

Angela Rayner speech to Labour Party Conference

Angela Rayner MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education, speaking at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton today, said:

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

Conference, last year I said it was a surprise, but a great privilege, to stand before you as Shadow Secretary of State for Education. And what a year it has been.

Theresa May started it by warning of a coalition of chaos. Now she leads it. And her education ministers have spent the last few months ripping up their own Manifesto page by page.

They wanted to open new grammar schools. But they can't. They said they'd build 140 free schools. They couldn't. They pledged the healthy pupils fund would not fall below £400 million. Now it will.

They promised they'd provide free school breakfasts. But they won't.

When we beat them on tuition fees, they refused to accept it. Instead they will just stop turning up for votes. They've gone from running the place to running away from the place.

In fact, I went through their Manifesto line by line. There are more education policies that they are reviewing or abandoning than they are actually implementing.

They're binning their Manifesto; we are building on ours.

The next Labour Government will create a National Education Service, a cradle-to-grave system supporting everyone throughout their lives. It would start in the early years, where we know it has the most impact in changing people's lives – just like my life was changed by a Labour Government.

When I became pregnant at sixteen, it was easy to think that the direction of my life, and that of my young son, was already set. My mum had a difficult life, and so did I, and it looked like my son would simply have the same.

Instead, the last Labour Government,

through support of my local Sure Start centre, transformed my son's childhood,
and made sure that his life would not have to be as hard as mine had been. So when I say that politics changes lives, I say it as someone whose own life was changed.

Yet those services are being lost across the country. We revealed today that since 2012, £437 million pounds has been cut from Sure Start – nearly half of their funding. That means more children and families with less control over their lives.

So I am proud to say that we will give £500 million a year directly to Sure Start, reversing those cuts in full. Because to give every child a fair chance to succeed, we need to give them the best possible start in life.

For far too many that simply isn't happening. The Tories promised free childcare to the children of working parents. They promised over 600,000 places. But they created less than a quarter of them. The most disadvantaged aren't even eligible and costs are rising more than twice as fast as wages.

Today, we are publishing a report setting out the alternative. Free, high-quality early education, universally available for every 2-4 year old, and extra affordable care for every family, saving them thousands of pounds a year. So our children will be ready for school. And when children arrive, they won't be let down for a lack of resources there either.

The Government's latest U-turn was on their so-called fair funding formula two weeks ago. Thanks to our pressure, and the great campaign run by parents and teachers, they have abandoned cash cuts to schools.

But the truth is, there is no new money – every penny has been found by cutting other education spending. And they still won't meet their promise that funding will go up in real terms over five years. This means the continuation of real terms funding cuts to 88% of schools, hitting the most disadvantaged areas hard.

A Labour Government would meet that promise instead: a fairer funding formula, but genuinely fair and properly funded. And we will remember the most important resource: people.

Learning needs teaching. Teachers would be at the heart of the National Education Service. And we will pay them properly to do it. That is why we will bring an end to the public sector pay cap. And teaching assistants and support staff too. Many have lost so much that they are on the minimum wage. We will bring back national standards for them too. They look after our children. We should look after them.

As well as giving our schools the resources they need, we must ensure that they give every child the support they need. Because all our pupils deserve a good quality of life. So, I am proud to say that as your Secretary of State, I will allocate £10m from our departmental budget to end the scandal of period poverty in our schools.

Councils are required to find a school for every child. We will give them the resources to meet that responsibility. Unlike the Tories, we will help successful state schools expand and ensure that every child gets a school place. So we will invest £8bn pounds in new school buildings, where they are needed. And we won't neglect existing schools to do it.

We will provide the full £13bn pounds needed for the existing school estate. Instead of wasting millions of pounds on an inefficient free schools programme, we will provide funding to ensure our schools are safe – that flammable cladding can be removed, sprinklers installed and asbestos cleared.

And the National Education Service won't stop at eighteen, or sixteen. Further education isn't just for those who 'didn't get the chance' to go to university; it serves the majority of young people. They too deserve a world-class education.

Instead, the Tories are happy to manage decline. I will only be happy when we manage success. So we will invest a billion pounds into a further education service to deliver T-levels that are a true gold standard.

The Tories keep talking about how they want to help young people. Reducing fees.

Capping interest rates. Raising repayment thresholds. I've got a suggestion for them. Stop talking about it, and get on with it.

But our National Education Service is not just for young people either. That is personal to me too. At sixteen I was out of school and looking for work, but without qualifications to offer. I supported myself and my son as a care worker, looking after the elderly and disabled in their homes. Low qualifications meant low wages. No skills meant no security.

As a trade unionist with Unison, I could change that. Not just for myself, but for the carers I worked with, and the people we cared for. Workplace education meant we had the chance to learn more and earn more. Other people need that chance. So, our National Education Service will be lifelong, providing for people at every stage of their life.

That is our National Education Service. Not just another structure. Not another new sign on the school gate.

A promise, from a Labour Government, to the British people and British businesses.

That we believe in all of them, in their talent and their potential, in all they give to our country, and that we will never limit their aspiration or their ability to succeed. It will set out the education that people can expect throughout their lives. The contribution that society makes to them and that they can make to society.

Today, we outline the principles of that National Education Service in a draft charter, starting a conversation on how we continue to build it moving forward. And I look forward to that conversation, to visiting schools, colleges, and universities, to talking to pupils, parents, teachers, and businesses, so we can truly build a National Education Service for the many, and not just the few.

Conference, Education informs. It inspires. And it empowers. Because knowledge is power. I know that from my own life. We must ensure that power becomes the right of every person, whatever the circumstances of their birth.

That means giving opportunity to all, with a guarantee of lifelong learning, whenever they need it. It means giving power back to our communities, ensuring that every school in receipt of public money is genuinely, democratically accountable to the people it serves.

The Labour Party was founded to ensure that the workers earned the full fruit of their labour. Well, the sum of

human knowledge is the fruit
of thousands of years of human labour. The discoveries of maths and science;
the great works of literature and art; the arc of human and natural history
itself; and so much more that there is to learn. All of it should be our
common
inheritance. Because knowledge belongs to the many, not the few.

This is our historic purpose as a
movement. Not just to be a voice for the voiceless.

But to give them a voice of their own.
That is the challenge we face. And it is what we will do, together.

We have got the Government running. Now
let's get running the Government.

Thank you.