



## Briefing paper

### 2024 General Election

## What does it mean for career development?

### A review of the party manifestos

#### Introduction

Ahead of the general election on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024, the UK's political parties have published their manifestos, setting out their policies should they form the next government. This document summarises the key policies and statements for each party where they relate to careers, education, skills and jobs.

I am grateful to CDI Associate Michelle Stewart for rapidly reviewing the documents to highlight the key aspects that we believe will interest those working in and around career development. This includes direct career development actions, plus relevant policies related to education, skills and employment where they may need to be considered and understood by those supporting young people and adults.

This briefing includes Michelle's analysis plus additional comments from across career development and beyond.

The manifestos have been ordered by the [current poll of polls](#) (as of 14<sup>th</sup> June) which puts the parties at:

- Labour 42%
- Conservatives 21%
- Reform 15%
- Liberal Democrats 11%
- Greens 6%
- SNP 3%
- Plaid Cymru 1%

We have also included manifestos for parties in northern Ireland which account for 18 seats in the House of Commons, including Sinn Fein, DUP, Alliance, UUP (yet to publish), SDLP (yet to publish) and TUV.

David Morgan, Chief Executive, CDI

## Labour Party

### Change

The Labour manifesto is about 'change' in terms of a return to stability; to stop the cycle of chaos and restore hope. An underlying belief is that if you work hard, your contribution will be respected and you'll be given a fair chance to get on. It acknowledges there is '*no quick fix*' (p.7), with the aim of improving the country's prosperity founded on sustained economic growth, with measurable long-term objectives that provide a shared sense of purpose. Yet, by making a commitment to not increase National Insurance, the basic, higher, or additional rates of Income Tax, or VAT (p.21) Labour has placed a significant constraint on its ability to fund future rebuilding of the country.

Much of the way forward is presented as governance through over-arching strategies, with an emphasis throughout the manifesto on the devolving of power and responsibility to the local level – combined and Mayoral authorities - encouraging local authorities to take on new powers over transport, adult education and employment support.

The proposals most relevant to the careers sector are:

- To bring Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service together to provide a '*national job and careers service*' (p.43).
- To guarantee work experience and improve careers advice for all young people, with a funding allocation of 85 million.
- To create a new Young Futures programme with a network of hubs with careers advisers on hand to support young people, with a funding allocation of 95 million.

However, the 1,000 additional careers advisers in schools that Labour politicians had mentioned numerous times is not explicitly in the manifesto.

### **Young people and education**

The Labour Party seeks to provide a country where children are equipped with the skills to thrive in the future. It is '*determined to raise school standards for every child and ensure they are prepared for the future*' (p.81). This aspiration is supported by a pledge to improve careers advice in schools and colleges (without any further explanation and no mention of the 1,000 additional careers advisers they have talk about over the past year or more) and a guarantee of two weeks' worth of work experience for every young person.

Directly impacting on career development professionals are Labour's plans to engage them in the new Young Futures programme. This network of hubs with youth workers, specially trained mental health support workers and careers advisers would be on hand to support young people at risk, and offer a pathway out of violence and potential crime. Youth workers would also be placed in A&E units and PRUs.

Similarly, of relevance to some career development professionals is a proposal that every young person caught in possession of a knife will be referred to a Youth Offending Team and will receive a mandatory plan to prevent reoffending. Offenders in prison will be supported to create pre-release plans and to link up with local employers and the voluntary sector to get into employment. Labour also plans to introduce new legal safeguards around strip searching children and young people.

Labour proposes to transform the education system, modernize the curriculum and *'support children to study a creative or vocational subject until they are 16'* (p.86) and create higher-quality training and employment plans by *'empowering local communities to develop skills people need'* (p.77-78). A post-16 skills strategy would better integrate FE and HE, and Further Education colleges would transform into specialist Technical Excellence Colleges to provide better job opportunities and the highly trained workforce that local economies need (p.86).

This includes a statement that Labour will *'guarantee training, an apprenticeship, or help finding work for all 18- to 21-year-olds'* (p.85). Plus they would uphold *'supporting the aspirations of every young person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university'* (p.86).

There is also reference to *'a single unique identifier'* (p.81) to improve data sharing across services and support children and families. This could also create better opportunities for tracking destinations.

### **Employment Support**

Labour will reform employment support, introducing a system *'underpinned by rights and responsibilities – those who can work, should work'* (p.42). Of note it will *'bring Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service together to provide a national jobs and careers service – focused on getting people into work'* (p.42/43). There is both opportunity and risk in this proposal, depending on the ideology underpinning the new service and how it is implemented. If it retains the current employability ideology of – *'get a job, any job'* – then the risk is that careers support for adults becomes more target driven and short term. However, if the service is more client-centred, helping people overcome barriers to find longer-term and fulfilling work, then this would be positive from a career development perspective. This is a space the CDI will be watching closely and seeking to influence.

Similarly, the CDI will seek to influence plans to support more disabled people and those with health conditions into work, and the development of local health and skills offers. Labour's proposals to make sure disabled people can try out a job without fear of an immediate benefit reassessment if it does not work out are welcome. The CDI would also see that career guidance should be an integral part of Labour's proposals for a youth guarantee of access to training, an apprenticeship or support to find work.

### **Employment Rights**

Labour would ban exploitative zero hours contracts, prohibit employers from firing and re-hiring employees, and remove any qualifying period to parental leave, sick pay and protection from unfair dismissal. In addition it would remove age bands so all adults are entitled to the same minimum wage and strengthen rights to equal pay and protection from discrimination.

### **Industrial strategy and skills**

The manifesto seeks to kickstart economic growth and restore a labour market where *'you will be treated with dignity and respect'* (p.9). Underpinning this growth will be a new industrial strategy (with an industrial strategy council) and a ten-year infrastructure strategy to renew road networks, fix potholes and overhaul railways. Aligned to the national strategies, at the local level will be Local Growth Plans.

Supporting the industrial strategy is the creation of Skills England *'to bring together business, training providers and unions with national and local government to ensure we have the highly trained workforce needed'* (p. 85). Skills England will work with the migration team and co-ordinate with local areas who will have greater devolved responsibility. This will be valuable for career development professionals if it results in clearer longer-term visibility of the changing skills and workforce demands for the economy.

Planning policy would be updated to support the further development of the digital infrastructure, the building of laboratories and 'gigafactories' (manufacturing facilities where components and products associated with electrification and decarbonization technologies are produced). Vital sectors are identified as financial services, automotives, life sciences and creative sectors (e.g. film, music, gaming) indicating potential areas of future employment. Similarly, the building of 1.5 million new houses (p.36), prioritising the development of previously used land, indicates employment opportunities in the construction sector in towns and cities across the country. Explicit reference is made to appointing 300 planning officers (p.127).

Economic growth would be supported through a National Wealth Fund. Among the sectors this would target are ports and supply chains, the automotive industry, the steel industry, and de-carbonisation and green energy (onshore and offshore wind, solar power). Through the Green Prosperity Plan, Labour aims to create 650,000 jobs across the country by 2030 (p.50) with a new publicly-owned company Great British Energy, while concurrently ensuring the long-term security of skilled jobs in the nuclear power sector.

A specific area for potential growth would be the creation of a new border security command *'with hundreds of new investigators, intelligence officers and cross-border police officers'* (p17). In addition the manifesto speaks of additional caseworkers to better manage the asylum system, complemented by a new returns and enforcement unit with an additional 1,000 staff to fast track the removal of those who do not have the right to stay in the UK.

To reduce reliance on overseas workers, Labour would introduce workforce and training plans for sectors such as health and social care, and construction to *'end the long-term reliance on overseas workers in some parts of the economy'* (p.42). Similarly, Labour would act to improve public workers' living standards and restore neighbourhood policing with thousands of extra police officers, police and community support officers and special constables. (p.64), while likewise making more prosecutors available within the justice system.

There is also a commitment to recruit an additional 6,500 expert teachers (p.82) and to deliver the NHS long-term work plan to train the staff needed to get patients seen on time (p.96) with specific reference to training *'thousands more GPs'* (p.98). At the other end of the skills spectrum Labour would introduce a supervised tooth-brushing scheme for 3- to 5-year-olds.

Further potential areas of employment growth are horticulture and conservation with plans to create nine new National River Walks, three new National Forests, and to expand nature-rich habitats, such as peat bogs and forests.

Finally, should Labour remove the right of hereditary peers to sit in the House of Lord and require members reaching 80 years of age to retire, a reformed appointments process may provide new public service opportunities in Westminster.

## Conservative and Unionist Party

### Clear Plan, Bold Action, Secure Future

The Conservative's manifesto presents cutting taxes as providing working people with financial security. It claims to offer a future where hard work is rewarded, aspirations and opportunity are celebrated, and where young people always get the skills they need. However, it makes only one reference to 'career' which is in terms of supporting workforce needs within the agricultural sector by '*promoting agri-food careers and skills*' (p.62) and thereby reducing reliance on migrant workers.

### **Young people**

To secure the skills young people need the manifesto proposes the introduction of mandatory National Service for everyone at 18 with a choice between a competitive place in the military or civic service roles. If implemented, this policy would impact on young people's post-18 career options and hence the advice given by career professionals. To enable 16-17-year-olds to gain the skills they need, support for the National Citizen Service will continue.

There is no mention of career guidance, although the manifesto cites that a Conservative government would support children in their transition to secondary school. In addition to a mandatory two hours of PE every week, a transformation within 16-19 education curriculum would be the introduction of the Advanced British Standard (ABS). These proposals would impact on CEIAG provision within secondary education, especially when choosing options in Year 9 and Year 11, and implies that PE as a means of being fit for the future takes priority above CEIAG. Not mentioned is the potential impact on those who are home schooled, and so fall outside the ABS and CEIAG school-based provision.

Careers Advisers working in schools should be aware of proposals to legislate that schools follow government guidance for teachers on how best to support gender questioning students in schools and colleges, as this issue may arise during the provision of careers guidance.

### **Employment Opportunities**

An ambition is to fund 100,000 high quality apprenticeships by changing the law to close university courses in England with the worst outcomes for their students. There are no clues within the manifesto as to which degrees will be affected. However, it does state courses that have excessive drop-out rates or leave students worse off than had they not gone to university, will be prevented by the universities regulator from recruiting students. This may increase apprenticeship opportunities, albeit does not say at which level, while reducing level 4 and above course options in higher education.

The manifesto identifies apprenticeships as '*a key pipeline of talent into our world-leading creative industries*' (p.70) (film, TV, gaming and music sectors) so this may be a sector with which careers advisers will need to familiarise themselves.

Similarly, the promise to recruit 8,000 more full-time police officers, and to match fund 100 criminal law pupillages, suggests possible future employment opportunities. Likewise, an investment of £8.3 billion to fill potholes and resurface roads, and to improve our transport infrastructure more widely. In addition, support of the development of decarbonising technologies, renewable energy and manufacturing sectors including automotive,

aerospace, life sciences and clean energy, may indicate other areas of employment growth. A further area of growth is the NHS (nurses, doctors, midwives and paramedics and dental care professionals) and social care. Also mentioned is work to secure a £250 million 'Invest in Women' (entrepreneurs) fund.

In contrast, the manifesto mentions reducing the number of NHS managers and returning the Civil Service to its pre-pandemic size, while moving 25,000 civil servant posts to outside of London. However, it will seek to double the digital and AI expertise. With a commitment to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, giving adults the support they need to train, retrain and upskill flexibly throughout their working lives, potentially this may provide opportunities for skills development, although possibly self-funded through loans to cover new qualifications. For careers development professionals keeping up to speed with new and changing provisions will continue to be a challenge.

The manifesto doesn't mention an industrial strategy.

### **Welfare support**

Many career development professionals engage with young people and adults who are in low paid employment, unemployed or economically inactive, many of whom are reliant on welfare support.

The manifesto advises that the benefits system of assessment is to be tightened so those with '*moderate mental health issues or mobility problems*' (p.23) could potentially engage with the world of work are given tailored support. Moreover, responsibility for issuing 'sick notes' will be moved away from GPs to '*specialist work and health professionals*' (p.23). An important detail if making a referral. However, while linked to the Government's WorkWell service, as yet this role has not been aligned with qualified career development professionals. Programmes such as skills bootcamps and adult skills programmes and are set to continue while the provision of careers guidance remains noticeable by its absence. This omission extends to rehabilitation programmes for offenders.

Conservative plans include the introduction of '*tougher sanctions rules so people who refuse to take up suitable jobs after 12 months on benefits can have their cases closed and their benefits removed entirely*' (p.23), offering no room for compromise. If implemented, this action could be a cause for conflict with the 'client-centred' approach evident within the careers sector, in particular the National Careers Service and other bodies working with NEET young people or the unemployed. New powers are also to be deployed to enforce the removal of illegal traveller sites which may adversely impact those working with groups who fit under the umbrella term Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

Finally, a further 2p off National Insurance may be welcome. Yet, the fact that NI contributions and the payment record are key to unlocking certain benefits, including the state pension, maternity allowance, bereavement support payment and new-style jobseeker's allowance, should not be overlooked. The manifesto doesn't say how any lost revenue for those at risk would be replaced, so career development professionals may need to place more emphasis on clients securing financial advice to safeguard their future.

## Reform UK

### Our contract with you

Reform claim their Contract isn't just another manifesto, but '*is a serious plan to reshape the way our country is run*' (intro) setting out reforms the country needs in the first 100 days and beyond. They have five core pledges focused on immigration, the NHS, their policy to raise the income tax starting point to £20,000 and reducing energy bills by ending net zero ambitions.

There are no direct mentions of career development in the contract

### **Education**

Reform describe wanting '*A Patriotic Curriculum in Primary and Secondary Schools*' (p. 11) with the wording reduced from the first draft, which called for a ban on critical Race Theory, to now describe teaching of British or European imperialism or slavery needing to be paired with a non-European example. They have retained the ban on transgender ideology that was in the earlier version of the Contract.

They would double the number of Pupil Referral Units to permanently exclude violent and disruptive students from mainstream schools and give them support.

On private schools, Reform is pulling in the opposite direction to Labour, advocating for 20% tax relief on independent school fees to encourage more parents to use them and reduce the pressure on state schools.

For university students, Reform would scrap the interest on student loans, potentially making university more attractive as a choice to young people from lower income backgrounds. They would also reduce student numbers and introduce two-year graduate courses.

### **Skills**

As the only significant party advocating for the scrapping of net zero, Reform's agenda would be unlikely to see the increase in jobs in the green sector that other parties envisage. However, they would encourage greater oil and gas production, including shale, and fast-track small nuclear reactors, maintaining and potentially growing employment in these areas.

Reform looks to increase front-line police officers by 40,000 over the parliament and increase nurses and doctors, though doesn't say by how much. The armed forces will also increase by 30,000 with additional funding – up to 3% of national GDP within 6 years – and pay reviews for the military. Transport spending would be cut – with a £25bn saving from cancelling HS2 then £5 billion a year less spend.

This is all in the context of a target for every government department to cut spending by 5%, likely reducing the number of roles in the civil service and public sector services.

### **Employment**

Reform aims to raise the income tax threshold to £20,000, keeping the same rates but lifting the 40% bracket to £70,000 and above. They would also lift the minimum corporation tax threshold to £100,000 and reduce corporation tax down to 15% from year 3.

They would remove the IR35 rules and raise VAT thresholds to £150,000 making it more attractive to be self-employed or run a small business.

They aim to get two million people back to work, by reforming benefit support and training, while enforcing a rule to withdraw benefits if job seekers don't find work within 4 months or accept one of their first two job offers.

Reform UK immigration policy would likely lead to reduced numbers of immigrants in the UK workforce, with policies including an employer immigrant tax, raising national insurance to 20% for foreign workers.

## Liberal Democrat Party

### For a fair deal

The Liberal Democrats manifesto – For a Fair Deal – present this as being ‘*where every child can go to a good school and have real opportunities to fulfil their potential*’ (p.5). This belief is extended to include everyone: ‘*everyone deserves the chance to get on in life, see their hard work properly rewarded and realise their hopes for the future*’ (p.7).

Citing education as the best possible investment in the country’s future, the Liberal Democrats would invest in more apprenticeships and notably, new Lifelong Skills Grants.

Crucially, it would strengthen and increase the availability of careers advice for young people (p.18, p.21) and links with employers in schools and colleges (p.42), albeit the manifesto is lacking in detail.

The Liberal Democrats would introduce proportional representation, give 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote, and throughout their manifesto place an emphasis on forging new partnerships with Europe.

### **Education**

The Liberal Democrats would:

- Invest in education and training, including creating a commission to broaden the curriculum and ‘*make qualifications at 16 and 18 fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*’ (p.42). It cites the International Baccalaureate as best practice and mentions core skills ‘*such as critical thinking, verbal reasoning and creativity*’ (p.42). This could mean further change in the qualifications landscape for career development professionals to understand to support young people’s choices.
- Strengthen careers advice for young people and strengthening links with employers in schools and colleges (p.42).
- Improve vocational education, Include arts subjects in the English Baccalaureate and expand extra curriculum provision (p.42).
- Measures to support children outside school, with EHCPs and SEND. Put a qualified mental health professional in every primary and secondary school (p.41).
- Increase financial support for young people, by extending Pupil Premium funding to disadvantaged young people aged 16-18 (p.44), reinstating maintenance grants for disadvantaged students (p.41) and half-fares on buses, trams and trains extended to 18-year-olds as well as introducing a ‘*Young Person’s Buscard*’ (p.81).
- Solving skills gaps by expanding the availability of level 4/5 qualifications (Foundation Degrees, HNCs, HNDs) (p.21) and review Higher Education finance (p.45).
- End Ofsted’s single-word judgements (p.44).

### **Industrial strategy and skills**

The manifesto’s economic policies include ‘*an industrial strategy focused on the skills the future UK economy will need, from the renewables industry to the digital and bioscience sectors*’ (p.11), that will ‘*incentivise businesses to invest and create good jobs across the UK*’ (p. 12). The industrial strategy will have oversight from a statutory Industrial Strategy Council. Key policies are to;

- Increase the availability of apprenticeships and ensure apprentices are paid at least the national minimum wage. They also propose replacing the apprenticeship levy with a '*broader and more flexible skills and training levy*' (p.20).
- Develop national colleges as centres of expertise to deliver the vocational skills needed by businesses (e.g. renewable energies) and a low-carbon economy (p.21, p.24).
- Create new Lifelong Skills Grants of £5,000 for adults (and up to £10,000 when public finances allow) to spend on education throughout their lives (p.12, p.42).
- Improve the provision of training, education and work opportunities in prisons, ensuring that every prison has a 'through the gate' mentorship programme (p.59).

## Employment

The Liberal Democrats would seek to:

- Modernise employment rights, expand parental leave and pay, and amend the statutory sick pay system (p.21).
- Replace the welfare benefits sanction regime with an incentivised-based scheme to help young people into work (p.52).
- Set UK-wide targets for improving digital literacy and empower more people to enter the labour market by making the most of technology and new ways of working (p.15, p.18).
- Raise the amount carers can earn and extend the carers allowance to carers in full-time education (p.52).
- Reform 'Personal Independence Payments' for disabled people (p.52).
- Reverse cuts to the Army and International Development alongside recruiting and retaining a public health and social care workforce, setting a target of 8,000 more GPs (p.9, p.30, p.34).
- Address staff shortages in the police, prison and judiciary services (P.56, p.57).
- Invest in rural and coastal infrastructure, including local abattoirs, to attract and retain workers (p.66).
- Invest in leisure centres, swimming pools and support community sports clubs (p.77).
- Put the construction sector on a sustainable footing by investing in skills training (p.72).

Finally, with the introduction of a legal regulated market for cannabis there would be new opportunities for licenses retailers. Concurrently, investment in specialist youth services would provide opportunities to combat the harm caused by drugs and to provide support for drug users (p.36).

## The Green Party

### Real Hope. Real Change.

Within the manifesto, policy is frequently expressed in terms of 'pushing for', 'advocating for' and 'campaigning for', perhaps in recognition that it is unlikely the Green Party will win the forthcoming general election. It gives headline figures, but it is not clear where funding will come from although proposals to increase various taxes are made. Underlying the manifesto is an intent to re-join the EU and the European Customs Union.

There are no direct references to career development with only one comment about careers more broadly, that for young people, '*The world of work is changing fast. Fewer young people will experience only one career and workplace in their lives. Education and training must be accessible, and better designed to support lifelong learning*' (p.30).

### **Education**

The Green Party believes that education should be about inspiring a love of learning and ensuring that every young person can reach their potential (p.29). Specific policies include:

- £8bn investment in schools that would include £2bn for a pay uplift for teachers.
- £5bn to be invested in special needs (SEND) provision within mainstream schools.
- £3bn increase in funding for sixth-form education.
- £12bn investment in skills and lifelong learning for further education.
- Every higher education student to be fully funded, restoring maintenance grants and scrapping undergraduate tuition fees.
- Giving students access to a qualified counsellor and an on-site medical professional for health and wellbeing.
- Retaining a full, evidence-based and age-appropriate programme of Relationships, Sex and Health Education.

In addition, the Green Party will campaign to ensure local authorities are properly funded to deliver youth services (p.41). Although central to '*ensuring that all children have an equal chance to thrive*' and '*opening up opportunities for all*', there is no acknowledgement of the role of qualified career development professionals or CEIAG provision.

### **Industrial strategy and skills**

The manifesto doesn't mention an industrial strategy though recognizes the need to transform our economy and the need to train a new workforce to support that. It would push for investment in the NHS, Health and Social Care, Transport and bring railways, the water companies and the big 5 retail energy companies back into public ownership (p.14).

Leading to potential growth in the construction industry, transport, renewable energy (wind, solar, marine hydro-power and geothermal), early years, health and social care, conservation, the arts, and the judiciary, the Green Party would:

- Support local councils to provide good quality, affordable social housing.
- Invest in homes and public building insulation, and the provision of non-fossil-fuel heat.
- Ensure large-scale developments are always supported by new infrastructure such as GP surgeries, bus services, cycling and walking networks, and extra places at nurseries and schools (p.7).

- Seek to increase investment in research and development (to support a green economy) by over £30bn across five years (p.15).
- Prioritise training of conservation workers and developing a public service professional path for nature conservation (p.24), alongside advocating for a substantial increase in productive forestry and increases in woodland with wood and crop waste to be recycled into construction materials, paper and fabrics (p.28).
- Campaign to Invest an extra £5bn over 5 years for local government spending on arts and culture to fund keeping local museums, theatres, libraries and art galleries open and thriving (p.37).
- Push to recruit more judges and to ensure that they are representative of wider society (p.40).

The Green Party would also seek an evidenced based approach to reform the UK's drug laws. This would allow the UK to move towards a legally regulated market (p.3) with the aim of diverting people from the criminal justice system *'towards support with addiction, housing and employment, from health workers focused on drug harm reduction* (p.41)

Conversely, a new Commission on Animal Protection, responsible for overseeing all rules designed to protect animals, could potentially lead to a reduction in the workforce engaged in factory farming, bottom trawling (fishing industry), blood sports, including trail hunting, and the use of live animals in military training.

## **Employment**

A long-term aim is for a Universal Basic Income *'that will give everybody the security to start a business, study, train or just live their life in dignity'* (p.19). In the meantime they will end benefits sanctions and advocate for the most disadvantaged in society, such as ensuring disabled workers have the in-job support they need, as well as proper pay and conditions (p.6).

It would seek to restore the democratic right of workers to organise to defend themselves, legislate for workers to have full employment rights from day one of their employment and seek to introduce a minimum wage of £15 an hour for all, irrespective of age (p.17).

- Workers will have full employment rights from day one, and tribunal fees will be abolished as part of funding workers' rights.
- The Greens will also require medium and large organisations to carry out equal pay audits and address issues. They will also push for safe sick pay and ensure 'gig economy' workers are included in a single definition of 'worker' with *'full and equal rights'* (p.17).
- Push for Increased pay rates and a career structure for carers to rebuild the care workforce (p.5).

## **Additional support**

Specifically relating to mental health services, the manifesto states that a trained and paid counsellor would be provided in every primary and secondary school, and every sixth-form college. It would push for children in foster care or who have been adopted to have consistent access to a trained counsellor until it is no longer required (p.6). This work would be supported through bursaries to train counsellors from underrepresented backgrounds to ensure we have sufficient culturally aware counsellors for our diverse population (p.6).

They would make it mandatory for councils to provide free transport for 16–18-year-old pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability (p.6).

### **Migration**

For career development professionals whose work brings them into contact with refugees and asylum seekers, it is worth noting that the Green Party acknowledges the right to claim asylum, in any country, as set out in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Greens will campaign for a system of asylum and humanitarian protection that treats the applicant fairly, humanely and without discrimination.

## Scottish National Party (SNP)

### A future made in Scotland

As to be expected, the SNP put the interests of Scotland first in their manifesto. Central to this positioning is the belief that Scotland should be an independent nation and part of the European Union – ‘*We will champion our vision for an independent Scotland in the EU*’ (p.13).

Within the manifesto there is no mention of ‘career’. Perhaps more surprisingly, ‘skills’ are referred to only once – and with specific reference to Grangemouth – which is to maintain the oil refinement industry and so retain the skilled workforce, while the transition is made to working in new, greener technologies (20). This may be a large part because careers and skills policy is devolved, though the manifesto could have been an opportunity to outline their approach in these areas.

Throughout the manifesto there is a focus on what the SNP is doing, with the realisation of future aspirations for economic growth and development being heavily dependent on the UK Government devolving more powers to the Scottish Parliament. Consequently, the SNP place many demands on the UK Government with an emphasis on the need for more devolved funding and increased investment to secure sustainable jobs for the future.

### **Education**

Within the manifesto there are only two references to education:

- The SNP would continue to defend free university tuition in Scotland (p.5).
- A statement that by rejoining the EU, they believe Scotland could re-enter the Erasmus+ scheme, thereby widening educational opportunities for Scotland’s future generations (p.13).

There is no mention of transitional support. Perhaps creating an interesting juxtaposition for young people’s choices, the SNP would extend the voting age to 16 (p.26) while phasing out the recruitment of young people under 18 to the armed forces (p.28).

### **Employment**

There are 3 references to employment:

- Demanding powers over immigration, including the devolution of overseas workers’ *employment visas* to mitigate against labour shortages – with particular reference to social care and rural economies (p.18, p.21)
- Calling for the devolution of employment rights and the minimum wage with the aim of improving working conditions (p.23).
- Seeking improvements from the UK government concerning the armed forces and veterans community (p.28).

Their pledges include empowering workers by scrapping exploitative zero-hours contracts, banning fire and rehire and repealing the Minimum Service Bill (p. 5). They would also increase maternity pay and promote shared parental leave, while legislating for an ‘essentials guarantee’ to ensure everyone can afford the basics such as food and utilities – a possible variation on Universal Basic Income?

The manifesto cites as the main industries: energy, food and drink, tourism, financial services and the creative sector (p.7). To drive economic growth it would introduce a lower rate of VAT for hospitality and tourism, and address the imbalance in VAT in the construction industry to encourage the refurbishment and retrofitting of existing buildings (p.10). Also, a commitment is given to specific road improvements (p.22). Elsewhere, demands are made on the UK Government to invest in the NHS, and calls made for policies prohibiting care workers from overseas bringing their families with them to be reversed (p.18).

## **Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales)**

### **For fairness, for ambition, for Wales.**

Within the manifesto there is an emphasis on securing an increase in devolved powers and funding with Wales having greater control. Also stressed is the promotion of the Welsh language – to recruit and train a bilingual workforce. Plaid Cymru supports proportional representation and does not support the House of Lords. It believes that Wales would be best served by re-joining the European Union.

There are no specific references to career development provision or the role of qualified career development professionals, despite the prominence of Careers Wales in serving schools, colleges and employers.

### **Education and Training**

Plaid Cymru would seek to recruit and retain 5,000 teachers and support staff, appointing more non-teaching staff to deal with pupil needs beyond education (p.20).

By implementing a living wage and supporting colleges to reduce the financial burden on students it would incentivise learners to remain on apprenticeship courses and increase the availability of apprenticeships in the healthcare sector to provide more opportunities for young people to enter the profession.

It would work with the education sector to support personalised and flexible pathways into Higher Education and increase investment in research and development.

To support lifelong learning it would offer a grant of £5,000 to the Personal Learning Accounts of every individual over 25 to train or retrain, with loans to cover more expensive courses (p.22).

### **Industrial strategy and skills**

Plaid Cymru refers to both industrial and skills strategy, saying '*With a number of sectors in Wales highlighting the availability of skills as being a significant barrier, a skills strategy and industrial strategy is sorely needed*' (p.10). It would move towards this by mapping out the skills needed by sector and '*create an environment where learners are incentivised to remain on apprentice courses by addressing student poverty*'.

To secure economic growth Plaid Cymru will create a Welsh Green New Deal to re-skill and support Welsh employees and apprentices, alongside establishing a National Development Agency to meet the economic challenges into the 2050s and beyond. It would invest in the digital infrastructure to provide greater connectivity and flexibility.

Plaid Cymru supports the health and social care workforce, offering £1 above the real living wage to improve recruitment. It would open a new dental school and invest in the workforce to recruit, train and retain more oncology staff (p.16).

Although the criminal justice system (e.g. police, prisons, probation services) has a strong presence in Wales, it is worth noting that powers are in the control of the Westminster government.

Likewise, Wales has neither full control over energy powers, including water supplies and sewage, nor the rail infrastructure. This impacts on investment and growth in the local labour market.

In contrast, responsibility for bus services and the road network are devolved. Also, the opportunity for local authorities to build their own housing has been re-instated, giving greater control over construction.

### **Employment**

Control of the Welfare system currently rests with the Westminster government and Plaid Cymru support the devolution of employment law to Wales. They would strengthen employment rights by reversing anti-strike legislation, tackle insecure work, provide paid bereavement and miscarriage rights from day one of employment, reform shared parental leave, introduce paid carers leave and an increase in statutory sick pay.

They would also ban fire and rehire and compulsory zero-hour contracts and establish the right not to be contacted outside work hours.

They would also reform Universal Credit to be based on a fairer assessment basis – such as annual rather than monthly incomes - and support the principle of the Universal Basic Income.

## Manifestos for Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland there are two main parties – Sinn Fein and the Democratic Union Party (DUP). Other parties are the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Alliance Party, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV).

Prior to the dissolution of the Westminster Parliament, Northern Ireland had 18 seats in the UK House of Commons. Eight were held by the DUP and seven by Sinn Fein. (Sinn Fein does not take its seats at Westminster and has always held a policy of abstentionism when it comes to the House of Commons.) Of the remaining seats, two were held by the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and one by the Alliance Party.

### Sinn Fein

#### Strong leadership. Positive change

Sinn Féin is an Irish republican and democratic socialist political party in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is the largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly and states in its manifesto that it wants *a stronger and fairer economy that delivers good jobs that pay well, offers workers secure conditions, and supports local business*’ (p.5). It wants to increase productivity and opportunities for skills, training and jobs. There are no further references to skills, and none to careers, employment or economic growth, but essential for recruitment and retention in the construction industry is a commitment to a number of substantial building projects (p.5). Similarly, education is cited among the things that matter most (p.3, p.4) but there is no detail.

Sinn Fein supports legal protections for work and is committed to delivering good public services (p.5, p.7). The latter could be important as the Careers Service Northern Ireland is an integral part of the civil service, and like elsewhere in the UK, investment in the public service workforces has been affected by reduced funding from the Westminster government.

### DUP

#### Speaking up for Northern Ireland

The DUP is a unionist, loyalist, British nationalist and national conservative political party in Northern Ireland. It is the second largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly and supports Northern Ireland remaining part of the United Kingdom. The manifesto has a strong focus on ensuring Northern Ireland can thrive as a secure and vibrant part of the United Kingdom and a key objective is making the case for Northern Ireland within the Union. Overall, the focus of the manifesto is more about what the DUP has achieved and less on future governance.

The Northern Ireland Careers Service is part of the nation’s Civil Service and so a commitment to *‘delivering fair and equitable funding for our NHS, and other public services’* (p.4) may offer an element of reassurance regards its future. A specific aim is to *‘ensure the drive to expand apprenticeships is part of a joined-up approach to careers advice’* (p.27). DUP MPs will also campaign to reintroduce financial incentives for businesses that hire young apprentices at risk of long-term unemployment (p.22). More generally, DUP MPs will campaign to deliver increased

economic and educational opportunities for young people and promote a joined-up approach to educational under-achievement (p.22). Elsewhere within the manifesto, education is mainly presented in terms of ‘outcomes delivered’ (p.13).

With regards to economic growth, the DUP are committed to putting into action strategies which adopt a sustainable and sustained approach to identifying and meeting skills shortages in key and emerging sectors of the Northern Ireland economy and throughout its public services. Explicitly expressed is support for the establishment of an Independent UK Skills Commission. There is a particular focus on wanting to increase the number of small and medium sized businesses established, growing and competing globally, while also seeking regulation of online market places (p.23). Planned developments that would impact on the construction sector appear reliant on securing funding from Westminster.

DUP MPs would support the creation a new UK export strategy with a specific trade plan for Northern Ireland and seek government funding to help expand Northern Ireland’s trade presence across the world, including through recruitment of more staff. They would:

- Pursue measures to make farm businesses more profitable, productive and resilient, as well as attractive to the next generation (p.34),
- Push for better support for the fishing industry and coastal communities (p.35).
- Press for a new national industrial strategy in which advanced manufacturing and other thriving sectors, including digital, agri-tech, life and health sciences and fintech are prioritised (p.25).
- Seek a dedicated Hydrogen Innovation Strategy (p.25)
- Work to increase the number of major MoD contracts placed in Northern Ireland and promote the creation of more high quality, well-paid and secure jobs in the aerospace, defence, security and space sector (p.31).

DUP MPs would advocate for policies and initiatives that are environmentally responsible and support decarbonisation, and would press for a truly fair transition which is inclusive of all communities, households and industries (p.36). More specifically, the DUP is committed to doubling the size of Northern Ireland’s low carbon and renewable energy economy to more than £2bn turnover, and to phasing out fossil fuels (p.37), while also expressing a commitment to strengthening Northern Ireland’s air connectivity with Great Britain and internationally (p.41).

## **Alliance Party**

### **Leading change for everyone**

The Alliance Party is the third biggest in the Northern Ireland assembly. It defines itself as separate from the traditional unionist and nationalist blocs in Northern Ireland’s politics and has links with the Liberal Democrats. It remains Alliance’s policy that Northern Ireland and the UK should return to the European Union.

In its manifesto there is no reference to careers. Nor is there any mention of employment, education or training among its key policies, albeit ‘*access to education*’ is cited as a priority (p.43). The Alliance Party does however want to see investment in Northern Ireland’s infrastructure and skills (p.4, p.5, p.14), and Alliance MPs would work at Westminster to secure

action from the UK government. This would include a renewed focus on skills development and training for those within the welfare system (p.15).

The Party would seek action from the UK government to review the funding model for colleges, universities and apprenticeships and student finance for England, as this may have beneficial outcomes for Northern Ireland, alongside a general review of the Apprenticeship Levy across the UK (p.20).

Alliance MPs would campaign for the Immigration Act 2020 to be repealed and scrap the shortage occupation list and points-based system, creating a visa system based on the real needs of the Northern Ireland economy and society (p.27). In addition, the Party would work to ensure that migrants' and refugees' qualifications and prior learning are recognised to reflect the needs of the local economy and to ensure they can continue their education and find employment that corresponds to their skills.

### **UUP** – Manifesto yet to be published

The UUP is a unionist political party in Northern Ireland and with 9 members in the Northern Ireland Assembly is the fourth-largest party after Sinn Féin, the DUP and the Alliance Party. It has not been represented in Westminster since 2017.

### **SDLP** – Manifesto yet to be published

The SDLP is a social-democratic and Irish nationalist political party in Northern Ireland and currently has seven members in the Northern Ireland Assembly and advocates Irish reunification.

### **TUV**

#### **Restore the union**

The Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) is a unionist political party in Northern Ireland and the third largest unionist party in Northern Ireland, behind the DUP and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). For the General Election, Reform UK and TUV are providing mutually supporting candidates in Northern Ireland.

It sees tackling educational underachievement as its number one priority, in particular for the Protestant working class (p.20). While there is no mention of career guidance, among its proposals are: creating a system in which children can find different paths to successful outcomes; helping children to see value in education by ensuring it connects them to a job market which harnesses their skills and talents; and vocational training, for those seeking apprenticeships, commencing at school and moving on to FE with employer support. It would also seek to introduce new visa rules for international students that bar dependents.

To support employment growth, the manifesto proposes tax cuts growth, while seeking to impose a requirement of 5 years residency and employment to claim any benefits in the UK and

introducing an employer Immigration Tax to pay for apprenticeships and training for young British people. More specifically, a TUV priority is sustaining long term investment in health, emphasising a need for more nurses and doctors.