

Labour launches National Education Service

Angela Rayner, Shadow Education Secretary, launching Labour's plans for a cradle to grave National Education Service at Leeds City Further Education College today, said:

To the people of this country I say this – you have a clear choice on 8 June.

A choice between a Conservative Government that has let you and your children down.

Or a Labour Government that will stand up for you and provide a better education and life chances for all.

The Conservatives said they would look after our children.

But instead they've cut funding for our state schools, abolished the Education Maintenance Allowance and tripled Tuition Fees.

Over the past seven years, the Tories have been dismantling the incredible legacy of the last Labour Government.

As it has across the economy.

This Conservative Government has held you back.

If you're a teacher living the reality of falling investment and rising class sizes.

You're being held back.

If you're a parent – like I am – and your children aren't getting the education they deserve because class sizes are too high.

Then our children are being held back.

It's truly frightening that school budgets are being cut for the first time in over twenty years.

We're going to see a generation of our children being held back.

It never used to be like this under Labour.

Harold Wilson spoke of a new Britain forged in the white heat of the technological revolution, and Tony Blair spoke of the need to build an education system fit for a new millennium.

This is how Labour always equipped Britain to rise to new challenges; the history of Labour in power is of us giving power to people.

To fulfil their potential, to have the economic security to start a family

and get on in life, and to pass on to their children more than they were given.

And education has always been at the heart of how we have delivered this.

But in the past seven years, as the Tories drag us further away from the legacy of the last Labour Government, more and more people are being held back.

Held back by an education system that, under the Conservatives, isn't giving them the support they need.

The over 800,000 young people not in education, employment, or training, who aren't able to get the skills they need to get a good job, are being held back by a Government that is not supporting them.

The nine million adults who have poor literacy, poor numeracy, or both, too often trapped in low-wage, low-skill work, struggling to make ends meet as wages stagnate and living costs rise, are being held back by a Government not giving them the support they need.

I know how it feels to be held back, because, for a long time, I was too.

If you grow up in poverty and on a run-down estate, it doesn't take much for you to feel held back.

You feel like you'll never have the same opportunities as your better off mates, for even the most basic things; you feel like education isn't for you.

You leave school without qualifications; you become a NEET, just another statistic on Philip Hammond's spreadsheet.

Of course, in my case, I left school pregnant too, and at that point, you forget about feeling held back, and you start to worry about the most basic things.

How to make ends meet and provide for a child, how to try and give them even a little more than you had.

You do the best you can, but it can be so easy, through no fault of your own, to end up in your early adult life trapped in a cycle of deprivation, unable to get the decent wage you need to break out of it.

Slowly watching your dreams of becoming a nurse, a teacher or a scientist slip away as fantasies created by a young naive child.

But education can offer a lifeline that is simply transformative. And it shouldn't stop at a particular age in life.

Like many people, including some of my colleagues, I went back to education as an adult, to get the skills and qualifications I missed the first time.

I did that thanks to a Labour Government introducing free childcare through

Sure Start and free adult learner courses at my local college.

It is difficult to say how much this changed my life, but I think I can safely say that if I hadn't done that, I wouldn't be standing here today. I left school thinking I was thick and feeling like a failure.

For too many, the transformative power of education is lost, from schools not getting the funding they need, to the debts you need to take on to return to education as an adult.

I fear that the opportunities that were there for me are not there for those who need them now.

But things can be different.

We can build a fairer, richer Britain, where opportunity and prosperity can be shared by all. That provides business with a skilled and ready British workforce.

And that is why I am proud today to announce the first stages of Labour's National Education Service.

First, we will secure the best education possible for every child, by getting the basics right, and that starts with proper funding for our schools.

We will reverse the £3 billion of cuts that our schools would face by 2020, and protect per pupil funding over the course of the Parliament.

And unlike the Tories, when we say real terms, we mean real terms.

No child will be held back by being in a school that doesn't have the staff it needs, or can't offer the curriculum our children need.

Under Labour, every child, whatever their background, will be given the opportunity to unlock their full potential.

We will give further and technical education the parity of esteem that it deserves, not just with warm words, but with bold action.

We will give further education for 16 to 19 year olds the funding it needs, reversing seven years of managed decline under the Conservatives.

NEETs will no longer be held back, but will instead be given the support they need to go into further education, to be able to acquire the qualifications they need to get on in life.

It's vital we have lifelong learning. Learning is a ticket not just out of poverty but also out of isolation and loneliness that many of us will face at some point in our lives.

30 per cent of jobs will be affected by the rise of automation.

Up to nine million more people who will see their industries decline and their livelihoods disappear.

And if anyone thinks the Conservatives are up to the challenges that these changes to our economy will bring, I would remind them to look at what has happened in post-industrial towns across our country.

All the Conservatives did in power under Margaret Thatcher and John Major was to manage the decline of industries and left nothing but low-paid, low-skill work in its place.

Ghost towns with the heart ripped out of our communities, left to rot with little opportunities.

Theresa May is continuing Margaret Thatcher's legacy.

But there's nothing strong or stable in creating an economy that holds people back, puts a cap on their ambition and leaves them in job insecurity.

Only Labour has the vision to deliver a fairer Britain, where opportunities are available to all and prosperity is shared.

The National Education Service has been developed by the thousands of people, teachers and organisations who have spoken to me over the last 12 months either by email or in person on my many visits up and down the UK and of course in my own constituency of Ashton-under-Lyne.

The Labour Party has listened. You are at the heart of Labour's National Education Service, offering opportunity for all, to ensure that nobody – be they child or adult or community – is held back.

This will help everyone who wants to use education, to enrich their own life and their career, moving into jobs with better wages and more security.

Education is a central pillar to Labour's plan to upgrade Britain's economy.

Because all of our businesses will benefit from Labour's plans too, as they thrive in a richer Britain.

Productivity in Britain remains stubbornly low compared to our competitors. The average German worker can make everything a British one does in a week, and take Fridays off.

It is no surprise that countries with high-quality technical education have more productive economies.

Which is why Labour will upgrade Britain's economy by ending the historic neglect of further education, giving teachers and facilities the investment they need to lead the world.

I will make sure our education system is fit for the 21st century by introducing free, life-long education in further education colleges.

Labour will abolish adult learner loans, and make all adult education free at the point of use, for all those who need it.

So adults who don't have the basic skills they need to move on and move up in life will no longer be held back by the fear of loans.

They will instead be able to return to education whenever they need it.

It will enable everyone to upskill or retrain at any point in their life.

It will correct the historic neglect of the further education sector by investing in teachers and in facilities.

And Labour will set a target for all further education teaching staff to have a teaching qualification within five years and we will back this up with financial support.

And we will increase capital investment to equip colleges to deliver T-levels and an official pre-apprenticeship trainee programme.

Beyond lifelong learning, we will transform the provision of apprenticeships.

There must be a focus on quality and not quantity.

Frankly, the number of apprenticeships does not matter if they're more about poor wages than getting a foot on the career ladder.

Currently half of all apprenticeships are below NVQ level 2 and this is simply not good enough.

So a Labour Government will shift the emphasis from quantity to quality by doubling the number of completed Level-3 apprenticeships before the end of the next Parliament.

It is only by transforming our education system that we can upgrade our economy so that nobody and no community is left behind.

And while the Tories have seen the benefits of economic growth go to a small number of the very wealthy, concentrated in the South-East, Labour will share prosperity across the country.

We will ring-fence £440 million from the apprenticeship levy to give small and medium sized companies the support they need to recruit and train highly skilled staff.

And encourage joined up thinking between local government, schools, the FE sector, and businesses, so that everyone, young and old, can leave education with a valued qualification and the skills they need to get a decent job in their local community.

And we recognise that 75 per cent of apprenticeships are delivered by independent providers and we appreciate their contribution to the sector.

And, yes, we are going to ask businesses to pay a little more in tax to fund it all.

But this is because they have their important part to play in a new deal for

Britain, transforming our economy.

Quite simply, we are asking good businesses to do what they always do, to make long term investments that will yield a significant economic return.

And the Labour Party and Britain's businesses both know that as we face our exit from the European Union, upskilling our workforce to tackle the challenges we face in the years to come has never been more important.

Labour's National Education Service will give everyone in Britain, whatever their age and background, the opportunities they need to use education to transform their lives, just as it did for me.

And the businesses that help us fund it will get a highly skilled workforce, more productive, and better able to adapt to the challenges to come.

This will give them the certainty and security they need to continue to create jobs and wealth across Britain.

There can be no doubt that we face great challenges in the years to come, from Brexit, to the rise of automation, to the decline of industries that will be replaced in our economy by new, high-tech and green industries.

It takes a united approach, of individuals, of government at all levels, and of business, to respond to them, to ensure that we can deliver opportunity, security, and prosperity for all.

By offering everyone a properly funded school, a high quality technical education, and support for lifelong learning that will allow everyone to reskill, retrain, and return to education as they need to.

Quite simply, we will rise to the challenge that was laid down twenty years ago, to deliver an education service fit for a new millennium.

To deliver richer lives for our people and a richer Britain for us all.

A National Education Service delivering hope and prosperity.

For the many not the few.

Ends