**What do the main political parties have to say about Deaf and Disabled people’s priority issues?**

Inclusion London asked the Conservative Party, the Green Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats the same 7 key questions. We received the following replies from Rhiannon Padley from the Conservative Party; Jonathan Bartley: co-leader of the Green Party; Marsha De Cordova: Shadow Minister for Disabled People of The Labour Party and Tim Farron from the Liberal Democrats.

Sorry for the late posting - we had to extend the deadline for replies three times!

**1.Disabled people have been disproportionately affected by austerity with our community experiencing increased levels of poverty and exclusion. What will you do to address the impact of austerity on Disabled people?**

**The Conservative party:** We want to ensure that disabled people live a life of opportunity, and since 2014 we have helped over one million disabled people into work. We are spending over £55 billion a year on benefits to support people with disabilities and health conditions this year – a record amount and a real-terms rise of £10 billion since 2010. We recognise that disabled people still face too many barriers to realising their potential and to playing a full part in our national life. That is why we will develop a National Strategy for Disabled People by the end of 2020, which will look at improving the benefit system but also take a wide-ranging approach to the challenges disabled people face in all areas of their life.

**The Green Party**: Austerity has been cruel and the Green Party has opposed it constantly. The Green Party will reverse the impact of austerity by funding Local Authorities and services properly again. We will scrap universal credit and the cruel sanctions regime, and replace the confusing, abusive system of benefits with a simple payment paid to all adults, with an additional payment for people with disabilities, as well as carers allowance. This will make the whole process much easier and less stressful.

**The Labour Party:** Over the past decade, the Coalition and Conservative Governments have created a hostile environment for disabled people that has plunged thousands of ill and disabled people into poverty and destitution. Figures from the Social Metrics Commission show that half of the 14 million people in poverty are living in families include a disabled person. The scandalous rise of foodbank use under the Lib Dems and Conservatives has disproportionately affected disabled people – according to the Trussell Trust, three quarters of people using foodbanks are disabled. Our manifesto, “Breaking Down Barriers”, was produced by and with disabled people, aimed at addressing the impact of austerity. We are clear that we will scrap cruel and callous Universal Credit, replacing it with a system that is co-produced alongside disabled people. As soon as we enter Government, we will also implement an emergency package of reforms to mitigate some of the worst features of UC while we develop our replacement system. In Government, we will incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRPD) into law, working with disabled people every step of the way so that all disabled people can live independently and with dignity.

**The Liberal Democrats:** The most important thing to do is to reform our benefits system so that disabled people are given the support they need to find work. The Liberal Democrats will ensure that everyone gets the help they need by separating employment support from benefits administration and increase spending on training and education. We will introduce an incentive-based scheme to replace the current sanctions system, which does not encourage people into work, penalises people with mental health issues and deters people from claiming support. We will also end Work Capability Assessments and replace them with a new system that is run by local authorities and based on real-world tests**.**

**2. What will you do to end the immediate crisis in social care and what is your party’s position on creating a legal right to independent living and setting up a national independent living support service that Disabled people are calling for?**

**The Conservative party:** We have outlined a clear three-point plan to resolve the issue of social care for the long term. First, we will provide a minimum of £1 billion extra a year over the next Parliament to help stabilise the current system and invest in vital infrastructure and recruitment. Second, we will build a cross-party consensus for a long term reform plan. Social care is one of the biggest, long-term challenges facing society. Putting social care on sustainable footing is crucial. Because this is a long-term problem that will affect so many people, any solution has to be able to survive long-term – enduring through the chop and change of political fashion and Westminster party fortunes. We must build the same level of consensus on social care as we have already built on the NHS. Third, as the Prime Minster said on the steps of Downing Street: ‘No one should have to sell their home to pay for the cost of care’. Our plan guarantees that. We have also committed to a three year £60 million Learning, Disability and Autism Fund to support the transition of people to appropriate community care settings, and will review ongoing funding thereafter.

**The Green Party:** The Green Party will invest an additional £4.5 billion a year of funding for social care, and work towards a system that provides free social care for everyone who needs it. The Green Party will introduce a legal right to independent living for disabled people, overseen by a National Independent Living Support Service. This service will support and empower disabled people who do choose to live independently The Green Party will support local councils to better provide housing for disabled people, and many more houses will be built to mobility standards. We will provide funding and support for local authorities to build 100,000 social houses every year. This will support every person’s right to live independently with proper support in the community.

**The Labour Party:**  Years of lack of investment has left social care support in crisis. Social care has long been under-funded, and disabled people are left without the support that they need to live independently. The little support that is made available often violates disabled people’s rights. Labour is clear that we must build a comprehensive National Care Service for England that will provide community-based, person-centred support, underpinned by the principles of independent living. We will invest in social care packages which ensure that autistic people and people with learning disabilities are supported to live independently. I am clear that all these steps must provide the foundation for an Independent Living Service.

**The Liberal Democrats:** We will raise £7 billion a year additional revenue to be ring-fenced to be spent only on NHS and social care services. This revenue will be generated from a 1p rise on the basic, higher and additional rates of Income Tax. We will introduce a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks for unpaid carers, and require councils to make regular contact with carers to offer support and signpost services. Provide a package of carer benefits such as free leisure centre access, free bus travel for young carers, and self-referral to socially prescribed activities and courses. We will also raise the amount people can earn before losing their Carer’s Allowance from £123 to £150 a week, and reduce the number of hours’ care per week required to qualify for it. The Liberal Democrats would reinstate the Independent Living Fund to allow disabled people to live in the community**.**

**3. What issues in our benefits system need tackling and what would you do?**

**The Conservative Party:** We will consider how we can make the benefits system support disabled people more effectively through a wide-ranging Green Paper. We will consult widely with disabled people, disabled people’s organisations and charities.

**The Green Party:** I challenged Ian Duncan Smith in 2015 about the scandalous suicides of benefit claimants, and we have been pushing for a transformation of the welfare system to one which empowers and supports. We will replace the confusing, abusive system of benefits with a simple payment paid to all adults, and an additional payment for people with disabilities and carers. This will make the whole process much easier and less stressful. We will end the privatisation of the welfare system and turn it into a caring, understanding system where people are rewarded for helping people, not sanctioning them.

**The Labour Party:** We need the right kind of social security system - one that respects the values of the Beveridge report. A system that we are as proud of, as we are of the National Health Service. But in the past nine years, we have watched the system diminish and the people who use it vilified as skivers or scroungers. Changing this rhetoric is vital to dismantling the hostile environment facing disabled people in Britain today and to rebuilding a social security system that is fair, compassionate and there for all of us in our times of need. We will ensure that the social security system provides people with an adequate level of income. We will reshape the culture by creating a Department of Social Security. We will scrap the cruel and callous assessment framework for PIP and ESA. Labour is committed to creating a single and personalised assessment framework. We have been working alongside disabled activists and campaigners to realise that vision. There is no stronger indictment of the failing assessments system than over five thousand people dying just months after being denied vital social security. Labour is proud to have supported the Justice for Jodey Whiting petition, calling for independent inquiry into these deaths. We are clear that it is time to end the pernicious outsourcing of assessments for marginalised groups and that we must bring these assessments in house.We will reverse cruel cuts to the ESA Work Related Activity Group, worth £30 a week, and to the UC Limited Capability to Work element.Labour will end the sanctions regime for disabled people and ensure that legal aid is available those appealing their social security decisions.Above all, we will continue to ensure that disabled people’s voices are central to our movement**.**

**The Liberal Democrats:** The biggest issue that needs to be tackled with the current benefit system is the cruel five-week wait for the first Universal Credit payment. We will reduce that wait from five weeks down to five days, so that no-one has to go for over a month having to rely on foodbanks. We would also remove the two-child limit and lift the benefits cap. Reform Universal Credit to be more supportive of the self-employed. We will increase Local Housing Allowance in line with average rents in an area. We will also abolish the bedroom tax and introduce positive incentives for people to downsize.

**4. Disabled people continue to experience discrimination, exclusion and inaccessible services on a daily basis. What will you do to stop this?**

**The Conservative Party:** We recognise that too often disabled people experience discrimination and we want to remove barriers and create more opportunities in order to enable disabled people to achieve their goals and aspirations and lead full productive lives. Our Manifesto promises to publish a National Strategy for Disabled People in 2020. The strategy will be ambitious and holistic. It will support disabled people in all aspects and phases of their life. The strategy will include housing, education and transport but will also focus on other areas that are identified by disabled people. The strategy will be developed with disabled people, disabled people’s organisations and charities. We will take a broad approach to the challenges that disabled people face and the strategy will be rooted in their lived experience.

**The Green Party:** The Green Party will fund the improvement of public spaces like train stations and bus stops to be more user friendly and accessible. We are proposing more investment that any other party in transport, and will end transport apartheid. Public transport should be available to everyone. We will aim for full accessibility for all disabled people and remove exemptions in Disability law. We will fully embed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) into UK law.

**The Labour Party:**  A vital part of our commitment to incorporate the UNCRPD into domestic law, is to ensure that disabled people no longer face inaccessible services every day. We will radically reform our transport system, to ensure that it is accessible to disabled people. This includes a commitment to end the discriminatory practice of Driver Only Operation on the railway. We will guarantee a second member of fully trained staff on all trains, so that disabled people can travel when they want with dignity. We will expand bus services and ensure that all new buses will offer audio visual announcements and reform taxi services to be more accessible. Violent hate crime against disabled people has risen by 41% in the last year. I am proud that we will incorporate disability hate crime into law and put in place comprehensive national action plans to tackle discrimination. We will also restore early legal aid advice, recruit hundreds of new community lawyers and build an expanded network of law centres. Finally, I am proud that Labour will build more accessible homes, using the ‘lifetime’ home standard as a condition for housing.

**The Liberal Democrats:** We will increase accessibility to public places and transport by making more stations wheelchair accessible, improving the legislative framework governing blue badges, setting up a benchmarking standard for accessible cities, and banning discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis.

**5. In light of raising rates of segregation and exclusion of Disabled children from mainstream education how important is inclusive education to your party and what will you do advance the inclusion of Disabled children?**

**The Conservative Party:** We want to make sure that all children are provided the education that is most appropriate to them and helps them thrive. We are conducting a review into how we best can support children with additional needs. We will be investing an additional £780 million in high needs funding in 2020-21 – a 12% increase on the amount available this year.

**The Green Party:** I challenged David Cameron publicly in 2010 about the Conservative plans to make it harder to disabled children and those with SEN to get a mainstream education. Since then things have become far worse, not better and we are committed to reversing this trend. We believe that an inclusive education should be a right. We all benefit from an inclusive system and celebrating diversity. We would scrap the one-size-fits-all approach to education with a child-centred approach which meets every child's needs, with maximum class sizes of 20, an end to the regime of testing and league tables and a broader curriculum. Segregation has been made much worse by austerity, with schools and local authorities struggling to meet their legal commitments to children with special educational needs and disabilities. We will make sure that the proper funding is in place for children to be fully supported in their school of choice.

**The Labour Party:**  When as I was growing up, I attended a primary school where the Head teacher wanted me to be taken out of mainstream education. My mum fought this, and fought the Department of Education, to keep me in that primary school. Had I not been in a mainstream school, I firmly believe that I would not be where I am now. Labour is committed to tackling discrimination against disabled children and young people in accessing mainstream education and ending the special educational needs and disability (SEND) funding crisis.

**The Liberal Democrats:** Inclusion of disabled children into mainstream schools is absolutely vital. It is frankly disgraceful that we have a current system that head teachers are basically financially incentivised into not accepting children with disabilities, and that schools that do the right thing and accept children with special educational needs and penalised for doing so. The Liberal Democrats will allocate additional funding to local authorities to halve the amount that schools pay towards the cost of a child’s Education Health and Care Plan.

**6. How would you put co-production with Disabled people at the heart of and at the start of decision making?**

**The Conservative Party:** Disabled people will be at the front of centre of the National Strategy for Disabled People and the Green Paper. We will develop our strategies and policies together with disabled people.

**The Green Party:** Including people democratically in decision making is at the heart of everything the Green Party stands for. Our policies are decided democratically by our members, and we would extend this principle to how decision making is made by the Government and your local council. Co-production has massive benefits for the people who use services, by making sure that those services properly meet the needs and realities of the people who will use them. The Green Party will encourage true co-production, with Disabled people included from the very start of decisions and plans about the services that affect them. We will re-open the Access to Elected Fund, ensure it covers parliamentary elections, and make it permanent. This Fund will support disabled people to stand for election, so that their voices can be at the heart of policy making.

**The Labour Party:** I am proud that the Labour Party is the only party with a manifesto developed by and for disabled people, according to the principle of ‘nothing about you without you’. Labour in Government will embody that principle, empowering disabled people and enhancing our voices. Every policy decision and every pledge will be co-produced by, with and for disabled people. This is how we will build a transformative movement, capable of reshaping disabled people’s lives and capable of demolishing the hostile environment framework that marginalises so many in Britain today**.**

**The Liberal Democrats:** We have started as we mean to go on with disabled party members such party president Sal Brinton having a full input into the manifesto. It’s absolutely vital that disabled people are at the forefront of any decisions made if we are get the best outcomes for disabled people.

**7. Why should Disabled people vote for you?**

**The Conservative Party:** We want to break down the barriers that disabled people face. We will use all levers available to us to enable disabled people to achieve their potential and lead the lives they want to lead.

**The Green Party:** Disabled people should vote Green because we are completely committed to a fully inclusive society. We stood form against austerity when everyone else compromised. We are advocating twice as much investment that any other party, and are the only party that wouldn't just end austerity but would reverse it completely. Our vision is for a fair country that meets everyone’s needs.

**The Labour Party:** In 2016 a United Nations report labelled austerity as responsible for “grave” and “systematic” human rights violations against disabled people. The UN said this again in 2019, when its rapporteur on Extreme Poverty likened the DWP to a 19th century workhouse. A Labour Government is our only chance to build a society according to the social model of disability, removing the barriers facing disabled people to accessing independent public services, education, employment, transport, justice and housing. We will honour our commitment to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRPD), signed by the previous Labour government in 2009, by incorporating it into law. Over the past decade, the Conservative and Coalition Governments have created a hostile environment for disabled people. Only the Labour Party will end it**.**

**The Liberal Democrats:** We have a clear plan to end discrimination and help disabled people live independently, work and flourish. We have a plan which will allow all children, regardless of whether they are disabled, to have the best possible start in life and then grow up to have access the best possible education and training, with world class public services and a properly funded NHS and social care system to look after them when they need it.

**Reclaiming Our Futures Alliance – a grassroots alliance of Disabled Peoples organisations including Inclusion London - has produced a Disabled People’s Manifesto 2019, setting out our vision for Equality and inclusion for all** [**https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/act-now/disabled-peoples-manifesto-2019/**](https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/act-now/disabled-peoples-manifesto-2019/)