

Politicians have to deliver. They are the people who ar...

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:10 pm

I [posted this thread](#) on Twitter this morning:

The government is, apparently, planning to legislate for new performance standards that public sector workers must meet before they are allowed to strike. The idea makes no sense, unless the government sets standards for itself that it must meet. A thread....

This planned new legislation is clearly part of the government's planned PR campaign against public sector workers trying to maintain their pay in the face of a cost of living crisis has been in part created by the government's own planned increases in tax and interest rates.

The government's aim is to say that strikers are failing the public, and the government must crack down on the right to strike as a result. There are, however, big problems with this argument.

First, whilst the strikes are, of course, about pay they are about much more than this. They are in most cases also about working conditions. These have been massively undermined by government cuts.

They are also about preserving the public services. Right across the board people are leaving the public services because they simply cannot afford to stay when pay is so low, overwork is so high because others have already left, and the private sector pays more.

They are also a protest. No paramedic has ever gone to work to sit for many hours in an ambulance with a sick patient they know should actually be in the hospital they are outside, knowing that the person they are caring for is being harmed by the lack of resources to treat them.

The issues differ across the public sector, but the problems are the same: deliberate

government-imposed cuts are making the supply of public services by already over-stretched and underpaid staff, who see their colleagues leaving by the week, nigh on impossible.

In that case there is an issue about guaranteeing levels of public service for the government to address right now. The actions required by the government (and Labour) are threefold.

First, they need to talk about how they will fund the increased spending these services need if they aren't going to fail. That means the government has to stop talking about there being no money when that is not true, and for Labour to talk about more than ending the non-dom rule.

Second, it means inflation-matching pay rises are needed. That will cost £28bn a year. In total spending exceeding £800bn this is simply not an issue, and if in the short term a bigger deficit is needed, so be it.

There is no problem with deficits in the UK right now, or our debt. What is more, by simply cutting official interest rates the government could completely cover the cost of these pay rises by reducing the payments of unnecessary interest it is now making to our commercial banks.

Third, it means a strategy to reinvigorate public services is required. When right across the sector people have had enough and are willing to strike (which is a hard decision to take) then the message that something is profoundly wrong is clearly being delivered.

In that case, blaming workers for poor delivery is going to badly backfire on the government. Workers in these services clearly care because they see the destruction being caused by the government. And people will understand that.

What people will in that case rightly demand is something quite different from the government. They will ask the government to guarantee the supply of services because it is not workers who are failing to deliver: it is the government that's failing.

No one wants to live in a strike-ridden country. But it would not be if the government actually did its job and delivered what the people of this country want and need, which are decent public services.

The buck-passing has to stop. Politicians have to deliver. They are the people who are not doing their jobs right now. It is time they did.