

Multiple needs in the Conservative Party 2015 General Election Manifesto

Following 7 May the Conservative government won a majority in the House of Commons. This briefing summarises the key commitments made in the party's [election manifesto](#) that, if implemented, are likely to affect people with multiple needs.

Drug treatment

The manifesto mentions the previous Government's promotion of abstinence-based treatment, and implies that they will continue along this path.

We reformed drug treatment so that abstinence and full recovery is the goal, instead of the routine maintenance of people's addictions with substitute drugs. (p. 58)

It also revives existing proposals on mandatory treatment, promising to review whether people with long-term conditions should be required to accept treatment in return for receiving full benefit entitlements. The previous government explored this both in the context of substance misuse¹ and mental health² conditions such as depression and anxiety, but received significant criticism from treatment providers.

We will make sure the hardest to help receive the support they need for a fulfilling life. We will review how best to support those suffering from long-term yet treatable conditions, such as drug or alcohol addiction, or obesity, back into work. People who might benefit from treatment should get the medical help they need so they can return to work. If they refuse a recommended treatment, we will review whether their benefits should be reduced. We will also provide significant new support for mental health, benefiting thousands of people claiming out-of-work benefits or being supported by Fit for Work. (p. 28)

¹ ['DWP softens line on mandatory drug tests for benefit claimants'](#), CommunityCare, 4 November 2009

² ['Tories discuss stripping benefits claimants who refuse treatment for depression'](#), The Telegraph, 12 July 2014

The Prime Minister has asked³ Dame Carol Black to conduct a review into this issue and MEAM will be seeking to help people engage in this process when more information is available.

Mental health

The manifesto commits to continue promoting parity of esteem between mental and physical health, and promises further investment in therapy and faster access to treatment.

We have legislated to ensure that mental and physical health conditions are given equal priority. We will now go further, ensuring that there are therapists in every part of the country providing treatment for those who need it. We are increasing funding for mental health care. We will enforce the new access and waiting time standards for people experiencing mental ill-health, including children and young people. (p. 39)

The new NHS-led mental health taskforce is developing a new five year national strategy for mental health covering services for all ages which will be published in autumn 2015. MEAM recently [submitted evidence to the taskforce](#), which has an independent chair, Paul Farmer, chief executive of Mind.

Transforming Rehabilitation

Although not mentioned by name, the manifesto describes the progress of Transforming Rehabilitation so far, and implies it will continue as planned.

We have made sure that 45,000 offenders will now receive supervision and rehabilitation on release from prison, with providers paid according to the results they achieve in reducing reoffending. (p. 58)

In this context, more work is promised on rehabilitation of offenders and early intervention, particularly with regard to drug and alcohol misuse. This may come into conflict with the continued introduction of cost-saving technologies, such as electronic kiosks.

We need to complete our revolution in the way we manage offenders in the community, using the latest technology to keep criminals on the straight and narrow. And we must also become smarter when it comes to crime prevention, dealing with the drivers of crime such as drugs and alcohol. So we will focus not only on punishment, but also on rehabilitating offenders and

³ [‘David Cameron calls on obese to accept help or risk losing benefits’](#), Guardian, 14 February 2015

intervening early to prevent troubled young people being drawn into crime. (p. 58-9)

Prison reform

The manifesto suggests that further prison reforms will include more use of payment-by-results, and the more widespread use of random drug testing in prisons.

Despite making savings in the prison budget, there are around 3,000 more adult male prison places today than in 2010. We will make further savings by closing old, inefficient prisons, building larger, modern and fit-for-purpose ones and expanding payment-by-results. And we will introduce widespread random testing of drug use in jails, new body scanners, greater use of mobile phone blocking technology and a new strategy to tackle corruption in prisons. (p. 59)

Housing

The manifesto proposes several policies to encourage home ownership, including extending the previous government's 'Help to Buy' scheme and extending the right to buy.

At its heart, a clear objective to build affordable homes, including 200,000 Starter Homes which will be sold at a 20 per cent discount, and will be built exclusively for first time buyers under the age of 40. At the same time, we will extend our Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme, introduce a new Help to Buy ISA, extend the Right to Buy to Housing Association tenants and make sure that, when it comes to planning decisions, local people are in charge. (p. 51)

The manifesto also pledges to end the 'automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit' for 18 – 21 year-olds who are claiming Jobseekers' Allowance. It also proposes a residency requirement for EU migrants seeking social housing, under which they cannot be considered unless they are living in an area for four years.

Violence against women and girls

The manifesto commits the Government to work with local areas to protect specialist services for vulnerable women and girls (although it makes no commitments on funding).

We have made protecting women and girls from violence and supporting victims and survivors of sexual violence a key priority. We will now work with local authorities, the NHS and Police and Crime Commissioners to ensure a secure future for specialist FGM and forced marriage units, refuges and rape crisis centres. (p. 59)

Funding mechanisms

Integration of the health and social care systems will continue, with a commitment to expanding pilots of new funding structures such as pooled budgets.

We will continue to integrate the health and social care systems, joining-up services between homes, clinics and hospitals, including through piloting new approaches like the pooling of around £6 billion of health and social care funding in Greater Manchester and the £5.3 billion Better Care Fund. (p. 39)

This includes a commitment to wider use of social investment models and payment by results.

We have also pioneered the use of social impact bonds and payment-by-results, and we will look to scale these up in the future, focusing on youth unemployment, mental health and homelessness. (p. 46)

Implementation of the manifesto

We will continue to monitor the new Government's programme of work, which will be set out in greater detail through the Queen's Speech, budget and spending review.

For more resources like this, sign up to the MEAM [Fulfilling Lives Policy Briefing](#), supported by the Big Lottery Fund

