

The Election 2010

Which policies are relevant to you?

This document outlines some of the key policies relevant to the VCS from Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat party manifestos under the headings of:

- [Community](#)
- [Family](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Local Government](#)
- [Pensions and Older People](#)
- [Schools and Education](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Equality](#)
- [Rural issues](#); and
- [Environment](#).

It does not provide an exhaustive list of priorities but instead aims to give you an idea of the key policies that may be relevant to your organisation. We hope you find it useful to understand what the implications might be of any one outcome of the election on 6th May. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please contact Katy Harbottle, Information and Communications Officer on 01799 532 887.

Community and the VCS

Labour

Labour seek to protect post offices and pubs and will invest £235 million to create new or refurbished play spaces and adventure playgrounds. They will extend the use of participatory budgeting to give local people a stronger say. They will support Community Land Trusts to enable local people to purchase and run local amenities and assets in their area and will promote the transfer of buildings and land to the ownership or control of voluntary and community groups.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats aim to reform the National Lottery and change the way it is taxed to deliver more for good causes, as well as using cash in dormant betting accounts to improve local sports facilities and supporting sports clubs. They will introduce 'easy giving accounts' at publicly-owned banks to allow people to operate charitable giving accounts alongside their current accounts; reform Gift Aid to operate at a single rate of 23%; and reform the process of criminal record checking so that volunteers need only one record that is portable, rather than multiple checks for each activity.

Conservative

The Conservatives will support faith, voluntary and charitable groups to counter poverty and deprivation. They will introduce a National Citizen Service for 16 year olds to give them a chance to develop the skills needed to be active and responsible citizens, to mix with people from different backgrounds, and start getting involved in their communities.

Family

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats will make amendments to current parental responsibility and childcare arrangements through: shared parental leave up to 18 months when resources allow; introducing a Default Contact Arrangement to divide the child's time between their two parents in the event of family breakdown, if there is no threat to the safety of the child; and giving fathers rights to time off for ante-natal appointments. The Liberal Democrats also place emphasis on enforcing child protection through: maintaining the commitment to end child poverty in the UK by 2020; incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into UK law, ending the detention of children for immigration purposes; enforcing the publication of an anonymised version of Serious Case Reviews to ensure that lessons are learned; and supporting the objective of at least a 70% reduction in child maltreatment by 2030. Finally the Liberal Democrats seek to make youth service a statutory service and encourage local authorities to provide youth services in partnership with young people and the voluntary sector.

Conservative

The Conservatives pledge to improve Sure Start and increase the services provided in Children's Centres across the country and provide 4,200 extra Sure Start health visitors. For parents they will: introduce a new system of parental leave so parents can share maternity leave between them or both take time off simultaneously; extend the right to request flexible working; help make childcare more affordable by supporting the provision of free nursery care for pre-school children; review the way the childcare industry is regulated and funded; and review family law to look at how best to provide greater access rights to non-resident parents and grandparents. They will recognise marriage and civil partnerships in the tax system, making 4 million couples up to £150 per year better off. Finally they plan to reform the administration of tax credits to reduce fraud and overpayments, which hit the poorest families hardest.

Labour

Labour plan to provide more help for parents to balance work and family life, with a 'Father's Month' of flexible paid leave, and allowing shared maternity leave after six months. They will continue to provide nine months of paid maternity leave and will double paid paternity leave to four weeks. To assist with childcare they will increase free nursery hours to 15 hours a week for three and four-year-olds; guarantee primary school pupils childcare from 8am until 6pm and by 2012 they will provide nursery places for 20,000 two-year-olds and nursery places for 20,000 two-year-olds in the most deprived areas. They will introduce a Toddler Tax Credit of £4 a week from 2012 to give more support to all parents of young children; will fund two parenting advisers in every local authority; provide two extra outreach workers for 1,500 Sure Start community support centres in most disadvantaged areas; and protect the Child Trust Fund. Labour aim to end child poverty by 2020.

Health

Conservative

The Conservatives plan to increase spending on the NHS every year. They seek to give patients the right to choose their GP, hospital and even consultant. They will improve accessibility to GPs by ensuring they are open 8am-8pm seven days a week and ensure patients can get all the best new drugs they need for free on the NHS. They will fight hospital infections and mixed-sex wards by providing more single rooms in the NHS. Finally, they will introduce a voluntary insurance scheme so that people are no longer forced to sell their homes if they need residential care.

Labour

Labour will 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. They will enable preventative healthcare through routine check-ups for the over-40s and a major expansion of diagnostic testing. They advocate more personal care, with the 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 at home. They will give patients the right to choose a GP in their area open at evenings and weekends, with more services available on the high-street, personal care plans and rights to individual budgets. They will ensure access to psychological therapy for those who need it.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats will cut the size of the Department of Health by half, abolish quangos such as Connecting for Health and cut the budgets of the rest, scrap Strategic Health Authorities and seek to limit the pay and bonuses of top NHS managers so that none are paid more than the Prime Minister. They will integrate health and social care allowing people to stay in their homes for longer rather than going into hospital or long term residential care. They will empower local communities to improve health services through elected Local Health Boards, which will take over the role of Primary Care Trust boards in commissioning care for local people, working in co-operation with local councils. The party will give every patient the right to choose to register with the GP they want. The Liberal Democrats will use the money for Labour's Personal Care At Home Bill to provide guaranteed respite care for the one million carers who work the longest hours. Finally the Liberal Democrats will prioritise dementia research and will improve access to counselling for people with mental health problems, by continuing the roll-out of cognitive and behavioural therapies.

Local Government

Labour

Labour's Total Place Agenda will continue the pooling of budgets across localities, giving local areas additional freedom to achieve better services and more savings, cutting bureaucracy and management costs, while placing a greater on early intervention. Labour will cut back ring-fenced budgets, central targets and indicators. They will give local government new powers to lead in the provision and financing of social and affordable housing, tackle climate change and work with the NHS in the new National Care Service. They will introduce petitioning powers for local residents to demand action, and extending neighbourhood agreements where citizens set out the standards of services they expect locally.

Conservative

The Conservatives will abolish Regional Assemblies and regional planning and devolve powers and funding of Regional Development Agencies to local partnerships of councils and business. They will also allow councils to return to the committee system of local government, promote local ward budgets for councillors and scrap rules which hinder councillors from championing interests of local residents. Local residents will be able to petition to hold a referendum on any local issue. They will freeze council tax for two years, in partnership with local councils. The party will work with local councils to freeze Council Tax for two years. Finally, the Conservatives seek to introduce a Community Right to Buy to allow local residents to take over a local service or venue under threat of closure; and allow local residents to bid to run community assets.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats will make local government more accountable and responsive to local people by introducing fair votes for local elections in England. They will reform local taxation, replacing Council Tax with a local tax based on people's ability to pay. They will scrap the Government Offices for the Regions and regional ministers.

Pensions and Older People

Conservative

The Conservatives will end the obligation to buy an annuity at 75. They will ensure all pensioners receive a decent state pension; address the growing disparity between public sector and private sector pensions; and reverse the effects of the abolition of the dividend tax credit for pension funds. The party will hold a review to bring forward the date that state pension age starts to rise to 66. They will also support the removal of the default retirement age in principle. The party will introduce a 'home protection scheme' to stop people being forced to sell their homes to pay for residential care; and will make greater use of direct payments and individual budgets to give people control over their care. They will re-link the basic state pension to earnings, and protect the winter fuel payment, free bus passes and free TV licences.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats will restore the link between the basic state pension and earnings and uprate the state pension annually by at least 2.5%. When resources allow, they will introduce a Citizen's Pension for all long term residents in the UK, set at the level of the Pension Credit; and give people control over their pensions by scrapping the obligation to buy an annuity at 75. They will increase the income tax threshold to £10,000, and plan to insulate many more homes paid for by savings from lower energy bills. They also plan to offer a week's respite for the one million carers who spend 50 hours/ week looking after a sick relative. They will scrap compulsory retirement ages, allowing those who wish to continue in work to do so.

Labour

Labour will introduce the right to request flexible working for older workers, with an end to default retirement at 65 so people can decide for themselves how long they choose to keep working. They will establish a new National Care Service to ensure free care in the home for those with the greatest care needs and a cap on the costs of residential care so that everyone's homes and savings are protected from care charges after two years in a care home. Finally they will re-establish the link between the Basic State Pension and earnings from 2012 and help for ten million people to build up savings through new Personal Pension

Schools and education

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats seek to improve opportunities for every child by: providing cash to reduce class sizes and increase one-to-one tuition; increasing funding of disadvantaged pupils; and guaranteeing Special Educational Needs (SEN) assessment and provision. They will replace the Early Years Foundation Stage with a slimmed-down framework which includes a range of educational approaches; axe the National Curriculum and replace it with a 'Minimum Curriculum Entitlement'; and create a General Diploma to bring GCSEs, A-Levels and high quality vocational qualifications

together. They will replace quangos (the Skills Funding Agency and the Higher Education Funding Council for England) with a single Council for Adult Skills and Higher Education. They will fund 15,000 new places on Foundation Degree courses and off-the-job costs of adult apprenticeships. They will improve target spending on adult skills, ending Train to Gain funding for large companies, restricting funds to the small and medium-sized firms.

Conservative

The Conservatives will create a new generation of independently run state schools and open a new generation of good small schools with smaller classes and top quality teachers. The party plan to create an extra 100,000 apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships each year; give small and medium businesses bonuses for new apprentices hired; and make it easier for firms to run apprenticeships. Over two years the party will provide an extra 100,000 college places and 100,000 new 'work pairings' to help unemployed young people improve their skills and gain meaningful work experience and mentoring from businesspeople. They want to see better careers advice on offer; and the establishment of a Community Learning Fund to help adults learn skills or restart careers. They will abolish many further education quangos.

Labour

Labour will increase spending on Sure Start and free childcare, schools and 16-19 learning- expanding free nursery places for two year olds and providing 15 hours a week of free nursery education for three and four year olds. They aim to ensure that every pupil leaves primary school secure in the basics. They want a choice of good schools in every area and, where parents are not satisfied, the power to bring in new school leadership teams with up to 1,000 secondary schools part of an accredited schools group by 2015. They will ensure that every young person is 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.

Housing

Labour

Labour will guarantee the three million households who rent from a private landlord the right to a written tenancy agreement and access to free and impartial advice, and they will establish a new National Landlord Register. They aim to end rough sleeping by 2012 and to tackle problems faced by homeless people. They will provide homeless 16 and 17 year olds with Foyer-based supported accommodation and training including help with parenting skills.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats will make sure that repossession is always the last resort by changing the courts' powers. They will bring 250,000 empty homes back into use with cheap loans and grants. They will also investigate reforming public sector borrowing requirements to free councils to borrow money against their assets in order to build new of council homes and keep all the revenue from these new homes. They will seek to provide a greater degree of subsidy, as resources allow, to increase the number of new sustainable homes being built.

Conservative

To help people get onto the housing ladder, the Conservatives will increase the stamp duty threshold for them to £250,000; offer tenants with a record of five years' good behaviour a 10% equity share in their social rented property; and strengthen shared ownership schemes. They will introduce a national

mobility scheme for good tenants wishing to move to other social sector properties. They will create new Local Housing Trusts to allow local communities to build local homes for local people, while protecting the character of their neighbourhoods and villages; and abolish the unelected, bureaucratic tier of regional planning, returning power to local communities and their elected councillors to protect their Green Belt and determine the right level of development. Finally they will ensure more accurate homelessness counts and include homelessness as a Ministerial responsibility across a series of government departments.

Equality

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats will extend the right to request flexible working to all employees. For every company with over 100 employees they will ensure name-blind job application forms to reduce sex and race discrimination and introduce fair pay audits to combat pay discrimination. They will give disabled job seekers better practical help to get to work, using voluntary and private sector providers, as well as JobCentre Plus services. They will reform Access to Work so disabled people can apply for jobs with funding already in place for the equipment and adaptation they need.

Conservative

The Conservatives will take measures to tackle the gender pay gap, including stronger legislation to prevent employers discriminating and better careers guidance for young women; and violence against women, including a greater focus on preventative work in schools, better training for police and front-line professionals and new rape crisis centres. They will give disabled people more support to live independently through extending the use of individual budgets and direct payments, giving disabled people greater control over their care and the funding spent on it; preserving Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance as cash benefits; offering disabled people more help to get back into work; ensuring that existing disability discrimination law is more widely understood and better implemented; and taking action to support disabled children and their families. The party will also take action to remove mental health discrimination in Parliament and open up the political system to disabled people by setting up an Access to Public Life Fund.

Labour

Labour will support new legislation and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure people are not held back at work because of their gender, age, disability, race and religious or sexual orientation. They will enforce the new Equality Act. They will extend the public duty to promote equality of opportunity. Finally they will encourage employers to make greater use of pay reviews and equality checks.

Rural Issues

Conservative

The Conservatives seek to give rural communities a voice to decide their own future and only seek to regulate where self-regulation. They will protect rural services and will address the lack of affordable housing through growth based on what local communities want, at the same time helping them protect the countryside from development imposed by central government. They will revive the rural economy by reducing the barriers to business growth and creating rural development incentives.

Labour

Labour will build 10,000 homes in rural areas up to 2011. They plan to protect rural services such as bus services (protecting rural schools), as well as shops, post offices and pubs. They will ensure rural businesses and communities must have the broadband connections they need. Under Labour, councils will have to ensure the importance of local services to the community is taken into account before granting planning permission to change their use. Finally, the party will encourage and support imaginative solutions in rural communities to the provision of locally owned services.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats will promote schemes for affordable homes like equity mortgages and 'Home on the Farm' which encourage farmers to convert existing buildings into affordable housing. They will end the post office closure programme and will increase the general right of access to the countryside.

Environment

Labour

Labour aim to achieve around 40% low-carbon electricity by 2020 and create 400,000 new green jobs by 2015. They will 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.

Conservative

The Conservative Party will take forward the findings of the Pitt Review on the summer 2007 floods to improve our flood defences, prevent unnecessary building in areas of high flood risk, and ensure the country is better equipped for future flooding. In terms of energy saving, the party will allow communities that host renewable energy projects to keep the additional business rates they generate for six years; provide incentives for smaller-scale energy generation; create a 'Green Deal', giving every home up to £6,500 worth of energy improvement measures paid for by savings from lower energy bills; ensure energy bills provides information on moving to the cheapest tariff and comparisons of energy usage by similar households; and reform the Post Office Card Account to give up to 4 million people access to lower tariffs. Finally the party plan to launch a national tree planting campaign to green our towns and cities by planting up to one million new trees in the next Parliament.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats identify this as a crosscutting theme as many of their priorities for housing, employment and transport have an environmental element. The party will encourage energy saving and cost saving on energy through launching a one year 'Eco Cash-Back' scheme to give you £400 if you install double glazing or micro-generation (also allowing you to sell energy back to the National Grid) or replace an old boiler; encouraging community-owned renewable energy schemes where local people benefit from the power produced; insulating many more homes paid for by savings from lower energy bills; changing the tariffs used by energy supply companies so provide cheaper energy; and making sure every new home is fully energy-efficient by improving building regulations.

30th April 2010

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