

You simply cannot empower local government if you impoverish it – Pearce

Commenting on the LGA's warning that local authorities face a £5.8 billion funding black hole by 2020, Teresa Pearce, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, said:

"The £5.8 billion funding gap facing local councils is a damning indictment of this Government's indifference to the fate of communities across the country. Year after year, councils have warned that the sheer scale of cuts they have been dealt will lead to a tipping point. Now, we are at that tipping point, and the Government is simply not listening.

"The scale of funding cuts that local government has endured – predicted by the IFS to be a 79% cut in direct funding by 2020 – will leave them able to only offer a threadbare service, such as the minimum statutory services in adult social care and child protection, and little else. The libraries and museums have already been closed, youth services have been cut back and all viable efficiency savings have been made.

"There is an unprecedented crisis in social care, with care providers handing contracts back to councils, 1.2 million elderly people living without the care they need and bed-blocking in the NHS at an all-time high. Yet the Government failed to provide a penny extra for social care in the Local Government Finance Settlement. The Prime Minister's claims of "new funding for social care" amount to nothing more than pushing the numbers around in existing budgets.

"Councils, such as Surrey County Council, have been forced into the unwelcome position of holding a referendum on steep council tax rises in an attempt to plug the funding gap. But council tax rises are a short-term sticking plaster for a problem that needs long-term solutions.

"Local councils play an invaluable role in society – caring for our elderly, looking after the disabled and supporting our young people. It is local services that support, shape and enrich the communities we live in. You simply cannot empower local government if you impoverish it."

"Urgent action required" as Theresa

May's NHS Crisis continues – Jonathan Ashworth

New figures published today show that there were 315 cancelled urgent operations in the NHS in December, including 12 cancelled for the second or more time.

In total there were 4,093 cancelled urgent operations in 2016, up from 3779 in 2015 and 3216 in 2014.

The NHS situation report for the week ending 22 January has been published today, showing further evidence of the strain on the health service:

- 51 different trusts reported serious operational pressures at some point.
- 11 trusts registered an OPEL 4 incident – indicating that they were unable to deliver comprehensive care, with increased potential for patient care and safety to be compromised.
- 43 temporary diverts from one A&E to another to provide temporary respite.
- 18 Trusts had bed occupancy over 99 per cent.

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to the latest winter pressure data, said:

"Theresa May's NHS crisis continues, and the problems are worse and more widespread than in previous years. By underfunding and overstressing the NHS, the Tories have pushed health services to the brink.

"Even urgent operations are now being cancelled in record numbers – 4,093 in 2016, up 27 per cent in just two years. The Prime Minister needs to explain what she's going to do to fix this mess – not just pass the buck to local health providers. Cuts to social care have left patients stuck in hospitals across the country even when they are ready to leave, with knock on effects for those waiting for treatment.

"Urgent action is required and Labour is calling for a sustainable health and social care package to be brought forward in the March Budget, so that the NHS and its patients never have to go through a winter like this again."

[It is deeply depressing that the Tories have chosen to take money away from schools like this – Angela Rayner](#)

Angela Rayner MP, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, commenting on reports that the Treasury has taken back £384 million originally promised for schools in England, said:

"It is astonishing that the Treasury is now clawing money back from the Education budget at the same time as schools spending is being drastically cut.

"There is no better investment a government can make than in education and it is deeply depressing that the Tories have chosen to take money away from schools like this.

"Theresa May needs to answer some serious questions on what this money is now going to be used for if not to help ease the pressure on struggling schools."

[This latest report from the PAC shows how the Tories have run a rigged economy – John McDonnell](#)

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on the Public Affairs Committee (PAC)

report on HMRC's tax collection efforts from high net worth individuals, which

shows that the very wealthy are receiving preferential treatment, said:

"This latest report from the PAC shows how the Tories have run a rigged economy

where the super-rich pay less and less in tax while earnings for average working households are still below their level of a decade ago. It's a national

disgrace that the amount lost in tax from a super-rich elite under the Tories would be enough to help end the crisis in social care.

"Labour will call time on the super-rich tax-dodgers and give HMRC the legal and staff resources it needs to close the tax avoidance loopholes and scams. We'll stop the Tories using the excuse of Brexit to turn Britain into a tax haven off the coast of Europe, and build an economy that leaves no-one and no community behind."

It is beyond belief that our Prime Minister is bartering away our health service in her desperation for post-Brexit trade deals – Ashworth

Jonathan

Ashworth, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, commenting on reports that the Prime Minister has refused to exclude health services from a possible trade deal with the US, said:

"It is beyond belief that our Prime Minister is bartering away our health service in her desperation for post-Brexit trade deals. Labour is committed to the NHS both free at the point of use and free at the point of delivery. Theresa May has presided over the worst winter for the NHS in years and she must not now be allowed to sell off the NHS to big US healthcare corporations.

"Labour will oppose any attempt to sell off our health service. The Prime Minister needs to urgently confirm that a rushed trade deal with President Trump will not be a Trojan horse for NHS privatisation. The British people did not vote for Theresa May to use our NHS as a bargaining chip with Donald Trump."