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**LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO FOR THE 2019 DORSET  
COUNCIL UNITARY AUTHORITY ELECTION**

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# INTRODUCTION

For decades the Tory-led County and District Councils have worked on a cabinet basis. This means a small handful of Conservative Councillors have been able to put their own narrow ideological agenda first, and democracy and the views of ordinary people last, by making important decisions that affect all our lives behind closed doors.

When the legal framework for the new unitary authority was set up, it was enshrined in law through a structural change order from the Conservative Secretary of State that stipulates a cabinet structure for the next five years.

Dorset Labour recognises the creation of the new Dorset Council provides a once in a lifetime opportunity to change this, giving people in Dorset a greater say in shaping the kind of public services they want the local authority to provide and the way in they want them delivered.

Our aim is to bring public services back into public ownership under local democratic control.

A Labour-led Dorset Council will embrace the transparency and public accountability required for a properly functioning local democracy to empower the many to lead richer lives.

We will oppose the principle of a cabinet structure that stifles debate by putting too much power in the hands of the few.

Austerity cuts to local government funding were introduced by the Conservatives and Lib Dems in 2010 and continue to deepen year on year.

By 2020, some 60% of the total funding, amounting to £90 billion across the England, will have been cut.

For the new Dorset Council, this means facing a potential budget deficit of £15.5 million next year alone.

Local authorities are deliberately being forced to either charge more for local services or make cuts to essential services local like social care and child protection.

Despite the critical need for a change of national government and increased funding, Labour Councils up and down the country have shown that there is much that can still be achieved to provide valuable services to their communities.

While the local Conservative aspirations for Dorset stop just shy of being able to cling on to power to bungle their way through the transition into the new unitary authority over the next ten years, much in the same way as they have handled Brexit, Dorset Labour believes the people of Dorset deserve much better from their elected representatives.

This manifesto lays out a plan to deliver democratic transformational change in Dorset that will enable the people who live here to lead richer lives for generations to come.

# 1. A sustainable economy for Dorset

A sustainable economy for Dorset means looking beyond the fast buck, slash and burn austerity economics of the Tories. It means investing in a Dorset economy that's able to provide public services that meet the needs of our residents, both now and in the future, whilst also ensuring that we're doing our bit to limit the impacts of a climate change catastrophe and protect the environment for future generations.

While the Tories, unopposed by the Lib Dems, seem determined to lead us over an environmental and economic cliff edge, Labour will focus on revitalising the local economy to deliver a sustainable future.

Climate change and the careless exploitation of the environment remain the biggest threats the future of humanity. A recent UN report indicates that we have less than twelve years to limit the effects of a climate change catastrophe.

Every level of government has a role to play in ensuring that this human disaster is averted. In London and Bristol, Labour Councils have recognised this by committing to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Meanwhile, under the Tories, Dorset still lags behind Devon and Cornwall on renewable energy generation and the investment bankers running the Dorset County Council Pension Fund maintain an investment of £77.8 million in fracking companies, playing fast and loose with the environment and the funds they've been entrusted to protect and grow.

A 6,400 fall in Dorset's working age population is expected over the next ten years.

As more employees move into retirement, employers will need to up-skill other workers and train apprentices. Otherwise, Dorset will face a loss of skills in the workforce that will deal a damaging blow to our local economy.

While the current council works with partners to secure and deliver European Social Funds for initiatives to up-skill the workforce and help people into

employment, we can expect this funding to disappear after Brexit.

The UK has a productivity gap with output per hour below the average for the rest of the G7 major industrialised countries. In Dorset, for every hour worked, we produce almost 16% less than the UK average and our businesses are less competitive than the national average.

In Dorset, 85% of the 20,000 businesses employ fewer than 10 people, only 2% employ more than fifty.

There are only thirty-five large firms with 250+ employees in Dorset representing 0.2% of Dorset's business stock; however, these firms employ about a fifth of the workforce.

Dependence on a such a small number of firms, coupled with a much lower than average level of new businesses setting up in Dorset, presents a significant risk to economic sustainability in Dorset. And yet our digital transport infrastructure remains far from appealing to companies that would want to transport goods and services in and out of the County at significant scale.

In Dorset, about 20,400 people aged 16-64 and 3,700 children live in 16,400 workless households.

Employment is expected to grow by more than 11,000 in Dorset between 2017 and 2027. Most of this new employment will be part time and much of this will be to meet the increased need for adult social care.

Currently, seven neighbourhoods in Weymouth and Portland fall within the top 20% income deprived areas nationally, earning around 8% less than the national average.

Ten neighbourhoods in Dorset are in the most deprived 20% nationally for employment. Nine of these are in Weymouth and Portland.

The low carbon economy has the potential to grow by 11% per year between 2015 and 2030. That's four times faster than the rest of the economy.

This represents a significant opportunity for Dorset, with its coast and hills, to generate renewable energy from onshore and offshore wind farms.

A Labour Council will:

- Review and update the Council's ethical procurement model drawing on the approach pioneered successfully by the Labour Council in Preston to stimulate economic regeneration by sourcing more goods and services from local providers.
- Work with local public sector 'anchor institutions' such as Dorset police, NHS Dorset, Housing Associations, Schools and Colleges to redirect more of the significant amount of public wealth spent by these institutions on goods and services to deliver social and economic benefits to Dorset.
- Approach the £2.5 billion Dorset County Council Pension Fund and its trade union representatives and challenge them to invest in the Dorset economy rather than risky investments abroad and environmentally damaging fossil fuels and fracking companies.
- Seek the reinvestment of £78 million currently invested by the Dorset County Council Pension Fund in fracking companies in a community owned renewable energy company with the aim of pushing beyond achieving the 11% growth potential in renewables by 2030, creating good jobs and apprenticeships for local people.
- Campaign to ensure all publicly invested money, including local-government pensionschemes, is in ethically and environmentally sound funds and to ensure any future investment from local government also meets these standards.
- Oppose any new plans for fracking or for the mining and extraction of fossil fuels.
- Ensure all council decisions should be subject to an environmental impact assessment before being introduced, to ensure action taken by the authority does not damage our local area.
- Launch a fully licensed not-for-profit Dorset Community Bank, based on the emerging practice in Hampshire and Greater London, with the aim of supporting local SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) often ignored by the mainstream banking community.

- Ensure that 100% renewable energy is supplied to all council buildings, and energy generating solar panels are installed on every viable roof on council buildings and buildings of anchor organisations.
- Provide professional advice and support for those wishing to start their own businesses and create local jobs, including those with plans for co-operatives and social enterprises.
- Attract new business into the area and encourage existing businesses to stay by creating shared workspaces across the county, like the Ludgate Hub in County Cork, offering superfast digital connectivity of 1Gbps, (1,000Mbps), to those who use it for work, video conferencing, education or leisure activities. This will mean that people will no longer need to head to the Cities to work.
- Bring essential publicly-funded services such as Tricuro fully back in-house and end outsourcing practices to save local taxpayers' money and improve the delivery and quality of important services.
- Work with existing partners in the voluntary sector, like CAB, to establish a Welfare Rights Service, providing a one-stop shop for those entitled to benefits.
- Use planning powers for large developments to ensure local jobs, apprenticeship and work experience opportunities are part of the conditions that developers must meet to gain planning permission, alongside signing up to Unite's Construction Charter.
- Ensure that the new Dorset Council is an accredited living wage employer that pays the independent living wage, opposes the use of zero-hour contracts and only enters into contracts with suppliers that adopt the same approach.
- Work with advice agencies and the DWP to ensure local people are not penalised for the delays or other problems with Universal Credit, whilst using our position in the Local Government Association to press the Government to scrap the introduction of Universal Credit.
- Work with credit unions to provide crisis loans for those pushed into destitution by Universal Credit.

- Promote a prosperous and sustainable tourist industry to attract greater investment and more employment for local people. This is not just about beaches and picturesque countryside but also about the arts and culture. This will benefit not only tourism but will also enrich the lives of our communities, improving health and wellbeing.
- Support the creation of a “strategy for high streets”, in line with that proposed by USDAW, which can regenerate and revitalise the local economy and improve retail opportunities.
- Work with Town and Parish Councils and local people to develop high streets as community hubs that are attractive and useful to the communities they serve.
- Ensure the laws that protect marine environments are strictly enforced.
- Prioritise and support locally based fishing that is small-scale and sustainable such as the recent certification of a sustainable Manila Clam fishery in Poole harbour.
- Support small-scale farming and seek funding to support community farms and the reintroduction of council farms.

## 2. Connecting our communities: Transport and digital infrastructure

In today's world we are connected as much by virtual means as by physical means, meaning that mobile signal (3G or 4G) and broadband are as vitally important as road and rail.

The decline of rural post offices and the retreat of bank branches and other services that underpin daily living make the issues of connectivity and access worse for a growing number of coastal and rural communities and market towns.

So-called 'Superfast' broadband of 24Mbps (megabits per second) or more, is now available to 97% of Dorset premises and yet 21% of people in Dorset are offline, with about half of those having never been online.

Volunteer schemes like digital champions provide valuable support but they're largely reliant on local libraries, which remain under threat of closure due to Tory Austerity, to provide access to WiFi and a place to learn.

Access to full-fibre networks in the Dorset County Council area is just over 3%. Full-fibre connections that can deliver speeds greater than 1Gbps are even more reliable than copper-based networks and are cheaper to maintain and operate. They are also important for supporting high capacity mobile broadband, particularly future 5G networks.

Whilst not necessarily cheap or good for the environment, rising bus and train fares and continual cuts to bus services mean that for many the car is the only way they can get to work or study, go shopping or socialise, or see friends and family – all of which are often located further afield than in urban areas.

In the Dorset Council area, 41.6% of households have two or more cars or vans, 43.2% of households have at least one car or van and 15.2%, often the most vulnerable or economically disadvantaged, are reliant on public transport or lifts from others.

Despite this, Dorset's road network is one of the worst in the region. The main transport route for HGVs from North to South is dependent on a C road running through the village of Melbury Abbas, which is notorious for traffic jams.

Not only does this represent a disincentive to businesses wishing to transport goods and services in, out and around Dorset, it also endangers the local people as on-call ambulances and fire engines have been delayed there in the past.

It also means that it's currently easier and less stressful to bypass Dorset and head to more accessible tourist destinations in Devon and Cornwall than it is to visit one of the many beautiful tourist spots along our famous Jurassic coastline.

If you're under 18 or a young person who struggles to pay high car insurance premiums, or retired and perhaps a little frailer than you once were, or someone who has never learned to drive that now finds themselves unable to find a lift, or someone that just isn't tech savvy, you can be left with limited opportunities to connect to or access the benefits from services and markets.

This can prevent many people from leading richer lives by depriving them of opportunity, stimulation, and human interaction. It can also add to the cost of delivering public services as more needs to be done to get to people or get them to the services they need.

A Labour Council will:

- Bring public transport services back into public ownership and back under democratic control.
- Remove unnecessary traffic from our roads by promoting the use of buses and trains and by promoting the implementation of car share schemes within all public sector organisations in Dorset.
- Designate and protect bus routes of critical community value, including those that serve local schools and hospitals, and work towards ensuring that no major changes to rail or bus services are implemented without first seeking the opinion and consent of passengers affected by any proposed changes.

- Introduce electric vehicle mileage quotas for bus services with the aim of the services being 100% electric by 2030.
- Ensure parity of access to free school transport for 16–18 year olds, including the guarantee of a place on the bus to attend their nearest or most suitable school or college.
- Protect SEN school transport provision.
- Prioritise park and ride solutions to town centre parking.
- Provide a park and ride solution for Council workers in Dorchester.
- Provide subsidised bus pass provision for women denied by Government fair access to their pensions benefits as highlighted by the campaign Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI).
- Provide electric vehicle grant support for drivers in rural areas who commit to participating in community transport schemes.
- Seek funding for the installation of electric car charging points, making the most remote areas, rather than the most populous, the highest priority with a target of at least 100 new Electric Vehicle charge points across the County by 2021.
- Phase out diesel taxis by not granting licences to any diesel taxis. Put the safety of our communities at the heart of decisions made about our transport infrastructure by consulting with blue light services and acting on the advice given.
- Work with Councillors from neighbouring local authorities from across the political spectrum to open up our rural economy to good jobs and economic prosperity by making the championing of a solution to Dorset's North/South road network the number one investment priority for the region.
- Hold utility companies to account for the major disruptions that roadworks cause to local people going about their daily lives by tightening controls and increasing fines for those that try to play fast and loose with the rules.
- Consult on the introduction of 20mph zones in residential areas to keep

pedestrians safe and emissions down.

- Promote the development and extension of traffic-free trailways and a network of safe walking and cycling routes.
- Support the keeping of a guard on all trains that serve our stations and, through the Local Government Association, press rail operators to remove any plans to reduce this provision.
- Appoint a new Cycling Champion so that the views of cyclists can be heard and more people are encouraged to cycle.
- Provide support to the Royal Mail and the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters to find the best ways of maintaining the existing number of Post Office outlets and serving those who need the services the most.

### 3. Homes and communities

The country is in a housing crisis and hasn't built enough homes for our people for the last thirty years.

According to SHELTER, there are over 4,700 people on the housing list in Dorset. Despite this, the Tory led Councils have failed to address demand.

In North Dorset, for example, the Tory-led District Council failed to meet the five year land supply for housing, opening the door to development without the need for local consultation and meaning that local people have even less say in what's built on their doorstep than they do already.

At the Dorchester Brewery site, builders were able to exploit loopholes that the Conservatives introduced with changes to clause 106, to build 350 houses without the provision of so called 'affordable housing' by simply saying that it will cost too much.

With house prices as much as twelve times the typical salary for the region, it's often impossible for people working in Dorset to buy their own homes.

There are 66 Dorset neighbourhoods in the national list of most deprived areas for access to housing and services. Twenty-one are in West Dorset and twenty are in North Dorset, reflecting rurality and distance to services impeded by poor transport infrastructure.

Increasingly high prices in the private rental sector make it difficult for many people to save for a deposit. Insecure tenancies and inflated agency fees make it difficult for private sector tenants to speak out about the quality and condition of their homes lest they find themselves evicted without the financial means to find somewhere new to live.

With low potential in the local market, estate agents market homes in Dorset to buyers in London or further afield. These are often second homes that remain empty for long periods throughout the year.

Families and young people from rural areas feel they have to move away

from the communities they grew up in due to low wages and lack of affordable housing options. This is changing the demographics of rural Dorset and damages the viability of local services and businesses.

At current rates we can expect well over half of the population could be over sixty-five within the next ten to twenty years.

Adaptable, flexible housing options are critical to ensuring that older people can still live in their communities, receiving help and support from their families and support networks.

There is widespread recognition that mass developments are often just dumped on our communities with little regard to integration with existing place providing the necessary facilities that make a community, or the local public services needed to support a larger towns or villages.

People in Dorset want their homes to be cost-efficient to run and they also want them to have as little environmental impact as possible; however, according to the Rural Housing Association, fuel poverty is higher in the most remote rural areas as many communities are off the grid and reliant on fuel oils for cooking and heating.

Our homes and our communities also need to feel safe but, since the Tories came to power, our police service has seen big cuts to frontline provision.

Dorset Police are overworked and overstretched with the lowest number of officers since 1981 having to cope with perennial hotspots like rural crime and marine crime, while also trying to get to grips with newer problems like county lines drug networks.

A Labour Council will:

- Build council homes for rent and bring housing association stock back under democratic control.
- Enhance the neighbourhood planning process so that people have a say on the challenges that the country needs every community to address, from energy supply to flood adaptation, and can have a direct input into a strategic plan for infrastructure development.

- Raise awareness and help scale up delivery of community-led housing and, where it is necessary and local need is clear, the Dorset Council and Town and Parish Councils should consider buying small, disused plots of land to build council homes on small-scale developments built by small and medium- sized local building firms or trades co-operatives.
- Develop plans to make the provision of Council owned plots a stipulation for planning consent for medium and large-scale developments over a certain square acreage. Council owned properties can then be built on these plots by small and medium sized local building firms or trades co- operatives to provide homes for those in need and generate a rental income that will be ringfenced for further investment in housing stock.
- Take an affordable housing contribution from sites smaller than 10 homes.
- Ensure that all new council homes and those being delivered in partnership with Housing Associations are not only energy efficient but also energy generating and future-proofed with solar panels and electric car charging points fitted as standard.
- Protect the Rural Exception Site policy, which allows small sites to be used for affordable housing in perpetuity, where sites would not normally be used for housing, to provide homes for local people.
- Campaign to ensure that new buildings are manufactured to BREEM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) specifications, and consider adherence to these regulations when assessing planning applications.
- Call for a review of brownfield sites and options for redesignation to increase housing development options before any further building on flood plains or greenbelt.
- Carry out an up-to-date strategic housing and health needs assessment to determine what provision is required to meet the housing and health needs of those who are homeless or at risk of becoming so.
- Use legislation to make empty properties available for use and introduce a 'buy back' scheme to take back suitable housing and add it to the housing stock.

- Raise council tax on empty second properties and remove any discounts they may attract.
- Increase council tax on holiday homes that are vacant for more than four months of the year and invest the revenue in alleviating fuel poverty by providing solar panelling to low income, lower value homes.
- Introduce a 'fuel oil' council tax levy on large properties that do not invest in solar or other renewable energy sources.
- Work with local charities and other organisations to formulate a proposal for the use of empty homes and other public buildings that may be available as crisis accommodation for rough sleepers.
- Withdraw punitive Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) which seek to criminalise those without a home and instead introduce a Housing First Policy for housing rough sleepers. This will include working with the voluntary sector to create a one-stop shop for homelessness services, introducing training flats for former rough sleepers, outreach services, emergency short term crisis shelters and support for households affected by the move to universal credit to prevent them from becoming homeless.
- Help young people leaving care and support their start into independent living by exempting them from paying council tax and provide other reductions for those on low incomes.
- Improve confidence in the rental market, consult on introducing a new Tenants' Charter to raise awareness of tenants' rights and encourage the formation of Tenants' Associations. These rights could include the availability of longer-term tenancies and a requirement on landlords to register with the local authority to be granted a five-year licence to rent out their property on the understanding that the property meets certain agreed standards and a transparent and agreed formula for rent increases.
- Enforce fines against rogue landlords.
- Put pressure on the Government, through the Local Government Association, to ensure that the Local Housing Allowance more accurately reflects the real market rents in our area.

- Look at improving the provision of home adaptation grants to enable older residents to maintain their independence at home for as long as they wish.
- Introduce an insulation programme/boiler discount scheme for local residents to tackle fuel poverty.
- Ensure a unified and joined-up approach to planning across the local authority that recognises the unique character and needs of each of the communities it serves.
- Seek closer working relationships and involvement of Town and Parish Councils, triggering a renaissance of democracy at this level, with the aim of devolving more decision making and budgets to the democratically elected representatives of communities, especially in relation to town and community planning.
- Guarantee that every one of our councillors will hold regular surgeries and offer a pledge to answer constituents' queries within a set time limit.
- Establish Community Panels across the area that can be asked for their views on the council's activities and wider public services.
- Commission a Dorset-wide review of community spaces to ensure that every community has reasonable access to a community hall or other space where they can come together.
- Ensure that the Council engages in meaningful consultations with under-represented groups and those directly affected by any proposed measures it is seeking to introduce.
- Look at the viability of introducing weekly refuse collections during the summer months.
- Work with responsible dog owners to campaign for zero tolerance of dog mess in public areas and fine those owners who do not clean up after their dogs.
- Work with community groups like 'Men in Sheds' and the WI to create re-use and repair outlets for local people to fix and maintain their appliances, furniture and other household items.

- Build a strong and sustainable partnership with Dorset Police by supporting community policing and opposing Tory cuts to police officers and PCSOs.

## 4. Caring for a healthier, happier Dorset

In the Dorset Council area, 28.3% of our population is already over sixty-five. This is expected to grow by 1.6% per annum over the next ten years (18,500 people), with a fifth of this group set to be 85+.

In 2017/18 migration gave us a net population gain of around 3,100. The greatest increases coming from retirees in the 60–69 age group and then children.

This will add to increased demand for NHS and care services that are already at breaking point after eight years of Tory and Lib Dem austerity.

One in five of Dorset's population consider that they have a long-term health problem or disability.

During the course of a year, one in four of us will experience some form of mental health condition.

Dorset residents currently provide 11.9% of unpaid care for a family member, of which 9.4% provide up to fifty hours per week and 2.5% over fifty hours.

Human health and social work activities represent the second largest employment sector in Dorset, providing work for 13.5% of working age adults in employment yet recruitment, particularly in rural areas, is extremely challenging.

It's estimated that by 2025 there will be 10,100 people aged over sixty-five living with dementia in the local authority area and an estimated 3,000 carers from the shrinking workforce will be required to support them.

Loneliness and isolation can be exacerbated in old age but it's not just a problem for the over sixty-fives.

One in every twenty (5%) English adults reports feeling lonely often or always, according to Office of National Statistics data released in April. An

additional 16% said they felt lonely some of the time and almost a quarter said they felt lonely occasionally and figures released earlier this month suggest 14% of children aged ten to twelve say they often feel lonely.

In the Dorset Council area almost 2/3 (62%) of adults are overweight or obese as are 28% of primary school children in year 6, 14% of adults still smoke and admission rates for alcohol related harm continue to rise year on year.

A Labour Council will:

- Support Labour's policy nationally to reinstate the NHS as a publicly provided and publicly funded service, roll back privatisation and reinstate clinical need as the guiding principle.
- Fight for the protection of acute hospital services and the retention of A&E, maternity and paediatric services at Poole, the retention of maternity and paediatric services at Dorset County, the retention of Community Hospital provision and/or beds across the local authority area and the retention of GP surgeries, particularly in rural areas where there are no accessible alternatives.
- Champion full democratic accountability for any proposed changes to Dorset NHS services through genuine consultation and full scrutiny by elected representatives across the County.
- Work with NHS partners to lobby central government for proper funding for the NHS in Dorset to meet needs and oppose the principle of cutting services to meet inadequate funding.
- Lobby NHS partners to seek funding to reinstate services that have been closed, including Community Hospital provision and/or beds at Ferndown, Portland and Wareham
- Lobby NHS partners to reinstate or maintain a full range of treatments, including hip and knee replacement, cataract operations, interventional treatments for back pain and other treatments that were deemed clinically effective for years but are now under threat or have been stopped for financial reasons.

- Oppose the sale of NHS estate properties and land.
- Publicly challenge central government initiatives that incentivise closure and privatisation of NHS services.
- Support close working of NHS and Social Care staff at the point of delivery of services for residents but oppose systemic changes that facilitate privatisation and reduce democratic accountability.
- Bring care services back into public ownership and under democratic control.
- Work with NHS partners to ensure there is a credible plan to recruit and retain public sector NHS and Social Care staff to meet Dorset's needs, including initiatives to support training where there is a deficit
- Embrace the promotion of caring as a career under the 'Proud to Care' banner. We'll go beyond a snappy slogan and advertising spin by creating careers in care that workers can be proud of. We'll do this by signing up to Unison's Ethical Care and Residential Care Charters which commit to ending fifteen minute care visits, providing care workers with paid travel time and offering the dignity and security of a real living wage.
- Sign the National Pensioners Convention's Dignity Code which outlines how older people should be treated in care and require all remaining commissioned service providers to adopt its key principles.
- Consult widely with disabled people and their organisations, carers and service users about the Government's much-delayed proposals for long-term funding for adult social care which is now expected in a 'Green Paper' in early 2019.
- Work with the Clinical Commissioning Group and local GP surgeries to investigate ways in which waiting times can be reduced.
- Expand a Deferred Payment Scheme to those facing residential and nursing home costs, which would recoup the cost of care fees after any property has been sold. This means no-one will pay for residential or nursing care while they are alive.

- Improve the support, advice and information services for unpaid carers, including respite services.
- Expand the trips and falls prevention service, meals on wheels provision and use of the Better Care Fund to improve the provision of equipment and adaptations to keep older and disabled people safely in their homes for as long as possible.
- Adopt Health Impact Assessments as part of development plans to encourage new GP provision, open spaces and quality housing to create healthier communities and explore the benefits and feasibility of intergenerational care facilities with care being provided on the same site, bringing older and younger people together.
- Ringfence Dorset's £2.9m share of the 2019 'Adult Social Care Grant', which is not ringfenced, with no reporting requirement, and add it to the £1.7m 'Winter Pressures Grant' for the provision of social care services.
- Continue to press the Government, through the Local Government Association, for adequate, sustained, ring-fenced funding for social care, so that we're not reliant on windfall funding that fails to meet our needs.
- Work with local charities, faith groups, social care providers and others to publish an action plan to tackle loneliness.
- Address economic, social and environmental health inequalities through programmes to tackle smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, obesity and unsafe communities. Encourage greater levels of fitness among the population, improved child development and targeted support for young families and isolated older people.
- Work with Citizens Advice and other local organisations to train and fund advocates to support people facing possible sanctions under the benefits system, including work capability assessments, and campaign for the end of this system.

## 5. Improving education and supporting children and young people

Dorset schools have been slammed by Ofsted's Regional Director as the 'worst in the region', pointing the finger of accountability firmly at the Tory led County Council for not providing the supportive challenge that schools need for improvement.

In 2017, 43% of 11 year olds did not get to the expected standards by the end of their primary education and 31% failed to achieve good development in Early Years Foundation Stage.

It's therefore unsurprising that 20 neighbourhoods in the Dorset Council area are in the 20% most deprived nationally for education.

The Tory Government has interfered with education services as a way of introducing a business model into education and reducing the power of local councils to intervene and raise standards.

A move to focus simply on exams and remove music and the arts from the curriculum has had a negative impact on our children's education.

We also know that many young people now feel under tremendous pressure and suffer greater levels of stress and anxiety than previous generations.

Around 640 pupils are designated with a Special Educational Need defined as Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), many of whom are feeling the effects of school cuts first, as additional support is withdrawn.

There are 3,700 children living in workless households and 14% of primary school claim Free School Meals. Many of them are visibly affected by food and clothing poverty, especially in those areas where the relentless Universal Credit roll out has led to an increased use of foodbanks.

There are around 450 children in care in Dorset, about one in twenty of whom don't go into suitable accommodation when leaving care.

A chronic shortfall in foster parents in Dorset means that more expensive 'agency' fostering is currently necessary to fill the gap.

Youth Centres have faced closure as funding has been slashed, meaning that many of the most vulnerable people are now less able to access education and support for a range of life skills and public health issues like drugs, sexual health and relationships.

Labour will:

- Oppose further academisation of schools and maintain and develop what's left of the Local Education Authority support infrastructure so that academies can be brought back under local democratic control.
- Work with early years providers and others to promote opportunities for greater links between the generations, for example by locating nurseries in new extra care housing schemes for older people.
- Review every aspect of schooling from nursery provision, breakfast clubs, longer school days, timing of school holidays, the cost of school uniforms and establish what additional support might be needed for parents who are working.
- Work with schools and parents to introduce a fairer school absence system, rather than fining parents for taking their children on holiday during term time which can hurt families on a budget.
- Ensure existing Library services are maintained and improved.
- Give all Reception children a library card to help improve literacy and promote greater educational attainment.
- Offer free bus passes for all under 25s and ensure school transport is affordable to all.
- Look at innovative ways in which youth services can be improved to meet the needs of 21st Century young people and commit to opening/re-opening of local authority youth clubs.
- Introduce a new public campaign to encourage more families to come

forward for adoption and fostering.

- Appoint a Young Carers' Champion to be their voice in the area and to advocate for additional support.
- Reinstate CAMS (Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality) and work with the NHS to expand the support available to schools and young people to tackle the growing mental health problems they face.
- Work with school admissions authorities to agree criteria which lead to a more balanced pupil intake, with schools having a much wider ability range of children, and work with schools to develop a protocol for situations where a school has to exclude a pupil but retains the responsibility for finding a better suited school place and for monitoring the child's progress there.
- Monitor and rigorously scrutinise the practice of 'off-rolling' and provide appropriate support to parents that have no option other than to home-school their children.
- Work with local schools and a wide range of criminal justice agencies to promote restorative practice models to minimise avoidable exclusions and absences from schools and colleges.
- Encourage schools to share their facilities for local communities to use to come together and also decrease social isolation.
- Support families by setting up education in 'the basics' such as buying and cooking food, dealing with money/bills and using the internet.

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