



# Winter plan for jobs, incomes and communities

**Coronavirus has upturned our lives and this winter is set to be the most challenging chapter of the crisis yet. If left unchecked, the virus will overwhelm our National Health Service and cause untold death and suffering. But it will also wreck the economy, as people become too afraid to travel, work or socialise for fear of their own safety, and that of their family and community.**

The economy exists to serve people, not the other way round. Thinking about the pandemic as a choice between our health or our economy will ultimately cost us both. Until we have an effective vaccine programme or more sophisticated means of controlling, mitigating and adapting to Covid-19, the best thing for our health and the economy is to suppress the virus.

But having to reduce economic activity is hugely challenging. Ten years of austerity and stagnant wages, followed by ten weeks of lockdown, have pushed millions of families to the edge even before a second wave of the pandemic. Rarely have so many people suddenly and simultaneously experienced the same fears over how they will feed their families, how they will heat their homes and whether they will have jobs to return to in the new year.

We can choose to address those fears. Sustained government intervention to protect jobs and incomes can alleviate the pain and prevent it from becoming permanent. Germany, France, Denmark and other major economies recognise this and are taking action. The UK must too.

Our government has listened to calls to strengthen support schemes, showing that we can protect people's livelihoods while we fight the pandemic. But it must go further to prevent millions from facing intolerable hardship this winter and to set us on course for a better future.

## **We need action to:**

### **Protect incomes**

Provide a living income that guarantees at least £227 a week to those that need it, so that everyone can live in dignity during the worst of the pandemic.

### **Protect jobs**

Replace arbitrary job protection deadlines with a guarantee that workers can be furloughed for as long as, and wherever, there are severe social distancing restrictions in place.

### **Create jobs**

Invest now to create over a million new low-carbon jobs and reskill people to take these up in the next 18 months.

Everyone agrees we must build back better. But how we respond to this crisis today will define what we can do tomorrow. In Spring, the job was only half done – with millions falling through cracks that are yet to be repaired. **This time we have to get it right: to look out for each other, to strengthen the systems that support us all when times are tough, and to design a better future.**

# Protect jobs

Replace arbitrary job protection deadlines with a guarantee that workers can be furloughed for as long as, and wherever, there are severe social distancing restrictions in place.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- The Job Retention Scheme (JRS) should remain in place until 30 days after any national or local area moves below tier 3 level restrictions.
- Outside of tier 3 restrictions, the JRS should be made available to employers whose premises are forced to close by a localised outbreak.
- Where the level of lock down is below tier 3, a strengthened version of the Job Support Scheme should be made available to all business that have suffered a fall in demand as a result of the pandemic.

# Protect incomes

Provide a living income that guarantees at least £227 a week to those that need it, so that everyone can live in dignity during the worst of the pandemic.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- Every working age adult could apply for a weekly payment worth £227 per week, equivalent to the minimum income standard estimated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Those already on benefits, or eligible through sick pay, would get an automatic top-up to their main payment.
- For all other new applicants, payments would be non-conditional and non-means tested at the point of access through the advanced payment system of universal credit, meaning no five-week wait.
- For those not claiming universal credit or other income support, and on incomes above £227 per week, the payment would act like an interest-free loan, with the difference above £227 per week paid back through future tax.

# Create jobs

Invest now to create more than a million new low-carbon jobs and reskill people to take these up in the next 18 months.

### KEY PROPOSALS

- The government should look to create new jobs, directly or indirectly, in excess of the 1.1 million rise in unemployment expected by the end of 2021.
- A £28 billion investment over 18 months in green infrastructure, such as energy efficiency, reforestation and transport, would create 400,000 jobs.
- A £15-20 billion investment over 18 months in social infrastructure, such as care workers, nursing assistants and teaching assistants, would create 700,000 jobs.
- Free training for these opportunities should be available to anyone in receipt of support from the Job Retention Scheme, Job Support Scheme or Minimum Income Guarantee.