

Welfare benefit and tax credit pledges in the General Election 2015 Party Manifestos



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Welfare benefit and tax credit measures
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Alliance Party

Pledges include –

- abolish the bedroom tax;
- reform of welfare assessments so that people with lifelong conditions do not need regular re-assessment;
- provide specific assistance for disabled people and their employers to allow access to work, following the 'Employability Programme for Deaf People';
- implementation of an easier process for scrutiny and transparency of any private companies responsible for medical assessments for welfare by both legislation and procurement;
- removing onerous obligations being placed on people who are in receipt of benefits or for a lower rate of benefits for younger people;
- support paying housing benefit directly to landlords;
- a 'yellow card' system for benefit sanctions which would allow recipients the opportunity for an explanation and the introduction of more stringent requirements before a sanction is considered;
- to advocate for an increase in carer's allowance;
- advocate moving to a position where a pension is paid on the basis of meeting residence requirements rather than contributory requirements;
- support for an annual state pension uplift which is linked to inflation, prices and earnings, whichever is the highest;
- independent, objective analysis on the issue of the national pension liability, age of eligibility and how this affects long-term funding arrangements; and
- seek to balance the need for sustainable finances with the need to ensure people have a dignified retirement and time to adjust to any necessary changes in their pension provision.

[http://allianceparty.org/document/manifesto/
alliance-2015-westminster-manifesto.pdf](http://allianceparty.org/document/manifesto/alliance-2015-westminster-manifesto.pdf)

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Conservative Party

Pledges include -

- £12bn in welfare savings on top of the £21bn delivered in this parliament;
- universal credit to be delivered to 'provide the right incentives for people to work; target support at those who need it most; reduce fraud and error; and streamline administration';
- a reduction in the household benefit cap from £26,000 to £23,000, with continued exemptions from the cap for those receiving disability living allowance or personal independence payment;
- working age benefits to be frozen for two years from April 2016, with exemptions for disability and pensioner benefits, maternity allowance, statutory maternity pay, statutory paternity pay, statutory adoption pay and statutory sick pay;
- an overall welfare cap limiting the amount that government can spend on certain social security benefits in the five years from 2015/2016;
- 'Day One Work Requirements' for young people claiming out-of-work benefits;
- jobseeker's allowance for 18-21 year-olds to be replaced with a 'youth allowance' that will be time-limited to six months, after which young people will have to take an apprenticeship, a traineeship or do daily community work for their benefits;
- ending automatic entitlement to housing benefit for 18-21 year-olds on jobseeker's allowance;
- a review of how best to support those suffering from long-term treatable conditions - such as drug or alcohol addiction, or obesity - back into work, including a review of whether people who refuse a recommended treatment should have their benefit reduced;
- the provision of 'significant new support' for claimants with mental health problems claiming out-of-work benefits or being supported by the Fit for Work service;
- retention of the state pension triple lock under which the pension rises in line with whichever is higher - earnings, inflation or 2.5 per cent;
- the introduction of the single-tier pension from April 2016;
- the maintenance of current pensioner benefits including winter fuel payments, free bus passes, free prescriptions and TV licences whilst implementing a 'temperature test' for winter fuel payments, so that those living in warmer countries no longer receive it;
- work to eliminate child poverty and the introduction of 'better measures to drive real change in children's lives';
- the negotiation of new rules with the EU, including that migrants who want to claim tax credits and child benefit must have lived in the UK and made contributions for a minimum of 4 years;
- ending the payment of child benefit to EU migrants where their child(ren) live abroad;
- ending the ability of EU jobseekers to claim any jobseeking benefits at all, with jobseekers who have not found a job within six months being required to leave; and
- implementation of the recommendations of the Smith Commission in relation to new tax and welfare powers for Scotland.

<https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto.aspx>

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Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

Pledges include -

- welfare reform to incentivise work but also to protect those most in need;
- support for the abolition of the bedroom tax;
- support for universal credit being allowed to bed down, enabling a proper evaluation of its impact;
- opposition to the taxing of disability benefits;
- to ensure economic migrants must have contributed to the UK before they are entitled to claim benefits;
- support for the triple lock on the state pension; and
- opposition to plans to means test pensioner benefits that are currently universal;

[http://dev.mydup.com/images/uploads/publications/
DUP_Manifesto_2015_LR.pdf](http://dev.mydup.com/images/uploads/publications/DUP_Manifesto_2015_LR.pdf)

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Green Party

Pledges include -

- scrapping most existing benefits apart from disability benefits and housing benefit;
- paying every woman, man and child legally resident in the UK a 'Basic Income' - a guaranteed, non-means-tested income, sufficient to cover basic needs;
- children will receive a reduced Basic Income (child benefit);
- pensioners will receive their Basic Income at a higher level, as a Citizen's Pension;
- abolishing the 'bedroom tax';
- bringing housing benefit for all age groups back in line with average market rents;
- subjecting the Shared Accommodation Rate to a comprehensive review to ensure it reflects the real cost of renting shared properties;
- small changes 'in the direction of' allowing those who earn some income from paid work to keep more of that income, starting with increasing the disregards for income support and JSA, initially increasing the income disregarded on JSA for all categories of client to £50 a week, with similar increases for those on universal credit;
- halting implementation of the universal credit programme and carry out a thorough review of its structure and implementation, including the treatment of earned income, and removing conditionality;
- ending work-for-benefits programmes, or workfare and ensure a fair choice of waged work opportunities or voluntary training for jobseekers;
- ensuring that all those on training or work placements as part of the benefits regime are either in college-based training or at work earning at least the minimum wage;
- reviewing the harsh systems of sanctions and benefits caps introduced by the Coalition government and its predecessors;
- considering offering more personalised job-seeking support for people with mental health problems;
- restoring council tax benefit at the equivalent of 2012/2013 levels for low-income householders;
- cancelling the DWP's contracts with the private sector for benefit entitlement assessment;
- restoration of the link between state benefits and earnings;
- ensuring state benefits rise as fast as prices or wages, whichever of those grows more; and
- raising child benefit from 2016 from £20.70 a week for the oldest or only child and £13.70 a week for additional children in 2015/16 to £40 a week for each child.

[https://www.greenparty.org.uk/
we-stand-for/2015-manifesto.html](https://www.greenparty.org.uk/we-stand-for/2015-manifesto.html)

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Labour Party

Pledges include –

- universal credit to be paused, and reviewed to see if it is 'affordable and fit for purpose';
- abolition of the bedroom tax;
- no cuts to tax credits;
- retention of the household benefit cap, with the Social Security Advisory Committee to be asked to examine if it should be lower in some areas;
- a cap on structural social security spending as part of each spending review;
- a guaranteed, paid job for all young people who have been out of work for one year - and for all those over 25 years old and out of work for two years - which they have to take or lose their benefits;
- a higher rate of JSA for those who have contributed 'over years', to be funded by extending the length of time people need to have worked to qualify;
- testing jobseekers' Maths, English & IT skills within six weeks of them claiming benefits, with the requirement that they take up training where this will improve their chances of getting a job;
- commissioning a replacement for the Work Programme at a more local level, working with local authorities to join up support for the long-term unemployed;
- reforming the WCA to focus it on the support disabled people need to get into work, with an independent scrutiny group of disabled people given a central role in monitoring it;
- introduction of a specialist support programme to ensure that disabled people who can work get more tailored help;
- retention of the state pension triple-lock so that it increases by higher of inflation, earnings, or 2.5 per cent;
- increasing the state retirement age, whilst ensuring that people have time to plan for changes;
- restricting winter fuel payments for the richest 5% of pensioners, with a guarantee that there will be no additional changes to the winter fuel payment, free TV licences or bus passes;
- increasing the amount of statutory paternity pay from £140 to more than £260 a week;
- capping child benefit rises for two years;
- retaining child poverty targets, and asking the OBR to monitor and report on progress;
- ending child benefit for those whose children live abroad
- migrants to be unable to claim benefits for at least two years after entering the UK;
- allowing local authorities that negotiate rent reductions on behalf of tenants who are claiming housing benefit to retain some of the savings, on the condition that the money is invested in building homes; and
- in addition to the full implementation of the Smith Agreement, a Home Rule Bill to give Scotland extra powers over tax, welfare and jobs.

<http://www.labour.org.uk/manifesto/all>

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Liberal Democrats

Pledges include -

- completing the introduction of universal credit whilst reviewing it to address any issues regarding 'cliff edges' and ensure increased working hours are properly incentivised for all claimants;
- retention of the benefit cap which should continue to be set at around the average family income;
- a reformed and improved Work Programme in partnership with English local government, and the national governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- improved incentives for Jobcentre staff and Work Programme providers to ensure there is real help for those furthest from the labour market;
- a package of specialist support for carers seeking part-time work or a return to full-time work;
- a review of sanctions procedures in Jobcentres, bearing in mind that those with chaotic lives might be more successful in finding a job if they were directed to targeted support with their problems;
- ensuring there are no Jobcentre league tables or targets for sanctions, and introduce a 'yellow card' warning so people are only sanctioned if they deliberately and repeatedly break the rules;
- protecting young people's entitlements, while getting them the help they need to get their first job;
- a 1% cap on the uprating of working-age benefits (other than disability and parental leave benefits) until the budget is balanced in 2017/2018, after which they will rise with inflation once again;
- encouraging landlords to lower their rent by paying them housing benefit directly, with tenants' consent, in return for a fixed reduction;
- a review of the way the shared accommodation rate in local housing allowance is set, and review the broad rental market areas to ensure they fit with realistic travel patterns;
- improve links between jobcentres and Work Programme providers and the local NHS to ensure all those in receipt of health-related benefits are getting the care and support to which they are entitled;
- work with councils to tackle fraud and error in a more coordinated way, in particular on HB;
- withdraw eligibility for the winter fuel payment from pensioners who pay tax at the higher rate (40%);
- conduct a review of the WCA and personal independence payment assessments to ensure they are fair, accurate and timely and evaluate the merits of a public sector provider;
- invest to clear any backlog in assessments for DLA and personal independence payment;
- simplify and streamline back-to-work support for people with disabilities, mental or physical health;
- raise awareness of, and seek to expand, Access to Work;
- reform the bedroom tax so that existing social tenants will not be subject to any housing benefit reduction until they have been offered reasonable alternative accommodation; tenants who need an extra bedroom for genuine medical reasons are entitled to one; and those whose homes are substantially adapted do not have their benefit reduced;
- continue the introduction of a simpler single-tier pension;
- legislate for a state pension 'triple lock', increasing it each year by the highest of earnings, prices or 2.5%;
- introduce an annual carer's bonus of £250 for carers looking after someone for 35 hrs/wk or more;
- work to raise the amount you can earn before losing carer's allowance from £110 to £150 a week; and
- consult on introducing 5 days' paid additional leave a year for carer's allowance claimants.

<http://www.libdems.org.uk/manifesto>

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Plaid Cymru

Pledges include -

- scrapping the bedroom tax;
- not implementing the universal credit system until a fully independent and comprehensive review is carried out;
- if universal credit is introduced, paying it weekly, rather than monthly, direct to individuals, rather than households, without requirement for internet access or IT skills;
- changes to the 'tax rates' for universal credit that act as a barrier to work;
- preparations for the further devolution of welfare, by developing a Welsh employment and benefits system that supports individuals to find suitable jobs, involving disabled people and groups that represent the interests of disabled people in designing and developing such a system;
- work to remove the need for food banks, whilst supporting the good that they carry out in the face of economic pressures placed upon people from government;
- ensuring an independent review on the use of benefit sanctions to ensure a humane and effective social security system;
- proposals for a Welsh Jobcentre Plus system, putting the focus upon helping people into work rather than punishing them for disadvantages that they face;
- tackling child poverty through better-paid and full-time work rather than people 'simply finding a job';
- an investigation as to how tax credits can be better used to reduce child poverty;
- ensuring that the new single-tier pension is a Living Pension for all, set at least at the rate of pension credit, and support moves to allow early access to pensions;
- ensuring that winter fuel allowance is paid to off-grid households during the summer so that they can get better value for money;
- ensuring that cold-winter payments are based on accurate local temperatures;
- starting a new 'Claim It' campaign so that everybody entitled to their benefits claims them, working alongside Citizens Advice Bureaux, local authorities and the third sector to promote it; and
- increasing the Upper Earnings Limit on National Insurance Contributions to £100,000 per year.

<http://www.partyof.wales/2015-manifesto>

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Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP)

Pledges include –

- to vote for the immediate abolition of the bedroom tax;
- an urgent review of the conditionality and sanctions regime;
- opposition to further cuts to child benefit and tax credits;
- to vote to increase benefits at least in line with CPI inflation;
- to block plans to cut disability living allowance;
- support for an increase in carer's allowance so that it matches jobseeker's allowance;
- a single-tier pension of £160;
- to continue the state pension triple lock of a rise by inflation, earning or 2.5%, whichever is the higher;
- to vote to protect the winter fuel allowance;
- to oppose the abolition of savings credit; and
- a review of plans to raise the state pension age beyond 66.

[http://www.snp.org/sites/default/files/page/file/
04_16d_snp_election_manifesto_290x](http://www.snp.org/sites/default/files/page/file/04_16d_snp_election_manifesto_290x)

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Sinn Fein

Pledges include –

- to fully implement the welfare protection in the Stormont House agreement;
- continue to oppose austerity and protect core public services, including welfare;
- seek the establishment of a Poverty Commission;
- work to ensure pension credits are paid automatically; and
- promotion of a pilot scheme to ensure maximum take-up of benefit entitlement for parents of children with disabilities and for adults with complex needs.

http://www.sinnfein.ie/files/2015/Westminster_Manifesto_2015_web.pdf

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Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

Pledges include -

- continuing to campaign for the immediate restoration of the earnings link for the state pension;
- fighting for the winter fuel payment to be increased to £500;
- a call for 'specific support' for older and disabled jobseekers;
- 'automatic payment' of benefits;
- continuing to press OFMDFM to deliver on the Executive's anti-poverty commitments and for Northern Ireland specific child poverty targets; and
- opposition to any future cuts that attack the unemployed, the sick and disabled and hard-pressed families.

http://www.sdlp.ie/site/assets/files/42192/westminster_manifesto.pdf

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UKIP

Pledges include -

- a lower cap on benefits;
- a 'crack down' on benefit fraud;
- an end to 'welfare tourism' with a five-year ban on benefits for migrants;
- stopping child benefit being paid to children who don't live in the UK;
- limiting child benefit to two children for new claimants;
- scrapping the bedroom tax;
- continuing to pay housing benefit to young people under 25;
- giving tenants the right to have housing benefit paid direct to the their landlords, whatever benefit scheme they are on;
- ending ATOS-style work capability assessments and return assessments to GPs or appropriate specialist consultants;
- requiring GPs/specialists to notify the DWP when they believe a patient is well enough to return to work
- removing 'tick-box' and quota arrangements from sickness and disability assessments;
- increasing carer's allowance from £62.10 per week to the level of JSA - £73.10 per week;
- improving carers' access to support by sharing information on benefit and social care entitlements and support groups across all public services; and
- training and funding the cost of 800 advisers to work in 800 food banks.

<http://www.ukip.org/manifesto2015>

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Ulster Unionist Party

Pledges include –

- ensure work pays in order to break the cycle of welfare dependency; and
- introduce a statutory duty on Departments to work towards eliminating child poverty;

[http://uup.org/assets/images/
uup%20ge%20manifesto.pdf](http://uup.org/assets/images/uup%20ge%20manifesto.pdf)