

The Tories offer pensioners nothing but insecurity – Debbie Abrahams

Labour is today (Tuesday 23 May) challenging the Tories to come clean on their plans for older people, after they caused confusion with their failed attempt to 'clarify' their social care policy.

Labour is calling on Theresa May to guarantee pensioners won't be hit with further cuts to universal benefits or further hits to their incomes.

The challenge comes as Labour warns that, having broken their promise on social care already and announced plans to means test Winter Fuel Payments, hitting up to ten million pensioners, the Tories could next come for other benefits, including free bus passes and TV licences.

Debbie Abrahams, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, said:

"The Tories have plunged pensioners into insecurity. Their manifesto promised to take away winter fuel allowances; it ditched the security of the triple lock; and proposed making people pay for essential care with their homes.

"Yesterday, they attempted to back away from their plans, but only raised more questions about what they were going to do instead. They could offer no reassurance to worried pensioners.

"Given the gaping hole in the Tory plans, and the dumping of their existing promises, the risk is now that the Tories could have other nasty surprises for pensioners up their sleeves. There's a real possibility that other hard earned benefits like bus passes and free TV licenses could be next."

"The promises in the Tory manifesto are clearly no longer worth the paper they're written on. So we are today calling for Theresa May to come clean, set out what exactly she's planning and rule out definitively further attacks on pensioners' living standards.

"You can't trust the Tories to protect pensioners. They offer only insecurity."

ENDS

Background:

“Nothing has changed” – the Tories promise insecurity for pensioners

We have a crisis in social care under the Tories:

- o The Tories have starved the system of money, taking £4.6 billion out of social care between 2010 and 2015.
- o The number of people receiving state funded social care fell by over a quarter under the Tories.
- o This year care firms have ended contracts with 95 councils, warning they are unable to deliver services on the amount they are being paid^[i].
- o There are now 1.2 million older people (1 in 8) with unmet care needs in England.
- o There is a currently a funding gap of £600 million for 2017/18, which will rise to £2.1bn by 2019/20.^[ii]

To help address the Tory social care crisis, Labour has promised to invest £8bn into social care in the next parliament, including an immediate £1bn.

“Our first urgent task will be to address the immediate funding crisis. We will increase the social care budgets by a further £8 billion over the lifetime of the next Parliament, including an additional £1 billion for the first year.”

The Labour Party Manifesto 2017

The Tories haven't promised to match this funding. Instead they came forward with a plan which originally said that they would cap care costs and would help pay for it by means testing Winter Fuel Payments.

“So we will means test Winter Fuel Payments, focusing assistance on the least well-off pensioners, who are most at risk of fuel poverty. The money released will be transferred directly to health and social care, helping to provide dignity and care to the most vulnerable pensioners and reassurance to their families.”

The Conservative Party Manifesto 2017

“we will introduce a single capital floor, set at £100,000, more than four times the current means test threshold.

This will ensure that, no matter how large the cost of care turns out to be, people will always retain at least £100,000 of their savings and assets, including value in the family home.”

The Conservative Party Manifesto 2017

· They explicitly rejected the policy of having a cap as proposed by Andrew Dilnot.

Jeremy Hunt: At the moment if you end up going into a care home, you could get down to £23,000 and now we’re quadrupling that amount. And what is the alternative? I think this is the important thing because I know you had Sir Andrew Dilnot on earlier. If you have that cap that was his proposal...

Nick Robinson: Excuse me, it was your proposal in your last manifesto. You promised to implement it; you passed a law to implement it. You then said let’s delay it a few years. So let’s not slop it off to Sir Andrew Dilnot, this was a Tory manifesto promise.

JH:
Yes, and we couldn’t be being clearer.

NR:
You’re dropping it.

JH:
Yes, and not only are we dropping it but we are dropping it ahead of a general election and we’re being completely explicit in our manifesto that we’re dropping it. We’re dropping it because we’ve looked again at this proposal and we don’t think it’s fair.

BBC Radio Four: Today, 18 May 2017

· Despite a chorus of disapproval in response to their plans, Theresa May herself defended the policy just this weekend.

“You have a situation where two widows are living side by side in homes of the same value. One of them [has] saved up all their life and has over £23,000 in savings, now finds that they need care in a home and has to pay for that because they are above the current threshold.

Then there is [the widow] next door who has perhaps lived the good life and doesn't have those savings and gets in for free. And I think we are equalising home and residential calculations and setting the threshold four times higher at £100,000.

'We are being fair to those who have saved over time.'

Theresa

May, The Times, 20 May 2017

· Now they've changed their minds, but they can't provide detail about what their plan will mean. And they have announced no extra money for social care.

· This is not just a chaotic change of direction, it's a repeat of a broken promise. In their 2015 Manifesto, the Tories promised to introduce a cap on charges.

"We will cap charges for residential social care from April 2016 and also allow deferred

payment agreements, so no one has to sell their home."

Conservative Party Manifesto 2015, Page 65

· Only weeks after the 2015 general election, they broke their promise and announced that the cap on charges for residential social care would be delayed until 2020.

"we have taken the difficult decision to delay the introduction of the cap on care costs system until April 2020."

Written Statement: Care Costs, Lord Prior of Brampton, 17 July 2015

The Tories have broken their promise before, how can they be trusted not to do so again?

What will the Tories do to fill the gap?

The Tory reversal leaves a substantial black hole in the Tory manifesto. To date there is no detail on how the cap will operate, at what level it will be set, who it will apply to and, crucially, how the Tories will deal with the funding gap in social care which must be filled to give the system the stability it needs.

- The Tories also have a £2bn black hole in their plans caused by their reversal on NICs earlier this year.

- After the U-turn on NICs Hammond said that he would address the £2bn black hole in the forthcoming Autumn Budget which would be 'broadly fiscally neutral'. The £2bn would come from either higher taxes or more cuts elsewhere.

As a result of the decision I have announced today, the spring Budget is no longer broadly fiscally neutral, but I am committed to addressing that issue in the autumn. The intention remains to balance the measures that we are delivering between spending and taxation.

*Philip
Hammond, 15 March 2017*

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2017-03-15/debates/8C87BBE6-1F11-44F8-A01E-1D99ECBD0ACA/Class4NationalInsuranceContributions?highlight=broadly%20fiscally%20neutral#contribution-A24CFA97-B0EC-4B6D-8C7F-DC88B51F6250>

- Today's U-turn, and Hammond's commitment to a 'broadly fiscally neutral' Autumn Budget, means we can expect either post-election tax rises or further cuts to vital public services under a Tory government.

- The Tories already pose a threat to pensioners with their plans to cut Winter Fuel Payments for up to 10 million pensioners.

- o Scrap the Triple Lock on state pensions after 2020.

- o Cut Winter Fuel Payments for up to 10 million pensioners.

- o Raise the State Pension age for up to 34 million workers.

- **That threat could now get even greater, as the Tories may look to**

means-test other pensioner benefits such as free bus passes and free TV licences.

- The Tory Manifesto's wording only commits Theresa May to maintaining the existence of current benefits throughout the duration of the parliament.

"We will maintain all other pensioner benefits, including free bus passes, eye tests, prescriptions and TV licences, for the duration of this parliament."

Conservative Party Manifesto, 2017

- This potentially leaves the door open to the introduction of new means-testing and plans to phase out, reduce, or end benefits after that parliament.

- More than 4 million over 75s receive a free TV licences and 9 million pensioners receive a free bus pass in England alone.

- Theresa May has refused to rule out cutting other universal pensioner benefits. Just two days before the publication of the Conservative Manifesto, Theresa May refused to give a straight answer when asked to commit to keeping free bus passes.

Robert Peston: Thomas is concerned you might take away bus passes from pensioners and the disabled?

Theresa May: Well, again, there may be a number of questions that will come in which are issues that will be addressed when we publish our manifesto later this week. I'd rather wait until we publish that package in the manifesto for people to see what we're going to do.

ITV News Facebook Live, 15 May 2017

Other senior Tories have in the past opposed universal pensioner benefits

- The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Damian Green has described free bus passes as a "bribe" saying they "take the prize for sheer

all-encompassing pointlessness”.

“Many Chancellors have indulged in pre-election bribes, some effective, some ineffective and some straightforwardly cynical, but to offer free off-peak bus passes for pensioners takes the prize for sheer all-encompassing pointlessness in the large areas of the country where there will be no one to receive the bribe that the Chancellor is trying to give them.”

Damian

Green, House of Commons debate, Hansard, 22 March 2005, Column 810

<https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmhansrd/vo050322/debtext/50322-27.htm>

· Senior Ministers Sajid Javid, Matthew Hancock and Liz Truss have supported the Free Enterprise Group which has previously called for free bus passes and free TV licences to be means-tested.

“Pensioners with incomes of more than £50,000 should lose their free TV licences, bus passes and winter fuel allowances to help cut the deficit, senior Tory MPs have said [...] The Free Enterprise Group numbers 39 Conservative MPs among its supporters, including the Treasury minister Sajid Javid, the skills minister Matthew Hancock, and the childcare minister Elizabeth Truss”

Telegraph, 22 November 2012,

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/9694503/Wealthy-pensioners-should-lose-free-bus-pass-MPs-suggest.html>

· Former Culture Secretary John Whittingdale has previously spoken of the case for means-testing TV licences.

“I can see a case for means-testing on the same grounds of why should a rich retired person get a winter fuel payment, so why should they get a free TV licence? [...]“But these are matters for the BBC to consider. They could get rid of the free TV licence altogether if they chose to do so but they could not do it until 2020.”

John

Whittingdale, reported in The Times, ‘Free TV licences could be means tested for over 75s’, 21 May 2017

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/free-tv-licences-could-be-means-tested-for-over-75s-8ktzgbn9t>

Theresa May has thrown her own election campaign into chaos and confusion – Andrew Gwynne

Andrew

Gwynne, Labour's Election Co-ordinator, responding to the unravelling of the Tories' social care policy, said:

"Theresa

May has thrown her own election campaign into chaos and confusion. She is unable to stick to her own manifesto for more than four days. And by failing to

put a figure for a cap on social care costs, she has only added to the uncertainty for millions of older people and their families.

"This

is weak and unstable leadership. You can't trust the Tories – if this is how they handle their own manifesto, how will they cope with the Brexit negotiations?"

Labour's Culture manifesto launch speech

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, speaking at the party's Culture manifesto launch in Hull, said:

There could be no better place to launch our cultural manifesto, Labour's plan to guarantee a 'Creative Future For All', than right here in Hull.

In the last Labour Government our then Culture Secretary, Andy Burnham, was impressed by how Liverpool had been transformed after being made the European City of Culture.

So Andy proposed the idea that every four years we should have a UK City of Culture.

And in 2013, thanks to a brilliant bid from Labour-run Hull City

Council, it was Hull that was chosen.

And what an inspiration you have been as a City of Culture

Hull had hoped to encourage an extra million people to visit Hull during 2017.

A third of a million visited in the first week.

And I'm not surprised. Look at what you've offered.

'Blade' saw a 200 foot wind turbine blade, made locally at Siemens Green Port factory go on display in Queen Victoria Square.

The Poppies Weeping Window had 450,000 visits in just two months.

And finally you created the 'Sea of Hull' by encouraging 3,000 local people to strip naked, paint themselves blue and be photographed in the early hours of Saturday morning.

Those photos by the brilliant photographer, Spencer Tunick, are now on display in the refurbished Ferens Art Gallery.

So in a very nice way, the people of Hull have literally made an exhibition of themselves.

I'd like to thank Hull's Labour council leader Steve Brady for all his hard work in helping the city deliver for culture, along with Hull 2017's Chief Executive Martin Green.

Because we can see what the transformative powers of culture have done for Hull.

Not just by attracting visitors and creating world class cultural events. But here in Humber Street, where a former Fruit Market has been regenerated into a thriving cultural hub, creating new business and new jobs.

The New Humber Street Contemporary Gallery next door has seen 60,000 visits in its first six weeks.

It is estimated that being the UK City of Culture will bring a £60 million economic boost in 2017 alone.

Now Labour wants to replicate what we've seen in Hull across the rest of the UK

And here's why: Our music industry alone contributes £4 billion to our economy each year. But every Adele or Stormzy has to start somewhere.

And small venues like Hull's New Adelphi and larger ones like Fruit give artists their first break as they learn their craft.

But over the last ten years in London alone 40 per cent of small venues

have closed.

And this Conservative Government has made matters even worse for artists.

Since 2010 they have slashed £48 million of funding to the Arts Councils in England, Wales and Scotland.

There is creativity in all of us. Labour's mission will be to set free that creativity.

We need to give people the opportunities for this creativity to flourish.

So today we unveil Labour's cultural manifesto which sets out a bold and inspiring policy programme to encourage creativity.

We're pledging £1 billion to launch a new Cultural Capital Fund to support our world leading cultural industries savaged by Conservative cuts.

We will end austerity to boost creativity.

It will be amongst the biggest arts infrastructure funds ever created.

It will boost arts, music, theatre and literature, upgrading our cultural and creative infrastructure for the digital age, and supporting our economy.

The fund will also invest in creative clusters across the country based on a similar model to business enterprise zones.

I don't want to see just one city benefit from the transformative powers of culture every four years.

Our Cultural Capital Fund will help many more towns and cities like Hull benefit all year round.

The fund will be administered by the Arts Council over a five-year period and help to transform our country's cultural landscape.

We will also protect and invest in music venues to support grassroots and professional music ensuring a healthy music industry across the country.

Labour will review the business rates system to make it fairer to organisations like music venues extending the £1,000 pub relief to help small music venues that are suffering from rates rises.

We will also maintain free museums and invest in our heritage sector which is central to both the identity and economy of local communities across the country.

Because access to culture is vital for the emotional and intellectual

growth of our people, especially the young.

We want to unleash the potential of every young person, not just through education, but also through culture.

In every one of us there is a poet, a writer, a singer of songs, an artist.

But too few of us fulfil our artistic ambition.

And under the Conservatives it's getting worse. Per pupil funding for schools is going to be cut for the first time in a generation.

It has become so bad that headteachers are sending out begging letters to parents to make donations to keep the school running.

This is a shameful state of affairs.

So as well as scrapping tuition fees, fully funding our schools and introducing universal free school meals – something pioneered here in Hull – we will go further.

Labour will introduce an Arts Pupil Premium that will allow every primary school child in England the chance to learn an instrument, take part in drama and dance, and have regular access to a theatre, gallery or museum.

Labour will not only feed our children's bellies, we will feed their minds and unleash their creativity.

The Arts Pupil Premium will provide £160 million per year to boost creative education and ensure arts facilities in state schools match standards found in many private schools.

We will deliver a creative future for all and culture for the many not the few.

But we need your help.

If people want to see these transformative changes then they have to be able to vote.

Those who are not on the register have just over 12 hours to get registered.

Since the election was called more than two million people have registered to vote – 40 per cent of them aged between 18 and 24.

If you're tired of being held back and want to lead a richer life, then get registered and have your say.

We can stop a Conservative Government that wants to pit the old against

the young.

And replace it with a Labour Government that offers hope and unity.

A government for the many not the few and a government that ensures culture is for the many not the few

Thank you.

[Labour announces £1bn investment in a Creative Future for All](#)

Labour will create a £1 billion Cultural Capital Fund to invest in the UK's cultural infrastructure – across arts, music, film, theatre and culture – as it sets out plans to build on Britain's status as a world leader in culture and the creative industries.

Labour Leader, Jeremy Corbyn, and Shadow Culture Secretary, Tom Watson, will unveil the fund at an event in Hull, the UK's 2017 City of Culture, on Monday.

Labour's election manifesto, published last week, included a commitment to create a pupil premium to help children of primary school age fulfil their artistic potential.

Labour announces today that a £1 billion Culture Capital Fund will invest in 'creative clusters' across the country.

Labour will guarantee a Creative Future for All by:

* Establishing a £1 billion Cultural Capital Fund to support our world-leading cultural industries, which have been badly hit by Tory cuts.

The fund will be one of the largest arts infrastructure funds ever created.

It will give the country's creative sectors an opportunity to bid for extra funding and help the UK protect its status as a creative and cultural hub in the digital age.

It will protect and invest in live music venues in order to support grassroots and professional music and ensure there is a vibrant music industry in all parts of the country. Labour will review the business rates system and extend the £1,000 pub relief to help small music venues that have been hit by rate rises.

* Ensuring museums and art galleries remain free and invest in our heritage sector, which is central to the identity and economy of local communities across the country.

* Introducing a £160 million arts pupil premium for every primary school in England to boost creative education and ensure state schools have arts facilities of an equivalent standard to those available in many private schools.

Shadow Culture Secretary, Tom Watson, who is a graduate of Hull University, said:

“As a former resident I’m proud to see Hull staging world-class cultural events and that it is attracting tourists from around the world who want to visit the UK City of Culture.

“Labour believes that cities like Hull have demonstrated that creativity can drive inward investment, regeneration and tourism as well as being an important expression of local and regional identity.

“Our thriving creative industries define how we are perceived overseas and make a vital contribution to our economy.

“Under the Tories, the arts and cultural institutions have been forced to absorb huge cuts; under Labour, they will get the investment they deserve.

“Our £1 billion Cultural Capital Fund will give museums, galleries and theatres in all parts of the country access to investment that can be used to upgrade and regenerate their buildings and facilities.”

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, said:

“We want to unleash the potential of every young person not just through education but also through culture. In every one of us there is a poet, a writer, a singer of songs, an artist. But too few of us fulfil our artistic ambition.

“The arts pupil premium will allow every primary school child the chance to learn an instrument, take part in drama and dance and have regular access to a theatre, gallery or museum. Labour will deliver a creative future for all and culture for the many, not the few.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

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Labour will introduce a £1 billion Cultural Capital Fund to invest in new facilities communities can be proud of and upgrade existing cultural and

creative infrastructure for the digital age. The fund will invest in creative clusters across the country, based on a similar model to business enterprise zones.

The Cultural Capital Fund will be administered by the Arts Council over a five-year period and help to transform the country's cultural landscape.

This will be funded from Labour's new National Transformation Fund, announced in the manifesto last week, that will invest £250 billion over 10 years to upgrade our economy.

Since 2010 there are now 600 fewer music teachers, 1,200 fewer arts teachers and 1,700 fewer drama teachers in our schools, and teaching hours in arts subjects has fallen by nearly 38,000. New pledges in the Conservatives' manifesto requiring 90 per cent of pupils to study the EBacc combination of subjects by 2025 could all but wipe out creative education in our schools. Labour will revamp the EBacc and restore the importance of creative education to the curriculum.

You can download Labour's Cultural Manifesto 'A Creative Future For All' at www.labour.org.uk/culturemanifesto

Labour will lift £38 billion debt burden from students' shoulders

400,000 university students will be freed from an average of around £27,000 debt this autumn if Labour is elected next month, Leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, and Shadow Education Secretary, Angela Rayner, will announce today.

Tuition fees will be abolished from 2018 under a Labour Government. But Labour is also pledging to write off the first year of fees for students planning to start university this September.

Abolishing tuition fees will lift a total £38 billion in debt from fees over the course of the next parliament, before a penny of interest is added.

This will give 18-year-olds sitting their A levels this summer yet another reason to register to vote before tonight's (22 May) midnight deadline and to

vote Labour on 8th June.

Tuition fees have trebled to over £9,000 a year since 2012 and graduates are being held back by starting their working lives saddled with debts averaging almost £45,000.

As well as abolishing university tuition fees, Labour will restore the maintenance grants the Conservatives abolished in 2016 and, under its transformative plan for a free National Education Service, will scrap college fees for adult learners.

Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, said:

“The Conservatives have held students back for too long, saddling them with debt that blights the start of their working lives. Labour will lift this cloud of debt and make education free for all as part of our plan for a richer Britain for the many not the few.

“We will scrap tuition fees and ensure universities have the resources they need to continue to provide a world-class education. Students will benefit from having more money in their pockets, and we will all benefit from the engineers, doctors, teachers and scientists that our universities produce.”

Angela Rayner, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Education, said:

“Labour believes everyone should have the chance to further their studies, not just those that can afford it, and we will restore the principle that education is free. No one should be put off from getting an education through a lack of money or fear of debt.

“The Tories trebled tuition fees and students now rack up an average £45,000 debt. A Labour Government will stop that. If students sitting their A levels now want a say on their future they need to register to vote before tonight’s deadline and vote Labour on 8 June.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

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Labour will abolish tuition fees for home students in England studying standard undergraduate first degrees at established universities and further education colleges from the academic year starting in 2018 – the earliest it will be possible to pass the legislation through parliament. (University is already free for EU students in Scottish universities)

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To discourage students who are planning to start university this

September from deferring until after tuition fees are removed, we will guarantee to immediately write off their first year of fees.

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Students part way through their degree will not have to pay fees for the remainder of their course. Part-time students will be covered for the cost of their first undergraduate degree.

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Students who have already graduated will be protected from above inflation interest rate rises on existing debt. And we will look for ways to ameliorate this debt burden in future.

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We will seek to provide free tuition for EU students and seek reciprocal arrangements at EU universities as part of the Brexit negotiations.

We will remove EU and international students from the net migration figures and preserve the current system of fees for non-EU students.

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The average student leaves university with almost £45,000 worth of debt, which they would pay off through their lifetime. Under our plans this will be reduced by an average of more £27,000 for students who don't qualify for a maintenance grant, and to zero for students who do.

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We have costed the abolition of tuition fees at £9.5 billion annually in 2021/22 prices (the £11.2 billion figure for higher education listed in our Grey Book published alongside the manifesto also included £1.7 billion for maintenance grants). Over four years (from 2018/19 academic year, this is £38 billion). It will be paid for by increasing income tax for the top

5 per cent of earners and reversing the Conservatives' cuts to corporation tax.

The £9.5 billion is an estimate of the actual revenues currently being paid to universities through fees, and this money will all go directly back into universities so they will not lose out.

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In 2015/16 there were 365,700 full-time first year students studying their first undergraduate degrees in England (Higher Education Statistics Agency). In 2014/15 there were 38,600 part-time students studying their first undergraduate degree (own calculations). Assuming student numbers stay roughly constant, approximately 400,000 students will benefit each year.