

A CONTRACT FOR EQUALITIES



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A CONTRACT FOR EQUALITIES

In this election campaign we have talked about the new part we hope people will play in making the country better, in building the Big Society. Now, at the end of the campaign, we are setting out our side of the bargain: what we will do if we win the election. So we are publishing this contract for equalities, which underscores some of the most important battles in politics – on gender equality, racial equality, ending age discrimination, LGBT issues and helping disabled people. And we are saying clearly in this contract that if we fail to make progress in these areas, if we do not deliver on our side of the bargain, then vote us out in five years time.

This contract for equalities will be central to what we plan to do in government. After 13 years of Labour's big government, inequality is at its highest level since the Second World War. Just as we are determined to fight poverty, so we are determined to fight prejudice and discrimination wherever it exists. We will transform Britain by returning power to the people – whoever they are, wherever they live, however they choose to make their positive contribution to society. But we will only get the economy moving, heal the wounds of the broken society and reform our rotten political system if we involve everyone. No group, no minority, will be left behind on the road to a better future.

Make no mistake: the Conservative Party has changed. We have updated our policies, and our candidates better reflect modern Britain. When David Cameron became leader of the Conservatives more than four years ago, he set out to reverse the under-representation of ethnic minorities in the party. There are, for example, 43 Black and Asian Parliamentary candidates standing for the party this week. And if we win, with even a small majority, we would have at least 15 Conservative MPs from minority ethnic backgrounds – more than any party has today.

After 13 years of Labour government, there have been some good steps forward in the struggle for equalities, especially on gay rights. But there is still much to do. The battle to break down barriers that hold back so many people will be at the core of our agenda for government. We will use every lever available to ensure equal opportunities turns from a dream into reality.

The harsh truth is that too many Britons still face discrimination on an almost daily basis because of their race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, belief or background. We will take action to bring this to an end. So, among other measures, we will fund up to 15 new rape crisis centres, tackle homophobic bullying in schools and set up a fund to help people with disabilities become MPs.

A CONTRACT FOR EQUALITIES

Much of the bias against minorities is found in the workplace. So we will take action to close the gender pay gap, get more women onto boards of public companies and set up mentoring schemes for female and ethnic minority entrepreneurs to help them succeed in business. Government must show responsibility too. That is why we will arrange internships in every Whitehall department for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, opening doors and tearing down barriers. We will help people with disabilities get back into work – and, if they are unable to work, ensure there is more support with personalised budgets giving them better control over services.

Finally, as part of our drive to be the most family-friendly government in history, we will take action to ensure more support for flexible working, for the parents of disabled children, for grandparents and for the army of six million carers who play such a vital role in society.

A Conservative government will use every lever to tear down the barriers that are holding too many people back. We will make Britain a fairer society for all.



David Cameron

Action to ensure gender equality

Labour have failed to deliver gender equality. Today women are paid on average 16.4 per cent less than men.¹ Women make up just 12 per cent of FTSE 100 directors, just 20 per cent of MPs, and less than a third of senior civil servants.² At the same time women remain at a disproportionately high risk of suffering from domestic violence, stalking or rape.

A Conservative government will bring new energy and ideas to succeed where Labour have failed.

Tackling the gender pay gap

Women on corporate boards

Only 12.2 per cent of FTSE 100 directorships are held by women – and based on current trends, it will take 73 years for women to hold half of FTSE 100 corporate directorships.

This is not only unfair, because too many talented women are being denied the opportunity to contribute, but it also reduces the diversity of opinion in boardrooms. This lack of diversity makes them more vulnerable to “groupthink” and less likely to develop new ideas and scrutinise management decisions effectively.

A Conservative government would bring change to Britain’s corporate boardrooms, introducing new rules to increase the proportion of female directors, and creating new opportunities for women to rise to the top.

We will require the long list for directorship appointments to include 50 per cent female candidates. This will help ensure that

companies recruit from a diverse pool of candidates. It will apply to executive directors as well as non-executive directors.

We will require all non-executive director positions to be advertised to ensure that talented potential candidates have the chance to apply for boardroom vacancies.

Compulsory pay audits

A Conservative government will introduce legislation requiring any employer who loses an employment tribunal case on grounds of gender pay discrimination to undergo a compulsory pay audit covering the entire company.

Ban on contract gagging clauses

We will ban companies from inserting so-called ‘gagging’ clauses into employment contracts, which prevent employees speaking to colleagues within the company about their salary. This will help to tackle some of the information barriers that entrench the gender pay gap.

Public sector pay transparency

We will require public bodies to publish online the salaries and expenses of senior officials paid more than the lowest salary permissible in Pay Band 1 of the Senior Civil Service pay scale.

We will also require local councils to publish online the names and salaries of their highest paid officials.

Careers advice

A Conservative government – through our new all-age careers service – will tackle one of the drivers of the gender pay gap by working with teachers and career advisers to ensure that young women make broader and more ambitious career decisions, and are fully informed of the financial and professional consequences of their decisions.

Promoting family-friendly working

Right to request flexible working

A Conservative government will extend the right to request flexible working to all parents of children under the age of 18. And, eventually, our ambition is to make flexible working available to as many people as possible.

We will also extend the right to request flexible working to all public sector workers – ensuring that Britain’s biggest employer becomes a world leader in providing flexible working opportunities.

Flexible parental leave

A Conservative government will ensure that both parents can take the parental leave entitlement at the same time. This policy will also help encourage a change in employers’ attitudes towards women by enabling parental leave to be taken by either men or women.

Women and enterprise

According to the Government, less than 5 per cent of women are self employed compared to 12 per cent of men.³ If women started up businesses at the same rate as men, there would be 150,000 extra start-ups each year in the UK.

Business mentoring for women

As part of our plans to Get Britain Working, a Conservative government will fund a targeted national enterprise mentoring scheme for women who want to start a business. This national mentoring programme will provide would-be female entrepreneurs with the advice, role models and targeted support they need to launch a start-up company.

The funding comes from our Get Britain Working programme. We will refocus spending on the New Deal, Train to Gain and other failing Labour programmes on our Get Britain Working package.

Childcare

One in five women struggle to find affordable childcare, and yet just a quarter of those eligible

for the working tax credit claimed the childcare element.

We support the provision of free nursery care for pre-school children and we want that support to be provided by a diverse range of providers – including the many childminders and private, voluntary and independent nurseries which are currently being squeezed out of the system. In government we will review the way the childcare industry is regulated to ensure that no provider is put at a disadvantage.

Ending violence against women

An incident of domestic violence is reported to the police every 60 seconds.⁴ Domestic violence is the biggest killer of women aged 19 to 44 – killing more women than cancer or traffic accidents.⁵ According to the British Crime Survey, one in four women will be a victim of domestic violence in their lifetime.⁶

Under Labour, the rape conviction rate has fallen sharply, and rape crisis centres have closed across the country.

Funding up to 15 new rape crisis centres

Rape crisis centres offer long-term support to survivors of sexual violence, including women dealing with historic experiences, such as child or early adulthood sexual abuse.

Under Labour, the number of rape crisis centres has fallen:

- Nine rape crisis centres have closed in the last five years.⁷ There are 38 rape crisis centres in England and Wales today, compared to 68 in 1984.⁸

A significant problem is the lack of long-term stable funding, with funding decisions often made midway through the financial year – meaning that rape crisis centres are forced to survive hand-to-mouth and often face the threat of imminent closure.

In July 2007, for example, rape crisis centres were informed that their grants from the Government's Victims' Fund would not be renewed for the next financial year. They were given only a few weeks' notice of the decision, which left them very little time in which to find alternative sources of income.

A Conservative government will allocate £2.6 million over three years for up to fifteen new rape crisis centres across England and Wales – growing the network by more than a third – to ensure victims of rape and sexual violence have access to a vital support service nearby. This will be funded from fines levied on criminals, which are paid into a Victims Surcharge Fund.

A Conservative government will also introduce stable long-term funding cycles for rape crisis centres. We will end the process of short-term

annual funding decisions and introduce three-year funding cycles for rape crisis centres.

Tackling the culture of sexual violence

As well as helping female victims of violence, it is important to tackle the causes of violence against women.

Worryingly, an Amnesty International UK study of young people in the UK⁹ found that one in two young men believe there are some circumstances when it's acceptable to force a woman to have sex:

- 27 per cent think it is acceptable for a boy to 'expect to have sex with a girl' if the girl has been 'very flirtatious'.
- The same view is held by one in 12 (8 per cent) of young people where a boy had 'spent a lot of time and money' on the girl.
- 11 per cent think it is acceptable for a boy to expect to have sex if sexual activity had been initiated and the boy was 'really turned on'.

We believe that the education system should play a key role in helping to inform young men and women about the issue of sexual consent, and tackle a key root cause of sexual violence.

A Conservative government will ensure that the curriculum includes teaching young people about sexual consent, including an emphasis on empowering young people to say no to sex.

Working group with Mayor Bloomberg on domestic violence

The Conservative Party Strategy Paper on 'Ending Violence Against Women' identified New York's successful approach to domestic violence, which has more than halved the domestic violence murder rate. This approach involves police visits to homes with histories of domestic violence. In 2008, trained officers made 72,463 home visits, a 93 per cent increase since 2002.¹⁰

According to Deputy Chief Kathy Ryan, the commanding officer of the NYPD's domestic-violence unit, the home visits give abusers a sense of being watched, give the weaker party in a home a sense of having allies, and sometimes even catch an offender in a household that he is barred from by a court order.

According to NYPD figures, the largest decline in domestic-violence murders occurred in households that police already knew to be problem homes. As a result of the strategy, this type of murder was reduced by 64 per cent between 2002 and 2007, compared with a fall of 27 per cent in other murders over the same period.¹¹

We will work with Mayor Bloomberg to examine how the successful New York approach could be adopted in the UK.

Helping women in the developing world

Women bear the overwhelming burden of extreme poverty and deprivation in the developing world. Over 70 per cent of the world's 1.3 billion poorest people are women and this appalling situation is getting worse. Currently girls constitute over two thirds of the 130 million children who have no access to basic education.¹²

We have reaffirmed our commitment to meet the internationally agreed goal of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income spent on aid by 2013 and set out some bold and radical ideas which will help women in their fight against poverty. For example, using women as recipients of aid would be an important step in improving development and ensuring equality and a commitment to primary education for all would help lower birth rates and promote female choice over marriage. More than anything else, ensuring equal participation of women across all spheres of society is crucial to economic growth and development.

Action to help disabled people

In Britain today, too many disabled people are held back from fulfilling their aspirations and reaching their full potential. Whether it is getting a job and developing a career, receiving the right care and support services, or simply doing all of the routine day to day things which non-disabled people take for granted, too many disabled people find that they are often not as free to live their lives as they would wish.

A Conservative government will break down these barriers and ensure that disabled people have the chance to succeed and to fully participate in society.

Reforming welfare – helping disabled people into work

Under Labour, only 50 per cent of disabled people are in work compared to 80 per cent of non-disabled people.¹³ This helps explain why disabled people are twice as likely to live in poverty as non-disabled people.¹⁴

There are now more disabled people on sickness benefits than when Labour came to power in 1997, and over 800,000 have been on benefit continuously for over 10 years.¹⁵

A Conservative government will reform our welfare system so that disabled people who are able to work, get the right help and support to move into and stay in work.

Unconditional support for those who cannot work

Central to our plans is a clear distinction between people who can't work and those who can. Of course, there are some people who due

to the nature of their disability or illness will not be able to work. These people who cannot work because of a disability or illness should never be forced to work, and will continue to receive unconditional support through the benefits system. Of course if they want to, they will be able to access employment support services on a voluntary basis.

Employment support for those who can work

We want support for disabled people to be designed around what they can do rather than what they can't do. Apart from people with a terminal illness, we will require all current recipients of Incapacity Benefit to be assessed through a Work Capability Assessment.

For those who are able to work, we want to ensure that they are given the right support and help so that they can enter or return to the workplace. We are very much focused on helping all who are capable of work, not just those who are nearest to the job market.

Through our Work Programme, we will use the expertise of the private and voluntary sector, and pay by results, in order to help disabled people realise their potential.

We will offer specialist support to disabled people to help them move into paid employment. Most importantly, by using a system of differential payments, we will encourage providers to support the hardest to help into a job by offering them bigger rewards for doing so. By focusing on truly sustainable outcomes, we will support disabled people into suitable jobs which are the right fit for them.

Government employment of disabled people

Whitehall needs to take the lead and promote the employment of disabled people – and a Conservative government will ensure that this happens.

Benefit reform

The complexity of the current benefit system can often discourage disabled people from moving off benefits and into work. We will examine ways in which we can reward responsibility by simplifying the benefits system for disabled people and reducing the perverse disincentives which put off disabled people from moving into work.

Care and support services for disabled people

One of the biggest barriers to living independently that disabled people face is finding the right care and support services which best fit their needs. For too long disabled people have had no choice but to accept the one-size-fits-all care and support services on offer to them without having a say over the services they receive.

A Conservative government will ensure that services are genuinely tailored and personalised around the needs of disabled people, giving them greater choice, control and information over the services they are able to receive.

Individual budgets for disabled people

We will provide clear leadership to promote the greater use of individual budgets and direct payments by disabled people across the UK. We will also go a step further by enabling health and social care funding to be incorporated into individual budgets so that disabled people have control over one single pot of money to use to best support their own needs.

Protecting disabled pensioners

Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance are a vital support for disabled pensioners and give them the chance to have

an independent life with the freedom to tailor their care to their needs. In future, Labour wants to cut these benefits, denying future pensioners the chance of living independently and having the freedom to tailor their care to their needs.

As disabled people themselves are best placed to judge how to meet their care needs, we will preserve Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance as cash benefits, which can be used to support family care and costs arising from their disability.

Supporting carers

There are an estimated 6 million informal, unpaid carers in the UK who look after sick or disabled relatives or friends, saving the taxpayer billions of pounds every year.¹⁶ We recognise the crucial role that carers play in our society. We will make sure that Jobcentre Plus more effectively supports carers who want to move into paid work, and will promote the right to request flexible working to ensure that every person that cares for someone else can manage their career and caring responsibilities in the best possible way, and by giving people more choice and control over their care needs we will open up more opportunity for them to use the money to purchase respite care.

Disability Living Allowance Mobility

Component for blind people

The current rules for people claiming the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability

Living Allowance mean that it is only available to people who are physically unable to walk. This is unfair to visually impaired people as they too face mobility difficulties. While the law has now been altered to enable these rules to be changed, it is still not a reality for people with no useful sight for orientation purposes. We will implement this change to help support people with visual impairments to live more independently.

Help for disabled children and their families

Under Labour, families with disabled children often struggle to get the services they need. While it would be wrong to suggest that Government alone can simply fix the system and make everything better, there are ways in which we can make life a lot simpler for parents of disabled children, and alleviate at least some of the things which cause so much anguish and frustration for parents and disabled children alike.

Simpler assessment

The complexity of assessment for social care and other services means that one pound in every four that the state spends on disabled children goes on the form-filling and commissioning – and not the care.

A Conservative government will simplify the assessment process for accessing services so that parents of disabled children do not

have to go through the stressful ordeal of multiple assessments with numerous different professionals, as well as hours of form-filling.

Early Intervention

Health visitors often play a crucial role in providing sound support and advice to parents of disabled children, and that is why we are committed to increasing the number of health visitors by 4,200 to give parents help and support in their homes.

Greater control over care services

Parents of disabled children are typically best placed to know what care services their child needs. We will give parents more power and control over the services their disabled child receives through the greater use of personal budgets and direct payments.

Respite care

We know that the demands of constantly caring for a disabled child can place a great deal of strain and intense pressure on many parents, and even a short break can make a huge difference, and help keep families together. We want to make it easier for parents to access respite care. By giving parents more choice and control over their child's care needs, this will open up more opportunity for them to use the money to purchase respite care.

Removing the bias against special schools

We want to make sure disabled children get the best start in life. However, over the last

decade, Labour's dogmatic policy of inclusion has ignored the wishes of parents and resulted in the closure of special schools for disabled children, even when parents wanted them to stay open. Conservatives believe that parents of disabled children are often best placed to know what type of school best fits their child's needs. We will make sure that parents of disabled children have a real choice over their child's education so they can secure the best opportunities for them.

Special Educational Needs

Many parents know all too well the battle which often needs to be fought in order for their disabled child to get some specialist help in school. This is because the people who decide who gets the specialist help are also the ones who pay for it. That is why we are looking carefully at how we can ensure that we accurately assess children's eligibility for Special Educational Needs statements, making the structural changes needed to achieve this goal.

Child Trust Funds for disabled children

We will keep Child Trust Funds for disabled children, and ensure that they continue to receive both new Child Trust Funds and top-up payments to existing Child Trust Funds.

Changing attitudes towards disabled people

A Conservative government will tackle the stigma and prejudice that still persists towards disabled people, particularly those with mental ill-health.

Removing discrimination in Parliament

Parliament should be able to lead the way in breaking down the stigma and prejudice faced by people with mental health problems. However, this is very difficult when outdated and discriminatory laws are still in force which mean that an MP automatically loses his or her seat if detained under the Mental Health Act. We will repeal this symbolic law so that MPs with mental health conditions are treated in the same way as those with a physical disability.

Opening up our political system – Access to Public Life Fund

Rebuilding trust in politics means making our political system better reflect the people it is meant to represent. Despite there being over 10 million disabled people in the UK, there are still too few in public life – often put off by the additional costs they can face because of their disability.¹⁷ That is why we will introduce a £1 million fund to help disabled people who want to become MPs, councillors or other

elected officials. This will be funded by the Government Equalities Office, with disability charities invited to tender to administer the fund.

Action on LGBT issues

Since the beginning of his leadership, David Cameron has made clear the Conservative Party's commitment to sexual equality and gay rights – from his first conference speech, in which he proudly confirmed our support for civil partnerships, to his apology for our former stance on Section 28. We have supported tackling homophobic bullying and measures to tackle incitement to gay hatred, and we have opened up Conservative candidate selection to people from all backgrounds. Whether it's our strong commitment to supporting marriage and civil partnerships, or our proposals for flexible parental leave which will benefit parents regardless of their sexuality, the modern Conservative Party is committed to a fairer deal for gay people across Britain.

Gay Conservative MPs and Parliamentary candidates

There are three openly gay members of the Conservative front bench (Nick Herbert – the Shadow DEFRA Secretary, Alan Duncan – the Shadow Prisons Minister, and Greg Barker – the Shadow Climate Change Minister).

In addition, there are a number of openly gay Conservative Party parliamentary candidates in winnable seats, including Nick Boles in Grantham and Stamford and Margot James in Stourbridge.

Civil partnerships

We support civil partnerships and will recognise civil partnerships in the tax system. Our plans to end the couple penalty in the tax credits system and to introduce a new system of flexible parental leave will apply to all couples, regardless of whether they are heterosexual or same sex couples.

We will also consider the case for changing the law to allow civil partnerships to be called and classified as marriage.

Tackling homophobia

Homophobic bullying

Labour have failed to take effective action to tackle homophobic bullying. As a result, homophobic bullies excluded from schools can be returned to the classroom by a bureaucratic appeals panel, and teachers are often unable to break up violent homophobic bullying because of “no touch” policies that prevent teachers from intervening.

A Conservative government will change this flawed system. We will give headteachers the final say over the exclusion of homophobic bullies and give teachers the power to stop violent homophobic incidents. We would also change DCSF guidance on exclusion to make it clear that non-violent bullying, aggravated by

prejudice – including homophobic bullying – should require a higher level of sanction. And in order to improve the level of information we have, we would include a new category in exclusions data specifically for ‘homophobic abuse.’

Inciting homophobic hatred

Inciting hatred or violence against gay people has no place in a civilized society. That’s why we supported legislation two years ago to make such incitement a crime and why we pushed the Government to implement that legislation.

Fight for consensual homosexual sex: ending the injustice

A Conservative government will change the law so that historic convictions for consensual gay sex do not need to be disclosed when applying for jobs or on criminal record checks.

We will amend the law so that men with convictions for consensual gay sex would be able to apply to have those convictions omitted from their CRB certificate. This would only apply to convictions for activity that is now lawful. It would not apply, for instance, to convictions for sex with somebody aged under 16.

We will also make a new Exemption Order under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 so that any convictions for consensual gay sex would be treated as ‘spent’, so people would

not need to disclose them when applying for jobs or positions.

Fight for LGBT rights around the world

Unfortunately there are still far too many countries around the world that discriminate against gay and lesbian people. We would use our relationships with other countries to push for unequivocal support for gay rights. For example, Shadow Cabinet Minister Nick Herbert will attend the EuroPride rally in Warsaw as part of our commitment to making the case for gay equality in Eastern Europe.

We would also use our influence in international groups like the Commonwealth to put pressure on countries where gay people are persecuted, such as Uganda, and we would change the rules so that gay people fleeing persecution were granted asylum. At the moment gay asylum seekers are often returned to countries with homophobic regimes and told to keep their sexuality a secret.

Action to tackle racial prejudice

A Conservative government will use every lever to tear down racial barriers and make Britain a fairer society. We want every child in Britain to have the best possible chance in life, irrespective of background or the colour of their skin.

Conservative Party BME candidates

The Conservative Party has 43 BME Parliamentary candidates – 9 per cent of all candidates.

When David Cameron became leader of the Conservatives over four years ago, he put reversing the under-representation of minorities in our party at the top of his to-do list. Today, there are 43 Black and Asian Parliamentary candidates standing for the Conservative Party at the general election. If the Conservative Party wins even a small majority, there will be 15 Conservative MPs from minority ethnic backgrounds – more than any other party.

BME internships

In opposition, the Conservative Party has been organising internships with the Social Mobility Foundation, so that bright people from BME backgrounds have been able to do work experience with our Shadow Cabinet.

A Conservative government will partner with Operation Black Vote to arrange internships in every single Whitehall department for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. This will open doors and tear down barriers at the highest level of government. It will create new opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds and different walks of life. And it will help make our government better, and our society fairer.

Boosting black enterprise

In Britain today, too many black people encounter specific obstacles in starting a business. According to government figures, 35 per cent of people from black African backgrounds living in the UK want to start a business (which is much higher than other ethnic groups), but only 4 per cent actually manage to do this (which is much lower than for other ethnic groups). As a recent government report stated: “There are higher aspirations to start-up in business amongst ethnic minority groups...but ‘conversion’ to start-ups remains very low.”¹⁸

Research suggests that the problem lies with access to advice and finance. For example, a recent study found that companies owned by people from black African backgrounds are more than four times as likely as white-owned firms to be denied a loan outright.¹⁹

The Ethnic Minority Business Task Force report, published in 2008, concluded that targeted mentoring and advice aimed at would-be black entrepreneurs will help to increase start-up rates. However, Labour explicitly rejected this recommendation, and have failed to introduce this type of targeted support.²⁰

Support for black entrepreneurs

As part of our radical agenda to Get Britain Working, a Conservative government will fund a targeted national enterprise mentoring scheme for black people who want to start a business. This national mentoring programme will provide would-be black entrepreneurs with the advice, role models and targeted support they need to launch a start-up company.

The funding comes from our Get Britain Working programme that we announced at our party conference last autumn. We will refocus spending on the New Deal, Train to Gain and other failing Labour programmes on our Get Britain Working package.

Action on the DNA database and ‘stop and search’

Labour’s illiberal and authoritarian criminal justice policies have disproportionately affected the BME community, with black people most likely to be included in the DNA database and stopped and searched by the police.

DNA database

We will end the current situation where the DNA of innocent people is stored indefinitely, as it is illegal. In order to ensure that Britain does not break the law in the next few months, as an interim measure we will allow the Government’s current proposal – to limit the retention of all data from innocent people to six years – to pass into law and operate for an interim period.

We will also change police guidelines to allow a large number of innocent people to reclaim their DNA immediately. We will change the current guidelines so that people arrested for a minor offence and not found guilty and who ask the police to remove their DNA from the database, can have this done as a matter of course.

Stop and search

More than one in ten of the people stopped and searched by police are black, even though

they make up only a fiftieth of the population. The police recorded 1,035,438 stop and searches of people under section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and other legislation in 2007/8 – this is the highest figure since 1998/9. There were nearly eight times more stops and searches of black people per head of population than of white people.²¹

Under Labour, too many people have been stopped and searched for the wrong reasons. We will monitor the number of black people being stopped by police so we'll be able to take action if needed. In particular, counter-terrorism powers such as stop and searches under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act have been over-used by police and we will review them if we are elected.²² It should be possible to strike the right balance between stopping those who give rise to genuine suspicion and ensuring that nobody is stopped purely because of their skin colour.

Promoting integration

Building stronger, more integrated communities is central to our vision for Britain. Under Labour, state-driven multiculturalism, uncontrolled immigration and the threat of extremism have led to an increase in distrust and segregation, and left us with divided communities.

Make speaking English a priority in all communities

We will redirect some of the money the Government currently spends on translation into additional English classes. There will be training for new immigrants, as well as those already here who cannot speak English. This will help people integrate into society and broaden their opportunities, irrespective of their background.

English requirement for new immigrants

In order to ensure better integration, we will introduce an English Language requirement for those coming to the UK on marriage visas. This would be set at ESOL level Entry 3, the standard required for British citizenship. This would ensure that new spouses will have a command of English which allows them to play a full part in British life, and remove the current barriers for the second generation who suffer academically when English is not able to be spoken in the home.

Teach history in our schools

To promote our shared values and history, we will ensure that children are taught a proper narrative of British history – including Sir Winston Churchill who was dropped from the history syllabus two years ago.

Celebrate England's National Day

To create a coherent national identity we need to show respect for Englishness just as we do for Scottishness, Welshness and Irishness.

We believe local authorities should take a lead on this and encourage people to celebrate England's national day. As Boris Johnson has done in London, we will support local authorities to give greater recognition to St George's Day.

Improving our schools

Labour are failing too many young BME students. Nearly 9,500 black children leave school primary school every year unable to read, write and add up to the expected level. 64 per cent of black children achieve Level 4 in English and maths – the expected standard – at the end of primary school, compared with 71.8 per cent of pupils overall.²³ Just 44.5 per cent of black children get 5 good GCSEs, including English and maths, compared with 50.7 per cent of pupils overall.²⁴

New Academies

We will expand the existing programme of Academies, making it easier for charities, existing school federations, not-for-profit trusts, and groups of parents to set up new schools in the state sector and access public funding equivalent to the provision for existing state schools. These free, non-selective Academies will have the freedom to innovate and control over their budgets, curriculum and discipline. The Conservatives will also allow all schools to apply for Academy status. Those ranked 'outstanding' by Ofsted in their

last inspection will be pre-approved for an immediate change of status. All other schools will have to go through a bid process.

No more 'sink schools'

Under radical new proposals, a Conservative government would immediately begin the process of replacing the leadership of any school that has been in special measures for over a year by the end of the next school year. These schools would all be reopened under new leadership as Academies by September 2011. Thereafter, a Conservative Government would continue to replace all schools that stay in special measures for a year with Academies.

Pupil premium

We will increase funding for pupils who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring they get the earliest possible opportunity to choose the best schools and enjoy the best teaching. We have proposed an explicit 'pupil premium' to increase the per capita funding for pupils from deprived backgrounds. This will provide an incentive for our new Academies, along with existing academies and other schools, to seek out pupils from less well-off families.

Good school discipline

Good discipline is essential to ensure that all pupils can benefit from the opportunities provided by education, without disruption from others. So we will give schools the final say on the exclusion of disruptive pupils, by abolishing the appeals panels which too often

overrule them. We will change the law to give teachers unequivocal powers to maintain discipline, including confiscating items such as mobile phones if the school has banned them. We will also make home-school contracts enforceable as requirements of admission and grounds for exclusion. To ensure better provision for those excluded, we will make greater use of voluntary and independent providers of remedial education, rather than relying solely on Pupil Referral Units.

National Citizen Service

We will create a six-week national programme for all school leavers – called ‘National Citizen Service’. Its aim will be to help young people make the transition to adulthood with a sense of purpose, optimism and belonging, instilling the values of self-discipline and social responsibility.

Tackling extremism

Our plans will help build stronger communities better able to resist extremism that fuels alienation, violence and terrorism. Mainstream political parties need to tackle the voter disillusionment that fuels support for extremism. We will mend our broken society, control immigration and rebuild our economy.

Addressing the security challenge

The threat posed by religious extremism requires a co-ordinated response across many different policy areas – not only the traditional areas of foreign affairs, defence and internal security.

A Conservative government will ensure our security response is joined up.

Combating extremism

We will take the lead in promoting shared values and setting an example for individuals, by preventing propagators of hate from entering the country and actively preventing the import and dissemination of extremist written material and speech, which promotes hatred and violence.

The police must exercise their powers to take down websites which violate the law organisations and individuals which promote extremism should be denied access to public funding and facilities, and activities at local level which help draw vulnerable individuals away from extremism should be supported.

Tackling radicalisation

We will support those most vulnerable to radicalisation, and those already radicalised, through targeted intervention strategies. This includes tackling the problem of radicalisation in vulnerable places like prisons. The growth of extremism within prisons is serious and much remains to be done to develop and implement guidance across the Prison Service to help it to develop effective counter strategies (for example, education programmes). In relation to the management of extremists within the prison system, experience in other countries needs to be examined for best practice and for ways forward in rehabilitation and deradicalisation.

Action to help older people

It is an absolute scandal that, under Labour, we have older people dying alone in the cold because they can no longer manage their heating costs. And that so many older people are afraid to go out in neighbourhoods they have lived in all their lives because of the level of violence and drink-fuelled disorder on our streets. And that tens of thousands of older people in care homes today have had their own homes forcibly sold to pay the fees.

These problems expose the failings of a Labour government that has not only broken its promises, but has seen life for older people get worse: 100,000 more in poverty since the last election; thousands forced to sell their homes each year to pay their care home fees; tens of thousands dying unnecessarily every year just because of cold weather. Our plan to tackle these issues goes hand in hand with positive ways of strengthening the role and inclusion of older people in society today, so that we can prevent the isolation and vulnerability that leads to these problems in the first place.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the older generation and we should be doing much more to ensure they live comfortable and healthy lives.

We will give older people better services and more choice over their work and financial options. We will give them many more opportunities to shape and improve the world around them, and protect them when they are vulnerable.

Work and equality

We want older people to play a bigger role in our economy. It is wrong that so many are excluded from working and prevented from playing their full part in our economic recovery. We will look at how to remove outdated rules that prevent older people working, and introduce better support for older workers who lose their jobs to get back into work.

Retirement age

We will look at how to abolish the default retirement age: we have agreed to removing this in principle, and want to work through the detail on how this can be achieved.

Flexible working

We will extend flexible working in the public sector: we want our government to lead from the front, so we will extend the right to request flexible working to all those in the public sector, recognising that this may need to be done in stages.

We will also roll out flexible working for all employees in the UK: in the longer term, we want to extend the right to request flexible working to all, but only in the light of experience and after full consultation with business on how to do this in a way which is administratively simple and without burdening them with extra costs.

Annuity

We will abolish the effective obligation to purchase an annuity: rewarding those who have saved for their retirement by ending the effective obligation to buy an annuity at age 75.

Helping older unemployed people back into jobs

Once older people lose their jobs it can be extremely hard for them to get back into the job market. We know, for example, that unemployed men over 50 only have a one in five chance of being in work two years later, and the chance of older men finding employment falls by a quarter for each year they are out of work.

At the centre of our plans to reform employment and welfare services is the Work Programme: a single service for everyone who is unemployed, which will offer more tailored, specialist help for those people who find it hardest to get access to the jobs market. As part of the Work Programme we will:

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- Give over 50s specialist back-to-work support: helping them to find the right job after redundancy or unemployment. Support will be delivered through private and voluntary sector providers, which will be rewarded on a payment by results basis for getting people into sustainable work; and,
- Provide extra training places: we will establish a Community Learning Fund, which will help older people restart their careers.

Financial security

Under Labour, there are 2 million pensioners living in poverty. We will protect pensioners' benefits, increase the basic state pension, and provide extra help with living costs to help tackle rising fuel poverty.

Protecting benefits

We will protect pensioners' benefits and concessions, and this includes:

- Pension credit
- Winter Fuel Allowance
- Free bus passes
- Free TV licences

In addition, we will not scrap the Disability Living Allowance or the Attendance Allowance for the over 65s, as Labour are planning to do, as part of their changes to social care.

Increase the basic state pension

To help stop the spread of means-testing, we will restore the link between the basic state pension and average earnings, starting in 2012.

Freeze council tax

We will work in partnership with councils in England to freeze council tax bills for two years by reducing spending on government advertising and consultants. This will provide £219 over two years in today's prices for a pensioner couple in a Band D home.

Fuel bills

Pensioners are very vulnerable to fuel poverty and winter deaths caused by cold homes – and they are more likely to be living in energy inefficient housing. So we will create a 'Green Deal', giving every home up to £6,500 worth of energy improvement measures – with more for hard-to-treat homes – paid for out of savings made on fuel bills over 25 years. This will help older people save, on average, an extra £20 a month from their fuel bills.

We will also give Post Office Card Account (POCA) holders the chance to benefit from direct debit discounts. Many pensioners use their POCA to receive pensions and benefits, and we will ensure it can be used to pay utility bills by direct debit.

Health and independence

People are living longer and more active lives, but older people are still by far the biggest users of health and care services. We will increase health spending and make sure more of it goes to the frontline. We will give older people more control over their health and social care services, and make sure no older person is forced to sell their home to pay for residential care costs.

Public health

We will create separate public health funding to local communities, which will be accountable for – and paid according to – how successful they are in improving their residents' health. This money will be spent on preventative measures, like home adaptations, that stop older people getting ill in the first place.

NHS and GPs

We will increase health spending and make sure more of it goes to the frontline. We will give older people more control over their health and social care services, and make sure no older person is forced to sell their home to pay for residential care costs.

We will commission a 24/7 urgent care service in every area of England, including GP out of hours services, and ensure that every patient can access a GP in their area between 8am and 8pm, seven days a week.

We will end the scandal of mixed-sex accommodation in hospitals: by increasing the number of single rooms in hospitals, as resources allow, helping the battle against infection and providing safety and privacy.

Access to drugs

We will give everyone access to the cancer drugs they need: NHS patients rightly expect to be among the first in the world to access effective treatments, but under Labour they are among the last. Using money saved by the NHS through our pledge to stop Labour's jobs tax, we will create a Cancer Drug Fund to enable patients to access the cancer drugs that their doctors think will help them.

We will introduce a payment by results system for drugs. Any drug that is clinically beneficial and recommended by a doctor will be made available to those with Alzheimer's and other age-related conditions.

We will make dementia a priority in research and development. Labour's funding of dementia research has halved in five years, but the number of sufferers is predicted to double within a generation. We will give dementia research – including into Alzheimer's – greater priority within NHS and Medical Research Council funding.

Social care

We want to give people more control over how their health needs are met, and a more sustainable system of elderly care.

Budgets for care

We will give older people single budgets for care: where possible we want to devolve control over health budgets to the lowest possible level, so people have more control over their health needs. For people with a chronic illness or a long-term condition, we will provide access to a single budget that combines their health and social care funding, which they can tailor to their own needs.

An end to Labour's 'death tax'

We reject Labour's plans for a compulsory 'death tax' on everyone to pay for social care, regardless of their needs. We want to create a system which is based on choice and which rewards the hundreds of thousands of people who care for an elderly relative full-time.

So we will allow anyone to protect their home from being sold to fund residential care costs by paying a one-off insurance premium that is entirely voluntary. Independent experts suggest this should cost around £8,000.

Care at home

We will support older people to live independently at home and have access to the personal care they need. We will work to

design a system where people can top up their premium – also voluntarily – to cover the costs of receiving care in their own home.

Choice over care

We will improve palliative care by introducing a new per-patient funding system for all hospices and other providers of palliative care, so that people can receive this care in the setting of their choice.

Rights for grandparents

Grandparents play an immensely important role in bringing up children – they provide huge amounts of childcare today – and their numbers will swell as our population ages. But current rules can mean their crucial role is overlooked when families break up or in cases where children need to be taken into care. The system has its priorities all wrong.

Reforming family law

We will reform family law to provide greater access rights to grandparents when families break up.

We will also promote custody rights for grandparents where children are taken into care. Grandparents should be one of the first ports of call when a child needs to be taken into care, but at the moment they are not treated any differently. We will change that, so where it is appropriate children can be placed with their grandparents.

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