

The Update

13 Feb 2024

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

General election 2024

As the nation waits for Rishi Sunak to call the election, Labour deputy leader Angela Rayner writes exclusively for UNISON, with her view of the challenges and opportunities ahead



‘It’s our chance to change Britain’

Nobody in Britain thinks the years ahead will be easy. But this year is our chance to change our country’s course. The future of Britain is in your hands, the power of the vote is in your control, and Labour will fight every day to earn it.

After 14 years of Tory failure, it’s our chance to change Britain.

The hospital your children are born in, the home you live in, the place where you work, the wage in your pocket, the opportunities in your town, the sense of pride – or unease – when you walk down your street. The stakes couldn’t be higher.

I may have been born in Stockport, but I was raised in the union movement. I will fight for working people, with Labour

values in my heart. And I will fight for a better future for our country.

Britain needs a government that rolls up its sleeves and gets to work alongside working people to solve the country’s problems. The Tories have knocked the confidence of the country, drained the well of optimism, and tried to stop people from believing change is possible.

In place of division and decline, Labour will offer people the hope that comes from a long-term plan,

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with Britain moving forward again and the country tilted back towards working people. And from now until the general election, whenever it comes, we will be showing how our plans can be turned into a reality for our communities.

Thirteen years of economic mismanagement

Working people are suffering – from the highest taxes in 70 years, mortgages costing them £240 extra a month, NHS waiting lists at nearly eight million, crumbling school buildings, rivers running with raw sewage. Working people are thousands of pounds worse off, from tax rises and soaring energy bills, despite Tory claims to be cutting them.

At a time of huge insecurity, the Tories believe in a ‘stand aside’ state, not one that backs working people. They don’t get people’s lives, what they are going through now, what their potential might be. They govern to serve their own interests, rather than to lift up the country.

Local services up and down the country have borne the brunt of the Tories’ failure. This government’s economic mismanagement is pushing more and more councils over the edge. Thirteen years of economic mismanagement, compounded by spiralling inflation and a failure to grow our economy, has seen councils stripped to the bone and then cut adrift.

One thing is certain: those who made the mess are never the right people to clear it up. The Tories can’t solve Britain’s problems – they caused them. It’s time for change and a Labour government that will be on your side.

I know the difference Labour in power can make. As a young, single mum, it was a Labour government that transformed my life chances. When I most needed it, a council house gave me and my son a secure home instead of surfing sofas. That in turn meant I could go out and find the job that I built a life upon. The minimum wage meant I earned more. A local authority job gave me better skills at work.

And joining a union changed the course of my life; it was thanks to UNISON that I was able to improve life for myself and my fellow workers who I represented.

A decent home, a unionised job, a thriving community empowered to create good local services and educational opportunities. These things were my lifeline. But everything I relied upon to improve my life and my community has been levelled down. Under the Conservatives, the foundations of a good life are crumbling.

With a broken housing market and stagnant wages across the whole country, the government’s promise to level up is a sham – and a scam. An empty slogan won’t pay decent wages. False promises won’t build secure homes. And a sound bite won’t empower local people and local communities to take control of their futures. We need real change.

A Labour government

A Labour government will build an economy that works for working people. Making work pay by introducing a **‘new deal for working people’** that delivers a genuine living wage, bans zero-hour contracts and ends fire and rehire. Because creating well-paid jobs across all parts of our country will make working people better off and more secure.

We’ll start by bringing forward an **employment rights bill** to legislate for this, within the first 100 days of entering office. That is a cast-iron commitment. We’ll make work more family-friendly, we’ll go further and faster in closing the gender pay gap and tackling sexual harassment at work. And we’ll strengthen trade unions’ role, so they can properly stand up for their members at work.

We’ll boost collective bargaining across the board, **with a fair pay agreement in adult social care**. We will empower workers and the trade unions that represent them to negotiate fair pay, terms and conditions – training, in-staff benefits and more. As a former social care worker myself, I cannot overstate the difference this will make not only to these low-paid and far too often overlooked workers, but to our entire health care system, weighed down by years of Tory neglect.

For far too long, unions have had barriers put in the way of their work, damaging industrial relations and worsening disputes. The Tories

pushed through the 2016 Trade Union Act, preventing fair bargaining and holding back living standards, while the Minimum Service Levels Act was a spiteful and bitter attack that threatens dedicated public service workers with the sack. So the next Labour government will ask Parliament to **repeal these anti-trade union laws within our first 100 days**.

Labour's 'new deal for working people' is our plan to make work fairer and more secure, and a crucial part of our wider plan for growth: boosting living standards and good jobs in every part of the country.

Getting Britain building again

Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and deputy leader Angela Rayner during a visit to a housing development in South Ribble in Lancashire, to tour the site and meet staff. Picture date: Thursday April 27, 2023.

But good wages and protections aren't enough, if every penny goes simply on keeping a roof over your head, if you live in damp, cramped housing - or have no home at all.

Homeowners face eye-watering mortgage rates, young people are struggling to get on the housing ladder, and the dream of home ownership has been snatched away. More than a million families are waiting for social housing, while others are left in the living nightmare of being wrapped in flammable cladding. So many are stuck paying unaffordable private rents, while leaseholders linger in a system left over from the Middle Ages.

Families are stuck living in cramped temporary accommodation and unfit private rental properties, too scared of eviction to complain about the terrible living conditions. It's felt daily by the millions of people on the ever-growing waiting lists.

Safe, secure, affordable housing is no longer the foundation on which people can rely. The Tories have ripped it away.

Labour's plan for secure homes will put an end to the Tories' housing emergency. We'll get Britain building again with our **housing recovery plan**. It's Labour that will deliver the

biggest boost to affordable, council and social housing in a generation, create the next wave of new towns and unlock economic growth across Britain.

We will not duck the difficult issues as the Tories have. Labour will abolish no-fault evictions, fix the broken leasehold system once and for all, and support first-time buyers onto the ladder. Labour is serious about boosting the supply of new homes to buy and rent.

The five missions

Good jobs and secure homes are core to **Labour's five missions**, the long-term plan Keir Starmer has set out to end 'sticking plaster' politics and change the country:

- getting Britain building again
- creating Great British Energy, a new, publicly owned energy company
- getting the NHS back on its feet
- taking back our streets, with initiatives including 13,000 more neighbourhood police and PCSOs
- breaking down barriers to opportunity in our country

Labour values put into action in the service of working people.

We must secure our economy and make it stronger by getting growth back on course, as the last Labour government did. It's by growing our economy that we'll provide sustainable, long-term funding for councils and give local areas the tools and stability they need for growth, as we push power, wealth and opportunity away from Westminster.

The battle for the general election is just getting started. Our country cannot endure another five years of Tory rule. People are crying out for change.

The stakes are high. By coming together as a movement and securing a Labour government this year, we can make Britain work for working people once again. That's what our shared future can be. Let's fight for it together and get Britain's future back.