



Education and Skills at Policy Connect

Party Manifestos

29/11/2019

We've taken a look at the manifestos recently released by the three key parties, and have produced the table below comparing their commitments on different aspects of education and skills. It's worth noting that the Conservative manifesto is a brief 64 pages, compared to the Liberal Democrats' 98 pages and Labour's 107, so there's not quite as much detail on some topics.

Flagship policies

Labour's flagship policy is the commitment to providing a free lifelong entitlement to six years of training at levels 4-6, with maintenance grants for disadvantaged learners. They have also stated their intention to create a National Education Service, and to replace Ofsted with a new body.

The Liberal Democrats' flagship policies are their commitment to investing an extra £1 billion in further education, restoring maintenance grants for the poorest students in higher education, and expanding the apprenticeship levy into a wider 'Skills and Training levy'.

The Conservatives' flagship policy is their announced £2 billion of investment to upgrade FE colleges, the creation of a £3bn National Skills Fund, and their commitment to creating 20 Institutes of Technology.

Key differences and commonalities

The Labour offer on education is more comprehensive and universal, whereas the Conservatives' offer is more targeted at specific groups.

The Conservatives want to maintain the current apprenticeship levy with improved working of the levy, trying to better link it to infrastructure projects. Both the Lib Dems and Labour are more open to expanding the scope of the apprenticeship levy, and further harnessing it to a social mobility and inclusion agenda.

Both Lib Dems and Labour are committed to reforming Ofsted.

We're delighted to see all parties offering a commitment to engaging the hardest to reach, as we've called for in our Spotlight Series, including recommendations for a social mobility fund, bursaries for apprentices, and targeted support for engaging SMEs. We look forward to continuing to raise these issues with politicians and policymakers, and hope to see further progress made by the new Parliament in 2020.

Manifestos

	Labour	Lib Dems	Conservatives
16 -18	<p>Align the base rate of per-pupil funding in post-16 education with Key Stage 4.</p> <p>Reinstitution of the Education Maintenance Allowance.</p>	<p>Invest an extra £1 billion in Further Education funding, including by refunding colleges for the VAT they pay.</p> <p>According to the party's own costings, their promises for further education, skills and youth services would cost £1.6 billion.</p> <p>Develop National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.</p> <p>Help children from poorer families to remain in education and training beyond the age of 16 by introducing a 'Young People's Premium'. This would be based on the same eligibility criteria as the Pupil Premium, but a portion of it would be paid directly to the young person aged 16-18.</p>	<p>£2bn investment to upgrade further education colleges.</p> <p>Commitment to 20 Institutes of Technology.</p> <p>Replacement of Structural Funds with £500m in UK Shared Prosperity Funds to upskill disadvantaged people.</p> <p>Create a prisoner education service focused on work-based training and skills.</p>
Careers IAG	Reform existing careers advice, working towards an integrated information, advice and guidance system that covers the entire National Education Service.	Improve the quality of vocational education, including skills for entrepreneurship and self-employment, and improve careers advice and links with employers in schools and colleges.	
Lifelong Learning	<p>A free lifelong entitlement to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training up to Level 3. • Six years training at Levels 4-6, with maintenance grants for disadvantaged learners. <p>Restore funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.</p>	<p>Introduce a new Skills Wallets for every adult in England, giving them £10,000 to spend on education and training throughout their lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government will put in £4,000 at age 25, £3,000 at age 40 and £3,000 at age 55. • Individuals, their employers and local government will be able to make additional payments into the wallets. • Individuals can choose how and when to spend this money on a range of approved education and training courses from providers who are regulated and monitored by the Office for Students. • Individuals will have access to free careers guidance to help them to decide how to spend the money in their Skills Wallets. Government will work with industry to identify skills needs and to evaluate and certify courses. 	Introduction of £3bn National Skills Fund over the next parliament. Skills fund will be for individuals and SMEs with a proportion reserved for strategic investment in skills.
Apprenticeships	<p>Make it easier for employers to spend the levy by allowing it to be used for a wider range of accredited training, in line with guidelines set by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and government's wider priorities for the economy.</p> <p>Climate Apprenticeship programme: Employers will be expected to allocate 25% of the funds in their Apprenticeship Levy accounts to training Climate Apprentices. These funds can be spent directly or allocated to a ring-fenced Climate Apprenticeship Fund, which will be topped up with any surplus raised through Inclusive Ownership Funds and made accessible to non levy-paying businesses. Targeted bursaries will be available to women, BAME people, care leavers, ex-armed forces personnel, and people with disabilities to encourage them to take</p>	Expand the apprenticeship levy into a wider 'Skills and Training Levy' to help prepare the UK's workforce for the economic challenges ahead, with 25% of the funds raised by the levy going into a 'Social Mobility Fund' targeted at areas with the greatest skill needs.	<p>Require a significant number of apprenticeships for all new big infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Improve the working of the Apprenticeship Levy.</p>

	up climate apprenticeships – the STEM of the future. The amount that can be transferred to non-levy-paying employers will be increased to 50% and an online matching service will be introduced to help levy-paying businesses find smaller businesses to transfer their funds to.		
HE	<p>Introduce post-qualification admissions in higher education, and work with universities to ensure contextual admissions are used across the system.</p> <p>Abolish tuition fees and bring back maintenance grants.</p> <p>We will fundamentally rethink the assessment of research and teaching quality, and develop a new funding formula for higher education that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures all public HE institutions have adequate funding for teaching and research. • Widens access to higher education and reverses the decline of part-time learning. • Ends the casualisation of staff. 	<p>Establish a review of higher education finance in the next parliament to consider any necessary reforms in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation and quality, and make sure there are no more retrospective raising of rates or selling-off of loans to private companies.</p> <p>Ensure that all universities work to widen participation by disadvantaged and underrepresented groups across the sector, prioritising their work with students in schools and colleges, and require every university to be transparent about selection criteria.</p> <p>Reinstate maintenance grants for the poorest students, ensuring that living costs are not a barrier to disadvantaged young people studying at university.</p> <p>Require universities to make mental health services accessible to their students, and introduce a Student Mental Health Charter through legislation.</p>	Reform science funding to reduce form filling and continue international collaboration.
Employment	<p>Additional entitlements for workers in industries that are significantly affected by industrial transition.</p> <p>Restore and expand the Union Learning Fund, giving workers the right to accrue paid time off for education and training.</p> <p>Give employers a role in co-design and co-production of qualifications.</p>		
Regulation	<p>Reverse the fragmentation and privatisation of further and adult education, incorporating it into a single national system of regulation that functions for education as our NHS does for healthcare provision.</p> <p>Transform the Office for Students from a market regulator to a body of the National Education Service, acting in the public interest.</p> <p>Replace Ofsted and transfer responsibility for inspections to a new body, designed to drive school improvement.</p>	<p>Replace Ofsted with a new HM Inspector of Schools. Inspections should take place every three years and should consider a broader range of factors including the social and emotional development of children, and the wellbeing of staff and pupils. Independent schools should be subject to the same inspection regime.</p>	<p>Maintain Ofsted and intervene in schools where there is entrenched underperformance.</p> <p>Require the Office for Students to look at universities' success in increasing access across all ages, not just young people entering undergraduate courses.</p>