

Speak up for public services

We all need our public services.

Our parks and libraries, clean and safe streets, schools and town halls. They make our communities into the places we call home.

As well as being there for the everyday things, services like our NHS and social care are there when we need more help – if we get sick or as we get frailer and older.

But years of cuts are taking their toll on public services and those who work in them.

We all need to speak up and call on the government to change direction.



Public services under unprecedented pressure

The government needs to understand that our public services are under unprecedented pressure, starved of resources and faced with a constant struggle to achieve more with less.

Libraries; care for the elderly and vulnerable; youth services; and community policing are all buckling under the pressures they face. Resources in our NHS and social care can't keep pace with growing demand.

UNISON hears every day from its members – from cleaners to senior managers; administrators to homecare workers; paramedics and nurses – that despite their best efforts, these services are at serious risk. Soon many will be unable to provide the support our communities need.

That's why UNISON is campaigning for the government to change direction, and asking you to help us champion public services in our communities.

Why we must act now

- The underfunding of the NHS means that **too many patients are waiting longer for crucial services such as cancer treatment and in A&E**. And access is increasingly being restricted for crucial operations like knee and hip replacements – treatments that make a real difference to patients' lives.
- The number of older, frail and disabled people receiving care through their local authority has been **reduced by a quarter in five years** because of central government cuts. A **quarter of a million fewer older people now receive care** from local authorities than in 2009, yet the number of older people is rising.
- **More than 600 youth centres have closed since 2012**, taking away the help and support, advice and a safe place to go for some of the most vulnerable young people in our communities.
- Schools are facing an exodus of support staff. Our research shows **more than half are experiencing stress, anxiety or depression** as they struggle to cope with their workloads. A recent study showed that 47% are considering leaving their jobs, as a result.

- **Police funding was cut by 20% between 2010 and 2015**, but neighbourhood policing was cut harder, with 30% of police community support officer posts lost across the UK. In London a staggering 62% of PCSOs lost their jobs. Meanwhile, **sexual offences have risen by 36% and violent crimes by 27%** since 2014-15.
- More than **300 libraries have closed** across the UK since 2010, depriving communities of access to books, courses, quiet study areas and computer facilities.

It's not an impossible choice

We need good quality public services. And those public services need our support – and the support of those we elect to represent us. The spending decisions that the government makes in the coming months will make all the difference.

UNISON is calling for a change of direction for public services.

By way of a first down payment on a sustainable future for public services, the government should immediately:

Stop further cuts to public service jobs. Approximately one million jobs have been cut from public services since 2010 – despite demand increasing. The government needs to reverse the cuts already announced in previous budgets and invest in the future to protect our services.

Fully fund student nursing to safeguard the future of our NHS. The government plans to abolish the Student Nursing Bursary. This comes at a time when the NHS faces a nursing shortage and when leaving the EU will further restrict the influx of qualified nurses. It is a real threat to the NHS. The government should fully fund the NHS bursary and give the NHS a better chance to recruit the additional health professionals our country needs.

Ensure that our loved ones receive the high-quality social care they need. Our social care system is chronically underfunded, and with an ageing population the situation will get worse. The government should fund significant improvements in social care provision.

Stop stealth cuts to public services. Even areas we have been told are safe from cuts are being cut. Costs are rising but budgets do not match those increases. For example, the government's new National Living Wage needs to be funded by government, or it will simply lead to additional cuts elsewhere.

Are you a **Public Service Champion?**

Become a Champion and make a difference.
Get involved in our Champions campaign today.

- Sign up to become a champion of public services at:
champions@unison.org.uk
- Find out how to get more involved in our campaign at:
www.unison.org.uk/champion
- **Talk to your UNISON branch to get more involved in local campaigning** to champion our public services.

