

Government are obsessing over arbitrary targets for apprenticeship starts but doing nothing to ensure the right outcomes for learners – Gordon Marsden

Gordon Marsden

MP, Labour's Shadow Skills Minister, commenting on a report from a sub-committee of the Education and Business Select Committee, claiming that the Government's apprenticeship levy lacks focus and targets the wrong industries, said:

"Today's report confirms what Labour have been saying all along, that while the Government are obsessing over reaching an arbitrary target for apprenticeship starts, they are doing nothing to ensure the right outcomes for learners.

"The fact that the Government's approach lacks focus and targets the wrong industries shows that they have failed to develop an industrial strategy worthy of the name, and can only offer headline chasing gimmicks instead.

"Closing the skills gap and giving young people and older learners the skills they need should be essential to securing our post-Brexit future, yet once again this Government have nothing serious to offer the country."

Plan confirms that May's Government has broken its promise by failing to give the NHS the funding it needs – Jonathan Ashworth

Jonathan

Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to the publication of

NHS England's Next Steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View said:

"NHS

England's Five Year Forward View update contains welcome ambitions around mental health and cancer care that Labour endorses. However reading between the lines this plan confirms that Theresa May's Government has broken its promise by failing to give the NHS the funding it needs. The plan admits the public are 'concerned' for the future of the NHS and that the health service is under 'real pressure' to cope with rising demand within the current spending envelope.

"Labour has warned repeatedly that the NHS funding squeeze imposed by the Government is damaging standards of patient care. Now the Forward View confirms that the main 4 hour A&E target won't be met for at least the next year. Waiting lists are growing as a direct result of the financial crisis. The collapse in standards in the past year has been nothing short of astonishing.

"What's more the plan confirms more and more rationing of treatments is taking place across the NHS.

"One

of the biggest problems laid out by the new NHS plan is the massive workforce challenge for the health service. We welcome NHS England reinforcing Labour's calls for the Government to guarantee the status of European health staff as soon as possible. Sadly Jeremy Hunt has no plan whatsoever to help the NHS through the challenge of Brexit and is being enormously complacent about the impact for the NHS. The Government need to be much clearer about how they will guarantee there are enough staff in place in the health service to keep patients safe for the years to come."

Staggering that Grayling thinks the growing revolving door scandal around HS2 is 'not a massive issue' – McDonald

Andy

McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, commenting on the Government's refusal to set up an inquiry into the cancellation of HS2 Ltd's £170 million contract with engineering firm CH2M, said:

“I’m

staggered Chris Grayling thinks the growing revolving door scandal over HS2 Ltd, CH2M and a £170m contract is ‘not a massive issue.’

“The

fact both HS2 Ltd’s Chief Executive and his predecessor previously worked for CH2M and a former HS2 Chief of Staff worked on the winning bid for CH2M should

have rung alarm bells at the Department for Transport

“Now

HS2’s Director General has resigned and Phase 2 could be delayed even further.

“This

whole business stinks to high heaven, and the Department for Transport must urgently address the key questions. When did it know about these substantial conflicts of interest and what due diligence did it do on the bid?”

Ends

Brexit makes action on self-employment all the more urgent – John McDonnell

Brexit

makes action on self-employment all the more urgent, and Britain should lead the way in supporting the self-employed, says Labour

In

the wake of the triggering of Article 50, Labour held a Self-Employment Summit

this morning to discuss the needs of the self-employed in the Brexit negotiations and beyond.

The

Summit, the first held by Labour’s Commission on Self-Employment, was hosted by

the Federation of Small Business (FSB) and attended by key stakeholders, including the TUC, the GMB, the British Chamber of Commerce, and the Co-operative Party.

John

McDonnell MP, Labour’s Shadow Chancellor, said:

“Labour’s self-employment summit

today looked at all aspects of self-employment and the gig economy, including

how any changes to the tax system should be aligned with increasing support for the self-employed.

“With the number of self-employed people due to overtake public sector workers by 2018, we will develop a package of measures for self-employed people that will form a major part of Labour’s offer at the next General Election. While the Tories are prepared to attack the living standards of the self-employed, Labour are listening and will act to address the real issues they are facing.”

Mike Cherry, FSB National Chairman, said:

“The future success of the UK economy rests squarely on the shoulders of the UK’s army of the self-employed. These are the entrepreneurs, the risk-takers, the freelancers, the strivers – and without them we simply wouldn’t have a thriving economy, just as we face Brexit.

“FSB worked with the Labour frontbench and MPs from all parties to kill off the £2bn tax hike on the self-employed. We now need a proper policy debate about future support for this critical part of the UK economy.”

**Tim Roache,
General Secretary of the GMB Union, said:**

“Philip Hammond made a hash of his first Budget by completely failing to look the wide range of issues facing people currently classified as self-employed. This initiative from Labour comes at a crucial time when work in all its forms is increasingly unclear and uncertain.

“GMB has genuinely self-employed members but we also have plenty of members who are at a loss as to what their employment status is or have been wrongly told they are self-employed by employers hell-bent on shirking their legal and moral responsibilities.

“How many scandals and court cases do we have to see before government ministers and HMRC stop twiddling their thumbs and start taking their enforcement role seriously? It’s time that politicians grasped this nettle.”

Sharon Hodgson responds to proposed sugar limits published by Public Health England

Sharon Hodgson MP, Labour's Shadow Health Minister, responding

to proposed sugar limits published by Public Health England, said:

"Labour supports action to tackle sugar consumption and with the refresh of the Five Year Forward View published this week there is a chance to set a really radical approach to obesity and children's health. It should be a matter of shame that obesity affects so many children in the UK and that the circumstances of where you grow up can have such a long term effect on your health outcomes.

"There is clear clinical and public support for measures like sugar taxes which promote healthier living and can keep people fit and well for the years to come.

"Theresa May watered down the Government's childhood obesity strategy but should be much bolder in supporting radical public health measures. Too often the Prime Minister seems happy to settle for second best for the nation's wellbeing when she ought to position Britain at the front of the global drive for better public health."