



## **TACT Briefing**

# **The 2017 Election Manifestos Policy Pledges and Children in Care and Care Leavers**

---

### **Summary**

This briefing looks at the 2017 General Election manifesto commitments made by each of the main UK wide political parties on issues pertinent to children in care and care leavers: early years, schools, further education, and children's services.

The briefing will cover the manifesto pledges on children's services from the Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat and Green Parties, including the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru relevant manifesto proposals.

This briefing will be of interest to children in care, care leavers, foster carers, social workers, children's charities, elected members and officers with an interest in, or responsibility for, children in care and care leavers.

### **Briefing**

On the 8th June 2017, there will be a general election. The following briefing will look at the main parties' pledges pertinent to children in care and care leavers.

Each of the main UK-wide political parties have published their manifestos setting out their proposals for government. The purpose of this briefing is to bring together the commitments made that are relevant to children in care or care leavers including early years, schools, further education and children's services. It focuses primarily on the manifestos of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democratic parties, the Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru.

## Conservative Party: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and Prosperous Britain and a Prosperous Future

The Conservative Party manifesto has changed at least twice since its launch in Yorkshire on 18 May 2017. The first change was on adult social care, dropping a pledge to remove the cap on care costs, the second on proposed cuts to universal free school meals. They have also appeared to have moderated their controversial pre-election fair funding proposals by promising that no schools will lose out because of conservative policy on funding.

### Main pledges

- Deliver a smooth and orderly departure from the EU
- Increase NHS budget in England by £8bn a year by 2022/23
- An extra £4bn for schools in England by 2022
- Restating commitment to bring net migration down to tens of thousands
- Balance budget by 2025
- Replacement of triple-lock pension pledge after 2020 with double lock

### Children's Social Care Pledges include:

- The publication of a Green Paper on young people's mental health by the end of 2017
- The introduction of mental health first aid training for teachers in every school by the end of the parliament.
- Demand local authorities be commissioners of the highest quality family support and child protection services. They propose to remove responsibilities from the weakest councils by placing them in trust.
- Ensure that Councils provide consistency of care and cannot re-locate vulnerable children far from their home when it is not in their interests to do so.
- Review support for Children in Need to understand why their outcomes are so poor and what support they might require in and out of school.
- Continue to support fast track entry schemes to children's and adults social work

### Early years

- Strengthen the teaching of literacy and numeracy in the early years.
- A new capital fund to help primary schools develop nurseries where they currently do not have the facilities to provide one so that all primary schools will include a nursery.

## **Schools**

- Continuation of the free school programme, building at least a hundred-new free schools a year.
- New funding arrangements to support the opening of a specialist maths school in every major city in England.
- Work with the Independent Schools Council to ensure that at least 100 leading independent schools become involved in academy sponsorship or the founding of free schools in the state system, with the option of changing the tax status of independent schools if progress not made.
- Making it a condition for universities hoping to charge maximum tuition fees to become involved in academy sponsorship or the founding of free schools.
- Lift the ban on selective schools
- Conduct a review of schools admissions policy, rejecting introduction of a mandatory lottery based school admission policy.
- All 11 year-olds to know their times tables off by heart
- An expectation that 75% to have been entered for the EBacc combination of GCSEs by the end of the next parliament, with 90% of pupils studying this combination of academic GCSEs by 2025

## **Recruitment of teachers**

- Continue to provide bursaries to attract top graduates into teaching.
- Offer forgiveness on student loan repayments while people are teaching, to help the retention of new teachers.
- Create a single portal for schools, like NHS Jobs, for schools to advertise vacancies in order to reduce costs and recruit effectively.

## **Fairer Funding**

- Make school funding fairer over the course of the parliament and ensure that no school has its budget cut as the result of the new formula.
- Increase the overall schools budget by £4 billion by 2022
- Protect the Pupil Premium to support those who need it.
- The offer of a free school breakfast for every child in every year of primary school.
- Children from low-income families will continue to receive free school lunches throughout primary and secondary education.

- The change away from free school lunches to all children in the first three years of primary towards the proposals above will result in savings which will be added to the core schools budget.

### **Higher education and skills**

- Replace the existing 13,000 technical qualifications with T-levels, across fifteen routes in technical areas.
- Investment in FE colleges to ensure that they have world-class equipment and facilities. A new programme to attract experienced industry professionals to work in FE colleges.
- The establishment of new institutes of technology, supported by leading employers and linked to key universities in every major city in England. They will deliver courses at degree level and above, specialising in technical disciplines and high-level apprenticeships.
- Launch a major review of tertiary education funding, to ensure that further, technical and higher education institutions are treated fairly.
- Deliver the existing commitment to create three million apprenticeships for young people by 2022
- Support for young people taking technical qualifications by introducing a UCAS-style portal for technical education and subsidising transport costs for apprentices.

## **The Labour Party: For the Many Not the Few**

### **Main pledges**

- Bring an end to austerity and invest heavily in public services
- Negotiate a Brexit deal that "puts the economy and living standards first"
- Nationalise a number of utilities including rail, post, water and the National Grid
- Increase taxation on business and the highest paid
- Invest in the British economy through a £250bn stimulus package
- Abolish tuition fees for university students in England

## **Children's Services and education**

### **Children's Social Care**

Labour proposes to:

- Bring an end to the neglect of children's mental health services with investment in early intervention by increasing the proportion of mental health budgets spent on support for children and young people.
- Re-focus social care on working with families in local communities to prevent children on the edge of care from ending up in care.
- Promote the care and educational achievement of the most vulnerable children and increase children in kinship and foster care, and their families. Labour supports further regulation of commercial fostering agencies as well as intending to commission a review on establishing a national fostering service.
- Extend *Staying Put* arrangements to support all children and young people in residential and other forms of care until they are 21.
- Enshrine the European Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law.
- Fund children burials nationally across all council areas, so that they are free for bereaved parents. (Some Councils have already made this move).

### **Early years**

- Reform the existing childcare system, in which subsidies are given directly to parents who can struggle to use them, and move to a system of high quality childcare places with government subsidy.
- Retain the current commitment to free hours entitlement and make significant capital investment in the first two years of government to ensure that there are sufficient places to meet demand.
- Phase in subsidised provision on top of free hour entitlements, to guarantee universal access to affordable childcare, '*no matter their working pattern*'.
- Make the transition to a qualified graduate-led profession by increasing staff wages and enhancing training opportunities, to benefit some of the worst paid workers and improve child development.
- Extend 30 free hour entitlements to all 2 year-olds
- Halt the Conservatives' closure of Sure Start Centres (support given to vulnerable children and hard to reach parents) and increase funding to the Sure Start centres

### **School Education**

1. **Investment:** by ensuring that schools are properly resourced by reversing Conservative cuts. A Fairer Funding formula would leave no school worse off.
2. **Quality:** by driving up standards across the board, learning from existing good practice such as Labour's London Challenge, encouraging collaboration and strong leadership across schools.
3. **Accountability:** by ensuring that all schools are democratically accountable and that controls are in place to confirm that they are serving public interests and those of their local communities. Labour advocates coherent and joined up admission policies across local schools to enable councils to carry out their responsibilities for child places , and to support parents in the effective use of admission processes
4. **Inclusion:** by ensuring that Labour-led education enables each unique child to find a learning path through their chosen courses and qualifications, and investing in measures to close attainment gaps between children from different backgrounds.

Specifically, Labour pledges to

- Give all children the best start in life by reducing class sizes to less than 30 for all 5, 6, and 7-year-olds and seek to extend that as resources allow.
- Aid attainment by introducing free school meals for all primary school children, paid for by removing the VAT exemption on private school fees.
- Abandon plans to re-introduce baseline assessment for children going into primary and launch a commission to review Key stage 1 and 2 statutory national tests and assessment and reduce the current '*teaching to the test*'.
- Tackle teacher recruitment and retention by ending the public- sector pay cap and reintroducing national pay settlements for teachers.
- Consult on the introduction of teacher sabbaticals and placements with industry to broaden the curriculum experience in the classroom.
- Extend schools -based counselling to all schools to improve children's mental health.
- Replace £150 million for supporting children in schools by abandoning the Conservatives' plans for schools to pay the apprenticeship levy.
- Deliver an inclusive strategy for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), which effectively embeds SEND into training for teachers and non-teaching staff and supports staff, children and parents.

## **Skills**

The Labour Manifesto argues that at a time when technology is changing demand for different kinds of skills and due to evolving patterns of work, people are likely to pursue a number of careers in their lifetime, '*it is crucial that our education system enables people to upskill and retrain over their lifetimes*'. As part of Labour's industrial strategy, lifelong

learning will help to deliver productivity and growth to the whole economy while transforming the lives of individuals and communities.

### **FE and Adult learning**

Labour proposes to:

- Abandon Conservative plans to build new technology colleges re-directing money to increase teacher numbers in FE.
- Improve careers advice, striking the balance between classroom and on-the-job training to ensure that students gain technical and '*softer*' skills
- Ensure that the 16-18 budget is distributed appropriately between colleges and school sixth forms.
- Replace Advanced Learner Loans and upfront course fees with direct funding, making FE course fees free at the point of use.
- Drive up quality in the FE sector by encouraging collaboration and leadership across colleges and sixth form, setting a target, supported by funding for all FE teaching staff to have a teaching qualification within five years.

### **Apprenticeships**

Labour proposes to:

- Maintain apprenticeship levy but also working to ensure high quality by requiring the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to report annually to the Secretary of State on the quality outcomes of completed apprenticeships to ensure that they deliver skilled workers and real jobs for apprentices at the end of their training.
- Set targets to double the number of completed apprenticeships at NVQ Level 3 by 2022.
- Set targets to increase apprenticeships for people with disabilities, care leavers and veterans and broaden the representation to include women, BAME and LGBT of all kinds of apprenticeships.

### **HE**

- Re-introduce maintenance grants for university students and abolish tuition fees.

## Liberal Democrat Party Manifesto 'Change Britain's Future

### Main pledges

- Hold a referendum on the final Brexit deal, with the option to remain in the EU
- Add 1p to income tax to fund the NHS and social care
- Rule out coalitions with the Conservatives or Labour – but want to make the Liberal Democrats the official opposition
- Increase spending on early years, schools and colleges in England
- Reverse some benefits cuts

### Children's Social Care

Examine the case for introducing a dedicated service for children and young people based on the Australian 'headspace' model and building on many excellent Youth information, advice and counselling services.

Continue to promote and invest in the Frontline programme to fast-track exceptional graduates into children's social care, as well as the Think Ahead scheme aimed at encouraging high-achieving graduates to pursue a career in mental health social work.

### Children and young people

**The Lib Dems** make the following commitments relating to children's education and family services.

#### Early years

Increase the Early Years Pupil Premium to £1,000 per pupil per year.

Commit to a long-term goal of 30 hours' free childcare a week for all parents in England with children aged from two to four years and all working parents from the end of parental leave to two years.

Ensure that this provision is fully funded at sustainable levels, provides flexibility for parents who work unsociable hours, and enables parents to use free school hours during school holidays.

#### Funding

Reverse all cuts to frontline school and college budgets, protecting per pupil funding in real terms.

Introduce a fairer National Funding System with a protection for all schools, so that no school loses money per pupil in cash terms.

Protect the Pupil Premium which targets extra help at disadvantaged children



Over the Parliament, this means an extra £7 billion for school and college budgets

## **Schools**

### **Curriculum and assessment**

Introduce a curriculum entitlement – a slimmed down core national curriculum, which will be taught in all state schools. It will include Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE): a ‘curriculum for life’, including financial literacy, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, mental health education, citizenship and age appropriate Sex and Relationship Education (SRE).

Include in SRE teaching about sexual consent, LGBT+ relationships and issues surrounding explicit images and content.

Make the curriculum the responsibility of an Educational Standards Authority to pilot, phase-in and resource future changes in consultation with professionals and experts while retaining legitimate democratic accountability.

Prioritise primary progress measures instead of floor thresholds and work with the profession to reform tests at 11, preventing curriculum narrowing in upper Key Stage 2.

Protect the availability of arts and creative subjects in the curriculum

Improve the quality of vocational education, including skills for entrepreneurship and self-employment, and improve careers advice in schools and colleges.

Improve links between employers and schools, encouraging all schools to participate in employment and enterprise schemes that promote regular experiences in business.

Challenge gender stereotyping and early sexualisation, working with schools to promote positive body image and break down outdated perceptions of gender appropriateness of particular academic subjects.

### **Teachers**

End the 1% cap on teachers’ pay rises.

Guarantee that all teachers in state-funded schools will be fully qualified or working towards Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) from January 2019.

Introduce a clear and properly funded entitlement to genuinely high quality professional development for all teachers – 25 hours per year by 2020, rising to the OECD average of 50 hours by 2025.

Support proper long-term planning of initial teacher training (ITT), prioritising close partnerships with higher education and specialist routes such as Teach First, in order to recruit the highest quality teachers in shortage areas such as science, technology, engineering, the arts and maths.

Address unnecessary workload by: establishing an independent Education Standards Authority to pilot, phase-in and resource future policy changes in consultation with professionals and experts.

Reform Ofsted inspections so that they include a focus on longer-term outcomes and sustainable improvement as well as teacher workload, sickness and retention support the establishment of a new independent Foundation for Leadership in Education, working under the umbrella of the Chartered College of Teaching, to promote high-quality evidence-based leadership and help the best leaders into the most challenging schools.

Continue to work with the Education Endowment Foundation to establish a comprehensive evidence base on what works in teaching.

### **School standards**

Give democratically accountable local authorities clear responsibility for local school places planning and repeal the rule that all new state funded schools must be free schools or academies. The Lib Dems will encourage local head teachers with a strong record to play a key role in school improvement, working with schools and local authorities.

Scrap the planned expansion of grammar schools and devolve all capital monies for new school spaces to local authorities.

Allow Ofsted to inspect local authorities and academy chains.

Rule out state-funded profit-making schools, and ensure that new schools are built in areas where there is a need for new school places, instead of wasting money on over-supply.

Ensure that identification and support for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) takes place as early as possible. All new policies should have an assessment of how they impact on pupils who have SEND, and ensure that they adhere to duties under the Equality Act.

### **Getting children and families ready to learn**

Ensure that all teaching staff have the training to identify mental health issues and that schools provide immediate access for pupil support and counselling.

Include promoting well-being as a statutory duty for a school, to be part of the Ofsted inspection framework.

Extend free school meals to all children in primary education and promote school breakfast clubs.

University, to provide every family with advice and guidance for learning and parenting at home as well as inspiring trips out and local opportunities.

Ensure collaboration between leading education and family organisations to improve the flow of helpful information between home and school without increasing teacher workload.

Tackle bullying in schools, including bullying on the basis of gender, sexuality, gender identity or gender expression.

### **Higher education**

Reinstate maintenance grants for the poorest students, ensuring that living costs are not a barrier to disadvantaged young people studying at university.

Establish a review of higher education finance in the next Parliament to consider any necessary reforms

Ensure that all universities work to widen participation across the sector, prioritising their work with students in schools and colleges, and require every university to be transparent about selection criteria.

Reinstate quality assurance for universities applying for degree-awarding powers.

### **Lifelong Learning**

Aim to double the number of businesses which hire apprentices, including by extending apprenticeships to new sectors of our economy, such as creative and digital industries.

Develop National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-quality vocational skills that businesses need.

Work with the Apprenticeship Advisory Group to increase the number of apprentices from BAME backgrounds, ensure gender balances across industry sector, and encourage underrepresented groups to apply.

Identify and seek to solve skills gaps such as the lack of advanced technicians by expanding higher vocational training such as foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates and Higher Apprenticeships.

Ensure that all the receipts from the Apprenticeship Levy in England are spent on training, aiming to fund a wider range of types of training

Aim to meet all basic skills needs including literacy, numeracy, and digital skills by 2030.

Create individual accounts for funding mature adult and part-time learning and training, and provide for all adults individual access to all necessary career information, advice and guidance.

Facilitate across the UK, an effective and comprehensive system for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning and qualifications

## The Green Party Manifesto 'A confident and caring Britain'

### Main pledges

- Hold a referendum on the terms of the Brexit deal, with the option of staying in the EU
- Pass an Environment Protection Act to safeguard and restore the environment
- Provide more money for public services
- Move towards a four-day working week and "universal basic income"
- Scrap tuition fees and fund full student grants

### Children's Social Care

Ensure that everyone experiencing a mental health crisis, including children and young people, should have

safe and prompt access to quality care, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The use of police cells as 'places of safety' for children should by the end of the next Parliament, and only occur for adults in exceptional circumstances.

### Equalities

Set clear targets for ending child poverty, including ways to measure it.

Increase the current investment in young people's services, including an inclusive youth service.

Extend free public transport to young people and students.

Raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14.

Lower the voting age to 16

### Education and young people from the Greens Manifesto

#### Early years

Build a free but voluntary universal early education and childcare service for all children from birth until compulsory education age, which would be raised to seven years.

Integrate this into the local education service, run by local authorities, and build on existing infant schools.

Local Authorities would be given freedom as to how to do this in the light of their local circumstances.

Ensure that the system includes children's centres for the very youngest children and their parents, and childcare and early education for children from the age of 1.

Ensure that those who lead early years education have qualified teacher status (QTS) and with specialist knowledge of early years education, and make sure that all other staff are qualified to level 3.

Encourage parents to participate in running the service

### **Schools**

Democratic accountability and a key role for local authorities in planning, admissions policy and equality of access for children with special needs.

A comprehensive system of local schools offering mixed-ability teaching, and staffing by qualified teachers and the integration of grammar schools into the comprehensive system.

Restoring education and current and capital funding to 2010 levels in real terms (around £7billion a year), distributing it fairly among local authorities, reflecting the core costs of education, pupil needs and the quality of school buildings.

Action to reduce teacher workload and introduce professional pay levels for all teachers.

Ending the marketisation and outsourcing of education.

Allowing local authorities to decide how much to allocate to current spending and to capital spending.

Class sizes of 20, costing £1.5billion over the Parliament

The integration of academies and free schools into the local authority system.

The abolition of SATS and performance tables and Ofsted, replaced by evaluation of parents, teachers and the local community.

A broad, balanced curriculum, including creative and vocational areas, making PSHE (including sex and relationships education and first aid) compulsory.

The right of every child who is disabled to a mainstream education

The removal of charitable status from private schools, with a view to absorbing them into the state system.

Phasing out schools run by religious organisations.

Free nutritious school lunches with children involved in growing, preparing and cooking food where possible.

### **Further Education and skills**

A coherent 16-19 qualifications framework allowing a real choice of academic and vocational areas, or a mixture of them.

Oppose the privatisation of FE and return colleges to the democratic control of local government.

Reinstate the government's duty to provide an apprenticeship to all qualified young people aged 16-19, extend it to age 25 and increase funding for apprenticeships by 30%.

Restore the Education Maintenance Allowance for 16 and 17 years olds.

Extra funding for FE of £1.5 billion a year.

Encourage local authorities to use some of the additional funding to them to restore a full range of adult education programmes.

### **Higher education**

Ending undergraduate tuition fees

Cancelling student debt issues by the Student Loans Company and held by the government.

Reintroducing student grants costing £2.2 billion over the Parliament

Restoring access to lifelong learning by supporting mature students and their families.

Reintroducing the block grant to universities.

## **Scottish National Party Manifesto 'Stronger for Scotland'**

### **Main pledges**

- End austerity and release £120bn for UK-wide public spending over next parliament
- Hold a second independence referendum "at the end of the Brexit process"
- Protect Scotland's place in the EU single market
- Raise the minimum wage to more than £10 per hour by 2021/22
- Call on the new UK government to increase health spending per head of population in England to the current Scottish level, which is 7% higher
- Support an increase across the UK in the Additional Rate of income tax - for those earning more than £150,000 - from 45p to 50p

### **Key policy pledges that could have an impact in children in care and care leavers**

- Expand early years education and childcare to 30 hours a week for 3 and 4 year olds and vulnerable 2 year olds in Scotland
- Will not follow the Tories' market-driven education reforms in Scotland
- There will be no selective grammar schools in Scotland
- Continue to guarantee no tuition fees for university education

## Plaid Cymru Action Plan

### Main pledges

- Negotiate a Brexit deal that puts Wales first
- Demand all future free trade deals must be endorsed by Welsh Assembly
- Guarantee rights of all Europeans currently living and working in Wales
- End the business rates system, moving to a turnover-based system
- Introduce a fuel duty regulator to stop rising fuel costs

### Key policy pledges that could have an impact in children in care and care leavers

- Guarantee employment / training / education for anyone under-25 and looking for work
- Free, full-time nursery places for all three-year-olds
- Increase availability of Welsh education from nursery to FE, HE and adult learning
- Create network of specialist National Colleges of Vocational Education for 14+ and post-compulsory education

## Links to full manifestos

[Conservative Party: Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and Prosperous Britain and a Prosperous Future](#)

[The Labour Party: For the Many Not the Few](#)

[Liberal Democrat Party Manifesto 'Change Britain's Future](#)

[The Green Party Manifesto 'A confident and caring Britain'](#)

[Scottish National Party Manifesto 'Stronger for Scotland'](#)

[Plaid Cymru Action Plan](#)

## Conclusion

You can read TACT's detailed policy proposals to transform the lives of children in care or leaving care here: [TACT Manifesto 2017](#)

Any questions on this briefing please contact: [j.ali@tactcare.org.uk](mailto:j.ali@tactcare.org.uk)

