

Labour's manifesto: Health and social care analysis

The Labour Party has today published their full manifesto following on from the health commitments they announced last week. The manifesto includes a series of commitments on the future of the NHS and social care system. This briefing assesses the key commitments against the issues that NHS Confederation members are most concerned about.

Key points

- **A commitment to a real-terms increase of £26 billion from 2018/19 to 2023/24 to "healthcare funding"**. This funding would be focused on NHS England's budget and represents an additional £6 billion on the Conservative party pledge of £20 billion made in 2018 and represents an overall increase of 3.9 per cent.
- **Investment of £15 billion extra in capital**. This would be used to fund a programme of modernisation covering commitments already made by the Conservatives to upgrade hospitals and a series of new projects across all sectors of healthcare.
- **An increase to the budget of the Department of Health and Social Care, bringing it to £178 billion by 2023/24** (equivalent to an average annual increase of 4.3 per cent). In the NHS Confederation commissioned report [Securing the future](#) it was estimated that around 4 per cent per year until 2023/24 would be required to maintain the status quo and around 5 per cent per year to modernise services. An increase of 4.3 per cent is therefore enough to make a meaningful difference to NHS services.

NHS Confederation analysis

As the membership body that represents leaders across healthcare providers, clinical commissioners and local systems, the NHS Confederation recently surveyed its members in England to gauge what they feel are their most critical priorities for an incoming government. This survey revealed that the most pressing priorities for members are **workforce, social care and capital investment**. This briefing therefore assesses the Labour Party manifesto against each of these issues in turn, before outlining some of the party's other commitments.



Workforce

Supporting and growing the NHS workforce was seen by the vast majority (94 per cent) of health leaders surveyed as a key priority, with over half (56 per cent) ranking it priority number one. There are more than 100,000 FTE vacancies in England in hospital and community services alone. Shortages are particularly pronounced in mental health and learning disabilities services, which have a disproportionately high number of vacancies.

In response, the Labour Party headline commitments are:

- **Deliver an extra 4,500 health visitors and school nurses** and increase mandated health visits as well provide assurances that new mothers are able to access breastfeeding and mental health support six weeks after birth.
- **Expand GP training places to 5,000** and provide resources for 27 million more appointments each year with greater support for community pharmacies.
- **Recruit 24,000 extra nurses, midwives and allied health professionals** and put agenda for change terms and conditions into law.
- **Increase training budget £1 billion a year and bring back training bursary for nurses and midwives** as part of a commitment to invest in NHS staff throughout their careers, though the manifesto does not give details on how this would be allocated.

On workforce, the Labour Party would also:

- Implement a national a **legal requirement for safe staffing levels** in the NHS.
- Remove obstacles to **ethical international recruitment**.
- Create a working environment that is **“safe, flexible, free from harassment and violence”**.
- Provide a **5 per cent increase to all public sector workers**, including those in the NHS in their first year of government.
- Review the **tax and pension changes** to ensure that the workforce is not adversely affected.

Social care

Social care is seen by more than nine in ten (92 per cent) of leaders as a key priority for the incoming government, making it the second most pressing concern for health leaders after workforce. A report last year commissioned by the NHS Confederation, and undertaken by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and The Health Foundation, calculated that social care funding would need to increase by 3.9 per cent a year to meet the needs of an ageing population and an increasing number of younger adults living with disabilities.

In response, the Labour Party headline commitments are:

- **Building a 'National Care Service' for England**

This includes free personal care targeted initially at older people, but with an aim to extend this to working age adults – ultimately aiming to double the number of people receiving publicly funded care packages whilst improving the quality of care they get. It is expected that this will amount to an additional £6 billion in 2020/21.

This is in addition to Labour's previous commitment of £8 billion of social care funding over the course of five years.

There will also be a lifetime cap on personal contributions to care costs of £100,000 as well as a pay guarantee that the social care workforce will receive a real living wage, rights to claim for travel time, access to training and an option to choose regular working hours.

- **Bringing social care provision in-house**

Labour believes that local authorities are best placed to provide care services, so they will support local government to build the capacity to deliver care and end time and money spent on negotiating contracts.

On social care, the Liberal Democrats would also:

- **Increase the Carer's Allowance for unpaid full-time carers** – the specifics of this increase have not been noted in the manifesto.
- **Ethical commissioning of social care services**, meaning that all providers will need to meet a set of standards which include transparency, compliance and profit capping.

Capital investment

Capital investment ranked as the third most pressing priority identified by health leaders, with over nine in ten (93 per cent) of those who responded telling us the commitments already made NHS are just the start of what is needed. Spending on capital investment in the NHS has fallen by 7 per cent in real terms from 2010/11 (£5.8 billion) to 2017/18 (£5.3 billion) according to research carried out by the Health Foundation. The UK currently has one of the lowest levels of healthcare capital funding in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) countries.

In response, the Labour Party headline commitments are:

- **Increase capital funding by £15 billion over five years**

The additional £15 billion of capital funding is set to be delivered over the course of five years. If this funding is allocated to the budget at a cumulative rate of £1 billion per year for five years, then it would bring the total capital budget by 2023/24 to above £10 billion.

Included within this capital spending commitment, Labour plans to spend: £2 billion on strategic mental health infrastructure fund, £2.5 billion on overhauling primary care estates and £1.5 billion on increasing numbers of CT and MRI scanners.

On capital funding, the Labour Party would also:

- **Invest in digital, AI and cyber technology** services across the health and care system.
- **Complete confirmed hospital rebuilds.**
- **Ensure data protection** and the use of that data to improve healthcare outcomes.

Other commitments

Outside the three areas outlined above, the Labour Party also commits to:

Public and mental health

- **£1 billion a year to expand public health services** including an extra £100 million each for addiction services, obesity services and public mental health services, as well as £75 million each for sexual health services and 0-5 services. On top of this, they also pledge to invest in parenting support to reduce health inequalities.
- **£1.6 billion a year to fund counselling services for schools, community mental health hubs for young people, community services for severe mental illness** and ensure high quality liaison and 24/7 crisis care for people living with poor mental health. In addition, Labour has committed to implementing, in full, the recommendations of the Mental Health Act Review.
- **Ban on unhealthy food adverts before the watershed**, ban fast-food restaurants near schools and enforce stricter rules around the advertising of junk food and levels of salt in food.
- **We will introduce a Future Generations Wellbeing act**, enshrining health aims in all policies and a new duty for NHS agencies to collaborate with directors of public health.

Access

- **Free prescriptions.** This follows in the footsteps of the 2008 Labour government which made prescriptions for cancer patients free.
- **Establishing a generic drug company.** If fair prices are rejected for patented drugs Labour plans to use the Patents Act provisions, compulsory licences and research exemptions to secure access to generic versions.
- **Free annual NHS tier one dental check-ups.** This is expected to cost £450 million a year.
- **Free hospital car parking for patients, visitors and NHS staff.** Previously Labour has said it will pay for this by increasing the rate of Insurance Premium Tax to 20 per cent for private healthcare insurance products.

- **Investment in a youth justice** that would see schools, local authorities and health authorities come together to support vulnerable young people.
- **Improvements to stroke, heart disease and cancer survival rates** by providing earlier diagnosis and improved screening rates. We will call a moratorium on bed cuts.

Green deal

- **Delivering a green new deal for the NHS to enable all trusts to reduce their carbon footprint** – which includes a pledge to plant a million extra trees across the NHS estate, more efficient heating and insulation systems, greater reliance on renewable energy, including more solar panelling and a transition to electric paramedic vehicles, NHS fleet cars and hybrid ambulances.

End to NHS privatisation

- **End the requirement on health authorities to put services out to competitive tender** and introduce measures to bring subsidiary companies back in-house.

Discussion

In their manifesto, Labour has promised an average 4.3 per cent increase to the Department of Health and Social Care budget until 2023/24. This goes beyond the 4 per cent average increase that was deemed as necessary to maintain the status quo in our report – *Securing the future*. Although it falls short of the 5 per cent needed to modernise NHS services, it is a welcome announcement that will enable some modest improvement to take place across the service and reflects continued efforts across the sector to highlight the challenges facing the whole health system. Of course, managing demand is not just about funding.

The manifesto pledges to “repeal the Health and Social Care act” and stop what Labour argues is the privatisation of services “under the cover of integration plans set out in the NHS Long term plan”. In our survey, our members were clear – they are not in favour of another reorganisation of NHS services and supported the current direction of travel towards integrated care systems in which patient choice was retained and the commissioning of services remained a core part of systems. There is little suggestion in the Long Term Plan that integration of services equates to privatisation of services; the reality is that without some NHS commissioned private services, patients would be likely to wait longer for their care. If an incoming Labour government sought to change plans to integrate healthcare delivery, we would welcome clarity on how they would achieve this. As it stands, there are no details on how this would be implemented in the manifesto.

Workforce and capital routinely ranked amongst those issues our members were most concerned about and it is reassuring to see both addressed here. An extra £15 billion of capital investment would allow the service to modernise and bring infrastructure in line with modern standards but greater detail on the process for allocating this is necessary to determine the full impact. The manifesto gives some assurances over current workforce shortages, but it does not go as far as saying how the overall workforce deficit will be reduced. Similarly, it is unclear whether those

funding promises made to increase NHS staff wages would be funded centrally or locally – the key difference being whether it would come out of NHS budgets or national government budget. Having said that, there is clear progress proposed on two key issues and despite limited details on how it would be implemented, it is broadly welcome.

The NHS Confederation welcomed the Labour Party's announcements at party conference earlier this year on social care – namely the introduction of free personal care, but was hoping to see the party go further on their commitment to a long-term plan for social care that creates a system with universal access, free at the point of use – as it is with NHS services. That said, the continued commitment to a National Care Service is positive and stabilising the workforce, limiting personal liability for unexpected care costs and widening access to free personal care are all warmly welcome pledges.

About the NHS Confederation

The NHS Confederation is the membership body that brings together and speaks on behalf of the whole NHS. We represent over 500 members across health and social care, including hospitals, community and mental health providers, ambulance trusts, independent sector organisations providing NHS care, and clinical commissioning groups.

To find out more, please visit www.nhsconfed.org or email enquiries@nhsconfed.org



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NHS Confederation
Portland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5BH
Tel 020 7799 6666
Email enquiries@nhsconfed.org
www.nhsconfed.org

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