

# BRIEFING: PUBLIC SERVICES

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you... for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (Jeremiah 29:7) How do we live together as people with different priorities, resources and needs? The writer of Jeremiah recognised the deep truth that our well-being is found alongside the well-being of others. Public services, such as housing, social care, the NHS and education, help those who are the youngest, the oldest, poorest and the sickest, so enriching all of our lives together. We find our welfare in the welfare of others.



Research predicts that the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease will increase to over 1 million by 2025 and over 2 million by 2051, leading to more pressures on health and social care.

## CONTEXT

This election takes place in the context of an overall estimated 10% fall in spending by

government departments over the last decade. Some departments were protected, others suffered deeper cuts, and, if a rising population is taken into account, the fall is nearer to 15%. Going into this election there are promises from many parties of an end to austerity and higher spending on public services.

Yet there are ongoing consequences of changes to expenditure. School budgets are stretched, with class sizes increasing. There is evidence that pupils with special needs are struggling to access mainstream schooling due to difficulties funding the necessary support.

Many sectors are experiencing staffing shortages, particularly nursing and social care. Changing needs and ageing populations are leading to increased demands. The challenge of funding social care in the long-term appears to remain beyond short term politics.

We are experiencing a housing crisis, with insufficient good quality affordable housing available. Increasing rents in the private sector, housing benefit which does not cover people's housing costs in some areas, and a sharp decline in affordable social housing have all contributed. Rising house prices lock many people out of homeownership, and **rough sleeping has more than doubled since 2010.**



Almost one third of English local authority secondary schools were in deficit in 2017-18, almost four times that of 2014.

## QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

- As needs change and populations age, how will your party reach long term decisions about social care for the good of all?
- How will your party ensure that there is sufficient good quality affordable housing available to those that need it?

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

What is your experience of public services? How might it differ from the experiences of other people?

People disagree about spending on different public services. What are the values you draw on in making these decisions?

In 2017/18 in England, 6,463 homes for social rent were built despite 1.15 million families being on the list for social housing.

