

Is anyone going to look after the nurses in their manifestos?



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Well, we're in full swing of the Party Political Broadcasts, canvassing and promises from politicians who are unlikely to keep them once elected. Although I may appear to lack faith in their veracity, I thought it might be helpful to outline briefly what the three main parties have outlined for nurses in their manifestos.

Labour

The Labour Party was first to launch its manifesto on 16 May 2017 and has pledged to invest in the NHS:

“To guarantee the best possible services for patients, Labour will invest in our health and care workforce. A Labour government will step in with a long-term workforce plan for our health service that gives staff the support they need to do the best for their patients.

Labour will scrap the NHS pay cap, put pay decisions back into the hands of the independent pay review body and give our NHS workers the pay they deserve. Labour will protect patients and legislate to ensure safe staffing levels in the NHS.

Labour’s long-term ambition is for our health system to have the best trained staff in the world, ready to deal with whatever they have to face in the years to come. Labour will re-introduce bursaries and funding for health-related degrees. Labour will support doctors to deliver the best care possible by investing in the training, education and development of doctors throughout their careers.”

Sadly, there is no mention of nurses, who are by far the biggest staffing group in the NHS.

Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats launched their manifesto on 17 May 2017, stating that:

“Our health and social care services’ greatest resource is their staff, working tirelessly under immense pressure. This Government has left them feeling embattled and undervalued.

To support the NHS and social care workforce we will:

- *Guarantee the rights of all NHS and social care service staff who are EU nationals, the right to stay in the UK.*
- *End the public sector pay freeze for NHS workers.*
- *Reinstate student nurse bursaries.*
- *Support innovation in how organisations can empower staff and patients, including learning from innovative social enterprises delivering community and mental health services.*
- *Protect NHS whistle-blowers.*

GPs in particular have been put under considerable strain due to severe under-funding and neglect from the Conservatives, leaving many people waiting weeks to get appointments. GPs are the core of what the NHS is and they need support to ensure that the NHS is able to survive and thrive. We will:

- *Produce a national workforce strategy, ensuring that we never again experience a shortage in the numbers of GPs, hospital doctors, nurses and other professionals that the NHS needs.”*

They pledge to fund these changes by putting a penny on income tax to give the NHS and Social Care the cash they need, but they also state that they are going to limit the amount elderly people have to pay for social care. Even to me, the figures don't add up, and again there is no mention of nurses.

Conservatives

The Conservative Party has pledged to ensure the NHS and social care services have the nurses,

midwives and other healthcare staff they need, and to prioritise negotiations so that European Union staff can “carry on making their vital contribution to our health and care system” following Brexit.

In its manifesto, published on 18 May 2017, the party did not provide details on how it would ensure an adequate supply of nurses and midwives. But it acknowledged that:

“We cannot continue to rely on bringing in clinical staff instead of training sufficient numbers ourselves.”

It went on to say it would continue with plans to increase investment in doctors’ training; however, still no mention of nurses! More widely, it said it

would “continue to bear down” on immigration from outside the EU. Following Brexit, it said it would reduce the number of people coming to the UK from Europe, while still allowing Britain to attract “the skilled workers our economy needs”. The party also said that:

“We will legislate to reform and rationalise the current outdated system of professional regulation of healthcare professions, based on the advice of professional regulators.”

It remains to be seen if these promises actually turn in to reality once the votes are cast on 8 June. Whether mentioned in manifestos or not, our fate as nurses rest in the winners’ hands! Happy voting! ■

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Available at:

www.labour.org.uk/index.php/manifesto2017



Available at:

www.libdems.org.uk/manifesto



Available at:

www.conservatives.com/manifesto

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