

A THREAT TO PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS

Reform UK's policy agenda examined



Reform UK is polling at record levels and attracting votes from working people who feel let down by the mainstream parties. That frustration is real and understandable. But **UNISON members deserve to know what the party stands for, and how Reform policies could impact their working lives.**

This briefing brings together key facts to support activists involved in discussions with members in the workplace. It also includes background on Reform UK's wider policy agenda, their record in power and who funds them. There are specific sections looking at their policies as they relate to different service groups.

In summary, the record is damning:

- ▶ Reform voted against the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation and has pledged to repeal it
- ▶ It plans to scrap the Equality Act, cut 68,500 civil service jobs, and close the Local Government Pension Scheme to new members
- ▶ Reform's immigration policies would strip the NHS and social care of the overseas staff they depend on
- ▶ Its financial plans have been described by the Institute for Fiscal Studies as plans that "do not add up" – and the party abandoned its own manifesto within months of the 2024 election
- ▶ In every council it controls, Reform has raised council tax despite promising the opposite.

Meanwhile, 75% of all donations to the party come from just three wealthy men. The IFS found Reform's tax plans would give the poorest households £17 a year and the richest £2,700. Nigel Farage earns over £1 million a year from right-wing media and financial interests.

This report sets out the evidence behind these points, drawing on Reform's own manifesto, its parliamentary voting record, independent economic analysis, and the behaviour of its councillors in power.

The gap between Reform's rhetoric and its record is not a matter of political opinion. It is a matter of verifiable fact.

Reform UK acts against workers' rights

Reform's parliamentary voting record

The Employment Rights Act 2025 is the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation. It bans exploitative zero-hours contracts, introduces day-one sick pay, curbs fire-and-rehire practices, and gives workers new powers to organise through their unions. It also repeals the Tory anti-strike laws, establishes a social care fair pay agreement, and strengthens protections for pregnant workers and victims of sexual harassment.

Reform voted against it at every stage.

Strikingly, 65% of Reform's own voters support banning zero-hours contracts, and 64% support sick pay from day one.

The Great Repeal Bill

In February 2026, Reform stopped being coy about what they would do in power. Deputy Leader Richard Tice – Reform's business, trade and energy spokesman – pledged to introduce a "Great Repeal Bill" to scrap Labour's employment rights legislation, net zero commitments, and renter protections. Tice called for a bill that would "scrap net zero, scrap ZEV mandates, scrap new employment rights rules, scrap new property rental rules." The Trades Union Congress (TUC) warns that removing the legislation could weaken protections on sick pay, bereavement leave, and pregnancy rights, as well as making fire-and-rehire easier for bad employers.

UNISON General Secretary Andrea Egan put it plainly: “The mask’s off. Reform UK has shown what it really thinks of working people. The millionaires calling the shots in Reform don’t think those putting in a hard day’s graft deserve basic rights or fair pay.”

Scrapping the Equality Act

Just days before the Great Repeal Bill announcement, Suella Braverman – Reform’s newly appointed equalities spokesperson – announced that a Reform government would repeal the Equality Act on “day one. Farage confirmed this was party policy, saying there was “no room for any confusion.”

The Equality Act 2010 is the law that protects workers from discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, pregnancy, age, sexual orientation, and religion. Repealing it would strip away those protections.

TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak said Reform’s stance effectively means discrimination “should be legal,” and that removing Equality Act protections would give employers a “blank cheque” to mistreat their staff.

Reform justified the pledge by claiming white men were losing jobs because of the Act – a claim directly contradicted by government statistics showing unemployment among white workers stands at 4.3%, compared with 8.8% for people from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Cutting the minimum wage

In November 2025, Farage explicitly called for cutting the minimum wage for young workers, stating “there’s an argument the minimum wage is too high for younger workers.” At the time, the minimum wage for 18–20 year olds was £10 per hour.

The historical record: UKIP’s war on workers’ rights

UKIP’s 2013 Small Business Manifesto (later removed from their website) laid bare Farage’s actual position on workers’ rights. The document explicitly stated that UKIP would “put an end to most legislation regarding matters such as weekly working hours, holidays and holiday, overtime, redundancy or sick pay.” It proposed:

- ▶ Making parental leave entirely optional for employers
- ▶ Listing the Working Time Regulations among the “most damaging or costly regulations”
- ▶ Describing asbestos safety regulations as an example of a “costly new application of a regulation”.

Reform UK attacks public services

The NHS

In September 2012, Farage stated clearly at a UKIP public meeting: “I think we are going to have to move to an insurance-based system of healthcare. Frankly, I would feel more comfortable that my money would return value if I was able to do that through the marketplace of an insurance company than just us trustingly giving £100 billion a year to central government.” This is documented on [video footage](#).

In January 2025, when asked by LBC whether he would be “open to an insurance-based model,” Farage replied simply: “[Open to anything.](#)” He has stated directly: “[I do not want it funded through general taxation.](#)”

Despite this consistent 13 year record, [Farage now claims Reform will keep the NHS “free at point of delivery.”](#) At the 2019 General Election debate, he [denied ever supporting an insurance-based system](#) – a claim directly contradicted by the video evidence.

Reform UK’s actual policies include [20% tax relief on all private healthcare and insurance.](#) [This would cost 1.7bn.](#) The Institute for Fiscal Studies warned that Reform’s proposed savings “[would almost certainly require substantial cuts to the quantity or quality of public services.](#)”

Reform pledges £17 billion per year in additional NHS funding to “eliminate waiting lists within two years.” The IFS notes this “has not been achieved in the history of the NHS” and that £17 billion is “demonstrably wrong” as a costing for this goal, calling it “near impossible within two years.”

Public sector workers face direct threats

Proposed job cuts: In December 2025 Reform pledged to cut 68,500 civil service jobs.

Overhauling public sector pensions: Reform has pledged to end the defined benefit pension schemes of local government workers, replacing LGPS with a defined contribution scheme; more widely, Deputy Leader Richard Tice has questioned the affordability of public sector pensions, asking: “How long can we carry on offering defined benefit pensions to all public sector workers?”

Criminal prosecution of civil servants: Reform has pledged to criminally prosecute civil servants who process asylum claims for migrants who later commit crimes, with punishments including up to two years in prison, loss of pension, and gross misconduct dismissal – applied retrospectively to cases from the past decade.

Immigration policies would devastate NHS and care

Reform’s immigration policies would be catastrophic for public services. The party’s “Operation Restoring Justice” proposes deporting up to 600,000 people within a single parliamentary term.

UNISON is clear that Reform’s threat to tear up our rules and deport hundreds and thousands of people who came to live and work in the UK is cruel and destructive. The NHS and social care would not be able to survive without overseas workers. There are already huge workforce shortages across health and care. To remove migrant staff would put patients at significant risk. The union is also deeply concerned about the way in which Reform’s policy announcement has created further insecurity for our work colleagues from overseas at a time when the current government is already changing rules on indefinite leave to remain.

UNISON president Catherine McKenna has said “migrant workers are colleagues, friends and neighbours. They are also essential to delivery of all our health and care services. We’ve already seen the increase in intolerance and racism in the NHS and in our communities. Reform UK’s announcement makes it far worse. It has cast the shadow of fear over the future. It has raised the spectre of an American-style anti-immigrant crackdown in our workplaces and our streets. We must resist these inhumane threats.”

Kent County Council – under Reform control – wrote to government requesting easier visa systems for care workers because local care homes cannot recruit staff. This directly contradicts Reform’s anti-immigration platform, revealing the **collision between ideology and operational reality**.

Reform UK causes chaos in local government

Reform UK won control of 10 councils in May 2025, taking 677 seats with approximately 30% of the vote. Within nine months (as of February 2026) the party has lost 46 councillors (roughly 1 in 18) through suspensions, expulsions, and resignations.

The vetting catastrophe

The scale of councillor misconduct has been extraordinary:

Ian Cooper (Leader of Staffordshire County Council) was expelled in December 2025 after posts emerged calling London Mayor Sadiq Khan a “narcissistic Pakistani,” stating migrants were “intent on colonising the UK, destroying all that has gone before,” and telling broadcaster Sangita Myska she was “neither culturally, ethnically or historically English.” He was identified as a “top fan” of a Facebook page promoting white supremacy.

Mark Broadhurst (Doncaster Council) was expelled within a month of election after sharing an image of Adolf Hitler with the caption: “For f*** sake, if I had chosen Muslims I would have been a f***ing legend.” A council investigation found his posts “clearly racist, Islamophobic, antisemitic and highly offensive.”

Wayne Titley (Staffordshire) resigned less than two weeks after election following revelations he had posted about Channel crossings: “Why they don’t position the navy so as the big boats leave the shoreline they intercept them and thunder them back using a volley of gun fire aimed at sinking them.”

Robert Bloom (North Northamptonshire) resigned over racism allegations, later charged with harassment.

Joseph Boam (Leicestershire) is under police investigation for allegedly giving away free ice creams near a polling station (“treating”).

Nathan Gill (former Brexit Party MEP and Reform Wales leader) was sentenced to ten years and six months in prison in October 2025 after pleading guilty to eight counts of bribery, having accepted payments from pro-Russian Ukrainian MP Oleh Voloshyn to make pro-Russian statements in the European Parliament.

Farage described him as a “bad apple,” though investigative reporting noted Gill was “one of Farage’s closest confidantes.”

Kent County Council faced spectacular internal collapse in October 2025 when video leaked showing Council Leader Linden Kemkaran swearing at councillors, telling them to “f***ing suck it up” and accusing dissenters of “treachery.” Nine councillors were subsequently suspended, multiple expelled. Kent’s Reform group dropped from 57 to 48 members.

Corey Edwards (candidate for Pen-y-bont Bro Morgannwg) stepped down as a Reform candidate in the Welsh Parliament election after a photo emerged of him appearing to perform a Nazi salute.

Daniel Taylor (Kent) was elected as a Reform UK councillor for Cliftonville in May 2025, but was suspended from the party within weeks after it emerged he was under police investigation. He was jailed for 12 months in February 2026 after pleading guilty to engaging in controlling or coercive behaviour towards his wife.

Farage himself acknowledged in September 2024: “I had no idea how bad it was. I had no idea that half of these people simply haven’t been vetted.”

Leadership instability

Warwickshire: Council leader resigned after just 41 days, leaving his 18-year-old deputy in charge.

The 18-year-old interim leader has since put forward plans to hire political assistants at a cost of up to £190,000 a year

Cornwall: Both the group leader and deputy leader resigned, with five councillors departing to form “Standalone Independents.”

Doncaster: Group leader stepped down citing “vitriolic texts that border on abuse” from party members.

Derbyshire: 10 councillors resigned from 15 positions across county, town, and parish councils in January 2025, citing an “increasingly autocratic manner” under Farage. Councillor Phillip Rose declared: “We are not Nigel Farage’s chattel.”

Council tax rises despite promises

All ten Reform-controlled councils are set to raise council tax despite campaign promises, including:

- ▶ Kent County Council (4%)
- ▶ Worcestershire County Council (9%)
- ▶ Derbyshire County Council (5%)
- ▶ North Northamptonshire Council (5%)
- ▶ West Northamptonshire Council (5%)
- ▶ Lincolnshire County Council (3%)
- ▶ Staffordshire County Council (4% proposed, PENDING)
- ▶ Durham County Council (2%)
- ▶ Warwickshire County Council (4%)
- ▶ Leicestershire County Council (3%)

Kent County Council – Reform’s self-declared “shop window” for national government – now faces a £46.5 million budget overspend (doubled from £27.9 million in Q1), with adult social care alone running 7% over budget. Despite promises to cut council tax, Reform has now voted to increase it by 4%.

A senior Kent cabinet member admitted: “Everyone thought we’d come in and there were going to be these huge costs we could cut away but there just aren’t.” Kent’s Diane Morton acknowledged services were already “down to the bare bones.”

The “efficiency” drives that found nothing

Reform promised to create local equivalents of Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency.

Kent’s “DOLGE” became the flagship example. The Reform leader of Kent CC outlined £40 million of potential savings in her first full council speech. A letter was sent to council staff threatening disciplinary action for non-cooperation – signed by Nigel Farage and Zia Yusuf on Reform UK letterhead, despite neither having any legal standing to instruct council staff.

The fundamental obstacle is that council “waste” is not where Reform claims. Kent County Council data shows **71.6% of spending goes on statutory adult and children’s social care, with only 1.2% on head office costs**. The 10 councils Reform captured had already identified £500 million in cuts in 2025 budget papers before Reform took control – there simply isn’t hidden fat to find.

The diversity officer lie

Reform promised to remove DEI officers and end diversity training. The reality has proven embarrassing:

Lincolnshire: Mayor Andrea Jenkyns pledged to “axe DEI officers” – but Freedom of Information requests revealed the council employs zero DEI officers. Total diversity training spending over two years: £15,000.

Dismissing staff for ideological reasons “is likely to be unlawful” according to legal analysis – employment law protections apply.

Reform councillors are also publicising their refusal to take equality or diversity training, yet the Public Sector Equality Duty requires councils to consider impacts on protected characteristics when making decisions. Refusing equality training may constitute non-compliance, exposing councils to judicial review.

Case study: Durham’s brutal cuts

Durham County Council’s Reform cabinet – led by Deputy Leader Darren Grimes (former GB News presenter) – approved £10 million in cuts affecting virtually every service:

- ▶ 88 job losses, a third of which are currently vacant, including not hiring for lollipop officer vacancies
- ▶ 40% increases in parking permits
- ▶ Bus route withdrawals
- ▶ Reduced grass cutting and litter picking
- ▶ Axing grants to town and parish councils
- ▶ Reducing council tax support for low-income residents from 100% to 90%, meaning 26,208 claimants who previously received full rebates will now pay council tax for the first time

This is Reform’s actual record of “standing up for working people.”

The incompetence of Reform UK

Fiscal plans “do not add up”

The IFS delivered a damning verdict on Reform’s 2024 manifesto: “Even with the extremely optimistic assumptions about how much economic growth would increase, the sums in this manifesto do not add up.”

Reform’s June 2024 manifesto proposed approximately £90 billion in annual tax cuts funded by £150 billion in spending reductions. Key problems included:

- ▶ **Corporation tax under costed:** Reform estimated £18 billion for all business tax cuts; the IFS said the corporation tax cut to 15% alone would likely cost £36 billion or more long-term
- ▶ **Bank of England savings overestimated:** Reform claimed £35 billion could be saved by stopping interest payments on quantitative easing reserves; the IFS said this would “raise a lot less”
- ▶ **“Waste” cuts implausible:** Reform’s £50 billion from “wasteful” government spending would “almost certainly require substantial cuts to the quantity or quality of public services”.

Their 2026 Wales manifesto has been met with similar criticism, with the IFS concluding it “has not fully faced up to the fiscal realities facing the next Welsh government”.

IFS Deputy Director Carl Emmerson stated: “The sums in this manifesto do not add up ... the tax cuts would cost more than stated, by a margin of tens of billions of pounds per year.”

The retreat from their promises

By November 2025, Reform had substantially retreated from its manifesto. Farage acknowledged: “We want to cut taxes, of course we do, but we understand substantial tax cuts given the dire state of debt and our finances are not realistic at this current moment in time.” (video link)

Deputy leader Richard Tice confirmed: “A manifesto is based on a point in time... All the other details go because we’re in a different time.”

The party now emphasises that “savings are made before implementing tax cuts” and has pivoted toward “the biggest benefit cuts you’ve probably ever heard any government do,” targeting Personal Independence Payment for people with “non-major anxiety” among other measures.

Reform UK abandoned its own manifesto within months because the numbers were fantasy.

Deportation plans require impossible capacity

Reform’s “Operation Restoring Justice” proposes deporting up to 600,000 people within a single parliamentary term – approximately 120,000 per year. This would require 24,000 detention places (a tenfold increase from current capacity of approximately 2,200) and charter flights departing “five times every day.”

Current enforced returns stand at approximately 9,000 per year. Reform’s plan would require achieving 13 times that level, sustained over five years.

The Migration Observatory notes that “consent from receiving countries is a longstanding barrier to deportations. If a country does not recognise their citizens or refuses to take them back, they cannot be returned.” This particularly affects Afghanistan and Iran, whose nationals feature prominently among asylum arrivals.

Human rights withdrawal threatens Belfast Agreement

Reform proposes leaving the European Convention on Human Rights and “disapplying” the 1951 Refugee Convention, the UN Convention Against Torture, and the Council of Europe Anti-Trafficking Convention for five years.

The Belfast Agreement poses a particular challenge:

The ECHR is embedded in the Good Friday Agreement as a legally enforceable safeguard. Academics Aoife O’Donoghue and Colin Murray argue withdrawal would “jeopardise” the peace settlement. Farage has acknowledged the Agreement would need to be “renegotiated” – which has previously required referendums in both jurisdictions.

The UK Constitutional Law Association emphasises that the prohibition against torture is a “jus cogens” norm in international law: “These norms cannot be restricted or set aside and must be respected by all States,” even during emergencies.

Climate policies would cost jobs and GDP

Reform UK explicitly pledges to “scrap Net Zero”.

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) calculated that Reform’s anti-net zero policies would:

- ▶ Stop 48GW of large-scale renewable capacity being built by 2030
- ▶ Cost £67-92 billion in gross value added – nearly 3% of UK GDP
- ▶ Eliminate over 60,000 jobs in wind and solar by the end of the decade
- ▶ Add at least £230 per household to energy bills during a gas price spike like 2022’s (compared to just £40 under current clean power plans).

Reform’s North Sea expansion would create approximately a mere 7,000 short-lived drilling and fabrication jobs – far fewer than the 60,000+ renewables jobs lost.

The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates the net cost of reaching net zero at 6% of GDP cumulatively over 25 years. By contrast, the cost of not acting (3°C warming) would deliver an 8% hit to the UK economy by the 2070s.

Reform UK is the party of the 1%

Major party donors

Reform UK claims to represent ordinary working people, yet 75% of all donations to the party since 2019 have come from just three wealthy men: Christopher Harborne, Richard Tice, and Jeremy Hosking.

Christopher Harborne – Reform’s largest donor – gave £9 million in August 2025, the largest single political donation in British history. He is a Thai-based cryptocurrency investor with a reported 12% stake in Tether (the world’s largest stablecoin), owner of an aviation fuel company, and the largest single shareholder in the defence firm QinetiQ . He lives in Thailand under the dual identity Chakrit Sakunkrit.

Reform UK now campaigns for crypto-friendly policies including a “sovereign Bitcoin reserve fund” – a direct benefit to Harborne’s investments.

Jeremy Hosking – a hedge fund manager – has donated over £1.7 million to Reform. His fund had over £108 million invested in fossil fuels, including stakes in major oil companies.

Richard Tice – Reform MP and Deputy Leader – was for a long period the party’s main financial backer, having given £1.4 million worth of loans by May 2024. Tice has millions of pounds squirreled away in an offshore tax haven.

All donor trends:

- ▶ According to DeSmog analysis, 92% of Reform UK's donations between 2019-2024 came from fossil fuel interests, polluters, and climate deniers
- ▶ OpenDemocracy analysis found that over 10% of Reform's donations come from sources with offshore or tax haven ties
- ▶ The party actively seeks donors "unhappy with the amount of regulation and tax in the UK."

Farage's personal fortune

Since becoming an MP in July 2024, Farage's declared additional earnings exceed £1.1 million from 12 "second jobs":

- ▶ £98,000 monthly from GB News (approximately £1.2 million annually)
- ▶ £400,000 a year for 4 hours work a month as a gold company ambassador
- ▶ £40,000 in 2024 for a keynote speech from Nomad Capitalist – a company helping the super-rich reduce their tax bills
- ▶ £25,972 in 2025 for an appearance at a Florida Republican fundraiser (which he initially failed to declare, leading to a Parliamentary Standards investigation)

He is also eligible for approximately £70,000 annually in EU pension from his time as an MEP.

This is a man earning over £1 million per year from right-wing media and financial interests while claiming to represent workers struggling with the cost of living.

Tax policies designed for the wealthy

The Institute for Public Policy Research analysed Reform's 2024 manifesto tax proposals and found they were starkly regressive:

- ▶ The **poorest 20% of households** would gain just **£17** annually
- ▶ The **richest 20%** would gain **£2,700**.

Reform UK's international connections

The Trump-Bannon network

Nigel Farage has cultivated the most extensive connections to Donald Trump and American conservative politics of any British politician. Since their first meeting in August 2016, Farage has positioned himself as Trump's primary British ally – appearing at campaign rallies, attending both inaugurations, and maintaining regular contact with Trump's inner circle.

Farage became the first British politician to address a Republican presidential campaign rally in 2016, speaking to 15,000 supporters. Trump introduced him as “the man behind Brexit.” Following Trump's victory, Farage became the first foreign politician to meet the president-elect, at Trump Tower.

The Steve Bannon connection runs deeper: Bannon's pan-European nationalist project “The Movement” was created in 2017 by Laure Ferrari – Farage's aide and current partner. Farage brokered the connection between Bannon and the foundation's leadership, with the stated purpose of uniting “populist and conservative movements in Europe.”

Raheem Kassam represents perhaps the most significant bridge figure. Kassam served as Farage's Chief of Staff and Senior Adviser while simultaneously working as Editor-in-Chief of Breitbart News London under Bannon. He later became co-founder of Bannon's War Room podcast and has described himself as “the Faragest of the Farageists.”

Project 2025 and American thinktank links

The Heritage Foundation – architects of Project 2025, the policy blueprint for Trump’s second term – has developed extensive UK connections. Heritage President Jim DeMint stated he was “proud that The Heritage Foundation has worked to convince Americans and the British people about the necessity and mutual benefits of Brexit.”

Reform UK’s own think tank, the Centre for a Better Britain (CBB), openly acknowledges these influences. Founded by Cambridge theologian James Orr (a Reform UK senior adviser), CBB’s CEO Jonathan Brown has said a Reform government should “learn from Trump”. In a BBC Radio 4 interview, Orr expressed admiration for the Heritage Foundation and Project 2025.

Notably, CBB is incorporated in Texas as a tax-exempt organisation and sets fundraising targets in both pounds and dollars.

These links are particularly significant as Reform voters differ markedly from Trump supporters on free trade, abortion rights, and the role of government, with natcen’s research suggesting the party represents selective adaptation rather than wholesale MAGA transplantation.

Putin apologism and Russian connections

When asked which world leader he admired most in 2014, Farage said: “As an operator, but not as a human being, I would say Putin.” He appeared on RT (Russia Today) 17 times in between 2010 and 2014, reportedly being offered his own show.

In June 2024, he told BBC Panorama that NATO and the EU had “provoked” Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

In September 2025, former Brexit Party MEP and close Farage aide Nathan Gill pleaded guilty to eight counts of bribery for taking payments in exchange for pro-Kremlin messaging. Gill followed Farage from UKIP to the Brexit Party in December 2018 – the same period he was receiving illicit payments.

The FBI has reportedly considered Farage a “person of interest” due to his connections to figures including Bannon and Roger Stone.

The Epstein files connection

In December 2025, revelations from the Epstein files showed that Jeffrey Epstein provided to Bannon’s European project and that Farage is mentioned 41 times in the files.

The European far-right network

Farage maintains connections across the European far-right through networks linking Marine Le Pen’s National Rally, Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz, and Germany’s AfD – classified as “extremist” by German intelligence and under surveillance for suspected right-wing extremism.

Elon Musk, who discussed potential donations of up to \$100 million to Reform UK and has already bankrolled a number of Reform figures, has explicitly endorsed AfD and held a livestream with its leader Alice Weidel.

These are not the connections of a party that represents British working-class interests. These are the connections of a far-right international network funded by oligarchs and committed to dismantling workers’ rights, public services, and democratic accountability.

Reform UK threatens net zero and climate commitments

Reform UK has made scrapping net zero a central policy commitment, second only to immigration in its political messaging. The party's 2024 manifesto pledges to scrap net zero entirely, fast-track and expand North Sea oil and gas licensing, reopen coal mines, abolish green levies, and end support for renewable energy projects. The NEF calculates that these policies would wipe £92 billion from the economy and destroy more than 60,000 jobs in the renewables sector by 2030.

This is not just a national threat. Since winning control of ten councils in May 2025, Reform has moved quickly to dismantle local climate commitments. Seven out of ten Reform-controlled councils have scrapped or weakened their climate targets. Durham rescinded its 2019 climate emergency declaration. Derbyshire disbanded its Climate Change and Biodiversity Committee and voted to oppose solar farms across the county. Lincolnshire's Reform mayor declared war on green energy projects, putting 12,200 jobs at risk.

Reform's position is shaped by who funds it. Between 2019 and 2024, around 92% of Reform's declared donations came from fossil fuel interests, highly polluting industries, and climate science deniers. The party's largest donor has a 12% stake in the world's largest cryptocurrency stablecoin and owns an aviation fuel company. Its policies reflect these interests directly.

The OBR has concluded that reaching net-zero will be much cheaper for the UK government than previously expected – and the economic damages of unmitigated climate change will be far more severe. Reform’s platform would lock in those catastrophic costs – while handing the bill to workers, households, and public services.

UNISON’s report ‘Cutting through the noise: defending net zero’ provides further detail on this subject.

Healthcare workers

Reasons not to vote for Reform UK

The NHS is Reform's most exposed territory.

Farage has spent fourteen years on record advocating for an insurance-based healthcare system - and fourteen years denying it when challenged.

This section sets out that record, examines what Reform's actual policies would mean for NHS staffing and funding, and explains why the party's immigration plans represent a particular threat to a service where nearly a third of nurses are non-British nationals.

Reform's NHS policies

Insurance-model inconsistencies

Nigel Farage has **consistently advocated for insurance-based healthcare** since 2012, when he stated: "I think we are going to have to move to an insurance-based system of healthcare." In a 2024 election debate he advocated for French-style insurance-based models, and in January 2025, he told LBC he was "open to anything" when asked about replacing the NHS with an insurance-based model.

However, **Reform's 2024 manifesto commits to keeping the NHS "free at the point of delivery"**, choosing instead to propose a suite of measures to boost private healthcare.

There is a clear contradiction between what Farage personally advocates and what Reform's manifesto commits to. This pattern has persisted for over a decade:

- ▶ 2012 Farage statement (insurance-based system)
- ▶ 2015 Farage statement (an insurance-based system is "a debate that we're all going to have to return to")
- ▶ 2015 UKIP manifesto (free NHS)
- ▶ 2019 Brexit Party manifesto (free NHS)
- ▶ 2024 Farage election debate (French-style insurance-based model)
- ▶ 2024 Reform manifesto (free NHS)
- ▶ 2025 Farage statement ("open to anything" on insurance).

NHS workers should note that **while manifestos pledge free care**, Farage's **consistent public position has been to move towards an insurance-based model**.

Why insurance-based systems are bad for healthcare and workers

The King's Fund's international comparison of healthcare systems shows that insurance-based systems create significant problems.

The French system - which Farage frequently cites as a model - **the better-off are more likely to have top-up insurance and access better quality care while there is evidence of unmet need among those on lower incomes**.

If we turn to the US, the picture is even more stark. Despite spending more than 17% of GDP on healthcare (compared to the UK's 11%), the US ranked last overall among 10 high-income nations in a 2024 study. Americans have a life expectancy of 77.5 years compared to 80.9 years in the UK. The US insurance-based model is consistently delivering worse healthcare for citizens - despite costing far more.

For workers, there are also significant impacts that come with insurance-based models and healthcare privatisation:

- ▶ **Administrative burden:** Administrative costs account for 25% of total hospital spending in the US – more than twice the proportion in Scotland (12%). Research also found that physicians spent twice as much time on paperwork as with patients.
- ▶ **Two-tier healthcare = two-tier workforce conditions:** In the US, “safety net hospitals” (serving low-income and uninsured patients) struggle to pay staff a competitive wage – when for every dollar that Medicare pays hospitals, private insurance pays \$2.50 for the exact same service, hospital employers are created with vastly different financial resources
- ▶ **Brain-drain from public to private:** Research on the NHS shows how private sector involvement drains staff from public services, with the Centre for Health and the Public Interest finding that “private hospitals can only do this work by using NHS consultants. They themselves have no doctors”.

Reform’s local healthcare governance

Local elections might not seem to impact the NHS. Councils don’t run hospitals, and they don’t employ doctors or nurses. What councils do, however – or stop doing – has a direct and measurable impact on the health service and on the health of the people who depend on it.

Reform UK has been explicit about its intention to slash council spending wherever it wins power. The party has announced local equivalents of Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency – audit teams that sweep in and cut what Reform considers waste. In practice, this means public health, social care, and community services.

In the councils Reform controls, this is already happening:

- ▶ **In Kent,** the Reform administration cut community navigation and wellbeing services for older and vulnerable adults – services that keep people independent, out of hospital, and out of expensive statutory care. A 2023 study by Involve Kent found that these services led to significant reductions in A&E attendance
- ▶ **In Lincolnshire,** Reform councillors moved to scrap the One You Lincolnshire contract – a public health programme supporting people with smoking, alcohol, weight and physical activity. The service has been found to save £4 in NHS treatment costs for every £1 spent, yet a Reform councillor said, “People need to take responsibility and not have everything handed to them by a nanny state. Money is better spent in other areas.”

This is the fundamental problem with Reform’s approach to council finances. Prevention services keep people out of hospital. When councils cut them, the pressure shifts directly to the NHS – and an estimated 14,000 NHS beds are blocked every day by patients who are ready to be discharged but have nowhere safe to go because social care provision has run out.

Cutting prevention doesn’t save money. It moves the cost somewhere else and makes it bigger.

Reform’s immigration policies

Reform UK’s immigration policy directly contradicts the workforce needs of the NHS. The party’s manifesto proposes a “freeze on non-essential immigration” – with no definition of ‘essential’. The party’s rhetoric and the practical implications of such a dramatic shift in policy would devastate NHS staffing.

The NHS workforce is critically dependent on international recruitment. In June 2025 21% of 1.5 million NHS staff reported a non-British nationality, including 36% of doctors and 30% of nurses.

The NHS cannot simply replace international staff with UK-trained workers – the Nuffield Trust warns that it typically takes at least three years to train a nurse and 14 years for a consultant, meaning overseas recruitment cannot simply be switched off while domestic training catches up. Even the government’s own NHS Long Term Workforce Plan – which commits to doubling medical school places and nearly doubling nursing training places by 2031/32 – explicitly acknowledges that international recruitment must continue in the interim.

Reform UK's immigration policy is fundamentally incompatible with maintaining NHS services. A

government cannot simultaneously:

- ▶ Run an NHS that relies on 21% international staff (36% of doctors, 30% of nurses)
- ▶ Pursue 'net zero immigration'
- ▶ Maintain current service levels, let alone expand them
- ▶ Avoid massive increases in waiting times and service closures.

Reform UK has not explained how they would square this circle. The most likely outcome is catastrophic staff shortages, service reductions, and significantly worse working conditions for remaining NHS staff as they attempt to cover impossible workloads.

Local government workers

Reasons not to vote for Reform UK

Reform currently controls ten councils, making local government the one area where its record in power can be judged against its promises. The picture is not flattering.

This section documents what Reform has done in the councils it runs - the council tax rises, the cuts, the failed efficiency drives, and the councillor scandals - and sets out what a Reform government's plans for local authority jobs and pensions would mean for the people who deliver those services.

Local government funding

Reform's plans for local government services

Reform's plan for local government is a 'British DOGE' - a Department of Government Efficiency unit, modelled on Elon Musk's initiative in the Trump administration, deployed in each council to root out waste. Their primary targets included net zero and renewable energy projects, diversity, equity and inclusion posts and ending working from home.

However, the **waste Reform describes simply doesn't exist at scale**. A Guardian investigation found just 4.56 full-time equivalent diversity and equality roles across all ten Reform-run councils combined - a maximum annual saving of £228,000, less than 0.003% of their combined budgets. The Institute for Government was direct: "All councils have been caught in an iron triangle of falling funding, rising demand, and legal obligations to deliver services... There is very little left to cut."

Reform's DOGE unit has proved ineffective in practice. The Local Government Chronicle confirmed that by September 2025 it had visited just three of twelve Reform-run councils, issued no formal instructions, and was blocked from financial data by legal barriers. The unit's first lead resigned within a week of being appointed.

The 'savings' Reform has announced are overwhelmingly one-off capital deferrals: cancelling net zero programmes. Kent scrapped £32 million of planned energy efficiency upgrades to buildings and £7.5 million of fleet electrification. Durham rescinded its climate emergency declaration and cancelled electric vehicle upgrades, heat pump and solar panel plans.

None of this addresses the recurring structural gap councils face every year.

When real recurring savings have been sought, they have come directly from vital services:

Lancashire consulted on closing five care homes and five day centres for older people (£4 million a year). Meanwhile, Worcestershire, facing a £73 million shortfall, is raising council tax by 9% - nearly double the normal maximum - despite Reform having campaigned on a council tax freeze. The Institute for Government warned that any genuine attempt to improve bin collections or fix roads "will likely require cutting services for some of the most vulnerable people."

The existing state of council finances

Local government has never fully recovered from the austerity cuts of 2010-2019. The Local Government Association warned of a £6.2 billion shortfall across 2025/26 and 2026/27, driven by adult social care, children's services, and homelessness. In 2025/26, 29 councils required Exceptional Financial Support from central government to balance their books, rising to 35 in 2026/27.

Meanwhile, UNISON's 2026/27 NJC pay claim documents that NJC staff have lost approximately 26% of the real value of their pay since 2010 – the CPI rising 82.4% against NJC pay growth of only 39.6%. In 2025 alone, rail fares rose 7.5%, food prices 5.9%, and council tax 5.4%, while NJC pay rose 3.2%.

Track record in councils Reform controls

Reform now controls ten local councils in England. Their record in those councils is the clearest possible guide to what local government under Reform at national level would look like.

Kent County Council

Reform took control of Kent County Council after the May 2025 local elections, overturning a 30-year Conservative majority. The new administration:

- ▶ Cut community navigation and wellbeing services for older and vulnerable adults – services that keep people independent, out of hospital, and out of expensive statutory care
- ▶ Cut £1.2 million from fostering services and £700,000 from fostering for children with disabilities
- ▶ Claimed nearly £40 million in savings in net zero that were found to be based on hypothetical projects for which there is no documentation
- ▶ Increased the council's overspend to £46.5 million, representing 3% of the overall budget.

Lincolnshire

In Lincolnshire, Reform councillors moved to scrap the One You Lincolnshire contract – a public health programme supporting people around smoking, alcohol, weight and physical activity. The service has been found to save £4 in NHS treatment costs for every £1 spent, yet a Reform councillor said “People need to take responsibility and not have everything handed to them by a nanny state. Money is better spent in other areas.”

The pattern

The **first targets in Reform-controlled councils are consistently prevention services**, public health, community support, and early intervention – the services that keep people out of hospital and out of expensive care packages. The savings are claimed upfront. The costs are displaced onto the NHS and onto the statutory social care budget that councils are legally obliged to fund regardless. Cutting prevention doesn't save money. It moves the cost somewhere else and makes it bigger.

Social care

Adult social care is the single biggest financial pressure facing local government. The ADASS Autumn Survey 2024 found that 81% of councils were on course to overspend their adult social care budget in 2024/25 – up from 72% the year before and 63% the year before that. In some areas, adult and children's social care together make up well over 70% of the entire council budget. In 2024/25, local authorities spent a total of £34.5 billion on adult social care in England.

The sector faces a vacancy rate of 8.3% and a turnover rate of 24% – among the highest of any sector in the economy. The Nuffield Trust found that over 220,000 people were waiting for a care assessment as of March 2024, 35% of whom had been waiting over six months. The LGA estimates a funding gap in local government of over £8.4 billion in 2028/29.

Reform's 2024 manifesto proposes a Royal Commission into social care and a single funding stream to replace the current split between the NHS and local authorities. A Royal Commission is not a plan – it is a deferral. While Reform deliberates, councils will still be legally required to provide care, facing the same spiralling costs, with no new money. Reform's overall spending plans, assessed as carrying an unfunded cost of at least £33 billion, provide no credible basis for the “more funding” their manifesto acknowledges will eventually be needed.

Immigration policy would make the staffing crisis worse

Around 16% of the adult social care workforce in England are non-EU nationals, following significant increases in international recruitment in recent years. Reform’s manifesto proposes a freeze on non-essential immigration and a 20% employer National Insurance surcharge on foreign workers.

Monthly Health and Care Worker visa applications have already fallen sharply – from around 18,300 in August 2023 to 2,300 in August 2024. Immigration policy significantly affects the adult social care workforce. Cutting off the supply of international workers to a sector with an 8.3% vacancy rate and a 24% turnover rate is a recruitment crisis by policy choice.

Adult social care across the UK simply could not function without people who have come from overseas to work in the sector.

Attacks on pensions

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is one of the largest pension schemes in the world. It has 6.7 million members and approximately £390 billion of assets under management. It provides defined benefit pensions to waste collectors, care workers, school support staff, librarians, parks workers, and hundreds of thousands of other local government workers – many of them low earners. The typical LGPS member is a 47-year-old woman earning around £18,000 a year, receiving an average pension of around £5,000 a year.

Close the scheme to new members

In February 2026, Reform deputy leader Richard Tice announced plans to close the LGPS to new members and move all new council employees into defined contribution (DC) schemes instead. Tice claimed this would save councils millions of pounds every single year” by cutting employer contributions to around 10%.

The pensions industry rejected Reform’s characterisation of the LGPS as underperforming. Pensions UK said the proposals were “lacking in detail” and described the LGPS as “one of the largest and most successful pension schemes in the world”, having achieved average returns of around 7% per year over the past decade.

UNISON’s own analysis was direct: closing the scheme to new members “would make recruitment to often low-paid roles much more difficult, and the staffing crisis would worsen.” Defined contribution schemes “only deliver decent pensions for high earners” – for anyone on low wages, DC “will only lead to poverty in retirement.”

Cut employer contributions to zero

In a separate attack, Tice wrote to councils under Reform control urging them to cut employer pension contributions to zero – taking advantage of current surpluses in some LGPS funds. This would save councils short-term costs while depleting the long-term security of the fund.

This risks undermining stability, creating intergenerational unfairness, and causing reputational damage. The LGPS has a total of 6.7 million members – 72% of them women – and 47% of pensioners receive less than £2,500 a year. This is not a “gold-plated” pension. It is **bare-minimum retirement security for predominantly low-paid workers**, and Reform’s plans for the LGPS are a **direct attack on the retirement security of local authority workers**.

Prisons, police & probation workers

Reasons not to vote for Reform UK

Reform campaigns hard on law and order, promising to halve crime in five years and get tough on reoffending.

This section examines whether its policies would achieve that - and finds that the evidence runs in the opposite direction.

Mass incarceration without resources, mandatory sentencing that overwhelms an already broken system, and cuts to the rehabilitation programmes that actually reduce reoffending would make the jobs of prison, probation and police staff harder, more dangerous, and more demoralising.

Prison crisis

Reform's policies commit to mass incarceration – without the resources needed to touch the sides of such a commitment.

They have proposed a range of policies – primarily in their 2024 manifesto and 2025 policy document Britain is Lawless – which would dramatically increase the number of prisoners in the UK system.

The UK prison system is already in severe crisis.

The prison population averaged around 86,596 on 29 December 2025, leaving spare capacity at just 2,868 places – only 3% headroom. Over half of prisons are (56%) classified as overcrowded, and the prison population is projected to pass 100,000 by March 2030. **The Prison Service already faces severe staffing challenges**, with the prison officer leaving rate standing at 10.8%.

Reform's plans would add tens of thousands more prisoners to a struggling system without a credible delivery plan.

What's their plan?

Rapid prison expansion of over 30,000 new spaces for a cost of £17.4bn

- ▶ 12,400 spaces by building 15 “Nightingale” prisons – prefabricated facilities built using army assistance on Ministry of Defence land
- ▶ 10,400 spaces by transferring foreign prisoners to their countries of origin
- ▶ 10,000 places overseas by renting prison cells in third-party countries such as El Salvador

Why it won't work

Reform claims the £17bn cost will be met without tax rises, through “cutting huge amounts of public spending” including HS2 and net-zero policies. However:

- ▶ Their sums don't add up – the figures are based on their claim that prison places cost £25,000 each, while the real annual cost per prisoner is £53,801
- ▶ The funding from public spending cuts has already been widely promised by Reform for a long list of other commitments. Analysis shows that Reform UK's plans have a total unfunded cost of at least £33bn – about twice the unfunded cost of Liz Truss's 2022 ‘mini-Budget’
- ▶ Expansion on this scale would also do nothing to address the staffing crisis – the system is already haemorrhaging prison officers, and tens of thousands of additional prisoners would make that far worse.

Wider concerns

Voters should also be aware that Farage has said he would **force Reform-run local authorities to agree to host these pre-fab prisons** – regardless of the views of local residents or councils.

Finally, overseas transfer proposals raise serious human rights concerns. El Salvador – one of Reform's cited destinations – has been accused by Amnesty International of ‘massive’ human rights violations amid its programme of mass incarceration.

Policing workload

Reform promises “zero tolerance policing” with investigation into “every reported crime” and 30,000 new police officers over five years.

NOTE: The 30,000 figure comes from the most recent commitments updated on their website in June 2025 – their 2024 manifesto committed the party to 40,000 new front-line officers, to increase the per capita police numbers to 300 per 100k population. Current figures put England and Wales at 235 FTE police officers per 100,000 people.

This is fundamentally the wrong approach to take, for several reasons:

- ▶ Active investigation into every crime is a vast commitment, particularly given that police forces are already struggling with massive backlogs.
- ▶ **Justice system:** The Crown Court backlog is projected to reach 108,700 cases by September 2028.
- ▶ **Prison system:** Investigating every reported crime while adding 30,000 officers would create an arrest surge – feeding directly into prisons that have only 3% spare capacity.

There’s no credible plan for where these arrested individuals would go while awaiting trial, how courts would process them, or where they’d serve sentences once convicted.

Probation crisis

Reform’s policies would massively increase probation caseloads by flooding the system with more prisoners, eventually returning to communities (zero tolerance policing; harsher sentences).

This is alarming, as the probation service – which manages offenders in the community and those released from prison – is in a state of managed collapse.

- ▶ Chronic understaffing: The vacancy rate for probation officers increased from 14% in 2021 to 21% in 2025
- ▶ Overworking: Probation officers have been working at 118% capacity for years
- ▶ Missing targets: The service hit only 7 of 27 performance targets in 2024-25 (down from 50% in 2021-22).

A service already unable to manage its current workload with half the sentence management staff it needs would face complete breakdown under Reform’s direction.

Courts

Reform promises “24/7 justice” and reopening magistrates’ courts to clear backlogs, staffed by recalled retired magistrates.

This is an **unsubstantiated commitment**. It leaves unanswered questions:

- ▶ Are court staff, legal aid solicitors, prosecutors, and defence lawyers expected to work 24/7?
- ▶ What about judges – will they work night shifts?
- ▶ How many retired magistrates are available and willing to return?
- ▶ What happens to the quality of justice when cases are heard at 2am by exhausted participants?

This is a slogan, not a policy. **There’s no detail on implementation, costs, staffing, or how it integrates with the prison capacity crisis** – faster courts would mean more convictions feeding into prisons with no space.

Privatisation

While Reform’s prison policies remain vague on implementation, their instinct across the public sector is clear: expand private sector involvement. The record of privatisation should give serious pause. Private prisons are more overcrowded and 47% more violent than public prisons.

The private HMP Birmingham, run by G4S, was described by the Chief Inspector of Prisons as “the worst prison I had ever visited.” Its record includes:

- ▶ Thirteen prisoner deaths in 2017-18.
- ▶ A riot in December 2016 required 11 public sector Tornado teams to regain control.
- ▶ Taken back into public control in 2018, costing taxpayers £9.9 million on top of the failed contract.

Private prison officers earn 23% less than public sector (based on 2011 data – the most recent comprehensive comparison available, as HMPPS workforce statistics exclude private sector staff entirely).

Policies that won’t work

Reform claims their approach will “halve crime in five years.” The evidence says otherwise.

Reoffending

Reoffending is on the rise in the UK, with most recent reoffending rate, for January to March 2024, at **28.9% – an increase of 2.4 percentage points** from the same quarter in 2023.

What reduces reoffending

Decades of criminological research shows that reducing reoffending requires:

- ▶ Stable housing on release
- ▶ Access to mental health and addiction services
- ▶ Education and genuine skills training
- ▶ Strong probation supervision in communities
- ▶ Employment opportunities
- ▶ Restorative justice programmes.

Countries with the lowest reoffending rates invest heavily in rehabilitation and provide decent prison conditions – such as Norway, with a 20% reoffending rate.

Reform UK’s approach actively opposes evidence-based measures. Their mandatory minimum sentences prevent judges from considering rehabilitation potential, while they propose cutting the public spending funding housing, mental health and other support services.

This would have an economic cost. The Ministry of Justice estimates that the economic and social cost of reoffending across adult offenders is around **£20.9 billion a year** in 2024-25 prices.

By pursuing policies proven to increase reoffending, Reform would waste billions while making communities less safe.

“Three strikes” policies do not work

Reform’s proposal for “three strikes and you’re out” mandatory sentencing mirrors failed US policies. US states with three-strikes laws have **not seen significant crime reductions** compared to states without them. Instead, these laws have contributed to mass incarceration without improving public safety.

It would also overwhelm the system. The mechanics are simple: if someone receives a life sentence on their third conviction, they never leave the system. Over time, this creates an ever-growing prison population with no possibility of reduction through rehabilitation, enormous costs for elderly prisoner care, growing healthcare expenses as the population ages, and no end to the capacity crisis.

Education workers

Reasons not to vote for Reform UK

Reform's 2024 manifesto devoted a single page to education.

It contained no plan for the teacher shortage, no school funding commitment, and nothing on support staff pay.

This section examines what Reform's policies would actually mean for everyone who works in education - from the classroom teacher to the teaching assistant whose LGPS pension Reform has pledged to close - and asks what it means that the party's education spokesperson used her first press conference to announce the repeal of the Equality Act.

Reform's education policy

Reform's education offer is thin. **Their 2024 manifesto devotes a single page to education.** It offers no serious policy response to any of the major structural problems facing the system: no plan to address the teacher shortage, no funding commitment for schools, no workforce strategy for support staff, and no credible proposal to reduce class sizes or improve working conditions.

The IFS noted that **Reform was the only main party to make no specific commitment on school funding** in 2024. Reform's overall spending plans are built on a claimed £50bn of savings from cutting "waste" - but analysis has found the party's plans carry an unfunded cost of at least £33 billion - roughly twice the unfunded black hole in Liz Truss's 2022 mini-Budget. As IFS puts it, their sums "do not add up". That money cannot simultaneously fund a long list of other Reform commitments and protect school budgets.

Suella Braverman was appointed Reform's education, skills and equalities spokesperson in February 2026 - and promptly spent her first press conference announcing the repeal of the Equality Act. The education sector has heard nothing from her on crucial issues including teacher recruitment, SEND funding, or support staff pay.

Schools policy

With Reform's schools policy, as with all their policy areas, what they don't say deserves as much attention as what they do. **Their 2024 manifesto contains no plan to address the teacher shortage, no commitment on school funding, and nothing on support staff pay or conditions.**

The UK is also facing a chronic teacher shortage, with vacancies reaching a record high in 2025, and excessive workload given as the top reason for teachers leaving their jobs,

Significantly, Reform's proposed 20% employer National Insurance surcharge on foreign workers - from which healthcare and social care would be given exemptions - would make the teacher shortage worse. As Schools Week has reported, England is already locked in a global competition for teachers, with an additional 44 million teachers needed globally by 2030. Making it significantly more expensive to employ international teachers would deepen shortages in physics, modern foreign languages and other subjects where domestic recruitment consistently fails to hit targets.

Where Reform does have explicit schools policy, **the focus is firmly on what is taught and how teachers behave** – not on the conditions in which teaching takes place. Their manifesto commits to:

- ▶ A “patriotic school curriculum”, with any lessons on British or European imperialism required to be “paired with the teaching of a non-European occurrence of the same”
- ▶ A regular review and audit of history and social science content to ensure children are “taught about their heritage”
- ▶ Banning “transgender ideology in schools”, including “no gender questioning, social transitioning or pronoun swapping” and requiring schools to inform parents of under-16s “about their children’s life decisions”
- ▶ Mandatory single-sex facilities in all schools
- ▶ A 20% tax relief for private school fees to incentivise parents to “choose independent schools”, on the basis that this would “ease pressure on state schools” – with no evidence offered for that claim
- ▶ Doubling the number of Pupil Referral Units to allow permanent exclusion of violent or disruptive pupils

Schools Week described Reform’s conference education offer as “all headlines, no policy lines”. The **policies that do exist are almost entirely about control** – over what teachers say, what curriculum they follow, and which children can stay in the classroom. **There is nothing on workload, nothing on pay, and nothing on the conditions that drive teachers out of the profession.** A party that responds to a staffing crisis by making it harder to employ foreign workers and easier to exclude children has its priorities the wrong way round.

Early years and childcare

Reform’s 2024 manifesto contains no early years or childcare policy at all. It makes no commitment on funded childcare hours, no workforce strategy for early years practitioners, and no plan to address the shortage of childcare places. The party has simply ignored the sector entirely.

This is a striking omission. The Early Education and Childcare Coalition – a group of more than 30 organisations – published research in 2024 showing that 53% of voters are concerned about the availability of early education and childcare, with 49% saying it is unaffordable and 40% saying it is difficult to find provision.

Early years workers – predominantly low-paid women – would face the compounded effects of Reform’s plans: no commitment to improve their pay or conditions, a threatened repeal of the Employment Rights Act (which introduced day-one sick pay for all workers), and a proposal to close the LGPS to new members, which would remove defined benefit pension access from the people already doing some of the most poorly paid work in the education sector.

Further education

Reform’s further education offer centres on **apprenticeships and vocational training**, framed around reducing the number of young people going to university. The 2024 manifesto proposes using £20bn raised over five years from an “employer immigration tax” on foreign workers “pay for apprenticeships and training for young Brits”. **There is no specific commitment to FE college funding.**

The reality is that FE colleges are already in serious difficulty. IFS data shows that college funding per student declined by 14% in real terms between 2010/11 and 2019/20, while school sixth-form funding fell by a steeper **28%** over the same period. The pay gap between college teachers and school teachers widened to nearly £7,000 – or 18% – in 2024/25, the largest gap on record. **Reform proposes no remedy for either problem.**

Suella Braverman announced at her first Reform press conference the ambition of “50% of young people going into trades” rather than university. This may sound like a commitment to FE – but there is **no funding plan, no workforce strategy for FE teachers, and no explanation of how a sector already starved of resource would accommodate a doubling of vocational provision.**

Higher education

Reform’s higher education policies would significantly damage the financial stability of universities and the jobs of the people who work in them.

Their 2024 manifesto commits to:

- ▶ Restricting undergraduate numbers to “well below current levels” and enforcing minimum entry standards
- ▶ Cutting funding to universities that “undermine free speech”
- ▶ New visa rules restricting international students – only those with “essential skills” could remain in the UK after graduation

The **financial threat of such measures is real.**

According to the House of Commons Library, international student fees accounted for 23% of total university income in 2023/24 – up from around 5% in the mid-1990s. The current government’s new annual levy on international students is anticipated to cost HE institutions £621 million, at a time when nearly half of universities in England face a deficit in 2025-26.

In 2024, modelling from PwC found that a 5% fall in international enrolments could leave up to 80% of universities in deficit. **Reform’s proposed restrictions on international students would go far beyond a 5% reduction.**

The impact on university staff would be severe. The financial crisis in higher education is already driving widespread job cuts – estimated at around 15,000 posts across the sector in 2025. A sharp reduction in international student income under Reform would accelerate those losses, hitting HE staff across the country.

Attacks on pensions

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) provides a pension for teaching assistants, support staff, caretakers, administrators, and all non-teaching school staff – in maintained schools, academies, and colleges alike. Under the Academy Trust LGPS rules, every academy trust is legally required to offer LGPS membership to all non-teaching staff who are not eligible for the Teachers’ Pension Scheme. The typical LGPS member is a 47-year-old woman earning around £18,000 a year, receiving an average pension of around £5,000 a year.

Reform’s plans for the LGPS are a **direct attack on the retirement security of education support workers.**

Close the scheme to new members

In February 2026, Reform deputy leader Richard Tice announced plans **to close the LGPS to new members** and move all new council employees – including school support staff – into **defined contribution (DC) schemes instead.** Tice claimed this would save councils “millions of pounds every single year” by cutting employer contributions to around 10%.

Conclusion

Reform UK asks for the votes of working people by claiming the established parties have failed them. The solution Reform offers, however, is to strip away the rights, protections, and public services that working people depend on - while rewarding the wealthy donors and ideological allies who fund and shape the party.

The evidence in this report speaks for itself. Reform voted against the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation and has pledged to repeal it. It plans to scrap the Equality Act, cut jobs, close the Local Government Pension Scheme to new members, and pursue immigration policies that would devastate NHS and social care staffing. In local government, Reform's eleven months in power have produced leadership chaos, broken promises on council tax, racist scandals, and "efficiency drives" that found nothing because council services are already cut to the bone.

The IFS has said Reform's financial plans "do not add up." The party's biggest donor gave £9 million while Reform campaigns for policies that directly benefit his investments.

UNISON members work in the NHS, in schools, in local councils, in prisons, in social care. The services we deliver and the rights that protect us at work are not abstract political issues - they are what makes the difference between a job worth doing and one that grinds people down.

Reform has shown, in parliament and in practice, that it is not on our side. Were they to gain more power, the consequences for UNISON members, public service workers and working people across the UK would be significant.

The logo for UNISON, featuring the word "UNISON" in a bold, serif font with a stylized wave graphic above it. Below the name is the tagline "the public service union" in a smaller, lowercase serif font.

UNISON
the public service union

