

Summary of manifesto pledges

Health and Social Care

recommendations were agreed by Cabinet in December 2009.

- ➔ The Labour and Conservative proposals for health and social care are almost identical from an ethos and principal perspective, with the exception of the proposals for the National Care Service, in particular how it is funded. All three parties are promoting more personalisation of services (with commitments to personal budgets in health from both Labour and Conservatives), and want to create a focus on preventative, early intervention work. They all want greater say for people in shaping services.
- ➔ On the National Care Service paper, Labour reiterates its commitment to the recent white paper, Conservatives do not refer to it, but repeat their £8,000 insurance proposal. The Liberal Democrats are open about being against the Personal Care at home bill and talk about providing respite care for 1 million of those carers who work the longest hours, and want to establish an independent commission to determine the answers for long term care.

Size of public sector and efficiencies

- ➔ It is in realising efficiencies that there are the real differences between Labour and Conservative. Labour fundamentally believes in a large public sector, the Conservatives in a much smaller one, with a 'Big Society'. The Conservative philosophy is very much in line with the ethos of personalisation with the move from the government having a very paternalistic role, "to direct society and micro-manage public services", to one where dependency on the state is reduced and where "the role of the state is to strengthen society and make public services serve the people who use them"
- ➔ Labour's proposals are to continue to spend now until the recovery is assured but then to make efficiencies to more than halve the public sector debt by 2014. The Conservatives, though they are promising to match Labour's funding proposals for health during 2010/11, are intending to start with realising £6 billion of efficiencies during 2010/11 – they state Peter Gershon has advised them that £12 billion could be cut in a year without impacting front-line services. They are then further saving £2 billion a year in the course of the next Parliament, by cutting "Whitehall policy, funding and regulation costs by a third", and cut "quango bureaucracy to achieve a further £1 billion a year. The Liberal Democrats are less specific on how (although theirs is the only manifesto with actual projected financial figures in it), just committing to 'at a minimum, halve the deficit by 2013–14'
- ➔ There are commitments from all three parties on public sector pay and/or pensions.

Third sector

- ➔ All three parties are committed to growing the third sector, specifically Mutuals, Co-operatives and Social Enterprises though the proposals for how vary across the three parties. In terms of funding the third sector, Labour's proposal is for 'Social Impact Bonds' to harness funding from the private sector, the Conservatives is for a 'Big Society Bank' to fund the third sector from unclaimed bank assets. There are proposals from Labour and the Conservatives on using public sector funding to encourage people to volunteer and play a part in the community. Labour and the Liberal Democrats both tackle how to encourage more commissioning of the third sector, Labour more holistically, and Liberal Democrats more specifically by their proposed 'Local Health Boards'.

Employment

- ➔ Both Labour and the Conservatives plan to reduce the number of those on Incapacity Benefit, with Labour promising 'new guarantee of supported employment' after two years on benefit for those with the most serious conditions or disabilities who want to work. The Conservatives commit to continuing financial support for those who are 'genuinely disabled'. Both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have proposals around reducing the barriers to work for disabled people – the Conservatives want to welfare-to-work providers and employers to purchase services from Mental Health Trusts, whilst the Liberal Democrats want to improve practical help, using voluntary and private providers as well as Jobcentre Plus, and reform Access to Work so that disabled people can apply for jobs with funding already in place for equipment and adaptation that they need.

Government structures

- ➔ Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have committed to reducing the size of central and/or regional government – for example, getting rid of the Government Office for London for the former, and reducing the role of Regional Development Agencies to economic development. Both Conservatives and Liberal Democrats talk about scrapping inspection regimes.
- ➔ In terms of health structures, Labour states that whilst there will be no 'top down' changes for PCTs and Strategic Health Authorities in the next parliament, all hospitals will become Foundation Trusts, and be given more freedoms about the services they provide and commission. The Liberal Democrats have some radical proposals – reducing the Department of Health by a half and getting rid of Strategic Health Authorities, and limiting the pay of top NHS managers so 'none are paid more than the Prime Minister'. The Liberal Democrats also want to create a seamless health and social care services, but it is not outlined how.
- ➔ The Conservatives outline specific proposals to enable local government to do more to improve people's lives, including giving local councils a 'general power of competence', and scrapping plans to implement unitary councils.
- ➔ The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have specific proposals around getting more democracy into local services. The Liberal Democrats propose the direct election of police authorities. Specifically for health, the Liberal Democrats propose empowering local communities to improve health services through elected Local Health Boards, to take over the role of Primary Care Trust boards in commissioning care for local people. The Conservatives will give the twelve largest cities in England the chance of having an elected mayor. The Conservatives are also proposing implementing fully the Sustainable Communities Act, and reintroduce the Sustainable Communities Act (Amendment) Bill as government legislation, to give people greater information on, and control over, what is being spent by each government agency in their area