

Staff and patients are being failed by Government neglect of NHS workforce – Ashworth

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, responding to new NHS Improvement data showing at least 36,000 nurse vacancies in England and new UCAS data showing a fall in the number of students starting health degrees, said:

"These new figures are stark evidence of the Tory Government's complete mismanagement of the NHS workforce and it is patients paying the price once again for understaffed wards.

"Cuts to training places and the self-defeating pay cap have meant hospitals just can't get enough staff in place to provide safe levels of care. These figures blow apart ministers' claims to prioritise patient safety.

"And understaffing is likely to get worse in the coming years, because the Government's decision to remove the NHS bursary has led to a fall in the number of new students starting nursing degrees. Ministers have no excuses because they were warned all along by students and nursing representatives that this would be the outcome.

"The Government urgently needs a long term, sustainable solution to get the right numbers of nursing staff in place to keep patients safe. Staff and patients alike are being failed by this neglect of the NHS workforce."

Andy McDonald comment on Sustrans walking and cycling study

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, commenting on a new study from Transport charity Sustrans which has analysed the Government's walking and cycling targets, said:

"The Government should match Labour's commitment to raise spending on cycling and walking to £10 per head and back our calls for a new Clean Air Act. Illegal levels of air pollution in the UK have escalated out of control into a public health emergency on this Government's watch, contributing to an estimated 50,000 deaths every year.

"The Tories' neglect of sustainable transport is leading to a failure to tackle the air pollution crisis. Since 2010, rail fares have soared above

inflation, bus services have been cut and our towns and cities haven't received the investment needed to encourage cycling and walking.

"In failing to support sustainable transport now, the Conservatives are storing up problems for future years and are falling short of their legal obligations to tackle the UK's air pollution crisis."

It is appalling that DVSA senior managers and ministers have allowed this dispute to escalate – Rachael Maskell

Rachael Maskell MP, Labour's Shadow Rail Minister, commenting on the driving examiners strike, said:

"It is appalling that DVSA senior managers and ministers have allowed this dispute to escalate, meaning thousands of driving tests are having to be cancelled.

"Driving examiners have told me they have serious and genuine concerns about the safety of the new test and we support the PCS union's call for it to be suspended to allow for further analysis.

"Instead of stoking disputes like this and demonising unions who raise concerns, the next Labour government will work with staff, their representatives and employers to protect working conditions while improving standards."

If these allegations are true, British taxpayers will be rightly outraged –

Osamor

Kate Osamor MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for

International Development, commenting on allegations that the British aid budget has contributed towards human rights violations and terrorist groups in Syria, to be aired tonight following a six month Panorama investigation, said:

"Spent properly, Britain's aid budget achieves incredible results and we must not shy away from working in conflict-affected countries. But if these allegations are true, British taxpayers will be rightly outraged.

"We need to understand how the Foreign and Commonwealth Office allowed this to happen, and why their mechanisms for properly managing aid projects failed. The opaque Conflict, Stability and Security Fund that financed this project also operates in 70 other countries – many with questionable human rights records.

"This investigation is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg: the Government must now open up its books so the public can understand the true extent of the problem."

A 700,000 increase in the number of children and older people in poverty is totally unacceptable – Abrahams

Debbie Abrahams MP,

Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary,

commenting on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation state of the nation report, said:

"A 700,000 increase in the number of children and older people in poverty is totally unacceptable.

"The last seven years of flat-lining wages and austerity cuts, now combined with sharply rising costs of household essentials is a truly terrifying prospect for millions trying to make ends meet. The cuts to Universal Credit, which were not

addressed in the recent Budget and mean that 'work does not always pay', will push even more children and working age adults into poverty.

"Even the Government's own social mobility commission has resigned over their failure to act.

"The Prime Minister should stand aside, and let Labour deliver a £10 an hour minimum wage, end zero hour contracts, transform our social security system and build the genuinely affordable homes Britain needs."