

THE CONSERVATIVES IN GOVERNMENT

COST OF LIVING CRISIS - A LONG TIME COMING

The Conservative Party has been in power since 2010. In that time we have seen five Prime Ministers, a five year coalition with the Liberal Democrats, with one thing remaining consistent, their politics. For over a decade they have committed to the tragic but predictable path of the economics of austerity, a process of cutting public funding from services and a commitment to privatisation & outsourcing, the outcome; a continual transfer of wealth and power away from working class people.

WHAT IS THEIR RECORD?

JOB



- The TUC says UK workers are suffering the longest and harshest pay squeeze in modern history.
- In 2022 there were approximately 1.03 million people on zero hours contracts in the United Kingdom, compared with 919,000 in the previous year. Since 2000 there has been a net increase of over 807,000 people on this type of employment contract.
- Workers in the UK are £11,000 worse off a year after 15 years of "almost completely unprecedented" wage stagnation.

HOUSING



- In 2000, a home cost 4 x average salary.
- In 2021, a home cost 8 x average salary.
- In 1990, 28,000 social homes were built.
- In 2020, less than 7,000 social homes were built.
- Average rents across London have increased by 38% in the past ten years.
- Average monthly rental payments are now 40% higher than they were 10 years ago, while typical mortgage payments for the same properties are up 13%.
- Renters have, on average, faced £2,820 a year increase in rental costs over the last five years.

TRANSPORT



- Spending on subsidies for bus and rail routes – where they are required to support 'socially necessary' routes, a definition open to interpretation – fell by 48% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20.
- Spending on concessionary bus fares – a statutory duty that local authorities cannot ration – fell by 14%.
- In the last decade rail fares have increased by 30%
- Almost 5,000 bus routes have been axed since 2012, with the North West and east of England the two regions worst affected.

HEALTH



- Over a decade of pay cuts, the pandemic and two top down reorganisations have left health workers' morale in tatters.
- The NHS has been chronically underfunded over the last decade with the worst funding settlements in its history.
- NHS waiting list to start elective care is at record levels in England – exceeding 7.4 million. That has risen by nearly half a million in five months and is the highest since records began (August 2007).
- The NHS spent nearly £11 billion on private sector providers in 2021-22.
- Nearly five million patients each month in England wait more than a fortnight for a GP appointment.
- The NHS is suffering from the worse staffing crisis in its history with nearly 112,000 full time equivalent staff vacancies including over 40,000 nurses.

ENERGY



- Weekly road fuel prices have almost doubled since 2016.
- National Energy Action (NEA) has calculated that 6.7 million people are currently living in fuel poverty.
- A Unite Investigates report reveals that companies made £45 billion profit from the UK domestic energy system in 2022. If that money had been kept in public hands, it could have been used to save each household £1,800 on their energy bills.

EDUCATION



- The Trade Union Learning Fund was scrapped in 2021 removing support for trade union education.
- School spending per pupil in England fell by 9% in real terms between 2009–10 and 2019–20, the largest cut in over 40 years.
- Around 10,000, (45 per cent) of schools are now academies following extensive growth over the past 11 years.
- The 2011 cut to Educational Maintenance Allowance saw up to £30 a week taken away from 603,000 students from the poorest socio-economic groups.
- The Government forecasts the value of outstanding student loans to be around £460 billion (2021/22 prices) by the mid-2040s.
- The rent university students pay for halls of residence has risen by 60% over the past decade.

SOCIAL SECURITY



- £14 billion has been taken out of the welfare system since 2010/11.
- For out-of-work families with two children, benefits will cover less than half their costs this year – (48% for a couple, 49% for a lone parent) compared to more than 60% in 2012.
- Working families have also lost out, with a £460 annual reduction compared to if the 2010 benefits system was in place.
- In 2016, the Welfare Reform and Work Act abolished the Child Poverty Act, including the targets to reduce poverty.
- The North East of England has seen the most dramatic rise in child poverty in the past six years, having risen by almost half from 26% to 38%.
- Between 2013 and 2022, the basic rate of unemployment benefits have lost value, leaving it at a 35-year low in real terms.
- Between 2008/09 the number of foodbank users was just under 26,000.
- In 2022/23 approximately 2.99 million people used a foodbank in the UK.
- There are 4.2 million children in poverty (or 29% of children).

LOCAL AUTHORITIES



- The UK government reduced grants to local authorities by £18.6 billion (in 2019/20 prices) between 2009/10 and 2019/20, a 63% reduction in real terms.
- Public spending cuts have closed almost 800 libraries in the past decade – a fifth of the UK's total.
- Spending on libraries in 2009 was at £1 billion, but by 2019 this had declined by a quarter.
- In 2018, the BBC reported that almost 700 local authority-run facilities (toilets) in the UK had closed since 2010—one in eight.
- Freedom of Information requests to UK councils revealed 65 pools had closed, either temporarily or permanently, in the three years to March 2022.
- Between 2009/10 and 2019/20, local authority spending on waste collection fell by 17% in real terms.
- Official figures show that 1,342 children's centres have closed over the last decade.
- Local authority spending on youth services in England experienced a 1.1 billion cut in a decade.

INEQUALITIES



- The number of households unable to afford a decent standard of living will have increased to 11.1 million (39%).
- 43% of families in the lowest wealth decile reported that they would run out of money within a week if they lost their main income source.
- Women are more likely to be poor, and have been hit harder by cuts to social security and provision of public services over the past decade.
- Disabled people were already facing on average an extra £583 in costs per month. Even prior to Covid-19, over a third of disabled workers were having to cut back on food and heating.
- On average BAEM – Black & Asian Ethnic Minority households are 1.6 times more affected by the cost of living than their white counterparts.
- LGBT+ support services have been cut and closed increasing inequality and isolation.
- The richest 50 families in the UK have more wealth than the bottom half of the UK population (33.5 million people).
- When the first rich list was compiled in 1989, a rich person had 6000 times the average person. Today it is 18,000 times.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS & CIVIL LIBERTIES

At the same time as our communities have been under relentless strain from privatisation and cuts, a series of laws have been passed or are under way, to restrict trade union rights, cut trade union representation on public bodies and hinder our ability to campaign and fight against these changes.

Trade Union Act 2016 –

This Act is the most serious attack on the rights of trade unions and their members in a generation. The aim was to cut back trade union rights to organise collectively in defence of jobs, pay and conditions. Arbitrary and complex thresholds, balloting and notice rules making it more difficult to organise industrial action, new restrictions on union campaigning from political funds, and so much more.

Further laws in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, Agency Labour/Striker Replacement Law, Public Order Bill and Minimum Service Levels Bill (in relation to strike action) have followed, all tightening their grip on the freedom with which we can organise against the attacks.

For a full list of sources please visit www.unitetheunion.org/theconservativesrecord

Our lives have worsened because of this politics. Public services removed, jobs lost. Community centres, libraries, swimming pools shut, transport and housing has worsened, work has become less secure, pay has stagnated and poverty has grown massively. With more than a decade of austerity the results – a cost of living crisis.

**LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK THE
IMPACT OF THEIR RECORD HAS BEEN:**

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