

# Why should I not vote Conservative? 29 nasty policies you shouldn't forget in the 2017 general election

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The 2017 general election is about "strong leadership" - at least, that's [what Theresa May would have you believe](#).

The Tory leader is touring the country with slogans, pledges and 'bribes' honed by her well-paid army of spin doctors.

It might even be tempting you to vote Conservative.

But what about things they DON'T want you to think about in the polling booth?

What about the things they'd rather you forgot about entirely?

We've compiled a list of the cruelest, most unfair and downright nasty policies Conservative governments have brought in - nearly all of them in the last two years.

Everyone should remember these when they go to the ballot box on June 8.

## 1. The Bedroom Tax



Jayson and Jacqueline Carmichael won a Supreme Court battle against the charge (Photo: Andy Stenning/Daily Mirror)

The cruel tax was launched by the Tories in April 2013 and increases the rent people have to pay if they have "extra" rooms.

Of course, the Tories don't like it being called a 'tax', so they've spun it as the "removal of the spare room subsidy." But critics point out there's a shortage of smaller flats for people to 'downsize' to - so they're stuck paying higher rates.

It hits **working-age people** who live in **social housing** and claim **housing benefit** .

Under the scheme social housing tenants have **14%** less net rent covered by housing benefit if they have a "spare" room.

It means some victims having to find an extra **£1,560 a year** .

And it's prompted a string of legal battles by disabled people including Jayson and Jacqueline Carmichael, who need to sleep in separate rooms due to Jacqueline's spina bifida.

- [What is the Bedroom Tax and why is it a problem? Full guide as victims win court victory](#)

## 2. Denying disability benefit to 165,000 people



Controversial comments from Tory members on **disability benefits**

Tory ministers rewrote the law earlier this year to **deny increased benefit payments to 165,000 people**.

Two tribunals had ruled Personal Independence Payment (PIP) - which helps disabled people fund their living costs - should be expanded.

But ministers blocked the rulings because implementing them would cost £3.7bn by 2022.

Disabled people are assessed for PIP using a 'points' system, where 8 points get a basic rate and 12 points an enhanced rate.

The main tribunal said more points should be available for **people who suffer "overwhelming psychological distress"** when travelling alone.

[Jeremy Corbyn](#) branded the decision to disregard it "nasty", and the government was accused of delaying a debate on the changes until it was too late to stop them.

- [Tory ministers have rewritten the law to deny increased disability benefit payments to more than 150,000 people](#)

### 3. Scrapping housing benefit for 18-21 year olds



Charities have warned the change will leave thousands at risk of becoming homeless

Since April 2017, jobseekers aged 18 to 21 can no longer get **Housing Benefit** to help with their rent.

It is supposedly to stop them sliding onto a "life on benefits" and there are a number of exemptions.

But Centrepoin<sup>t</sup> warns it could "force thousands of young people onto the streets" and cost more than it saves.

And the association for landlords - who are actually paid the money - says it will put landlords off letting to under-22s.

The government admits 10,000 young people a year are set to be hit, with research showing it could be as high as 18,000.

- [Tory plan to axe housing benefit for under-22s 'could force thousands onto the streets'](#)

### 4. The benefit cap





The benefit cap is a limit on the **total benefits a household can receive**.

Ex-Chancellor George Osborne announced it in 2010 at a rate of **£26,000 a year**.

That was reduced last year to **£20,000 a year** (£384.62 a week) for couples and families outside Greater London.

Between its 2013 rollout and November 2015, **69,900 households** lost some housing benefit due to the cap, the House of Commons Library says.

Critics say it fuels social cleansing, chasing families on low incomes out of large swathes of London up to 100 miles away.

- [What is the new benefit cap and will it affect me? The 'disgraceful' Tory cut explained](#)

## 5. Massive hikes to tuition fees



It costs more than three times more to study for a degree now than it did in 2010 (Photo: Rex)

University tuition fees were raised **from a maximum of £3,000 a year to £9,000** under the Tory-Lib Dem Coalition.

Since then they have been raised again after universities won permission to lift the £9,000 cap with inflation.

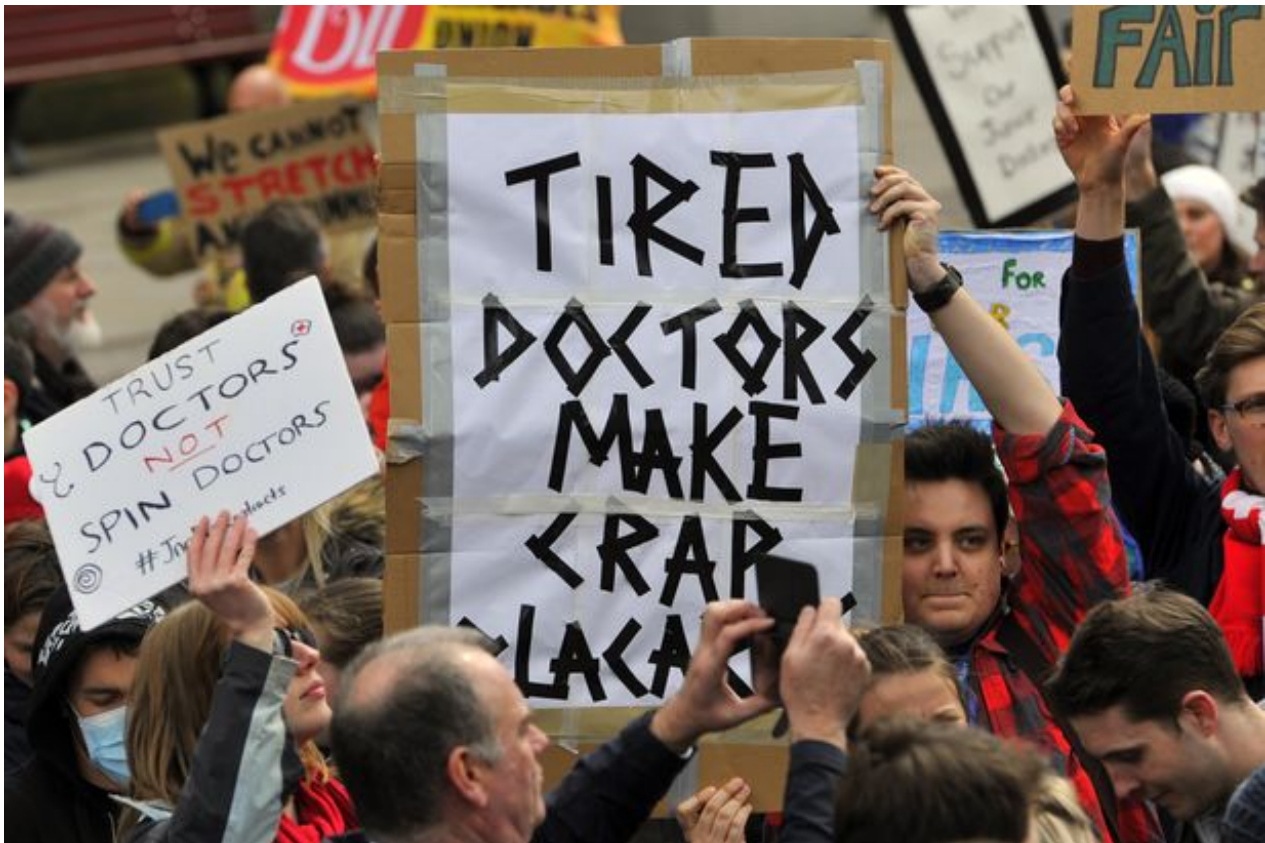
That is set to raise fees as high as **£11,697 by 2025** - tipping the price of a top degree over £35,000 without any living costs.

New Education Secretary Justine Greening said the move would pour £12billion of investment into universities.

But Shadow Education Secretary Angela Rayner warned the cash would come from poor students' pockets, saying: "Quite simply, it is a tax on aspiration."

- [Tory tuition fees hike passes first hurdle as Labour fails in bid to block it](#)

## 6. Junior doctors' contracts



Junior doctors spent months going on and off picket lines warning about patient safety (Photo: MEN)

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt forced through new contracts against doctors' will last year as part of his plan for a "seven-day NHS".

Doctors staged months of strikes while the maths he used to justify the changes [was thrown into serious doubt](#).

He was accused of ignoring the BMA union's concerns and failing to engage in talks - an accusation he threw back at the BMA.

The new contract raises basic pay, but doctors say it slashes out of hours premiums and will **endanger patients by leaving rota gaps**.

Since the row cooled off, a report has shown [record numbers of medics are leaving the NHS](#) after their foundation training.

- [Fury as Jeremy Hunt rams through rejected contract in hammer blow to junior doctors](#)

## 7. School cuts





Theresa May is pushing grammar schools - but cutting other school budgets by 3% (Photo: PA)

A consultation unveiled in early 2017 planned to slash funding at **5,000 schools in England by 3%**.

The cuts were part of a new funding formula that claims to 'level out' inequality in the system.

But **poorer urban areas are hit harder than Tory shires**, and the EPI think tank warns once inflation is factored in, every school in England will see 'real terms' funding fall.

An open letter by 500 headteachers warned: "To make ends meet, head teachers will be forced to make staff redundant, cut subjects, increase class size and cut back on extracurricular activity."

Meanwhile, Theresa May is pouring more than £1billion into her pet project of free schools despite a report warning they're [creating capacity where it's not needed](#).

Some of these will be grammar schools, which Labour brand a "ladder for the few" who pass a test aged 11.

- [500 school headteachers write open letter to Theresa May warning education system will collapse under £3bn cuts plan](#)

## 8. £30-a-week cuts to the sick



The changes treat sick and disabled people as if they're jobseekers (Photo: PA)

A major plan to **cut disability benefits** took force in April 2017 despite repeated attempts to block it.

People claiming disability benefit Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) will get **£29.05 less every week** if they're deemed fit for '**work-related activity**' (WRAG).

They will get £73.10, the same as jobseekers' allowance, instead of £102.15.

The plan has outraged charities, Labour and the House of Lords, who all say ESA claimants need more support than jobseekers.

Mind says the £1,500-a-year cut "will make their lives even more difficult and will do nothing to help them return to work".

Existing claimants are unaffected unless there is a break in their claims of 12 weeks or more.

- [The 5 Tory benefit cuts taking force this week that could affect YOU](#)

## 9. Legal aid cuts





Some of the changes affected women who had suffered domestic violence (Photo: Rex)

The government brought in a raft of reforms in 2013 to slash legal aid, which **helps poorer people get justice.**

According to Chambers Student, the yearly budget was slashed by £320million - and several of the changes have been challenged in court.

Judges said a decision to block some prisoners from getting legal aid [was unlawful](#).

And a rule that forced domestic violence victims to show evidence before getting a lawyer [was declared flawed by the Court of Appeal](#).

- [Yet another prisons policy by Tory Chris Grayling could be scrapped after a humiliating court defeat](#)

## 10. Making rape victims prove their ordeal



The 'rape clause' has attracted widespread anger from campaigners (Photo: Getty)

A rule grimly nicknamed the **rape clause** was introduced in April 2017 as part of cuts to tax credits.

Claimants can now only be paid tax credits **for their first two children**, with exceptions for twins or children born of rape.

However, rape victims must prove their ordeal by providing references and "evidence" in an **8-page government form**.

That has prompted outrage, with the SNP [leading protests against the policy](#) and raising it in Parliament.

Yet Theresa May has said "fairness" underpins the policy and the government rejected a 25,000-strong petition to scrap it.

- [Victims now have to prove they've been raped to get child tax credit by filling in this 8-page Government form](#)

## 11. Calling £450,000 homes 'affordable'



David Cameron and George Osborne launched the flagship scheme despite anger (Photo: Getty Images)

Last year [David Cameron](#) launched his flagship **Starter Homes** - offering first-time buyers a new property for £250,000 (£450,000 in London) after a 20% state-backed discount.

But these will count towards 'affordable home' quotas - meaning they will oust social housing for rent.

The **government's former housing chief**, Lord Kerslake, warned they would help people who can afford a deposit "at the expense of lower-income people in desperate need".

Tory MPs blocked a [last-ditch attempt to stop the move](#) in a bitter battle in Parliament.

- [New blow to social housing as Tory MPs wave through £450,000 'affordable' homes](#)

## 12. Scrapping the Human Rights Act





Theresa May still has the Human Rights Act in her crosshairs after Brexit is finished (Photo: REUTERS)

The Tory plan to scrap the **Human Rights Act** and replace it with a so-called **British Bill of Rights** has been in Tory manifestos since 2010.

The plan has been shelved until after [Brexit](#) - but once we're out of the EU it'll be back with a vengeance.

The Act protects your right to **life, freedom of expression and religion, and education** - as well as protecting you from **slavery, torture and unreasonable bosses**.

Campaigners fear allowing the government of the day to pick and choose which rights they want to protect would let the Tories weaken rights if they become inconvenient.

- [Human Rights Act: Everything you need to know about YOUR rights - and how they will change](#)

### 13. Scrapping nurses' bursaries



Cuts to nurses' bursaries have been pushed through - and applications have declined (Photo: Getty)

In his 2015 spending review, George Osborne unveiled “disastrous” plans to scrap £6,000-a-year grants for student [nurses](#) and midwives.

It was supposedly done to allow more training places to open up.

But hours after the policy was announced, unions warned us it could prompt a recruitment crisis.

And figures later showed a 23% drop in applications, according to former Labour health chief Andy Burnham.

Tory peers killed off a bid to block the change in [their final act before the 2017 general election](#).

- [£6,000-a-year student nurse grants AXED in spending review prompting fears of an NHS recruitment crisis](#)

## 14. Trying to bring back fox hunting



Protesters massed outside Parliament as they tried to stop the move in 2015 (Photo: Getty)

As one of his first acts after winning an outright majority in 2015, [David Cameron](#) tried to weaken the **Hunting Act**.

The law banning fox hunting was introduced under Labour and has huge public support, according to polls.

But ex-PM Mr Cameron wanted to weaken it so an unlimited number of dogs, not just two, **could "flush" a fox from undergrowth**.

Activists said that would render the law almost useless, because if hounds rip apart a fox it can be called an accident.

In the end the vote was ditched after the [SNP](#) went against convention to oppose it (the law applies only to England).

Theresa May has not put the issue at the top of her in-tray. But in 2009 she told the BBC she supported fox hunting and would scrap the Act.

- [Fox hunting: Furious David Cameron slams Nicola Sturgeon for saving bloodsport ban](#)

## 15. Snooping on all your texts, e-mails and browsing records





Theresa May has defended the snoopers' charter to the hilt

The Investigatory Powers Bill - dubbed the **snoopers' charter** - hands the police and security services wide ranging powers to hack phones and snoop on the web-browsing histories of ordinary people.

Theresa May claimed the measures in the bill are essential to keep the British people safe from terrorists, paedophiles and serious criminals.

But critics say the powers it would grant to government, police and security agencies licence them to invade the privacy of anyone in the country with little oversight to whether the snooping is justified.

- [7 reasons you should be worried about Theresa May's snoopers' charter](#)

## 16. The great crackdown on unions



It's now harder for you to exercise your right to strike (Photo: PA)

Passed in summer 2016 after a bitter battle, the **Trade Union Act** was a wide-ranging crackdown on workers' rights.

It banned strikes unless 50% of all union members eligible to vote choose them - not 50% of those who vote, as before.

This meant the threshold to strike is now much higher than the threshold to run the country after a general election.

The law will also strangle funding to Labour by making union members 'opt-in' to political donations.

Slamming the changes to political funds, [Jeremy Corbyn](#) accused the Tories of trying to create a “Zombie democracy” built around a “one-party state”.

[Union boss warns he could have to break the law to fight Tories' strike crackdown](#)

## 17. Slashing green subsidies



Solar panels may be the future, but funding for them has been slashed (Photo: Getty)

In 2015 the Tories slashed funding for **small household solar panels** by 64%.

A £500m drop in 'feed-in tariffs' was confirmed after critics said the scheme had benefited middle-class families.

But Labour's shadow energy secretary Lisa Nandy said the cuts would "cost jobs, hold back a growing industry and undermine progress on climate change."

New **onshore wind farms** were also excluded from a subsidy scheme from 2016.

And the sell-off of the **Green Investment Bank** was announced in April 2017, prompting fears from the Lib Dems and Green Party that its help for the environment could be weakened.

- [Tories slash solar panel funding by 64% - burying the bad news on last day before Christmas break](#)

## 18. Only taking 480 child refugees





A child in the Calais Jungle camp - the sort Theresa May did not want to offer a home (Photo: Getty)

As the deadly **refugee crisis** of 2016 unfolded, Theresa May refused to accept any stranded children who had already made it into Europe.

She argued it would give Syrian refugees a reason to cross the Mediterranean in dangerous flimsy boats.

But Labour peer Alf Dubs, who fled the Nazis as a child, called on her to show humanity - including to children in the squalid Jungle camp in Calais.

Eventually the government backed down and accepted the '**Dubs amendment**' on one condition.

They rejected his call to take 3,000 refugees and said they should set the number instead.

Only much later did it emerge that number is only **480 children**.

- [Red-faced Tory ministers tear up their child refugees limit after getting the number wrong](#)

## 19. Scrapping child poverty targets



Iain Duncan Smith said "poverty" shouldn't be measured in terms of, er, "money" (Photo: PA)

Tory welfare slasher Iain Duncan Smith wanted to scrap child poverty targets being **measured in terms of money** .

Instead he planned to count the number of workless families and monitor levels of education alongside other social factors.

They were forced to keep measuring child poverty by Labour peers and campaigners - but they no longer have to let MPs scrutinise the figures in the House of Commons.

And have scrapped the targets for reducing child poverty in terms of household income - and chillingly erased the term 'Child Poverty' from the Child Poverty Act, renaming it the Life Chances Act.

- [Iain Duncan Smith is trying to erase the words 'child poverty' from the Child Poverty Act](#)

## 20. Trying to impose fees for court cases



Magistrates' courts like the one at Teesside (pictured) are coming under pressure (Photo: Daily Mirror)

More than 50 magistrates quit in disgust at **court fees**, a charge on people who've been through the justice system.

They hit small-time criminals of **flat fees of up to £1,000** - on top of any fines or compensation - which were five times lower if they pleaded guilty.

Critics warned that would encourage innocent people to plead guilty to end fears of a huge fee.

The fees were introduced in 2015 despite the outrage, and were eventually scrapped just a few months later.

- [Joy as Tories scrap criminal courts charge 'that made innocent people plead guilty'](#)

## 21. Cutting inheritance tax for the rich





George Osborne knows how to look after Britain's richest people (Photo: PA)

The Conservatives won the 2015 election promising to "fix the roof while the sun is shining".

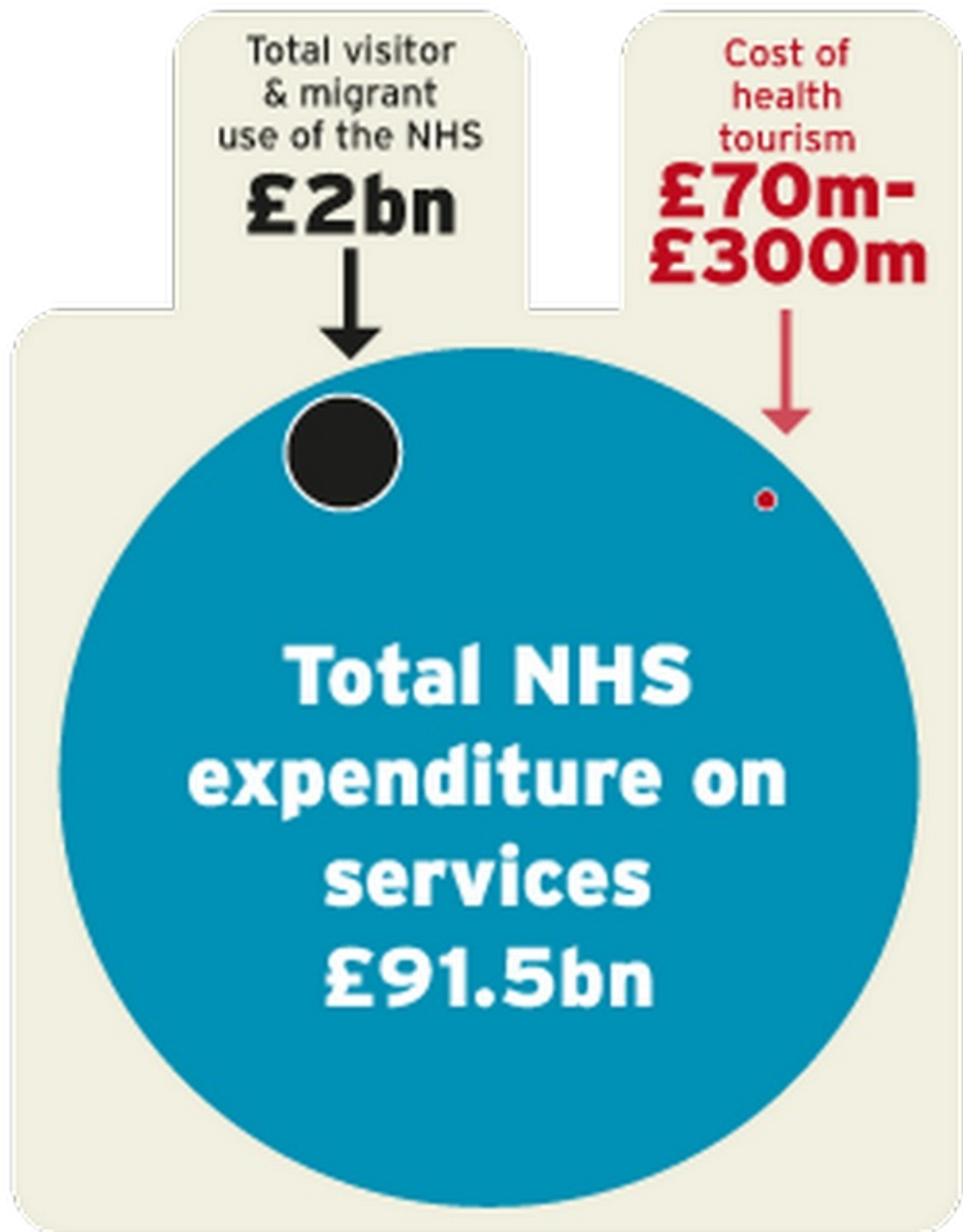
But there was one way they were happy to loosen the purse strings - **inheritance tax**.

One of George Osborne's first acts when he returned as Chancellor was to **let couples leave £350,000 more in property after they die** .

That means a total of **£1million** can now be left inheritance-tax-free, benefiting just 22,000 families, according to estimates.

The move was set to cost nearly £1billion a year, cash Labour says should be spent on schools and hospitals.

## **22. Making people show passports in hospital**



How much does health tourism cost the NHS compared to everything else?

In early 2017 it emerged new laws will make hospitals check patients' IDs to see if they are eligible for free NHS treatment, and charge up-front if they are not.

It's to crack down on **health tourism**, a favourite attack topic of right-wing politicians and commentators.

But how much of a problem is health tourism?

Research shows it is just a fraction of spending on other things in the NHS - agency contracts to plug staff gaps, for instance.

The total cost of foreigners using the NHS is £2billion, but only a small proportion of this is deliberate fraud or

evasion.

## 23. Turning landlords into immigration enforcers



Landlords are now having to act as an arm of immigration enforcement (Photo: PA)

**Right to Rent** was rolled out across England in 2016, and makes landlords establish their tenants have a right to be in the country by taking copies of **passports or identity cards**.

Failure to comply can lead to fines of up to £3,000 a tenant.

The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants warned the scheme was "clearly discriminatory" and "putting landlords in an impossible position".

Andy Burnham, shadow home secretary at the time, compared it to writing 'no dogs, no blacks, no Irish' in a 1950s guest house window.

- [Theresa May's landlord immigration checks 'like saying no dogs, no blacks, no Irish' claims Andy Burnham](#)

## 24. Social care cuts





Don't forget the social care crisis - it's been coming down the pipe for years (Photo: Getty)

The first few months of 2017 were dominated by an issue that's been coming down the pipe for years - social care cuts.

Theresa May had boasted she was giving the NHS £10billion of extra cash.

But at the same time councils were having their funds slashed. This matters because they look after the over-burdened **social care system** for the elderly and infirm.

Experts said more than half the £10bn was being swallowed up by hospital beds filled with vulnerable people with nowhere to go.

Overall 'real terms' spending has plummeted 8.4% since the Tories took power, the House of Commons Library said.

Only after months of pressure did Chancellor Philip Hammond announce a £2bn fund in his 2017 Budget, but [charities said it still wouldn't be enough](#).

- [Brutal Tory cuts slice £1bn off real spending on social care - despite Theresa May's boasts](#)

## 25. The public sector pay freeze



Public sector workers have marched for more pay for years, but it hasn't worked (Photo: PA)

Public sector workers first **had their pay frozen for two years** thanks to Tory austerity in 2010.

From 2012, pay rises were then **capped at 1% a year** for an astonishing seven years to 2019/20.

It means **civil servants, nurses, teachers, police, armed forces** and the like who entered work on a good wage could well be worse off in real terms in their early 30s.

## 26. The benefit freeze



A massive range of benefits are frozen - so in reality, they're all being cut (Photo: Getty)

Nearly all working-age benefits are **frozen at their 2015-16 rates for four years.**

That means in reality, **benefits are being slashed automatically** because the pound in your pocket can buy less with each passing year.

This isn't just about being out of work - it includes benefits to help people on low incomes too.

A government impact assessment obtained by the Lib Dems says the average claimant will be £6 a week worse off.

And overall, it will slash £3.5billion from the welfare bill by 2020.

## **27. NHS 'efficiency savings'**





Head of NHS slaps down PM's claim the NHS is getting 'more than it asked for'

The Tories baulk at any suggestion they're cutting the NHS - they say funding is at record levels.

But at the same time, hospital trusts are being asked to find "efficiency savings" of £22billion.

That has led several to draw up so-called **Sustainability and Transformation Plans** over spring 2017 that suggest closing down key services.

And with privatisation bringing big costs and more people living longer, health chiefs say we could be looking at the end of the service as we know it.

The last winter crisis in A&E was the worst on record, branded a "humanitarian crisis" by the Red Cross.

NHS Providers chief executive Chris Hopson told MPs in January: "We cannot carry on pretending that we can do everything on the financial envelope that we have. It's just not possible."

- [NHS chief warns cash crisis may signal the end of the health service as we know it](#)

## 28. Mental health bed numbers reduced



There are stories of people in crisis travelling hundreds of miles for a bed (Photo: REX/Shutterstock)

More than half of mental health NHS trusts have cut their number of beds for patients in crisis, [research found in late 2016](#).

There are stories of people in crisis travelling hundreds of miles for a bed.

And more than half of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) - the bodies who control local health spending - said they would have to cut mental health funding in 2016/17.

Freedom of Information requests by Labour MP Luciana Berger found of 128 CCGs who responded, 73 (57%) planned to cut the amount they will spend on mental health.

The figures all came despite repeated commitments to improve care for the mentally ill.

## **29. Trying to hike council tenants' rents**



Pay to Stay was eventually scrapped - but only after it was rammed into law (Photo: REX/Shutterstock)

There was outrage when the Tories forced councils to hike rents for high-income tenants in a policy called **Pay to Stay**.

Ministers [defied Labour MPs and the House of Lords](#) to pass the law in May 2016, despite being [warned it would force 60,000 families out of their homes](#).

It raised rents for council and housing association households **earning more than £30,000**, or £40,000 in London.

Labour MPs branded it a "tax on aspiration" and warned it would trap couples on just £15,000 a year each.

Eventually the Tories ditched the scheme in November 2016, but only after introducing it despite the outrage.