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## General Election 2024 – Manifesto analysis

This week saw the publication of the three major national Parties' manifestos – the documents that set out what policies and reforms each Party would implement if they were to form the next Government.

Published alongside these documents are costings documents, with a more detailed breakdown of the tax and spending implications of the policy proposals.

Below is a sector focused breakdown of each of these manifestos, with their overall narrative and key policy pledges set out, as well as ukactive analysis of what these mean for the sector.

### Labour

#### Overview

Labour is standing on a platform of change. Rather than specific policy interventions, the document focuses more on the broader narrative of a Labour Government.

There are specific policy interventions for the sector, with mentions of prioritising PE and using elite events to drive participation. It is confirmed the business rates system in England will be replaced, and a roadmap for business taxation will be published early in the new Parliament. This forms part of Labour's offer of a new Industrial Strategy, which, while not mentioning the sector specifically, does promise to remove barriers to growth and unlock investment.

On health, much of the rhetoric is on the need to prioritise prevention alongside community services, particularly how they might reduce the pressure on frontline NHS services. This provides plenty of scope for engagement with a future Government on the role the sector can play in providing treatment options, as well as the wider role in prevention.

#### Key Policies

##### Industrial Strategy

- Introduce a new industrial strategy.
- Establish an Industrial Strategy Council, on a statutory footing.
- Ensure a pro-business environment, with a competition and regulatory framework, that supports innovation, investment, and high-quality jobs.

##### Business taxation

- Replace the business rates system to raise the same revenue but in a fairer way. This new system will level the playing field between the high street and online



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giants, better incentivise investment, tackle empty properties and support entrepreneurship.

- Publish a roadmap for business taxation for the next parliament which will allow businesses to plan investments with confidence.
- New Deal for Working People, including banning “exploitative” zero hours contracts.

#### Welfare

- Work with local areas to create plans to support more disabled people and those with health conditions into work.
- Devolve funding so local areas can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer for local people.

#### Health

- Change the NHS so that it becomes not just a sickness service, but able to prevent ill health in the first place.
- Reflect the change in the nature of disease, with a greater focus on the management of chronic, long-term conditions.
- Move the National Health Service to a Neighbourhood Health Service, with more care delivered in local communities to spot problems earlier. To achieve this...over time shift resources to primary care and community services.
- Take the pressure off GP surgeries, by improving access to services and treatment through new routes.
- 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.

#### Culture, Media and Sport

- Deliver international events with pride and seek new opportunities...creating a legacy to inspire the next generation of talent while promoting exercise and healthy living.

#### Children and Young People

- Intervene earlier to stop young people being drawn into crime, creating a new Young Futures programme with a network of hubs reaching every community.
- Young Futures hubs will provide open access mental health services for children and young people in every community.
- More children active by protecting time for physical education, and supporting the role grassroots clubs play in expanding access to sport.
- An ambition to raise the healthiest generation of children in our history.

#### Local Government



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- Give councils multiyear funding settlements and end wasteful competitive bidding.

***ukactive analysis:** With the polls suggesting the next Government is very likely to be a Labour one, there is perhaps more scrutiny of this manifesto than the others. Also as a result of their poll lead and the desire not to make any unforced errors, Labour's manifesto is relatively light on policy detail, with the majority of specific policy pledges already announced and little fresh detail on ambitious changes such as business rate reform.*

*Physical activity is not a central plank of the manifesto, although there is reference to the value of community sports clubs and the need to promote exercise. It is extremely promising to see the focus on preventative health, as we know the key role that physical activity and our sector can play in this area. The reference to services and treatments through new routes suggests scope for facilities continuing to work closely with the NHS to reduce pressures and provides a platform for future engagement for the sector.*

*The breadth and lack of prescription within the document does allow for physical activity to take more of a front seat in the next Government, and the real work to influence that policy agenda begins now.*

## **Conservative**

### *Overview*

The central pitch from the Conservative Party throughout the campaign has been around their plan working to turn the tide on economic hardship and a promise of future lower taxes, a theme which continues in the manifesto.

The most headline grabbing policy surrounds National Insurance Contributions (NICs), pledging a further 2% cut to employees' NICs and to phase in an abolition of NICs for the self-employed.

There are further taxation measures for businesses, particularly SMEs, although the announcements around VAT and business rates are largely repeats of those unveiled in the Spring Budget.

Beyond this there is little of note specifically for the physical activity sector, with no further commitments regarding the ambitions set out in the Sport Strategy. However, there is a commitment to continued investment in the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme, prioritisation of sport for women and girls, and an extension of the PE and School Sport Premium.





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There is a recommitment to publishing the Major Conditions Strategy, which will focus on long-term conditions including heart disease, mental health, and musculo-skeletal disorders.

### *Key Policies*

#### Health

- Extend patients' right to choose to more NHS community services over time, including diagnostics, talking therapies and other mental health services
- Publish and implement a Major Conditions Strategy to prevent these conditions from occurring and ensure those living with them receive the best possible care.
- Expand coverage of Mental Health Support Teams from 50% to 100% of schools and colleges in England by 2030.

#### Business

- Ease the burden of business rates for high street, leisure and hospitality businesses by increasing the multiplier on distribution warehouses that support online shopping over time.
- Keep the VAT threshold under review and explore options to smooth the cliff edge at £90,000.
- Improve access to finance for SMEs including through expanding Open Finance and by exploring the creation of Regional Mutual Banks.
- Take more companies out of the scope of burdensome reporting requirements...lift the employee threshold allowing more companies to be considered medium-sized.
- Cut taxes to support the self-employed by abolishing the main rate of self-employed National Insurance entirely by the end of the Parliament.

#### Welfare

- Overhaul the fit note process so that people are not being signed off sick as a default.
- Delivering an expansion in mental health support to those signed off work due to mental health conditions.

#### Sport

- Maintain the pace of investment over the next Parliament through the continuation of the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme.
- Prioritise equal access for women and girls in ongoing programme of investment in grassroots sports facilities.

#### Children and Young People



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- Mandating two hours of PE every week in primary and secondary schools, supported by extending the PE and Sport Premium to secondary schools.
- Increase funding for School Games Organisers to get more competitive sport into and between schools and work with sporting bodies to create more UK-wide school competitions like National Finals.

#### Equalities

- Clarify the Equality Act to reinforce 'sex' means 'biological sex'.

*ukactive analysis: Trailing by such a significant margin the polls, the Conservatives needed their manifesto to make a real impact on the campaign. However, the offer within the document is widely seen to have fallen short. Many of the major policies on business taxation and welfare reform merely provide further detail to previous announcements, while the Major Conditions Strategy has been promised for over a year.*

*There is little mention at all of physical activity, aside from welcome support on school sport. However, given that a Conservative Government would be a continuation of the previous Government, we would expect that work towards the commitments set out in the 2023 Get Active strategy would continue.*

### **Liberal Democrats**

#### Overview

The Liberal Democrat manifesto's central theme is the same one that has cut through their campaign: health and social care. As well as Leader Ed Davey's personal story of caring, the manifesto contains a series of pledges on the NHS and wider health ecosystem. These include £8.6bn to reduce waiting lists, support for increased mental health provision, and increase in the Public Health Grant – with a focus on increasing healthy life years.

Aside from health, the Liberal Democrats also have pledges around the tax system, most notably replacing business rates with a Commercial Landowner Levy.

There is a specific pledge on physical activity, including “boost participation in sports and physical activity by investing in leisure centres [and] swimming pools”.

The document has a lot of positives for health and for the sector, although there are significant questions around funding, with commentators suggesting not all the tax calculations add up.

#### Key Policies



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### Economy

- End retrospective tax changes such as the loan charge brought in by the Conservatives, and review the Government's off-payroll working IR35 reforms to ensure self-employed people are treated fairly.

### Business and Jobs

- Fix the skills and recruitment crisis by investing in education and training, including increasing the availability of apprenticeships and career advice for young people.
- Boost small businesses and empower them to create new local jobs, including by abolishing business rates and replacing them with a Commercial Landowner Levy to help our high streets.

### Health

- Improve early access to mental health services by establishing mental health hubs for young people in every community and introducing regular mental health check-ups at key points in people's lives when they are most vulnerable to mental ill-health.
- Help people to spend five more years of their life in good health by investing in public health.
- 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.
- Establish a 'Health Creation Unit' in the Cabinet Office to lead work across government to improve the nation's health and tackle health inequalities.

### Sport

- Boost participation in sports and physical activity by investing in leisure centres, swimming pools and other grassroots facilities and supporting community sports clubs.
- Support and encourage campaigns to improve equality, diversity and inclusion in sport.
- Protect sports and arts funding via the National Lottery.

### Immigration

- Replace arbitrary salary threshold with a more flexible merit-based system for work visas, with the relevant department working with employers in each sector to address specific needs as part of a long-term workforce strategy.
- Reverse the increase to income thresholds for family visas.

*ukactive analysis: While much of the focus of the Lib Dem campaign has been on Leader Ed Davey's eye-catching stunts, their serious pitch to woo Conservative voters is*





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*cutting through. The manifesto builds on that with serious offers on a number of policy areas that appeal to that demographic around health and social care in particular. It is also positive to see explicit support for the sector, as well as public health.*

*However, there have been concerns raised about the feasibility of the offer, particularly on its affordability. The Liberal Democrats will hope it galvanises enough support to be a force in the next Parliament, or even in the event of a hung Parliament as a coalition partner, and see at least some of the more popular ideas implemented.*

### **Other parties**

Alongside the three major national parties, other policy announcements include:

#### *Green Party*

- A £5bn investment to support community sports, arts and culture.
- Keeping local sports facilities, museums, theatres, libraries and art galleries open and thriving.
- Restoring public health budgets to 2015/16 levels with an immediate annual increase of £1.5bn.

#### *Plaid Cymru*

- Well-being: Playing sport and participating in arts and culture is a significant part of our well-being. Recognising the positive effects that this has upon individuals and communities, we will promote participation and engagement, looking to fund this from cross governmental sources.