

Manifestos 2010

Proposals relevant to the Disability Alliance agenda

Below are some of the commitments from the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat party manifestos for the 2010 general election.

DA does not endorse a political party or advise who to vote for. The commitments we have highlighted are important to our agenda and the needs of disabled people and their families. We have categorised them in the following areas:

- Welfare, work and skills
- Tackling poverty
- Families and caring
- Health

We have provided some comments on specific proposals to demonstrate their relevance to our agenda or where we have concerns about specific commitments.

In December 2009 we published *Tackling Disability Poverty* which included recommendations for routes out of poverty for disabled people and their families. We have also highlighted manifesto commitments relevant to *Tackling Disability Poverty* below.

For a copy of our *Tackling Disability Poverty* manifesto please visit:
www.disabilityalliance.org/damanifesto.htm

Welfare, work and skills

Labour:

- Job or training for young people (16-24) out of work for 6 months through the Future Jobs Fund (to help 200,000 people); but benefits cut after 10 months if people refuse to participate.
- 1.5 million Incapacity Benefit claimants to be re-assessed by 2014 using Work Capability Assessment (WCA).

DA view: Evidence suggests the WCA is not sensitive enough to reflect the needs of disabled people. We have asked for the WCA to be independently reviewed to ensure it is effective.

- Guaranteed work for anyone unemployed for over 2 years including disabled people who want to work.
- National Minimum Wage to rise in line with earnings (to 2015).
- A guarantee of people being £40 per week Better Off in Work.
- Whitehall Departments “to be asked to pay the Living Wage”.
- The right to request flexible working for older workers. [DA NB: The age range of ‘older workers’ is not specified.]
- Every young person guaranteed education or training until 18, with 75% going on to higher education, or completing an advanced apprenticeship or technician level training, by the age of 30.
- Older workers (60+) to be eligible for Working Tax Credit if working 16 hours a week (current threshold is 30 hours a week).
- More help for parents to balance work and family life, with a ‘Father’s Month’ of flexible paid leave.
- Tax credits to “be increased not cut”.
- An end to default retirement at 65.

DA view: We support an end to the mandatory retirement age, as recommended in *Tackling Disability Poverty*. Ending the retirement age is also a Liberal Democrat commitment. The Conservatives commit to ‘look at how to’ end the retirement age.

Conservative:

- “Protect” disability living allowance, attendance allowance and the pension credit.
- Continue to provide the range of tax credits but no longer pay tax credits to households earning more than £50,000. Reform the administration of tax credits to reduce fraud/overpayments.
- Hold a review to bring forward the date at which the state pension age starts to rise to 66, although it will not be sooner than 2016 for men and 2020 for women.
- Look at how to abolish the default retirement age.
- Cut government contributions to Child Trust Funds for all but the poorest third of families and families with disabled children.
- Scrap “failing” employment schemes and create a single Work Programme for everyone who is unemployed, including the 2.6 million people claiming Incapacity Benefit.

DA view: The only scheme specifically named that will be scrapped is Train2Gain. It is unclear if/how the proposed Conservative Work Programme will support disabled people.

- People on Jobseeker's Allowance who refuse to join the Work Programme will lose the right to claim out-of-work benefits until they join, while people who refuse to accept reasonable job offers could forfeit their benefits for up to three years.
- The Work Programme aims to:
 - offer people targeted, personalised help sooner – straight away for those with serious barriers to work and at six months for those aged under 25;
 - be delivered through private and voluntary sector providers, which will be rewarded on a payment by results basis for getting people into sustainable work;
 - draw on a range of Service Academies to offer pre-employment training for unemployed people. The first Service Academy, for hospitality and leisure, will provide up to 50,000 training places and work placements; and
 - involve the development of local Work Clubs for people looking for work to “gather together to exchange skills, find opportunities, make useful contacts and provide mutual support”.
- Reassess all current claimants of Incapacity Benefit. Those found fit for work will be transferred onto Jobseeker's Allowance. Recipients of Incapacity Benefit (IB) who are “genuinely disabled” will continue to receive the financial support to which they are entitled. [DA NB: it is unclear if this means at the IB rate, or the current ESA support component rate which is higher.]

DA view: The Conservative commitment to rapidly re-assessing all 2.6 million IB recipients using the WCA is a significant concern. The WCA is not effective and the cost of re-assessing all IB claimants is considerable. There is also a significant likelihood of high numbers of expensive appeals at a time of public resource constraints.

- Long-term benefit claimants who fail to find work will be required to ‘work for the dole’ on community work programmes.
- Create 20,000 additional young apprenticeships.
- Welfare-to-work providers and employers will be able to purchase services from Mental Health Trusts.
- People will have a ‘right to bid’ to run any community service instead of the state. [DA NB: The ‘right’ covers all services, not just welfare.]

Liberal Democrat:

- First £10,000 tax free for all earners.
- 3.6 million low-earners and pensioners to pay no income tax.
- End government payments into Child Trust Funds.

- Fix tax credit payments for six months at a time (to avoid overpayments); and target payments on people who need them most – i.e. “restricting tax credits”.
- Reform Winter Fuel Payments to extend them to all severely disabled people, paid for by delaying age-related Winter Fuel Payments until people reach 65; and continue to pay Winter Fuel Payments to all current recipients of Pension Credit.
- In 2010, implement a one-year job creation and green economic stimulus package, using £3.1 billion to create 100,000 jobs.
- Generate a work placement scheme with up to 800,000 places to ensure young people have the opportunity to gain skills, work experience and qualifications; young people on the scheme would be paid £55 a week for up to three months. [DA NB: Unspecified age range, but likely to mean 18-24 year olds.]
- Fund 15,000 extra Foundation Degree places; fully meet the up-front costs of adult apprenticeships, and increase the Adult Learning Grant to £45 a week for 18-24 year olds in Further Education.
- Extend the right to request flexible working to all employees.
- Give disabled job seekers better practical help to get to work, using voluntary and private sector providers, as well as JobCentre Plus services. [DA NB: The help is unspecified.]
- Reform Access to Work, so disabled people can apply for jobs with funding already in place for equipment and adaptations.
- Increase funding for the most disadvantaged pupils (around one million children); invest £2.5 billion additional money in this ‘Pupil Premium’ to boost education opportunities for every child.
- Guarantee Special Educational Needs (SEN) diagnostic assessments for all 5 year olds; improve SEN provision and training for teachers.
- Scrap the current Government plan for all 16-18 year olds to remain in education or training.
- Set the minimum wage at the same level for all workers over 16 years of age (except for those on apprenticeships).
- Scrap the default retirement age.
- Make prisoners work and contribute from their prison wages to a compensation fund for victims. As resources allow, increase the number of hours prisoners spend in education and training.

Tackling poverty

<p>DA view: We are disappointed none of the parties pledged to measure or tackle disability poverty. This was a key area of <i>Tackling Disability Poverty</i> and is essential to delivering measures to address child/pensioner poverty.</p>
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Labour:

- Help with bills through Winter Fuel Payments and Social Tariff to be maintained and free prescriptions/eye tests, concessionary transport fares and free TV licences for people over 75 to be kept.
- End rough sleeping by 2012.
- Re-establish the link between the Basic State Pension and earnings from 2012.
- Help for ten million people to build up savings through new Personal Pension Accounts.
- Make greener living easier and fairer through 'pay as you save' home energy insulation, energy-bill discounts for pensioners and requiring landlords to properly insulate rented homes.
- A new 'Warm Home Standard' to help end fuel poverty for social housing and regulation of private landlords.
- A Universal Service Obligation on banks to serve every community.
- Continue to try to end child poverty by 2020.
- Spend 0.7% of national income on tackling international poverty by 2013.

Conservative:

- Reduce youth unemployment and the number of children in workless households as part of the strategy for tackling poverty.
- Help "stop the spread of means-testing" by restoring the link between the basic state pension and average earnings. [DA NB: Other Conservative measures, eg on Child Trust Funds and Tax Credits, would require an increase in means-testing.]
- Launch the first free national financial advice service, funded through a new social responsibility levy on financial service sector.
- Keep the minimum wage and work to reduce the very high marginal tax rates faced by many people on low incomes who want to return to work or increase their earnings.
- "Protect" the winter fuel payment, free bus passes and TV licences.
- Create a 'Green Deal', giving every home up to £6,500 worth of energy improvement measures – with more for hard-to-treat homes – paid for out of savings made on fuel bills over 25 years.
- Give Post Office Card Account holders the chance to benefit from direct debit discounts, worth up to £150 a year.
- Achieve, by 2013, the UN target of spending 0.7% of national income as aid; and establish a Poverty Impact Fund to support innovative and effective British poverty-fighting groups which do not currently qualify for government funding.

Liberal Democrat:

- Tax relief on pensions at the basic rate for all.

- Immediately restore the link between the basic state pension and earnings; and up-rating the state pension annually by whichever is the higher of growth in earnings, growth in prices or 2.5%.
- Give people greater flexibility in accessing part of their personal pension fund early, eg to help in times of financial hardship.
- Launch an 'Eco Cash-Back' scheme, for one year, to provide £400 to people who install double glazing, replace an old boiler, or install micro-generation.
- Reform current student bursary schemes to create a National Bursary Scheme so that each university gets a bursary budget suited to the needs of its students. Some bursaries would be awarded on the basis of financial hardship.
- Maintain the commitment to end child poverty in the UK by 2020.
- Improve access to banking for all with a PostBank, revenues from which will also help to secure the future of the Post Office.
- Increase UK aid budget to 0.7% of gross national income by 2013.
- Bring forward urgent proposals for a financial transaction tax.

DA view: This financial transaction tax is also known as the Robin Hood Tax which we support if the returns it generates are used to tackle poverty.

- Introduce a rural fuel discount scheme which would allow a reduced rate of fuel duty to be paid in remote rural areas.
- Scrap Council Tax and replace it with a Local Income Tax, based on people's ability to pay, to be piloted from 2011.

Families and caring

Labour:

- Introduce a new 'Toddler Tax Credit' (part of Child Tax Credit) of £4 a week from 2012 to give more support to all parents of 1-2 year old children paid regardless of marital status.
- Implement a new National Care Service to ensure free care in the home for people with the greatest care needs (to help 400,000 people).

DA view: we support a National Care Service provided on the same basis as the NHS. As chair of the Coalition on Charging, which campaigns to end unfair care service fees, we also support free care.

- Child Trust Fund to be maintained; disabled children to receive £100 a year higher payments.
- From 2014, cap the costs of residential care so that everyone is protected from care charges after two years in a care home.

- Increase spending on frontline Sure Start and free childcare, schools and 16-19 learning.
- Expand free nursery places for 2 year olds; 15 hours a week of flexible, free nursery education for 3-4 year olds.
- Ensure every pupil leaving primary school is secure “in the basics”, with a 3Rs guarantee of one-to-one and small-group tuition for every child falling behind; and in secondary school, every pupil with a personal tutor.
- Expand the number of specialist dyslexia teachers; improved teacher training for children with autism.

Conservative:

- Build the “Big Society” of social responsibility to make Britain the most family-friendly country in Europe.
- End the “couple penalty” for all couples in the tax credit system; and recognise marriage and civil partnerships in the tax system in the next Parliament.
- Freeze council tax for two years; and residents “will also be able to veto any proposed high council tax increases”. [DA NB: It is unclear how this will operate but could be through proposed referendums to be triggered by 5% of local residents ‘signing-up’.]
- Extend the right to request flexible working to all parents with children under 18 years of age – and to all public sector workers (possibly in stages). Potentially extended to all workers (ie including private sector) in the longer-term (after consultation).
- Flexible parental leave to allow parents “to share maternity leave”.
- Put funding for “relationship support” on a stable, long-term footing and ensure couples are encouraged to use existing relationship support. Review family law in order to increase the use of mediation when couples break up, and look at how to provide greater access rights to non-resident parents/grandparents.
- Sure Start to provide early intervention, with a focus on “neediest families”; and provide 4,200 more Sure Start health visitors.
- Allow anyone to protect their home from being sold to fund residential care costs by paying a one-off insurance premium that is entirely voluntary. [DA NB: This is likely to be £8,000.] And work to design a system where people can top up their premium – also voluntarily – to cover the costs of receiving care in their own home.
- End ring-fencing so that council funding can be spent on local priorities.

DA view: care service funding is not currently ring-fenced; this harms social service stability and means councils prioritise resources to other service areas.

- Replace the Human Rights Act with a UK Bill of Rights.

DA view: Ending the Human Rights Act poses significant risks to health and social care services, eg through potentially reduced guarantees surrounding people's dignity and rights to family life.

Liberal Democrat:

- Allow mums and dads to share parental leave; extend the period of shared parental leave up to 18 months "when resources allow".
- Offer a week's respite for the one million carers who spend 50 hours every week looking after a sick relative.
- Protect families from unfair bills. This includes:
 - Changing the tariffs used by energy supply companies so that the first, essential, energy used is the cheapest; and that effective energy efficiency measures are introduced to keep bills low and that 'social tariffs' are available to guarantee the best price for all those in most need.
 - Addressing unfairness in water charges.
- Protect existing childcare support arrangements until the nation's finances can support a longer term solution: a move to 20 hours free childcare for every child, from the age of 18 months.
- Require better recording of hate crimes against disabled people.
- Scrap nearly £1 billion of central government inspection regimes on local councils.

DA view: The 'regimes' are unspecified but if this includes the Care Quality Commission role, cuts could mean the under-regulation of frontline health and social care services to the detriment of disabled people.

Health

Labour:

- Introduce legally binding guarantees for patients including the right to cancer test results within one week of referral, and a maximum 18 weeks' wait for treatment or the offer of going private.
- Heighten preventative healthcare through routine check-ups for people 40-74 years of age and an expansion of diagnostic testing.
- Make healthcare more "personal" with a right in law to choose from any provider who meets NHS standards of quality at NHS costs when booking a hospital appointment, one-to-one dedicated nursing for all cancer patients, and more care in people's own homes.

- Introduce a right to choose a GP in people's own area open at evenings and weekends; and rights to individual budgets and personal care plans for anyone with a long-term health condition.
- Access to psychological therapy for people who need it – 8,000 new therapists over the next Parliament.

Conservative:

- Increase spending on health in real terms every year.
- Give every patient the power to choose any healthcare provider that meets NHS standards, within NHS prices. This includes independent, voluntary and community sector providers.
- Implement a payment by results system in the NHS, "to improve quality".
- Commission a 24/7 urgent care service in every area of England, including GP out of hours services, and ensure that every patient can access a GP in their area 8am-8pm, seven days a week.
- Provide access for people with a chronic illness or long-term condition to a single budget that combines health and social care funding, which they can tailor to their own needs.
- Provide £10 million a year beyond 2011 to support children's hospices.

Liberal Democrat:

- Integrate health and social care to create a seamless service, ending bureaucratic barriers and saving money to allow people to stay in their homes for longer rather than going into hospital or long-term residential care.
- Reform payments to GPs; those who accept patients from areas with the worst health and deprivation scores will receive an extra payment for each patient they take.
- Establish an independent commission, with cross-party support, to develop proposals for long-term care of older people.

Further information

The Labour manifesto, *A future fair for all*, is online at:

www.labour.org.uk/manifesto Some of Labour's policies were announced in the Budget 2010. For DA's information on the Budget proposals please visit: www.disabilityalliance.org/budget2010.htm

The Conservative manifesto, *An invitation to join the Government of Britain*, is online at: www.conservatives.com/Policy/Manifesto.aspx

The Liberal Democrat manifesto, *Change that works for you*, is online at: www.libdems.org.uk/our_manifesto.aspx

Contact: Neil Coyle, Director of Policy, on: 020 7247 8776 or email: ncoyle@disabilityalliance.org