

# HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES

## MACRO ANALYSIS

The Conservatives' manifesto is a much longer document than Labour's will be later this week. Nonetheless the essential pitch can be summarised in two words: tax cuts. There are an estimated £17 billion worth of tax cuts outlined in the manifesto to be implemented over the next parliament. They range from further reductions to national insurance to abolishing stamp duty for young home buyers. The proposals are vaguely costed but Rishi Sunak's main objective is not to demonstrate their feasibility. He seeks to create dividing lines with Labour over tax, often a vote winner for the Conservatives in the past. This time the electoral context is bleak for him and his party. Privately senior Tories are in despair about their prospects and fear the manifesto will not be a game changer.

**Steve Richards**, Senior Adviser

## POLICY ANALYSIS

As ever, health and social care is a prominent issue at the forefront of voter's minds. Record high NHS waiting lists, almost two years of strike action, and an ageing population adding yet more pressure on our health and social care system have combined to dominate headlines reporting on a 'broken system'.

In their manifesto the Conservatives nod to these pressures, noting the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has placed the system, and that the challenges of ill health are far-reaching with an increase in those economically inactive due to ill health.

To combat these challenges, the Conservatives have used their 2024 manifesto to re-emphasise their faith in existing plans, with most of their health-focused manifesto commitments already underway. These include delivering the major conditions strategy, implementing the NHS Workforce Plan, delivering 40 new hospitals by 2030 and legislation restricting the use of vapes and tobacco.

This approach comes as no surprise, with these policies either due to be implemented or have their intended impact under Rishi Sunak. In the case of both the major conditions strategy and vapes and tobacco legislation, a lot of work done in collaboration with supportive partners, means continued commitment to them will be popular with patient advocacy groups and other interested influencers.

The manifesto also marks a continuation in key trends for the delivery of healthcare services we have seen the recent Conservative government champion. This includes strong commitments to continue to move care into the community, an approach welcomed in order to reduce NHS frontline pressures, with the expansion of Pharmacy First and increased community diagnostic hubs.

In Life Sciences, their manifesto speaks to supporting the UK's 'world-leading' life sciences sector. Their proposed approach to improve the regulatory landscape and streamline access to new medicines through aligning NHS England's cost-effectiveness thresholds for new medicines indications with those used by NICE, will go some way in pleasing companies already concerned the UK's position as a leading global market is sliding.

With surprise policy coming in other areas, the Conservative message on health and social care is clear – we have the right plan, let us continue to implement it.

The challenge will come in gaining the trust of voters with their existing platform. Particularly as the public usually place more faith in Labour governments to run a more efficient health and social care system and have become accustomed to challenges in accessing care when they need it under a Conservative government.

To discuss WA's manifesto analysis and what it means for your organisation, please email **Dean Sowman**, Head of Health at [deansowman@wacomms.co.uk](mailto:deansowman@wacomms.co.uk).

## HEADLINE POLICY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Conservative Party manifesto includes commitments to:

- Increase NHS spending above inflation in each year of the next Parliament.
  - Return performance to the levels set out in the NHS Constitution by the end of the next Parliament.
  - Continue the implementation of the NHS Long-Term Workforce Plan, delivering 92,000 more nurses and 28,000 more doctors.
  - Care within local communities through expanding Pharmacy First as well as building or modernising 250 GP surgeries and 50 more community Diagnostic Centres.
  - Provide local authorities with a multi-year funding settlement to social care and an overarching commitment to delivery reforms to cap social care costs from October 2025.
- Securing more commercial clinical trials and removing barriers for new medicines through aligning NHS England's cost-effectiveness thresholds for new medicines indications with those used by NICE.
  - Combat prevalent disease through implementing a Major Conditions Strategy as well as tackling rare disease through taking forward the Rare Disease Action Plan.
  - Harness technology throughout the NHS through investing 3.4 billion in new technologies, with a focus on better utilising the NHS app, using AI to free up NHS staff time, and modernising existing IT infrastructure.

## WA ADVISORY BOARD ANALYSIS

It is encouraging to see the party re-commit to essential activity around workforce growth, modernised estates and tackling waiting lists.

Expanded commitments around Pharmacy First are also welcome, however this manifesto appears to be a missed opportunity to make broader primary care commitments in order to truly address public concern on access – an expected focus for both Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Without action in primary care and prevention initiatives, an unsustainable burden will continue to be placed on the rest of our health and social care system.”

**Michael Bell**, Chair of South West London Integrated Care Board and WA Adviser

There are some very positive messages on mental health support and women's health and new regulation of cosmetic procedures. But there really isn't much to address the wider crisis across the NHS - in primary care, the acute services, capital spending, the workforce, or indeed social care.

**Sir Philip Rutnam**, Chair of the Advisory Board, WA Communications