower that have not been tested. Even worse, it confirms there are still thousands of other tower blocks around the country which may not be safe but which Government tests have ignored.

“These

fire safety tests are vital to reassure residents that their homes are safe, but the testing process to date has failed to do this. The tests are too slow, too narrow and confused. Residents are still worried and landlords are in the dark. Secretary of State Sajid Javid must report fully to Parliament tomorrow before the summer recess and explain how he is going to get a grip of this mess.”