

## 2024 general election: manifesto briefing

The Liberal Democrat, Conservative and Labour parties have published their manifestos this week ahead of the general election on 4 July, outlining their commitments and spending plans for the next parliament.

At the beginning of the general election campaign, the NHS overtook the economy as the biggest **issue** facing voters. The three parties have made significant announcements on their plans to tackle challenges facing the NHS and wider health sector. All three have pledged to act on the recommendations of the infected blood scandal, and further support for the delivery of mental health services has been a consistent commitment across the board. There is also a commitment from all to address the workforce needs of the NHS, with attention paid to increasing retention and recruitment of NHS staff.

This briefing provides a summary of the main health and social care commitments, and other relevant policy commitments, made by the Liberal Democrat, Conservative, and Labour parties, and sets out NHS Providers view on each manifesto. Earlier this year we published **A picture of health: delivering the next generation NHS**, setting out a vision of how government and health services must work together to maximise the social and economic value of the NHS.

### The Liberal Democrat Party

The Liberal Democrat Party manifesto can be accessed in full [here](#), and associated costings document available [here](#).

### Health and social care commitments

#### Mental health

- Open walk-in hubs for children and young people in every community and extend young people's mental health services up to the age of 25.
- Cut suicide rates with a focus on community suicide prevention services and improving prevention training for frontline NHS staff.
- Modernise the Mental Health Act to strengthen people's rights, giving them more choice and control over their treatment and prevent inappropriate detentions.

- Create a statutory, independent mental health commissioner to represent patients, their families and carers.
- Widen the current safety investigation into mental health hospitals to look at the whole patient experience, including ward design and treatment options.
- End out-of-area mental health placements by increasing capacity and coordination between services, so that no one is treated far from home.
- End inappropriate and costly inpatient placements for people with learning disabilities and autism.
- Take an evidence-led approach to preventing and treating eating disorders, and challenging damaging stigma about weight.
- Increase access to clinically effective talking therapies.

## Public health and prevention

- Establish a 'health creation unit' in the Cabinet Office to lead work across government to improve the nation's health and tackle health inequalities.
- Increase the public health grant, with a proportion of the extra funding set aside for those experiencing the worst health inequalities to co-produce plans for their communities.
- Tackle air pollution and poor air quality in public buildings with a Clean Air Act.
- Introduce a new levy on tobacco company profits to fund healthcare and smoking cessation services and extend the current soft drinks levy to include juice-based and milk-based drinks high in added sugar.
- Move the departmental lead on drugs policy from the Home Office to the Department of Health and Social Care.

## Workforce

- Establish more autonomy for the independent pay review body.
- Retain more staff across the NHS through a ten-year retention plan.
- End the false economy of spending money on agency workers and encourage the use of flexible staff banks.
- Introduce truly independent complaints processes and transparent monitoring of reports of sexual misconduct in the NHS.
- Improve the work visa system and exempt NHS and care staff from the £1,000-a-year immigration skills charge and reverse the ban on care workers bringing partners and children.

## Capital investment and technology

- Implement a ten-year plan to invest in hospitals and the primary care estate.

- Introduce electronic records to every care setting and ensure patient data feeds into health records, with the patient's consent.
- Expand virtual wards and invest in new technologies that free up staff time and allow people to be treated closer to home.
- Ring-fence budgets to enable the NHS to adopt innovative digital tools that improve patient care and experience and save staff time and costs.
- Require all IT systems used by the NHS to work with each other.

## **Patient experience and access to treatment**

- Create a new 'patients charter' to harness lived experience of patients and embed patient voice, partnership and safety standards across health and care settings, with new legal rights to a second opinion, to maintain contact in all health and care settings and around patient data protection.
- End the General Medical Council's five-year rule which prevents patients raising complaints relating to matters more than five years old.
- Introduce a guarantee that 100% of cancer patients will be able to start treatment within 62 days from urgent referral.
- Recruit more cancer nurses so that every patient has a dedicated specialist supporting them throughout their treatment.
- Halve the time for new treatments to reach patients by expanding the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's capacity.
- Improve faster access to new and novel medicines and medical devices by seeking a comprehensive mutual recognition agreement with the European Medicines Agency.

## **Performance and service provision**

- Review diagnostic provision across the NHS and implement a new ten-year strategic diagnostics plan.
- End excessive handover delays for ambulances by increasing the number of staffed hospital beds to end degrading corridor care, and fixing social care as set out in chapter 7.
- Publish accessible, localised reports of ambulance response times.
- Create an emergency fund to reverse closures of community ambulance stations and cancel planned closures where needed.

## **Cancer research**

- Pass a Cancer Survival Research Act requiring the Government to coordinate and ensure funding for research into the cancers with the lowest survival rates.

## Primary and dental care

- Increase the number of full-time equivalent GPs by 8,000, half by boosting recruitment and half from retaining more experienced GPs.
- Free up GPs' time by giving more prescribing rights and public health advisory services to qualified pharmacists, nurse practitioners and paramedics.
- Work towards a fairer and more sustainable long-term funding model for pharmacies, and build on the Pharmacy First approach to give patients more accessible routine services and ease the pressure on GPs.
- Bring dentists back to the NHS from the private sector by fixing the NHS dental contract and using flexible commissioning to meet patient needs.

## Social care

- Create a social care workforce plan, establish a Royal College of Care Workers to improve recognition and career progression, and boost carer's minimum wage by £2 an hour.
- Establish a cross-party commission to forge a long-term agreement on sustainable funding for social care.
- Create a National Care Agency to set national minimum standards of care.
- Introduce a free personal care model to ensure provision of care is based on need and not ability to pay.
- Make caring a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and require employers to make reasonable adjustments to enable employees with caring responsibilities to provide that care.

## Other key policies of note

Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replace the salary threshold with a more flexible merit-based system for work visas.</li> <li>• Scrap the Illegal Migration Act and Rwanda scheme, uphold the Refugee Convention, and provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees, helping to prevent dangerous Channel crossings.</li> </ul>
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The economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage public finances to reduce national debt as a share of the economy, ensure day-to-day spending is less than the amount raised in taxes, and invest public money where needed.</li> <li>• Increase investment in green infrastructure, including renewable energy and zero-carbon transport, industry and housing, and give a clearer zero-carbon remit to the UK Infrastructure Bank.</li> <li>• Increase the digital services tax on social media firms and other tech giants from 2% to 6%.</li> </ul>
Pensions and welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackle child poverty by removing the two-child limit and the benefit cap.</li> <li>• Set a target of ending deep poverty within a decade and establish an independent commission to recommend further annual increases in Universal Credit to ensure that support covers life's essentials.</li> <li>• Support pensioners by protecting the triple lock so that pensions always rise in line with inflation, wages or 2.5%.</li> </ul>
Rights and equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a comprehensive Race Equality Strategy to address deep inequalities, including in education, health, criminal justice, and the economy.</li> <li>• Make misogyny a hate crime and give police and prosecutors the resources and training they need to prevent and prosecute all hate crimes while supporting survivors.</li> <li>• Give everyone a new right to flexible working and every disabled person the right to work from home, unless there are significant business reasons why it is not possible.</li> <li>• Respect and defend the rights of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including trans and non-binary people, and ban all forms of conversion therapies.</li> </ul>

## NHS Providers view

### Response to Liberal Democrats general election manifesto

Sir Julian Hartley, chief executive, NHS Providers, in response to today's Liberal Democrats general election manifesto, said:

"Liberal Democrats have highlighted the important links between the NHS and social care.

"The NHS needs overstretched social care to have meaningful reform and long-term, sustainable funding. Thousands of hospital beds every day are taken up by patients well enough to recover at or close to home but can't be discharged often due to scarce social care capacity.

"Pledges for more early access to mental health services and investment in public health will be welcomed by trust leaders.

"Liberal Democrats have highlighted too the need for greater capital investment in NHS buildings, facilities and equipment to help trusts to boost productivity and cut waiting lists.

"Hospital, mental health, community and ambulance trusts have a vital role to play in joined-up action with government to create a healthy, equitable and productive society for years to come.

"The next government and an NHS fit for the future must work hand in hand to create the picture of health we all want to see."

## The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party manifesto can be accessed in full [here](#) and the associated costings document [here](#).

### Health and social care commitments

#### Workforce

- Reduce the number of managers by 5,500, which will release £550 million for frontline services.
- Consult on a disbarring regime for NHS managers and consider the implications of the review of the whistleblowing framework.
- Recruit 92,000 more nurses and 28,000 more doctors by the end of next parliament.

#### Digital and technology

- Invest £3.4 billion in new technology to transform the NHS for staff and for patients.
- New digital health checks to 250,000 more people every year, helping to prevent hundreds of strokes and heart attack.
- Fund technology to help clinicians read MRI and CT scans more quickly and accurately, speeding up results for 130,000 patients every year.

#### Funding and productivity

- Increase NHS spending above inflation in each year of the next parliament.

- Grow NHS productivity by 1.9% a year from 2025-26, unlocking £35 billion of cumulative savings by the end of the decade.
- Continue to deliver 40 new hospitals by 2030 and invest proportionately more in out-of-hospital services over time.
- Grow opportunities for all types of providers - NHS, charity or independent sector - to offer services free of charge to NHS patients, where these meet NHS costs and standards.

## Performance and access to treatments

- Return performance to the levels set out in the NHS Constitution by the end of the next Parliament.
- Create new incentives for improved performance, rewarding the best performing providers of care.
- Remove obstacles to the use of new medicines, such as the NHS budget impact test, align NHS England's cost-effectiveness thresholds for new medicines indications with those used by NICE and implement a new medtech pathway so that cost-effective medtech, including AI, is rapidly adopted throughout the NHS.

## Public health

- An HIV action plan, which will end new HIV transmissions by 2030.
- Bring forward the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.
- Take forward the NHS Vaccination Strategy.

## Mental health

- Expand coverage of mental health support teams from 50% to 100% of schools and colleges in England by 2030.
- Open early support hubs for those aged 11-25 years old, in every local community by 2030.
- Increase the planned expansion of NHS talking therapies by 50%.
- Boost the capacity of individual placement and support for severe mental illness by 140,000 places.
- Pass a new law to provide better treatment and support for severe mental health needs in the first session of the next Parliament.

## Health inequalities

- Complete the implementation of the Cass Review.
- Publish and implement a Major Conditions Strategy.

- Ensure the NHS Constitution reflects the bespoke healthcare needs of rural and coastal communities and the need for the NHS to tailor services accordingly.
- Expand women's health hubs so that every integrated care system (ICS) has at least one hub running.

## Quality of care

- Pay comprehensive compensation to those infected and those affected by the infected blood scandal, accepting the principles recommended by the Inquiry.
- Fully roll out Martha's Rule, giving patients the right to a second opinion.
- Amend the NHS Constitution so that it recognises every patient's right to request single-sex accommodation and same-sex intimate care.

## Maternity care

- Deliver additional funding for maternal safety and improve access to mental health services for new mothers, improve perinatal pelvic health services to prevent and support women with birth injuries and postnatal appointments dedicated to checking mothers.
- Bring forward a comprehensive national strategy for maternity care as recommended by the APPG on Birth Trauma's inquiry.
- Support continued research into disparities in maternity care through the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NICE).

## Community and social care

- Commitment to supporting a high-quality and sustainable social care system, building on the additional investment of up to £8.6 billion over the last two years.
- Give local authorities a multi-year funding settlement to support social care and take forward the reforms in their 'People at the Heart of Care' White Paper.
- Build 50 more community diagnostic centres, resulting in an additional 2.5 million checks a year.
- Extend patients' right to choose to more NHS community services over time, including diagnostics, talking therapies and other mental health services.
- Implement planned reforms to cap social care costs from October 2025.

## Primary and dental care

- Build or modernise 250 GP surgeries, focused on areas of new housing growth.
- Expand Pharmacy First, including for menopause support, contraception and treatment for chest infections, freeing up 20 million GP appointments a year.



- A dental recovery plan which will provide 2.5 million more NHS dental appointments.

## Other key policies of note

Equality, diversity and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary legislation to clarify that the protected characteristic of sex in the Equality Act means biological sex.</li> <li>• Legislate so that an individual can only have one sex in the eyes of the law in the United Kingdom.</li> <li>• Introduce controls on all 'equality, diversity and inclusion' initiatives and spending within government.</li> </ul>
Immigration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migrants coming to the UK must undergo a health check in advance of travel, increasing their Immigration health surcharge or requiring them to buy health insurance if they are likely to be a burden on the NHS.</li> <li>• Increase all visa fees and remove the student discount to the immigration health surcharge to raise more money for public services.</li> <li>• Increase the salary threshold for skilled worker visas by 48% to £38,700.</li> </ul>
National service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Service will become compulsory for every 18-year-old, with a choice between:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ civic service: the equivalent of one weekend a month (25 days a year) volunteering in the community, alongside work or study, for a year. Roles could include special constable, NHS responder or RNLI volunteer</li> <li>○ military service: a year long full-time placement in the armed forces or cyber defence.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut employee national insurance to 6% by April 2027.</li> </ul>

## NHS Providers view

### Response to the Conservative general election manifesto

Responding to the Conservative Party manifesto, Sir Julian Hartley, chief executive at NHS Providers said:

"With commitments spanning the breadth and depth of workforce, social care and digital to public health, capital and mental health, trust leaders will closely scrutinise the wide range of proposals put forward in the Conservative Party manifesto.

"Nurturing a thriving health and care workforce is essential to delivering safe, high-quality patient care now and in the years to come. With over 100,000 vacancies in the health service in England alone, it is vital that any future government commits to implementing and fully funding the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. Efforts to retain staff and improve working conditions must be paramount. Central to this is recognising and valuing the contribution of all NHS staff – including NHS managers.

"We need to see a workforce plan for social care too. Increased spending on social care is a step in the right direction but wider sector reform is vital to also improve pay and conditions for staff, support unpaid carers and stabilise a critical provider market that's impacted by inflation and the high cost of living.

"Trust leaders will be encouraged by commitment to NHS funding needs and the promise to deliver the New Hospital Programme by 2030. With vital parts of the NHS crumbling due to years of inadequate investment and hospital, mental health and community trusts facing an eye-watering £11.6bn backlog of essential repairs, an infrastructure programme for the NHS cannot be delivered soon enough.

"Trust leaders know that investment in new technologies, such as artificial intelligence, alongside funding for core IT and digital infrastructure, has the potential to transform healthcare for patients, improve access to services and free up staff time particularly at a time when overall waiting lists are worryingly high and the NHS workforce and frontline services are under huge pressure. But with far too much NHS equipment, technology and digital infrastructure not fit for purpose, it's vital we get the basics right first.

"Finally, trust leaders strive to deliver high quality care for all the patients and communities they serve. With the deep-rooted impact of health and structural inequalities felt throughout our society, it's essential that NHS trusts are supported to deliver safe and inclusive services for patients and safe and inclusive environments for staff."

## The Labour Party

The Labour Party manifesto can be accessed in full [here](#), and associated costings document available [here](#).

## Health and social care commitments

### Performance

- Return to meeting NHS performance standards.

- Deliver an extra two million NHS operations, scans, and appointments every year – 40,000 more appointments every week.
- Incentivise staff to carry out additional appointments out of hours.
- Pool resources across neighbouring hospitals to introduce shared waiting lists to allow patients to be treated quicker.
- Use spare capacity in the independent sector to ensure patients are diagnosed and treated more quickly.

## Workforce

- Ensure the publication of regular, independent workforce planning, across health and social care.
- Deliver the NHS long-term workforce plan.
- Reset industrial relations with NHS staff.
- Train thousands more midwives as part of the NHS Workforce Plan.
- Implement professional standards and regulate NHS managers.
- Establish a Royal College of Clinical Leadership to champion the voice of clinicians.

## Mental health

- Reform the NHS to ensure that mental health is given the same attention and focus as physical health.
- Bring waiting times down and intervene earlier.
- Recruit an additional 8,500 new staff to treat children and adults.
- Establish new 'Young Futures hubs' which will provide open access mental health services for children and young people in every community.
- Modernise legislation to give patients greater choice, autonomy, enhanced rights and support, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect throughout treatment.

## Quality of care

- Ensure that trusts failing on maternity care are robustly supported into rapid improvement.

## Estates and capital

- Deliver the New Hospitals Programme.

## Digital and technology

- Establish a 'fit for the future' fund to double the number of CT and MRI scanners.

- Transform the NHS App to include giving performance information on local services, and notifications of vaccinations and health checks. Patients will be able to see the medical guidelines for the treatment they should get, to hold health services to account and understand what their choices are.
- Digitise the Red Book record of children's health.

## Health inequalities

- Set an explicit target to close the Black and Asian maternal mortality gap.
- Implement the expert recommendations of the Cass Review.
- Prioritise women's health as they reform the NHS.
- Tackle the social determinants of health, halving the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richest and poorest regions in England.

## Public health

- Ensure the next generation can never legally buy cigarettes and ensure all hospitals integrate 'opt-out' smoking cessation interventions into routine care.
- Ban vapes from being branded and advertised to appeal to children.
- Ban advertising junk food to children along with the sale of high-caffeine energy drinks to under-16s.
- Commission a new HIV action plan in England, in pursuit of ending HIV cases by 2030.

## Community

- Create a 'community pharmacist prescribing service', granting more pharmacists independent prescribing rights where clinically appropriate.
- Allow other professionals, such as opticians, to make direct referrals to specialist services or tests, as well as expanding self-referral routes where appropriate.
- Trial 'neighbourhood health centres', by bringing together existing services such as family doctors, district nurses, care workers, physiotherapists, palliative care, and mental health specialists under one roof.

## Primary and dental care

- Train thousands more GPs, guarantee a face-to-face appointment for all those who want one and deliver a modern appointment booking system.
- Incentivise GPs to see the same patient, so ongoing or complex conditions are dealt with effectively.

- Reform the dental contract, with a shift to focusing on prevention and the retention of NHS dentists.
- Introduce a supervised tooth-brushing scheme for 3- to 5-year-olds, targeting the areas of highest need.

## Social care

- Undertake a programme of reform to create a National Care Service, underpinned by national standards, delivering consistency of care across the country.
- Develop local partnership working between the NHS and social care on hospital discharge.
- Establish a Fair Pay Agreement in adult social care, which will set fair pay, terms and conditions, along with training standards.
- Task regulators with assessing the role social care workers can play in basic health treatment and monitoring.
- Explore how to best manage and support an ageing population; how integration with the NHS can be secured; how to best support working age disabled adults; and how to move to a more preventative system.

## Access to treatments

- Develop an NHS innovation and adoption strategy, giving a clearer route to get products into the NHS, drive innovation and faster regulatory approval for new technology and medicines.
- Maximise our potential to lead the world in clinical trials.

## Other key policies of note

Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use public investment to unlock additional private sector investment, create jobs, and provide a return for taxpayers.</li> <li>• Partner with British businesses to kickstart economic growth and rebuild Britain.</li> <li>• End short-term economic policy making with the establishment of a statutory Industrial Strategy Council.</li> <li>• Introduce a National Wealth Fund to support economic growth and clean energy missions, starting with £7.3 billion over the next Parliament.</li> <li>• Develop a ten-year infrastructure strategy that aligns with industrial strategy and regional development priorities.</li> </ul>
Research and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a National Data Library to bring together existing research programmes and help deliver data-driven public services.</li> <li>• Scrap short funding cycles for key R&amp;D institutions in favour of ten-year</li> </ul>

	<p>budgets to encourage strong partnerships with industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a new Regulatory Innovation Office, that brings together existing functions across government to better deal with developments of new technology.</li> </ul>
Devolution of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devolve funding so local areas can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer for local people.</li> <li>• Transfer power out of Westminster, and into our communities, with landmark devolution legislation.</li> <li>• Review governance arrangements for Combined Authorities to unblock decision making.</li> <li>• Give councils multi-year funding settlements and end competitive bidding.</li> </ul>
Energy sector reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up the publicly owned Great British Energy company with £8.3bn in capital funding to deliver clean power, support capital-intensive projects and deploy local energy production.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3,000 new primary school-based nurseries to deliver the extension of government funded hours families are entitled to.</li> </ul>
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a landmark Race Equality Act, to enshrine in law the full right to equal pay for Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority people, strengthen protections against dual discrimination and root out other racial inequalities.</li> </ul>
Tax, benefits, pensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abolish non-dom status and replace it with a modern scheme for people genuinely in the country for a short period.</li> <li>• Cap corporation tax at the current level of 25 per cent, the lowest in the G7.</li> <li>• Launch a review into Universal Credit so that it makes work pay and tackles poverty.</li> <li>• Adopt reforms to workplace pensions to deliver better outcomes for UK savers and pensioners.</li> </ul>

## NHS Providers view

### Response to Labour general election manifesto

Sir Julian Hartley, chief executive, NHS Providers, in response to today's Labour Party general election manifesto, said:

"An NHS fit for the future relies on having safe and modern buildings, facilities and equipment.

Labour has acknowledged the need for greater capital investment and the importance of this to boosting productivity and cutting waiting lists.

"There's a long way to go – including enabling digitisation of health services on an industrial scale – but by investing in eliminating the £11bn-plus repairs backlog and systematic renewal of NHS facilities, technology and buildings we will improve the quality and safety of patient care and give even greater value for money.

"The NHS is vital to the nation's health, wealth and our wellbeing as a society. Pledges to tackle race discrimination and health inequalities will be welcomed by trust leaders, as will making mental health services a priority.

"Support for the whole NHS workforce is crucial, from top down. Plans to regulate NHS managers must help trust leaders to nurture a thriving workforce and keep improving patient safety and the quality of care.

"Health services continue to experience record demand and relentless pressure on A&E departments. The next government must work hand in hand with the 'next generation' NHS – right across hospital, mental health, community health and ambulance services – to create the picture of health we all want to see."