

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 four 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.
- Working people lost nearly £20,000 in real earnings between 2008 and 2021 as a result of pay not keeping pace with inflation.
- More than a decade on from the financial crisis UK workers are still earning £75 a month less – in real terms – than in 2008.
- Since 2000 there has been a net increase of over 692 thousand people on zero hour contracts.

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%.

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 England alone, more than 3,000 local-authority-supported routes have been cut or reduced in the past two decades, fares are up 403% since 1987.

HEALTH



- The NHS has been chronically underfunded over the last decade with the worst funding settlements in its history.
- A total of 6.8 million people were waiting to start treatment at the end of July (2022), up from 6.7 million in June.
- By June 2021, the UK government had awarded £379 bn worth of contracts related to the coronavirus crisis to private companies.
- Over a decade of pay cuts, the pandemic and two top down reorganisations have left health workers' morale in tatters. The latest figures show over 132,000 vacant roles in the NHS. This includes more than 46,000 nurse posts, raising major questions about understaffing and the safety of services.

ENERGY



- It's estimated 6.5 million UK households are now living in fuel poverty.
- Weekly road fuel prices have almost doubled since 2016.
- 'Unite investigates' has established that the major energy suppliers, distributors and generators have made £15.8 billion in profits in the last year.

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



- £14bn has been taken out of the welfare system since 2010/11.
- On average, out-of-work families have lost £1,160 in annual income due to changes to the benefit system since 2010.
- Working families have also lost out, with a £460 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%. It has now overtaken London to have the highest child poverty rate (after housing costs) in the UK.
- 3.9 million children in the UK are living in poverty.
- Food banks in the food charity network provided more than 2.1 million emergency food parcels between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. Of these, 832,000 were for children. This represents an 81% increase compared to the same period five years ago.

INEQUALITIES



- 23.5 million people will be unable to afford the cost of living this year.
- 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.
- The wealthiest 100 people in the UK have as much money as the poorest 18 million people, according to the Equality Trust.
- 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.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES



- The UK government reduced grants to local authorities by £18.6bn (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.

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 to 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, Public Order Bill, Agency Labour/Striker Replacement Law 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:

unitepolitics@unitetheunion.org

