

Misuse of sanctions is further evidence of the Tory Government letting vulnerable groups down – Debbie Abrahams

Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow

Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting

on the findings of the Public Accounts Committee report on sanctions, said:

"Two years after the Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry the Government has failed to implement even their limited actions to address sanctions failings.

"This report makes it clear that sanctions have been used inconsistently to punish those struggling to get by with seven wasted years of austerity.

"This deplorable misuse of sanctions is further evidence of the Tory Government letting vulnerable groups down.

"Labour has committed to scrapping the Tories' punitive sanctions regime, under our plans to transform the social security system to ensure that, like the NHS, it is there for us all in our time of need."

Jonathan Ashworth responds to figures showing NHS trusts are already in a deficit of £886m

Jonathan

Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to

quarter three figures showing NHS trusts are already in a deficit of £886m, said:

"Theresa

May's sustained underfunding of the NHS is stretching the finances of NHS hospitals beyond their limits. Even with the £1.8bn that was set aside in the 'financial reset' last summer hospitals have already run up a deficit of £886m

this year. It will take a heroic effort by NHS staff to meet even the

predicted

year-end target in the face of chronic neglect by the Government.

“The

Government needs to be honest about what this crisis means for patient care.

It

means cuts to frontline staff, longer waits for treatment and services at risk

of closure. The money which had been set aside for NHS transformation funding,

which should be improving services and bringing the deficit down in future, has

instead had to be used to manage this year’s figures.

“Ministers

are in denial, but the staggering decline in the NHS’s financial performance is

a direct result of decisions they made. Cuts to social care have driven up hospital attendances while the Government’s inept workforce planning has forced

hospitals to drain resources on expensive agency staff.

“The

simple fact is that Tory Ministers have failed to come up with a workable solution to these problems. Their agency cap which was meant to help has been breached more than 2.7 million times already. The Government urgently need to provide a long-term, sustainable financial package to guarantee the NHS services which patients need for the future.”

The underinvestment in infrastructure spending in the north is totally unacceptable – Andy McDonald

Andy

McDonald MP, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, commenting on an IPPR report which shows underinvestment in transport in the north, said:

“The

underinvestment in infrastructure spending in the north is totally unacceptable. We need to ensure economic growth is spread beyond just London and the South East. Having a balanced economy is good for the UK as a whole but

the Government seem determined to invest in London at the expense of the rest of country.

“It’s short-term thinking that means our regions are starved of investment when they have so much potential for growth, and it shines a light on the Government’s self-defeating economic strategy which says that meeting the transport needs of London should come at the expense of our regions.

“Labour would make sure that the transport needs of the South-East are met whilst rebalancing the economy and making the necessary investment in transport infrastructure right across the UK, including prioritising a CrossRail for the North to improve connectivity between our Northern cities.”

[Long-Bailey writes to Greg Clark to demand guarantee of jobs for Vauxhall workforce](#)

Shadow

Business Secretary, Rebecca Long-Bailey, writes to Greg Clark about potential sale of Vauxhall to Peugeot-PSA

The Shadow Secretary for BEIS has today written to Greg Clark, Secretary of State for BEIS, urging him to guarantee that jobs and terms and conditions of the Vauxhall workforce will be protected in the event of the company’s sale to Peugeot-PSA.

Rebecca

Long-Bailey has also requested an Urgent Question on the matter in the House of Commons, which will be taken at 3.30 today.

On

the threat the proposed takeover poses to the UK workforce, Rebecca Long-Bailey said:

“These reports are deeply worrying to the 4,500 workers employed at Vauxhall’s Luton and Ellesmere Port plants, and to the tens of thousands of employees in its retail, support and supply chain operations. PSA’s history of axing jobs in the name of rationalisation are also concerning. Britain’s automotive industry has become a world-leader by

developing its skilled and highly-committed workforce and becoming more productive, not by ruthlessly driving down costs.”

On the implications of the proposal for the Government’s industrial strategy, Rebecca Long-Bailey said:

“a piecemeal, ad hoc approach will see our automotive sector lurch from crisis to crisis as the uncertainties created by Brexit begin to take their toll. Waiting for car makers to go to the brink before offering them support is the very antithesis of an industrial strategy.”

On the need to give workers in the UK the same protections given to European counterparts, Rebecca Long-Bailey said:

“failure to provide equivalent Government support to Opel’s UK sites as that seen in France and Germany, and to ensure full parity of treatment between Opel’s UK and French workers would be a betrayal of the UK workforce.”

Ends

Editors’ notes

– It has recently emerged that General Motors is discussing the sale of Opel, which includes Vauxhall, to PSA Group.

– 4,500 workers are employed at Vauxhall’s Luton and Ellesmere port plants, along with tens of thousands more who are employed in the retail, support and supply chain operations.

– These jobs are under threat from the proposed sale, should Vauxhall cut back production, a particular concern given the PSA Group has a reputation for cutting jobs to rationalise production.

– The French Government owns a 14% stake in PSA and the German government is providing financial support to its Opel sites.

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The
full text of the letter is as follows:

Dear
Rt Hon Greg Clark MP,

I
am writing to request an urgent meeting to discuss reports that General
Motors
may be about to sell its European business, Opel, to PSA, the owner of
Peugeot
and Citroen brands.

These
reports are deeply worrying to the 4,500 workers employed at Vauxhall's Luton
and Ellesmere Port plants, and to the tens of thousands of employees in its
retail, support and supply chain operations. PSA's history of axing jobs in
the
name of rationalisation are also concerning. Britain's automotive industry
has
become a world-leader by developing its skilled and highly-committed
workforce
and becoming more productive, not by ruthlessly driving down costs.

I
understand that you met with PSA executives on 16th February and that the
Prime
Minister is due to meet PSA CEO Carlos Taveres shortly. I am keen to hear in
detail what assurances they were able to give you about their plans for
Vauxhall, and what you and your Government are doing to ensure that PSA do
not
turn their backs on Opel's UK workforce.

Like
you, I welcomed Nissan's decision late last year to continue to invest in the
UK, but argued at the time that all car manufacturers should be given the
same
assurances. Recent developments have underlined this point. It was reported
over the weekend that PSA have now been given the same guarantees, but I
remain
concerned that a piecemeal, ad hoc approach will see our automotive sector
lurch from crisis to crisis as the uncertainties created by Brexit begin to
take their toll. Waiting for car makers to go to the brink before offering
them
support is the very antithesis of an industrial strategy.

This
is particularly so given that the French Government owns a 14% stake in PSA.
In
light of predictions by analysts and industry experts that French workers
will
be left unscathed by any buy-out, and that job losses will fall elsewhere,

including in the UK, it is hard not to worry that the British Government's hands-off approach is letting workers down. Even the German Government is providing financial support to its Opel sites, and workers in Germany are much

harder to sack than those in the UK. Under such circumstances, failure to provide equivalent Government support to Opel's UK sites as that seen in France

and Germany, and to ensure full parity of treatment between Opel's UK and French workers would be a betrayal of the UK workforce.

In the longer run, it is clear that the Government's Industrial Strategy Green Paper launched last month has done little to reassure manufacturers weighing up whether or not to stay in the UK after we leave the European Union. Urgent action is needed to encourage the reshoring of manufacturing supply chains and secure single market access for key exporting industries. Without this, there is a real danger that many of our finest manufacturers will fall victim to new import and export tariffs.

The next few days will be critical in determining the future of Vauxhall in the UK.

I would therefore be most grateful if you would agree to meet me as a matter of

urgency to discuss what action you are taking to protect the jobs and terms and

conditions of Opel's UK workforce. It may also be welcome to involve those MP's

representing areas directly affected by this issue in our discussions for example those members representing Luton and Ellesmere Port.

Yours
sincerely,

Rebecca
Long-Bailey

Shadow
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Prison officers pay deal "is policy

making on the hoof and shows the Tories have no plan”

Richard

Burton MP, Labour’s Shadow Justice Secretary, commenting on the pay deal for prisons officers in London and the South East, said:

“It is no surprise this announcement comes the same week as figures showing prison officers are still leaving faster than they can be recruited.

“It is policy making on the hoof and shows the Tories have no plan.

“Prison officers in the rest of the country will wonder why they don’t deserve the same increase. Prison understaffing is a national issue that needs a national response.”