

# Conservatives' £38m cleaning cuts left NHS woefully underprepared



**New figures show almost 1,000 fewer NHS cleaners in 2019/20 compared to 2010/11**

GMB, the union for NHS workers, has called for urgent investment as new figures expose the extent of cuts to cleaning services over the last decade.

Regular cleaning of wards and equipment is an essential part of the public health strategy for controlling coronavirus.



However, [new figures published by NHS Digital](#) show that the full-time equivalent of almost a thousand NHS cleaners have been cut in England since 2010/11. The figures include both directly employed and outsourced workers.

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And the amount spent by NHS Trusts on cleaning services fell by £38 million in real terms – a decline of 3.4 per cent.

GMB warned that many cleaning staff have been outsourced over the last decade and are enduring inferior pay and terms and conditions, and are under pressure to complete jobs too quickly.

[Research suggests](#) that the risk of catching the superbug MRSA may be 50 per cent higher in wards where cleaning services have been outsourced.

**Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer, said:**

“The NHS couldn’t function without its cleaning staff. They have been saving lives, often at real personal risk, since day one of the pandemic.

“Our members tell us that they are overworked, underpaid, and denied access to the right PPE. Some cleaning workers are put under pressure to complete jobs without enough time or the right equipment.

“ These cuts weakened the NHS and meant that services were vulnerable when the coronavirus pandemic hit.

**Rachel Harrison, GMB National Officer**

“These new figures confirm that a scandalous £38 million has been taken out of NHS cleaning budgets in real terms, while hundreds of NHS cleaners have lost their jobs. These cuts weakened the NHS and meant that services were vulnerable when the coronavirus pandemic hit.



“As we enter a third lockdown, it is more important than ever that NHS cleaners receive the resources, pay, and decent employment standards that they deserve.”

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