

# Public services

CLÉS calls on the next government to...

Public services are the bedrock to a decent society. They are the basis by which we build a platform for economic and social success.

Over the last three decades, our public services have fallen far. 30 years of outsourcing, marketisation and the last nine years of austerity has eviscerated our public services, with private sector management techniques and values imported into much of the UK public sector.

The widespread use of a new public management approach has produced a generation of public servants who are doing their utmost, but forced by severe budget reductions to overly focus on cost. Outsourcing practices have seen the extraction of public money by a few large market players operating in virtual monopolies. It has also commercialised the important relationship between the local and national state and its citizens, which is now often indistinguishable from that of producer and consumer. As a consequence, the democratic nature of public services has been severely undermined. **This calls for a new social contract.**

## End austerity

Austerity has been a false economy, affecting the ability of local public services, to reform and innovate. Austerity for local government must end, with an immediate review of funding. Key service areas such as adult social care and children's services should receive dedicated investment funds to help vulnerable citizens, families and communities who currently lack proper support.

## Pass a public values act

The public sector, has an obligation to consider social value under the auspices of the social value act. This is weak because social value is too often considered a 'tick box' exercise at the procurement stage. A new public values act would ensure that the unique public values of democracy, equity and service are enforced across all commissioning activities of local and national state.



## Power up the NHS

The NHS is not just a service that provides healthcare free at the point of need. It is a social contract with the British people to deliver well-being. National government needs to reset the NHS as a beacon of wellbeing in addition to a provider of treatment. It should explore how each local health institution can act as an anchor, supporting wider local economic health and thus affecting change to the determinants of ill health. Fundamentally, the NHS should allow more local flexibility in relation to its centralised procurement hub. This will encourage more localised decision-making around spend with a view to maximising the delivery of social, economic and environmental value.

## Build decent homes for all

There are now only two million council houses left under council control, from a high of more than 6.5 million in 1979<sup>4</sup>. More than one million people are on social housing waiting lists<sup>5</sup> and more than 100,000 children are living in temporary accommodation<sup>6</sup>. Government must urgently prioritise a national house building programme. All new social housing should be provided at social rent<sup>7</sup> and built to Passivhaus environmental standards<sup>8</sup>.



## Reinvest in municipally owned transport

Since the privatisation of our bus and train services in the 1980s and 90s our public transport systems have been dogged with controversy. Bus services have been run down, with many routes disappearing. Train operating companies have been plagued by cases of financial and operational mismanagement, with passenger service in second place behind shareholder return and wealth extraction. In light of these failures, we call for our public transportation system to be radically reformed with both greater devolution of power over transport to city region and local authority level and a return to municipal models of ownership.

## Create a new social safety net

The UK's welfare system has become cruel and coercive – “not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster” says the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights<sup>9</sup>. The current system of universal credit should be scrapped and a new social safety net established to ensure that no one is left to fall and everyone is supported and nurtured. This calls for the establishment of generous, non-stigmatising income support in conjunction with properly funded universal basic services.