

Labour Party Policy Commissions Draft Documents 2017

Below is the text of the draft policy statements with all the questions (mostly of questionable value) and fancy formatting stripped out. The aim is to give easy and direct access to the substance (such as it is) of the documents without needing to access and download multiple files and without the need for excessive printing if you prefer to work with hard copy.

Responses need to be sent in to the Policy Forum (www.policyforum.labour.org.uk) by 31st May 2017.

The documents can be downloaded from www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/agenda-2020/commissions

(1) The Work, Pensions and Equality Commission

Labour's vision

Labour believes in taking the action needed to secure a more equal society, to cut inequality in income and wealth and to achieve full employment and security at work.

The full employment the next Labour Government will aspire to will focus not just on the total number of jobs but on the quality, security and pay of those jobs too. To achieve that, we will set out plans to create a million good quality jobs across our regions and nations and guarantee a decent job for all.

We will develop policies that achieve greater security and stability for workers across the whole of the UK. That means a social security system that, like the NHS, is there for us all when we need it. We want to build a social security system that treats people of all ages and backgrounds with dignity and respect, one which promotes health and safety and provides proper support at every stage of life.

Labour has a proud record of championing equality and tackling discrimination in whatever form it takes. We want to embed equality in every policy, including the gender-proofing of policy. We want to build an inclusive, respectful and tolerant society. We will take the bold action that's needed to reduce inequalities and protect the rights of all citizens from prejudice and hate.

The issues

This year, the National Policy Forum (NPF) has identified poverty and inequality, social security and equalities as the three priority areas for the Work, Pensions and Equality Policy Commission.

Tackling poverty and inequality

There is overwhelming evidence that we, as a society, do better when poverty and inequalities across people and regions of the UK are reduced. However, over the course of the last year, child poverty has increased by 200,000. In that same time, the Government has abolished child poverty targets which were brought in by the last Labour Government and which played a key role in reducing child poverty.

There is also a growing crisis of in-work poverty under the Conservative Government. One in eight workers is now in poverty and it is no longer the case that work necessarily provides a guaranteed route out of poverty. According to recent analysis from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, there are 19 million people in the UK living below a minimum income standard.

We cannot afford to be complacent over levels of support for older people and disabled people, who are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-disabled people. It's therefore essential that steps are taken to reduce the number of older people and disabled people living in poverty.

The social security system that Labour builds will reduce inequality, tackle barriers to work and provide adequate support to those who cannot work. In order to achieve that, child poverty, pensioner poverty and in-work poverty must be reduced and we must consider the possible effects Brexit could have on poverty and inequality.

Social security and pensions for all

Living standards and wages have come under great pressure and the Government's changes to social security have added to that pressure. While it's welcome that the number of people in work has increased in recent years, this is not the experience in all parts of the country and for all population groups. On top of these labour market inequalities, millions of British workers are struggling to make ends meet because, even if they are in work, the jobs they have are too often insecure and low paid.

Job insecurity and low pay have increased under the Conservative Government. One in five employees in Britain are now stuck in low-paid jobs and more than six million workers are paid below the Living Wage, nearly a quarter of all employees. Meanwhile, there are nearly a million workers employed on a zero-hours contract, more than four million people in insecure work and many part-time workers, the vast majority of whom are women, need to increase their current hours of work in order to get by.

Over recent years, the debate around social security has been falsely characterised as 'strivers versus skivers'. Labour wants to bring an end to this divisive rhetoric and build popular support for Britain's system of social security, which, like the National Health Service, is there for us all when we need it.

To achieve that, social security needs to work for people of all ages and backgrounds, including for those with different requirements employed on different types of contracts and who may find it more difficult to access work. It needs to ensure pensioners can retire with dignity and that future generations of pensioners are encouraged and supported to save for their retirement, building on automatic enrolment.

We want to see Britain's system of social security made fairer, particularly in respect of the Government's sanctions regime and Work Capability Assessments as well as their accelerated increases to women's state pension age and to changes to the work allowances of Universal Credit.

Equalities - a more equal and tolerant society

Labour believes in creating a more equal and tolerant society that treats people of all backgrounds with dignity and respect. To achieve that, equality should be at the heart of every Labour policy. Labour is the party of equality and all major equality advances have come from Labour. We will continue to champion and strengthen the Equality Act, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and fairness and equality at work and in our communities.

The Government has failed in its obligations to publish Equalities Assessments of their policies. The suspicion is that's because such assessments reveal disproportionate impact on women, disabled people, or Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. As an example, analysis from the House of Commons Library suggests 86 per cent of net savings from the Government's tax and benefit changes have fallen on women.

The next Labour Government will close disparities of income and wealth. At 18 per cent, the gender pay gap remains far too high and while the Government has taken some steps in the right direction on measuring it, Labour will take bold action to close the gender pay gap.

All forms of discrimination damage communities, workplaces and life chances. Tackling discrimination goes hand in hand with addressing the lack of diversity in public life. We need people of all backgrounds and ages included, including having the diversity of women, working class and BAME people's voices heard, and our communities accessible and inclusive to disabled people. We have a proud history of securing rights for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) people and of opposing homophobia and transphobia. However, there's still a long way to go and we won't stop fighting until we achieve real LGBT equality.

(1110 words)

(2) The Justice and Home Affairs Commission

Labour's vision

The rule of law is fundamental to the British way of life. Fighting crime, maintaining public order and ensuring that communities have confidence in the police are crucial to the rule of law. That is why last year the justice and Home Affairs Commission examined in detail issues surrounding policing and crime. Labour also believes that respect for the rule of law requires a justice system which is accessible to all, so rights can be protected and those who do wrong are held to account. A robust legal system is crucial to ensuring the guilty are convicted, the innocent are protected, and that everyone has access to justice regardless of their means. Labour will strongly defend the Human Rights Act, but in order to benefit from its protections our justice system must be within the reach of everyone, not just those who can afford it.

The prison system should punish those who have done wrong and protect the public from dangerous offenders, whilst also ensuring that those who are locked up have a real opportunity for rehabilitation. Labour believes frontline prison officers are crucial to turning the lives of offenders around, so the safety of prison staff must be a top priority. When ex-convicts are released back into society it is vital they are appropriately supported and monitored. Labour will develop an effective probation service which places public safety and rehabilitation above a profit motive.

Victims must feel confident participating in the justice system. If someone has been the victim of crime and has been courageous enough to come forward and report what has happened to them, they should be treated fairly and with respect by the police and courts. When someone has suffered domestic abuse and seeks justice in the family courts, they should not face further victimisation. The passage of time should not prevent truth and justice prevailing. Labour will seek to place victims at the heart of the justice system and ensure historic wrongs can be put right.

Labour wants to see fair rules and reasonable management of migration in the best interests of the economy and society. We recognise that over many generations, Britain has seen people come from abroad to help build our businesses, work in our public services at every level and contribute to our growth. But also that large scale and rapid immigration does bring challenges which need strong government action to tackle them, including on community infrastructure and the lack of investment in public services and training by this Conservative Government. Issues around migration featured prominently during the EU referendum debate and Labour is clear that there will be a trade-off between restrictions on the movement of people and securing full single market access for Britain. Labour's priority is to protect the economy, people's jobs and living standards, and our rights at work and environmental protections. We must also ensure that EU citizens living in the UK are not used as pawns in Brexit negotiations.

The issues

Last year, the justice and Home Affairs Commission looked at crime and policing as a priority issue, taking evidence on topics such as police governance, gender-based violence, and police relations with BAME communities. This year the National Policy Forum (NPF) identified immigration, prisons and access to justice as the key issues the Commission must investigate. At its first meeting in the New Year, the Commission agreed that victims' rights and historic injustice was a further key issue that should be explored.

Immigration

Immigration is an important issue and will be a key consideration during the negotiations to leave the EU. It is a complex, wide-ranging, and sometimes emotive topic, but the Tories have done nothing but offer simplistic false promises on immigration, eroding public confidence. Labour's practical approach is in stark contrast to Tory failure. They have dragged their feet on accepting a fair share of refugees, and they are refusing to guarantee the rights of EU citizens living and working in Britain.

The spike in attacks against immigrant communities in the wake of the referendum emphasised the need to discuss this issue in a sensitive and thoughtful manner. AS we plan for a future outside of the EU, it is vital that Labour develop an approach to migration which recognises the contribution made by people who have come to work and live here over many years, but which also addresses concerns around the effect of immigration on public services and wages. We must also consider what Britain must do both at home and

abroad to play our part in bringing the refugee crisis to an end. And we need to consider the most effective strategies for strengthening border security to bear down on illegal immigration and people trafficking.

Prisons

Everyone should feel safe in their home, at work, and in their communities. An effective prison system can help achieve this by locking up those who are a danger to the public and by rehabilitating prisoners so when they are released they do not reoffend. But under the Tories our prisons are in crisis. Overcrowding has been exacerbated by the closure of 17 prisons, while the loss of thousands of frontline staff has coincided with record levels of violence, self-harm, and drug abuse. Reoffending rates have not improved and the reckless privatisation of the probation service has been a costly failure.

Labour's task is to devise a new approach to prisons and probation in which the public can place their confidence. This will mean addressing the recruitment crisis which has seen many experienced prison officers leave the service in recent years. It also involves consideration of new strategies to tackle the drug abuse and mental health problems that play a part in fuelling so much violence in our prisons. And we must also examine how the support and monitoring of ex-offenders needs to change so that people can be turned away from a life of crime.

Access to justice

We are rightly proud of our legal system in this country. Founded on the concept that no one is above the law and that everyone should be able to assert their rights and protect their liberties, it has been replicated all over the world. However this model has been undermined by the Conservative Government, which has made access to justice unaffordable for many ordinary working people by reducing the scope of legal aid, introducing tribunal fees, and closing courts. The widespread closure of legal advice centres has also significantly impacted on access to justice as it means many people are unaware of their rights or any remedies available to them in law. The Conservatives' attack on human rights, through funding cuts to the Equality and Human Rights Commission and plans to scrap the Human Rights Act, can also be seen as an attempt to deny justice for those who have been wronged.

We must look at how we ensure that access to justice is not just a privilege reserved for those who have the means to pay for it against a backdrop of significantly reduced funding. This will include reassessing the effect of the Government's changes to legal aid, investigating the benefits of alternative methods of dispute resolution, and a consideration of innovative ways of advising people of their rights and responsibilities.

Victims' Rights

Victims of crime have a right to expect to be treated fairly and compassionately by the justice system, but too many are still being let down by the police and courts. Furthermore, the current Victims' Code is not sufficient to guarantee the rights of victims and the Tories still have not brought forward a Victims' Law as promised. Additionally, abusers can still misuse the civil justice system to torment those who have suffered at their hands.

The Conservatives have also recently refused to grant public inquiries into historic injustices, such as Orgreave and the Shrewsbury 24. We must develop policies that guarantee better treatment of victims in the criminal justice system, that strengthen their rights, and that ensure historic wrongs can be put right.

(1330 words)

(3) The International Commission

Labour's Vision

Labour's foreign policy has always been guided by our values. Internationalism, social justice and universal rights have underpinned our greatest international achievements, from helping to establish NATO, to intervening to prevent ethnic cleansing in Kosovo or leading the world's advanced economies to cancel third world debt.

Today, many of the values we stand for are under threat, and the next Labour government will face seismic challenges. With the prospect of a potentially destructive Tory Brexit on the one hand, and a more isolationist United States on the other, the twin pillars of post-war UK foreign policy look increasingly uncertain.

In the Middle East, parts of Africa and eastern Europe the growth in instability and conflict is outpacing the ability of Britain and our allies to deal with the consequences. From terrorism to the global refugee crisis, failure to resolve crises is giving birth to new threats, just as the harsher impacts of climate change are beginning to be felt. Global geopolitics is in a state of flux, and the impact of this upheaval is increasingly being felt at home. Perhaps more than at any time since the Cold War, foreign policy is at the heart of British political debate.

But the Tories have no answers to the challenges we face. They talk about creating a 'Global Britain', yet they have diminished the UK's influence on the world stage and are tarnishing our reputation on human rights and climate change. They claim to be the party of defence, yet they have slashed and mis-spent the defence budget, leaving our Armed Forces diminished and poorly equipped. They say they are committed to helping the world's poorest, yet they are shifting ever-more of the aid budget away from poverty reduction and undermining Britain's reputation as a world leader in development. And they say they want Britain to be a truly open trading nation, yet they are risking trade with the EU - by far our largest trading partner - by threatening a hard Brexit. Under Theresa May, narrow party interest too often trumps the national interest.

These are the wrong priorities. The challenges we face require outward-looking, internationalist solutions. At this uncertain and volatile juncture, it is up to Labour to demonstrate that we have a better vision of what a truly 'Global Britain' looks like.

The Issues

Last year the International Policy Commission looked specifically at Britain's defence and security priorities. Following this, the National Policy Forum (NPF) has identified some key issues for further discussion and debate this year, which include future relations with

Europe and the United States, international development and Britain's role in conflict resolution and diplomacy. In addition to these topics, the Commission welcomes views and submissions on all aspects of Britain's international relations.

The UK's post-Brexit relationship with the European Union

Britain is leaving the EU, but there is huge uncertainty about whether a deal can be done within two years, and what the future relationship will look like. Labour has repeatedly emphasised that the Government must seek a trading relationship with the EU that is tariff-free, impediment-free and beneficial to all sectors of the economy. The protection of employment and consumer rights, environmental standards and close collaboration with the EU in key areas such as security, science and research should also be central to any deal.

Facing instability in the Eurozone, the refugee crisis and the rise of populist insurgent parties, the EU is dealing with common internal challenges which will influence the shape of the negotiations. But, like Britain, it also faces challenges further afield. Whether in responding to security challenges in the Middle East and North Africa, bringing sanctions and diplomacy to bear on Russia, or leading the fight against climate change, it is vital that Brexit leads to a new era of joint UK-EU cooperation and leadership.

The transatlantic relationship

Along with deep ties to Europe, the UK-US partnership has long served as the other key pillar of British foreign policy. With close cooperation on Intelligence, diplomacy and counter-terrorism, and as the two biggest contributors to NATO, Britain and the US together play a pivotal role in global security. Close economic ties mean the US is now the largest individual export market for UK goods and services.

With the election of President Trump, and the UK's decision to leave the EU, the future shape of the alliance is an issue for debate. The President's views on issues including torture, refugees and NATO have put him at odds with British public opinion, while at the same time the UK's decision to leave the EU will make it a less attractive destination for American investors.

Theresa May's attempts to ingratiate herself with the new President in pursuit of a quick trade deal have prompted much criticism, and raised questions about the extent to which Britain should seek such close ties to a President that doesn't appear to share British values. While the US is a key ally, the relationship has always been based on shared values, including respect for the rights of women and minorities and a strong commitment to democracy, freedom of the press and the rule of law.

Labour's vision for international development

Labour made the UK a world leader in global development, saving millions of lives whilst enhancing Britain's security and influence on the world stage. It was a Labour government that created the Ministry for Overseas Development in 1964, and another Labour government that established the independent Department for International Development (DfID) in 1997 and passed the pioneering International Development Act in 2002. Our record in Government helped save lives, build schools and hospitals and improve the life chances of the world's most vulnerable people. In 2005 it was the Labour government that led the way in ensuring the cancellation of multilateral debts for the world's poorest countries.

The Tories' approach is undermining this reputation, with growing signs that the commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on overseas development assistance is under threat. Under the Tories, the aid budget is being chipped away at by stealth and is increasingly being used to promote trade, provide loans to companies and bolster the diminished budgets of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Like all Government departments, DfID could perform better. But when managed properly it is a world leader in aid effectiveness and global development. Labour believes in a strong, innovative and well-resourced DfID that tackles global poverty and gets the best possible value for money. By doing this, and putting conflict resolution and human rights at the heart of our international agenda, we can restore Britain's reputation.

The case for continued UK leadership is clear. Around ten per cent of the global population still live in extreme poverty. The need to fight famine and disease, and improve education, health, infrastructure and water supply in the world's poorest countries remains acute. Climate change, population growth and resource insecurity are creating new stresses in the development and humanitarian system. The UN Sustainable Development Goals are an important step in recognising the scale of the challenge and setting clear objectives. The UK must now lead the way in delivering these and helping others to do the same.

Playing to Britain's strengths

Despite severe cuts to the diplomacy and defence budgets since 2010, Britain still has exceptional strengths and influence. The FCO possesses strong diplomatic assets, regional expertise and experience, and is situated in a truly global capital city. As a country at the heart of a number of important global networks - including the UN Security Council, the G7, the G20 and NATO - and possessing instruments of soft power ranging from a thriving entertainment sector to world-class higher education institutions, the UK may be leaving the EU but we still have a powerful voice and can exert influence in other ways.

At a time of rising nationalism and protectionism, the UK must draw on these unique strengths to be a champion of multilateralism, diplomacy and conflict resolution. We must learn the lessons of past military interventions, and consider under what circumstances intervention is justified and effective. And it is important that we honour our international treaty obligations on nuclear disarmament and work with others to do the same.

(1370 words)

(4) The Early Years, Education and Skills Commission

Labour's Vision

The Labour Party believes the purpose of education is to make sure that everyone, whatever their background, is given the opportunity and skills to reach their full potential and live a good life.

As a party we want to develop a world-class education system that offers support for very young children in their early care and education, excellent schools and well-funded services for mature students and those wanting to reskill throughout their careers.

Good quality early education and care is the key to pulling down the barriers to achievement and opportunity that many children in England face. Many of the gaps in attainment between lower-income children and their wealthier peers are evident before they even start school.

Building a strong education system is essential for our country's future economic health, but it is also important that individuals are given the opportunity to thrive and live good lives. We want to change the argument in education from one of not just economic imperatives but social imperatives too. It is important that we make sure that children are prepared for working life, that families are supported with childcare and that we have the skilled workforce needed for the future economy. However it is equally important that everyone is given the opportunity to live the life they want to and that they are supported in doing so.

Labour's aim is to build a National Education Service which would be open to all throughout their lives. We want to ensure there is universal childcare to give all children a good start in life, allowing greater sharing of caring responsibilities and removing barriers to women participating in the labour market. We want to bring about the progressive restoration of free education for all; and guarantee quality apprenticeships and adult skills training. We also want to build a sustainable children's social care system so that vital services are not lost and no child is ever allowed to fall through the net.

The Issues

Last year the Early Years, Education and Skills Policy Commission looked at how to deliver a step change in early intervention and the early years. This year the National Policy Form (NPF) identified further work on building a modern early years system, developing a schools system for the 21st century, modernising further education and adult skills and how we can improve children's social care and safeguarding as priorities for this year.

A modern early years system for a modern economy

The Tories have totally failed to deliver an early years system that works for all.

They have broken their election promises of 30 hours of free childcare to thousands of parents, their tax-free childcare commitment has experienced delay after delay, and the cost of childcare for working families has shot up to record levels. Nurseries are at risk of closure due to inadequate funding and hundreds of Sure Start services have been lost since the Tories came to office.

Labour is the party of social justice, and it is our aim to build a sustainable universal early years system that helps not just parents get back to work and childcare more affordable, but that gives children the best possible care in order that they do not begin school at a disadvantage.

A school system fit for the 21st century

Against a tide of constant upheaval and relentless changes since the Tories came to power in 2010, schools, teachers and the wider schools sector have coped well and have shown remarkable resilience.

However despite the Government's arguments that this was necessary to raise standards across the board, a regional variation in education standards is more apparent than ever with children in London still outperforming children in coastal towns. There are still too many children that are not receiving the education and opportunities they deserve.

Tory plans to bring back selection at 11 and open new grammar schools will only serve the minority of children who attend these schools. It will do nothing for the majority of children and actively make things worse for the most vulnerable. These plans will make the attainment gap between lower-income pupils and their wealthier classmates even wider.

Tory education policy promotes short-term quick fixes with no thought to how to ensure long-term school improvement and sustainability. The schools budget is facing unprecedented cuts of £3 billion by 2020, and the roll-out of the new schools funding formula will make this funding crisis even worse.

Schools everywhere need adequate funding and a permanent infrastructure of support services to help them function effectively. All children must have a right to an excellent education and be offered every opportunity to reach their full potential.

We are looking at how we can build a world-class education system that promotes sustainable school improvement, is evidence based and supports teachers and the wider school workforce.

Modernising and improving access to further education and adult skills

Since 2010 the further education sector has incurred real-terms cuts of around 14 per cent and providers are struggling to keep their doors open. There are now around 1.5 million fewer adult learners than there were in 2008. This has had implications for skills shortages in certain areas and has damaged the social role that accessing to this training had for many people.

The financial sustainability of further education is reaching crisis point with many colleges facing insolvency. The current Technical and Further Education Bill offers no new investment for the financial sustainability of this important sector that serves 4 million people in England every year. University Technical Colleges have been left neglected by the Government and are not attracting the students that may benefit from this education.

While we need to create more apprenticeships and encourage more people to undertake them, this cannot simply become a numbers game. The Government has committed to three million new apprenticeship starts over the course of this Parliament but with no care or assurance of the quality of training or strategic planning and are simply aiming for an arbitrary target. This will not ensure that students have access to the further education they need. There is a rapidly emerging skills gap in the UK, with Brexit likely to make this worse.

Improving children's social care and safeguarding

Children's social care has been savagely cut by this Conservative Government, the social work sector is being propped up by agency workers, and there are elements of the Children and Social Work Bill which will put a hundred years of child protection legislation at risk by dismantling local authority safeguarding responsibilities.

Tory neglect of this area has left children at risk for far too long. Almost three quarters of local authorities' children's social services are currently rated less than good and young people that grow up in care are more likely to die an early death than their peers. Tory cuts have meant non-statutory services that many young people rely on have been lost and early help services which have been proven to lead to better outcomes for children have also gone.

Children's social care is in crisis and government attempts to reform the sector have amounted to a Bill which in part would allow local authorities to exempt themselves from child protection duties. Such a move has led former government advisor, Professor Eileen Munro to conclude that this would pose a "serious danger" to vulnerable children.

(1200 words)

(5) The Business, Economy and Trade Commission

Labour's vision

Labour wants to create a society that is fundamentally fairer, more equal and more democratic, based on an economically and environmentally sustainable economy where prosperity is shared by all. Under the Tories, the British economy faces a turbulent and potentially deeply worrying future. The uncertainty caused by the vote to leave the European Union has exacerbated long-term structural weaknesses in our economy; weaknesses that the Conservative Government has failed to remedy, and in many cases made worse.

Seven years of failure on the economy have left us with stagnating wages, weak growth and poor public finances. Business investment has been sluggish and underlying structural problems in the UK economy have worsened, with a deepening skills crisis and a widening of the UK's productivity gap with our major competitors.

Alongside this we have seen the rise of insecure, low-skilled and low-paid jobs, and exploitative employment practices. There have been a number of significant, and high-profile, corporate governance failures which have highlighted a problem of short-termism on the part of too many businesses. Austerity cuts to public spending budgets have damaged the growth and capacity of the British economy.

We are also now faced with additional challenges in the coming months and years as the UK negotiates its exit from the European Union and as we begin to chart new trading relationships with the European Union and the rest of the world.

Existing economic headwinds, and the Conservative Government's handling of Brexit, are therefore real risks to long-term prosperity and opportunity. It is for the Labour Party to produce a credible economic alternative, with a twenty-first century industrial and trade strategy at its heart, which will secure our long-term prosperity. At the heart of our radical alternative will be our commitments to full employment, decent wages and working conditions, equality and environmental sustainability.

The issues

Last year the Economy Policy Commission looked at 'building a productive economy'. This year the National Policy Forum (NPF) identified further work on building a productive economy, on developing our industrial strategy, and on fostering the workplaces and work practices of the future as priorities for this year. A new priority for this year is work to integrate our international trade strategy with these other priority areas.

Economy

The UK economy is failing to deliver for many millions of people, with 19 million people living below the Minimum Living Standard and seven million in in-work poverty. We must build a growing economy which raises living standards for the many; in addition to a better organised and regulated labour market this should be supported by rising productivity.

The Conservative Government has failed to invest in the things that make our economy more productive and as a result we have sluggish growth and insecure work despite high levels of Government borrowing. Labour will need to urgently address this chronic underinvestment in our society's infrastructure, both physical and social, by investing in publicly funded and owned health, education, childcare and social care systems.

Productivity growth is a crucial component of rising living standards. When people produce more at work - for example, because the service they provide or the goods they make are of a higher standard or in greater quantity - that can help improve and increase the output of their employer. Through collective bargaining the workforce can then secure increases in pay and working conditions.

Productivity growth remains weak, and as such prospects for rising living standards are limited. Labour will come forward with a serious plan to invest in our future, to raise our productivity, and create the high-wage, high-skill economy of the future. A Labour government should lead the way with a programme of long-term investment and by embedding principles of workplace rights, equality and sustainability in procurement processes.

Business

Labour is committed to working with businesses to deliver the high-skill, high-wage successful economy we need.

Most businesses are hardworking and law-abiding, however the image of some businesses in the UK have been damaged by a few recent high-profile scandals. More generally, our corporate culture has been criticised

for being too short-termist and focused on short-term dividends rather than long-term company growth. Too many British companies are under-investing, contributing to the productivity gap. Corporate governance reform to ensure that companies are run with a view to long-term stability and growth, to prevent undercutting in corporate governance standards by a few bad apples, and to improve the reputation of business therefore makes good economic sense.

In the longer term it is clear that the coming digital revolution will transform our world; this will usher in a new era of fast technology-driven change, and will transform our workplaces, economies and the world. The potential opportunities offered by digital and technological change are enormous. However, the risks are also great. If not managed properly, it has the potential to exacerbate inequality of income, wealth and capital. This is particularly concerning given the existing trend in the labour market towards low-paid, low-skilled and insecure work.

Labour will build the productive working relationships with industry, businesses and trade unions to take advantage of these opportunities and foster the modern and positive workplaces of the future.

Only through structural and institutional changes, supported by innovative business models, can we achieve this. This means looking at democratisation and new forms of organisation and ownership as central planks in the transformation of our economy.

Trade

Labour is clear that we are pro-trade and pro-investment. The future prosperity of the UK is dependent on minimising trade barriers, both tariff and non-tariff, that prevent us from exporting. We want to create jobs and economic growth, and an open, rules-based trading system can help us achieve this.

We must create a modern, 21st century, trade strategy that builds fair and sustainable trading relationships with partners around the world. This is increasingly important in order to promote UK trade and take advantage of opportunities outside the European Union.

Trade and investment are essential for jobs, growth and prosperity. However, progressive trade deals are needed to ensure that the benefits of globalisation and trade are equitably shared. Labour is committed to building a trade strategy that ensures future trade deals are mutually beneficial, democratic and transparent.

The Labour Party will be developing a trade strategy that protects and promotes skilled jobs, human rights and workers' rights and which preserves and enhances social, health and environmental regulation, here and abroad. These are the red lines that the Labour Party will be insisting upon in all of our future trade agreements.

Industrial strategy

Only a bold, transformative industrial strategy can fix the structural problems with our economy. An industrial strategy is first and foremost about deciding what kind of economy we want. Labour's answer is that we want an economy that is prosperous and that leaves no one behind. This means cultivating industrial strength, while guaranteeing a good standard of living for everyone, everywhere.

Labour is committed to working in partnership with businesses and trade unions to develop an industrial strategy that will bring high-skill and high-wage jobs to every corner of the country. A large body of work has already been undertaken by the Party on developing this strategy, including the work of a National Investment Bank supported by a series of regional investment banks.

As part of this, Labour launched a wide-ranging consultation with businesses, trade unions, third sector and party members on our industrial strategy. This included the priorities, interventions, institutions and processes that will shape our industrial strategy.

Specifically, this document moves that discussion on to the important issue of how we integrate our industrial strategy with our trade strategy. We need to look at how we ensure that our industrial strategy and our trade strategy are joined up and complementary. Only by joining these two strategies together will we truly unlock the UK's potential to create jobs, grow our economy and raise people's living standards.

(1300 WORDS)

(6) The Housing, Local Government and Transport Commission

Labour's vision

Labour believes everyone deserves to be able to live in an affordable, secure home, in an area where their local authority can deliver good public services and to travel using affordable and reliable public transport. But under this Government communities are being left behind.

Putting power back in the hands of local people is key for the Labour Party. For many people politics is too distant from them, too many of the decisions that have an impact on their lives are made in Whitehall and do not reflect their needs and priorities. Our challenge is to rebuild public services, to expand democratic participation and to give people a real say in their local communities.

Getting to grips with the escalating housing crisis, in part caused by Conservative cuts to local government, is a Labour priority. Millions of people now struggle week-to-week because of this country's housing crisis. Labour has a clear plan of how to tackle this crisis. We are committing to building at least one million new homes, half of which will be council homes. We will end insecurity for private renters by introducing rent controls, secure tenancies and a charter of private tenants' rights, and increase access to affordable home ownership.

Unlike the Tories, Labour understands that local transport services are vital for our communities, for local economies and for the environment. When local transport fails it has a huge impact on people's work and family life. Labour will ensure that communities have a real say in decisions about local transport and make providers accountable to the public they serve.

Labour recognises the infrastructure challenges our country faces. Across the UK the Conservative Government's under-investment in our transport sector is leaving its mark. Our task is not just to address the transport challenges of today but those our country will face in years to come.

Labour is committed to meeting these challenges and finding solutions that are shaped around community needs, environmental impact and supporting the local economy.

The issues

Last year the National Policy Forum (NPF) considered the priority issue areas of affordable housing and local transport. This year the NPF identified further work on devolution; council, social and affordable housing building; reforming the private rented sector; and improving transport services as priorities.

Devolution

The Tories' cuts to local government are having a huge effect on housing and local transport. Government cuts are also having a severe impact on services and service users. Local youth centres, adult social care programmes, local museums and library services are all closing because of cutbacks. Labour will act to bring back in house our public and local council services and increase access to leisure, arts and sports across the country.

Responsibility for service delivery has been devolved to local authorities but the funding from central government to deliver the kind of projects communities require has been sorely lacking. Cuts are hitting the most deprived areas hardest. All ten of the most deprived councils in England are set to see higher cuts to their finances than the national average. Cuts to local councils are also having a drastic effect on local government pay which is the lowest across the public sector. Significant numbers earn below the Living Wage and local government workers have suffered real pay cuts of 20 per cent since 2010.

English devolution can play a pivotal role in re-balancing the loss of trust in politics. We should be clear, however, that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to devolution. Different communities require tailored approaches. Simply building a new tier of elected representatives will not work for all areas. Devolution should be grassroots up, designed and delivered by local people for local people, not implemented top-down from central government. This latter approach risks recreating centralised power at a local level.

The challenge for Labour now is to bring forward solid proposals which support the debate about where power will sit in the future and how key services will be run and funded in a post-Brexit economy.

Council, social and affordable house building

The need for affordable social and council housing has become acute. A significant proportion of the accommodation in the private rented sector is either crippling expensive for people on average incomes, offers little or no security or is of substandard quality. In too many cases all of these conditions apply, and families are unable to save for a deposit on a home of their own. Increasingly, for households with children, and vulnerable single adults, the security and affordability of a social or council tenancy is the best option.

After seven years of Tory failure on housing, there are now 143,000 fewer council homes with only one in six of those sold replaced, despite Tory promises of 'one for one' replacement. The number of new affordable homes (i.e. homes built for sale below market price, to rent and to buy) fell last year to the lowest level in 24 years, with the number of properties built at a genuinely affordable social rent at the lowest on record.

One cause of our housing crisis is the current severe skills shortage in the construction sector. In a recent survey 53 per cent of construction companies reported a difficulty sourcing labour. This is compounded by the 19 per cent of the construction workforce that are set to retire in the next five to ten years. This all leads to serious concerns about the Government's lack of response to this skills shortage and an abject failure to improve the workers' rights of those employed in the construction sector.

Building on work conducted by last year's Communities Policy Commission, Labour is committing to building over a million new homes in five years, at least half being council homes, through our public investment strategy. We also, unlike the Tories, understand that council regeneration programmes should have the consent of residents. But to help achieve our aims we also need to understand how best to increase access to affordable homes to rent and buy and tackle the severe skills shortage in the construction sector.

Reforming the private rented sector

Labour is committed to reforming standards, driving down costs and increasing security in the private rented sector. The number of people who own their own home has decreased by 200,000 since 2010 with the private rented sector making up the shortfall. There are over 900,000 more households renting from a private landlord than in 2010, including one in four families with dependent children. Deficiencies with the private rented sector mean that since 2010 the amount spent on housing benefit is over £4 billion a year higher.

Labour is concerned by the condition of the rented properties that many people live in. We must make sure that no one has to live in substandard accommodation or accept unfair charges or unscrupulous letting practices. We need to understand the best ways to help improve standards in the private rented sector.

Improving transport services

We need a transport system that works for local communities. As well as playing a critical role in our everyday lives, the transport sector plays a critical role in supporting the economy and could play its part in reducing our air pollution emissions. In many parts of the UK the three major barriers to using public transport are affordability, availability and access.

For too many people the rising cost of public transport is adding to the financial pressures they already face. Local authority supported bus routes have been cut and rail fares have risen more than three times faster than wages.

The Tories insist that privatisation delivers cheaper tickets and lower subsidies, yet under this Government we have some of the most expensive fares in Europe. Building on the work of last year's Transport Policy Commission, Labour has a different plan, taking the railways back into public ownership and putting passengers not profit first.

Buses are the most frequently used form of public transport. Building on the work of last year's Commission, we will give local authorities increased franchising powers to run and manage their local bus routes.

Labour understands that beyond current considerations we must also look to the transport infrastructure challenges our country will face in the decades to come.

1360 words

(7) The Environment, Energy and Culture Commission

Labour's Vision

Labour believes that the changing climate is one of the greatest global challenges and that continued action is needed to reduce carbon emissions to tackle global temperature increases. We need a renewed worldwide effort to tackle climate change following the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015.

We must ensure a fair transition to a low carbon economy and look at how we can drive the expansion of the green industries and promote the high-skilled jobs of the future. Our energy platform must deliver for ordinary people by curbing increases in energy prices rather than just working for the Big Six energy companies.

Leaving the European Union will mean that the United Kingdom's current agricultural and environmental policies will face uncertainty. Labour believes in defending and extending our environmental protections currently derived from the EU and in taking action to protect the future of our planet, with social justice at the heart of our environmental policies.

Our agricultural sector must be allowed to succeed and clarity must be offered to the industry post-Brexit. Farming needs coordinated government support to encourage growth and innovation to create a world-leading sector with well-paid jobs benefitting the rural economy.

Culture and the arts continue to make a large contribution to the UK both socially and economically. Labour recognises these benefits and will increase access to leisure, the arts and sports across the country, in particular amongst under-represented groups. We must support these industries to ensure they thrive.

The Issues

The National Policy Forum (NPF) has identified climate change, agriculture and the environment post-Brexit, and widening access to the arts as three key issues for the Environment, Energy and Culture Policy Commission to examine and consult on this year.

Continuing to lead in tackling global climate change

The Commission believes that climate change remains one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century. It notes the important need to develop strategies to limit the rise in global temperature through the decarbonisation of our energy supply whilst continuing to meet future energy demand.

Labour has a strong record in pressing for and tackling climate change. It was a Labour Government that passed the Climate Change Act which placed in law a duty to meet carbon reduction targets every five years. Labour will continue to support the Carbon Budgets and will take action to ensure that the targets set by them are met.

Following the Paris climate deal, which was agreed by all the world's major economies, Labour believes that we must remain committed to meeting our climate obligations including those obligations which are currently derived from the EU. The UK must not be seen to row backwards following Brexit and must continue to lead on the global stage.

Energy bills continue to rise with household bills increasing by over £300 since 2010. Labour acknowledges that the energy market is in need of reform and will act to redevelop our energy supply by making it both clean and affordable so that it can work for consumers and the environment.

By investing :E500 billion in infrastructure backed up by a publicly owned National Investment Bank and regional banks we will build a high-skilled, high tech, low carbon economy to help generate a million good quality jobs.

We will invest in and deliver clean energy and curb energy bill rises for households to provide energy for the British public.

The transition to a renewable and low carbon economy presents opportunities for jobs and growth in low carbon technologies can help to reduce bills and further investment. Emerging technologies such as carbon capture and storage will help to smooth over the transition to cleaner fuels and will help to protect existing jobs as part of the future energy mix. As part of Labour's wider low carbon strategy we will use our National Investment Bank to promote public investment and community ownership across future energy solutions.

A fully costed low carbon energy platform that includes renewables, nuclear and green gas should be developed and publicly financed options should be considered to ensure that the UK has a low carbon economy that works for consumers moving forwards.

Developing post-Brexit agricultural and environmental policies for the future

Brexit presents a significant challenge for the agricultural and environmental sectors. Farmers receive half of their income directly from European sources and much of our current environmental regulations are derived from Europe and are at risk of simply being scrapped by the Conservatives.

The farming and agricultural industries contribute hugely to the UK economy supporting half a million jobs and over £200 billion to the UK economy. These sectors play a vital role in both supporting our food supply and leading on environmental stewardship initiatives.

The Tory Government has offered no serious guarantees to date about the future of agricultural support once we leave the EU; they have only committed to safeguarding farmers' incomes until 2020. The Government has also failed to offer assurances to protect those who currently work across the sector. The Tories have failed to offer either the clarity or the long term security that the agricultural industry requires.

Much of the current environmental regulation and legislation in recent decades have originated from the EU. These regulations cover important issues including; air quality, soil quality, waste and recycling and other environmental aspects tied into the Common Agricultural Policy such as biodiversity. These environmental laws and protections should be, at a minimum, maintained at current levels and the enforcement of these protections once the UK leaves the EU should be seriously considered.

Other environmental issues such as flooding, high levels of air pollution and the fishing industry should remain Labour priorities in this area and particular attention needs to be given to the needs and concerns of rural communities.

The development of a rural and agricultural support system post-Brexit will mean a large expansion in the funding and remit of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Labour must put forward a platform that addresses the needs of today but one that is flexible enough to tackle the issues of the future.

Widening access to and delivering support for culture and the arts

Labour has a strong record in widening access to and in delivering support for culture and the arts. Last year marked 15 years since Labour scrapped museum entry fees, a landmark scheme, which saw attendance numbers substantially increase and it was a Labour Government who secured the Olympic Games in 2012.

The creative industries contributed £87.4 billion to the UK economy in 2015 and made up 5.8 per cent of the total UK workforce - totalling 1.8 million direct jobs. The importance of these industries means that we should look at how they can be given the support they need to continue to succeed, with particular attention on how best to preserve jobs and access to talent post-Brexit.

Ideas should be put forward which seek to preserve and to build upon Labour's record of increasing access, and which recognise the importance of the arts to UK life, as a sector which plays an active role in the generation of jobs and in contributing towards the national economy along with other social benefits.

Action needs to be taken to promote the take-up by those from under-represented backgrounds of activities across the arts. Innovative measures such as a new arts pupil premium should be considered as an option to better encourage and support cultural activities across schools.

Labour also acknowledges the health benefits of regular physical activity and believes that efforts should be made to widen participation in sports and other physical activities across the country.

Digital technologies hold the key to delivering future jobs and economic growth and Labour would take steps to increase the provision of and access to superfast broadband services across the country and will ensure that people have the skills to take advantage of the digital economy.

Labour acknowledges the role played by those institutions which remain publically owned and which continue to make large contributions towards culture and the arts across the UK. Labour will ensure that the BBC remains fully-funded and that Channel 4 remains in public ownership.

(1350 words)

(8) The Health and Social Care Commission

Labour's vision

Labour believes in a strong and secure NHS, where healthcare is based on need, not the ability to pay. We need to make sure we have a health and social care service that is fit for purpose and that can meet the challenges of today. The Labour Party believes in a fully integrated health and social care system which looks after the needs of our ageing population, treats people with dignity and ensures that mental and physical health are treated equally.

The scale of the challenge currently facing our NHS and social care system is huge. Our NHS is going through its biggest financial squeeze in history and the system is struggling to cope. Chronic underfunding of health and social care services, coupled with workforce shortages, is causing increasing stress and anxiety for both staff and the patients that they work so hard to care for.

The Conservative Government has failed to give our health and social care services the resources they need to ensure that patients receive the care they deserve. An increasing number of people are waiting too long for operations, key performance targets, such as the four-hour A&E waiting time target and the 62-day cancer treatment target, are being missed month after month. Older and vulnerable people are being left stranded on hospital wards because there is nowhere safe for them to go. Our social care system is under severe pressure, with increasing numbers of people getting little or no assistance to help them deal with basic daily tasks such as washing and dressing.

Underfunding is also having a negative impact on the ability of local authorities to support preventative public health initiatives such as sexual health programmes, smoking cessation services and measures to reduce obesity. There are real concerns that reductions to funding for prevention are short-sighted and will likely contribute to an increased burden on the health system in the future.

The NHS is Labour's proudest achievement. We have a duty to protect both patients and staff, and ensure that people can access the care they need, when they need it, through a publicly provided service.

The Issues

Last year the Health and Care Policy Commission looked specifically at the issue of mental health and explored issues surrounding early intervention and prevention in mental health, as well as what steps need to be taken to achieve true equality between physical and mental health.

This year the National Policy Forum (NPF) identified further work on funding, social care and public health.

Funding

As a result of Conservative policies on health and social care, our system is underfunded and overstretched. The Conservative Party has failed to grasp the size of the challenge facing health and social care, and patients are being let down as a result. NHS spending per person will be cut next year and experts have suggested that by 2020 there will be a gap in social care funding of at least £2.6 billion. In addition to this, it is expected that funding for public health will fall by at least £600 million in real terms by 2020/21 and figures also show that mental health funding fell by £600 million over the course of the last Parliament. NHS trusts finished 2015/16 £2.45 billion in deficit, the highest on record.

The period between 2009/10 and 2014/15 saw the lowest five year growth in public spending on health in the UK since the 1950s. Under the last Labour Government, the average annual growth rate was 5.9 per cent, compared to 1.1 per cent under the Coalition Government (2010-2015).

In addition to existing funding pressures across the board, local health communities are being asked to find savings totalling £22 billion, as set out in NHS England's Five Year Forward View. Finding savings of this level, while at the same time developing and implementing Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs), is expected to put huge pressure on local hospital services, and is likely to have a knock-on effect on community and primary care. There are real fears that STPs will lead to the downgrading or closure of some local services (e.g. A&E departments and maternity units).

The demographic of our country is changing. Our population is ageing rapidly, and the number of people living with multiple complex and long term conditions has increased. As a consequence, health and social care services are under immense pressure, sometimes struggling to meet the needs of patients. There has been a 56 per cent increase in the number of days lost to delayed transfers of care since 2011, 1.8 million people waited longer than four hours in A&E departments last year; GPs are struggling to cope with an increasing workload and the 62 day cancer target has not been hit for three years.

Health needs are constantly evolving and demand on the NHS is growing as a result. Patient demand for access to new drugs and treatments is increasing and Clinical Commissioning Groups in England are being forced to make difficult decisions about what treatments and drugs they can offer with reduced budgets.

The health and care system is under enormous financial pressure. There are calls from across the political spectrum, and from health and care experts, to boost funding for services in the immediate term by providing an urgent injection of funding to shore up services under significant strain. However, a more long-term, sustainable solution must be considered if we are to secure the future of our health and social care services.

Social care

As a result of choices the Conservative Government has made, social care is facing a funding shortfall of £1.9 billion next year, and by 2020 the gap could be as much as £2.6 billion. UK public spending on social care is set to fall to less than one per cent of GDP by 2020, and it has been estimated that as many as 1.2 million people are now living with unmet care needs - this means that they are receiving no help to perform daily tasks such as washing and dressing.

The number of people aged 65 and over is increasing. According to the National Audit Office, the number of older people in England (aged 65 and older) rose by 20 per cent between 2004 and 2014 and this upward trend is set to continue. The impact of a rapidly ageing population will have a significant impact on the health and social care system. Both delayed discharges and emergency admissions to hospital have increased in recent years - between 2010/11 and 2014/15 there has been an 18 per cent increase in emergency admissions of older people to hospital.

The Government has failed to provide the social care system with sufficient funding. The social care precept, which allows local councils to raise council tax to pay for social care, is not a sustainable, long term solution to the financial challenges facing the system. Despite the fact that around 95 per cent of councils decided to use the precept in 2016/17, the amount raised will not even cover costs related to an increase in the National Living Wage.

The Government has neglected to address serious funding issues in health and social care. In last year's Autumn Statement, the Government failed to provide a single extra penny for social care and this year's Spring Budget was a missed opportunity to give social care an immediate cash injection to help cope with increasing pressures. The Government's announcement to provide £2 billion over three years is woefully inadequate, when we take into account that the social care funding gap for next year alone is this amount.

Action needs to be taken to protect older and vulnerable people, who are increasingly being left to fend for themselves. Many are living with unmet care needs, or are being left trapped on hospital wards with nowhere to go. Carers are under increasing pressure to provide care to a growing number of older people, and unpaid carers, for example family members, are being left to cope with little or no extra help.

Public health

NHS England spent over £5 billion on ill health linked to being overweight or obese in 2014/15, and it is estimated that £14 billion a year is spent on treating diabetes. According to a recent report from the Health Foundation, the Department of Health estimates that 70 per cent of the total health and social care spend in England is for the treatment and care of people with long-term conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Cuts to the public health budget in England are putting prevention of ill health at risk - we have already seen in-year cuts to public health budgets of £200 million, and by the end of this Parliament it is expected that funding for public health will fall by around £600 million. Cuts of this scale could put at risk sexual health services, cancer screening, smoking cessation and measures to reduce obesity. Furthermore, there are concerns that cuts in the number of Sure Start centres will negatively impact people who benefit from the use of these services.

Our public health workforce is also under pressure, faced with cutbacks from local authority budgets. Shortages of both health visitors and school nurses are putting the existing public health workforce under unsustainable pressure. There are concerns that staff are finding it increasingly difficult to provide much needed advice to children and young people, at a crucial point in their lives, because they are so overstretched. Preventing ill health at an early age is vital for the future health and wellbeing of children and young people. A third of children aged between two and 15 are either overweight or obese, and without firm action to combat childhood obesity, there are real fears that its prevalence will continue to increase. The Government's much delayed and watered down Childhood Obesity Plan published last summer was a missed opportunity to deal with this issue head on.

We need to be aware of the impact issues such as housing, employment and education can have on people's health and wellbeing. As a society it is crucial that we identify ways in which to promote preventative measures, in order to improve the quality of people's lives and to reduce the burden of ill health on our health and social care services. Developing a range of policies to address health inequalities in our society is vital if we are to improve the health of people of all ages, from all parts of the country. (1740 words)