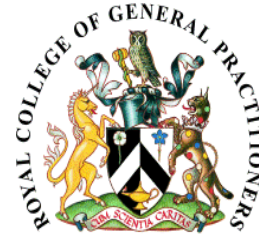


2001 ENGLISH ELECTION MANIFESTOS: LABOUR, LIBERAL DEMOCRATS AND CONSERVATIVE PARTIES

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INTRODUCTION

All three of the major British political parties have launched separate manifestos for England, Scotland and Wales. This summary focuses on the English manifestos; details of the Scottish and Welsh versions will be produced early next week along with a summary of the manifestos produced by the main parties in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

LABOUR MANIFESTO “*AMBITIONS FOR BRITAIN*”

The Manifesto focuses on what Labour has achieved since coming to power in 1997. The vast majority of the health content has already been announced either in the NHS Plan or in the speech Alan Milburn made at the launch of the Modernisation Agency.

Some issues mentioned in the Plan are not in the Manifesto. Revalidation is not mentioned nor is annual appraisal. On the subject of the consultant contract, there is no reference to limiting the amount of private work. PMS schemes are mentioned and are going ahead.

The document states that, provided the UK maintains economic stability, Labour will sustain significant funding increases throughout the next Parliament; so that over time UK health spending will be brought up to the EU average.

The Manifesto reiterates the promises of extra staff made in the Plan: 20,000 extra nurses and 10,000 extra doctors by 2005 are promised. The number of cardiologists will increase by around half and cancer specialists by nearly a third by 2005. Seven thousand extra beds in hospitals and intermediate care are also pledged. Ward sisters will be reintroduced and matrons will be responsible for food and hygiene. There will be 100 new hospital developments by 2010 and 500 one-stop primary care centres, with over 3,000 GP premises modernised by 2004

Within the framework of PFI management, Labour will seek ways in which support staff could remain part of the NHS.

Beyond other commitments to combat child poverty and poor housing, they will make cancer, heart disease and stroke the top priority for investment and reform, with £1 billion of earmarked funding by 2004. The aim is to prevent 300,000 avoidable deaths over the next decade. There will be a new emphasis on prevention, with more screening services including for conditions like sickle cell disease, cystic fibrosis and new-born hearing problems.

Labour remains committed to the Bill to ban tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

The Party states that the NHS has to earn the confidence of each new generation. It has to change the way it works if it is to meet today's challenges and provide fast and modern services. The target of access to a GP within 48 hours and the pledges on waiting times are reiterated. Major conditions like cancer and heart disease will have priority, with all patients treated according to clinical urgency.

The intention to redesign the system around the needs of patients is restated. Same day tests and diagnosis will become the norm. By extending the use of NHS Direct and increasing the numbers of dentists, patients will get easier access to NHS dentistry wherever they live.

Labour states that it would be wrong to push people into paying for their operations, which is why they reject the approach of the Conservatives, which, it claims, would lead to this outcome.

By the end of 2005 every hospital appointment will be booked for the convenience of the patient. Referring to the Concordat signed with the private sector, the Manifesto states that, from next year, if an operation is cancelled on the day of surgery for non-clinical reasons, the hospital will have to offer another binding date within 28 days, or fund the patient's treatment at the time and hospital of the patient's choice.

All maternity units will be modernised, the number of midwives will be increased and women will be given greater choice over childbirth.

There will be tough new standards for care of children, the elderly and people with conditions like diabetes, kidney failure, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and epilepsy.

Genetic services will be extended in the NHS so that more patients enjoy the benefit of the latest advances in testing and treatment; but human cloning will be banned and a moratorium on the use of genetic tests for insurance will be introduced.

Every citizen will be given a personal smartcard containing key medical data giving access to their medical records. Older people, people with disabilities and their carers will be able to decide which services they want, with the choice of having cash given to them directly by local councils.

The document restates the intention to give power to frontline staff. PMS schemes will be extended and by 2004 all local healthcare will be organised by PCTs. Together with the new care trusts, PCTs will control 75% of NHS funding. With more power for PCTs the number of health authorities will be cut by two-thirds and the remainder the functions will be devolved to NHS Regional Offices. The savings of £100m a year will be invested in frontline services.

Every NHS employer will offer more flexible working hours for staff and especially nurses. Childcare provision will be improved and there will be targeted subsidies for childcare for NHS staff.

The case for a public-private partnership with a commercial mortgage lender to make home ownership more affordable for nurses and other staff will be examined. A University of the NHS will be created to guarantee to staff at all levels opportunities for training and career development. The potential for sabbaticals to help GPs, consultant nurses and consultants keep their skills up to date will be examined. There will be a core education curriculum for all health professionals and reforms to modernise the way health professions are regulated.

The full Manifesto is on the web at: www.labour.org.uk.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO “*FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND HONESTY*”

The Liberal Democrats have produced separate manifestos for England, Scotland and Wales; this summary concentrates on the English version.

In England, they promise to prioritise investment in cutting waiting times and put more of an onus on preventative health care. They would scrap health targets set by Labour and allow doctors to set priorities for treatment.

To achieve cuts in waiting times the Liberal Democrats will focus on recruiting more staff. Over five years they promise to create training places for:-

- 27,500 more nurses (7,500 more than Labour)
- 4,600 more doctors (2,500 more than Labour)
- 10,250 more professionals allied to medicine (3,750 more than Labour)

They also aim to retain staff through increased pay - £1000 per year for the lowest paid staff and more money set-aside for others. As part of this process, they advocate establishing a Commission on terms and conditions in the NHS, and a single pay review system for all staff.

They promise 10,000 additional beds (3,000 more than Labour). To achieve this they would also review the criteria for PFI projects, aiming to create “a level playing field between different financial options”.

Backing up these measures is a promise that once referred, doctors will provide a guaranteed date for an appointment with a consultant or for surgery. If a service is not provided locally, patients will be able to use alternative NHS or private facilities.

To improve the quality of care they would create Patient Care Guarantees. These guarantees would be built into all new and existing National Service Frameworks (NSFs), specifying minimum standards of treatment for patients. Patient Care Guarantees and other complaints against the NHS would be enforced through a no-fault compensation that avoids legal costs.

New NSFs are promised on children in care, prosthetic limbs, hepatitis C, HIV and AIDS, palliative care, nutrition, adoption, neurological services, diabetes, maternity services and dentistry. The Liberal Democrats propose a “scorecard system” for patients taking account of the needs beyond just clinical needs, giving doctors a set of objective guidelines by which to judge priorities. They would also legislate against discrimination on the grounds of age in health and social care.

Other measures mentioned in the Manifesto are:-

- Free long-term personal care
- £500 million over five years for dental services. Restoring free dental check-ups and providing incentives for dentists to return to the NHS and to make new capital investments.
- Free eye checks for all
- Doubling the Government’s projected investment in scanning and diagnostic equipment
- Wider availability of complementary medicines on the NHS
- Ending mixed wards in hospitals
- Making more tests available in GP surgeries and pharmacies for diabetes, cholesterol, anaemia, HIV/AIDS, TB, prostate and colorectal diseases

Note that the above measure is the only explicit mention of GP’s in their commitments to health.

A “Pharmaceutical Agency” will replace the current system for buying medicine. It would use the purchasing power of the NHS to drive down the cost of medicines and other technology. The money saved would be used to end the postcode lottery. They hope that over time, further savings would allow a reduction and eventual end to prescription charges.

In the long-term the Liberal Democrats aim to increase funding for mental health and social services thereby providing more community care places, social workers for the elderly and vulnerable groups and more funding for preventative and rehabilitation services.

Liberal Democrats would appoint a Minister of Public Health based in the Cabinet Office to co-ordinate health policy across government departments.

The would make the NHS more accountable by:

- increasing local democracy on Trust and Primary Care Trust boards
- giving the Commons Health Select Committee more resources
- increasing the powers of the Health Ombudsman
- transferring local responsibility for public health from health authorities to local councils
- giving patients access to independent advocates; and,
- establishing a Children's Rights Commissioner

The Liberal Democrats include a "Green Thread" which runs through their manifesto. Under health they mention energy efficiency rating for homes being sold and a "comprehensive strategy" to tackle fuel poverty. They also advocate cleaner air through tax shifts from less polluting to more polluting vehicles and an increase in public transport.

The full Manifesto is on the web at: www.libdems.org.uk

CONSERVATIVE PARTY MANIFESTO "TIME FOR COMMON SENSE"

The Conservatives launched their 2001 election manifesto on May 10th. The section on health focuses a lot on what the Labour Party have done over the last few years, and describes how they would change this. Their principal criticisms of the current health service under Labour are:

- That it is under strain from too much bureaucracy
- That the government has substituted the clinical judgement of clinicians for the pursuit of headlines
- That people are waiting too long to be treated and do not have enough choice about when or where they are looked after

The Conservatives plan to match the Government's plans for spending on the NHS, and also:

- To take politicians out of the day-to-day management of the NHS
- To build a new partnership between the state and independent sectors

The party would abolish the Waiting List initiative and replace it with a Patients' Guarantee. This would give patients a maximum waiting time in defined clinical areas. The health authority will be obliged to treat the patient within that time, or arrange for them to be treated in another authority or in a private hospital.

The Conservatives would require hospitals to give back authority to Ward Sisters, and would bring back Matrons with responsibility to oversee and support nursing staff.

The Conservative Party would enable patients to be treated in the hospital which they and their GP choose, and would ensure that they have full access to information about hospital waiting lists and success rates to assist them in making that choice.

Provided they are of clinical effectiveness, the Party will make alternative and complementary therapies available through the NHS.

They will give GPs the choice of whether to operate as PCTs, and will encourage them to specialise.

The Conservative Party is committed to a comprehensive NHS free to all users, but it also firmly believes that if people choose to take out private insurance they should not be penalised for this. As such, they will abolish (when affordable) the taxes that are currently imposed on employers who offer employees private medical insurance, and on employees who receive the benefit.

The Conservatives intend to unblock the bottlenecks that slow down NHS treatment by, for instance, encouraging the development of stand-alone surgical units specialising in a particular type of standard operation, such as hip replacements. These would be NHS-funded, but could be operated either by the NHS or private providers.

They will encourage an expansion of the role of practice nurses to take on some of the tasks carried out by GPs.

The party also plan to end the 'postcode lottery' by introducing an Exceptional Medicines Fund. Expensive new medicines will be funded directly to doctors from a budget set by the Secretary of State. Access to this funding will be decided by criteria laid down by a panel of senior clinicians and academics.

The Conservatives proposed funding of the NHS matches that of the Labour Party, and includes a commitment that all nursing care will be free at the point of use. In addition, the party proposes to consider how people, who save in advance for the cost of long term care for themselves, can be protected from having their assets taken by the state if their actual care costs are more than could reasonably be foreseen.

The full Manifesto is on the web at: www.conservatives.com