

## **ELECTION 2010: UKDPC manifesto is call for action on rights**

The UK's leading disabled people's organisation has issued an election-time call for disabled people to challenge would-be MPs over the issues the political parties are ignoring.

In a manifesto that focuses on the continuing fight for disabled people's rights, the UK Disabled People's Council (UKDPC) says there has been progress over the last two decades with some "good policies and laws".

But it says that poor implementation and enforcement mean the reality of disabled people's lives is still one of "inequality, poverty, isolation, abuse and individual and institutional discrimination".

The document includes key areas ignored by political parties in their general election manifestos, such as the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the need for government to recognise the importance of strong, representative disabled people's organisations (DPOs).

Jaspal Dhani, UKDPC's chief executive, said the manifesto recognised there had been positive policies around disability discrimination, education, independent living and personalisation.

But he said that in too many areas – such as support for disabled pupils to attend mainstream schools, healthcare, and the failure to recognise disability hate crime and take it into account in sentencing – implementation and enforcement of policies have been missing.

The manifesto will be sent to political parties, but Dhani said UKDPC also hoped that DPOs would use it to challenge parliamentary candidates in the run-up to the general election.

The manifesto calls for disability to be higher up the political agenda, with the minister for disabled people again becoming a minister of state.

Dhani said disability was “still the poor relation” when compared with race, gender and sexuality, while the minister for disabled people “does not have a great deal of influence”.

He said a report by the UN high commissioner for human rights made it clear that government bodies such as the Office for Disability Issues should sit at the heart of government.

The UKDPC manifesto calls on the government to withdraw the “reservations” it made in signing up to the UN convention, and to “fully support” the involvement of DPOs in monitoring how the convention is implemented in the UK.

The manifesto also calls for the importance of DPOs to be recognized and for them to be financially supported.

Dhani warned that many councils were now withdrawing funding from DPOs to set up new “user-led organisations” (ULOs), which often include older people and carers, in order to meet the government’s target of a ULO in every area by 2010.

He said the government’s intention had been to strengthen the disability sector, but the more “generic” interpretation in many areas was “destroying the disability movement” and was becoming “a real threat to disabled people’s voice”.

The manifesto also accuses the criminal justice system of failing to treat disabled people as “full human beings” with the same rights – including the right to life – as non-disabled people.

Dhani pointed to the “stereotypes and prejudices” around the assisted suicide debate, which mean disabled people’s lives are often “not seen as worth living”.

The manifesto also says that no disabled person should be forced into residential care without their consent, and calls for a national system of assessments of need and “appropriately funded” support.

Dhani said there was still a greater chance of a disabled person ending up in residential care than receiving support services to live in the community.

There is also a call for a new criminal offence of disability hate crime, to be accorded the “same level of weight” as existing laws on race hate crime.

And there is strong backing for disabled children to receive the necessary support for independent living, their communication needs and inclusive education.

Dhani said UKDPC opposed the Conservative manifesto’s pledge for a “moratorium on the ideologically-driven closure of special schools”, and he called on the government to continue closing and not opening new special schools.

He said: “Education is not just about the accumulation of qualifications. It is about valuing people and people growing up together.”

**15 April 2010**

### **Dementia report draws positive conclusions on life quality**

People with severe dementia can be enabled to express views about what is important in their lives, according to new research.

The research by the Mental Health Foundation for Alzheimer’s Society also concluded that maintaining a good quality of life was “perfectly possible” following a diagnosis of dementia.

And it found a “discrepancy” between the views of people with dementia and those caring for them on what was most important to their quality of life.

Separate research for Alzheimer’s Society found only 13 per cent of the general public believe that someone with dementia could have a good quality of life at all stages of their condition.

New figures suggest there are 750,000 people living with dementia in the UK.

Those researching the My Name Is Not Dementia report talked to 44 people with dementia, including those from black and minority ethnic communities and people with more severe dementia living in care homes.

The project aimed to improve the measurement of quality of life for people with dementia, drawing directly on their own views and experiences.

It found that the top five indicators of a good quality of life were: relationships, or someone to talk to; the environment; physical health; a sense of humour; and independence.

The report concludes that people with dementia have “a clear need for regular, everyday, one to one social interaction and this will have significant benefit to their quality of life and social inclusion”.

And it found that people with more severe dementia can express their views about quality of life issues using picture cards.

The report says a way should be found to monitor the quality of life for people with dementia, measuring whether it is improving or declining and providing information on the factors that might explain any changes.

Such monitoring would “provide vital information” on the success of public policies, such as the implementation of the national dementia strategy for England.

Ruth Sutherland, acting chief executive of Alzheimer’s Society, said: “By listening to people living with the condition, as this report does, we can better understand what is important to them and how they would like to live their lives. We need to learn to see the person not just the dementia.”

Heather Roberts, 54, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease four years ago, said: “Being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease certainly changed my life but that doesn’t mean I don’t have a good quality of life.

“Yes I have dementia but there is much more to my life than that.”

**15 April 2010**

**Disabled people face barriers in enforcing access rights**

A new report has called for major changes to make it easier for disabled people to enforce their rights to access goods and services.

The Rights and Reality report by Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) says improving access is a “vital step” towards achieving equality for disabled people, while poor access is a “key contributing factor” to disability poverty.

The report says the “major block” to change is the difficulty disabled people face in enforcing their rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and challenging discrimination.

Two in five of those questioned in a survey of nearly 1,100 disabled people had experienced problems accessing goods and services in the last year.

But one in five had never heard of the DDA, while another 51 per cent knew little or nothing about it

The survey also found that more than a quarter of disabled people who had experienced difficulty accessing goods and services had taken action to challenge it, such as a formal complaint or not returning to a shop. But only one per cent had taken legal action.

And less than a tenth of those who took action said the organisation had made any improvements.

Among the report’s recommendations, it calls for a review of the effectiveness of the law and work to raise awareness of disabled people’s legal rights.

It says the government, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and other bodies should examine how to improve support for disabled people to take legal cases.

It also calls for a pilot scheme to test out a new system – possibly a form of arbitration hearings – that would be midway between making a complaint to a service provider and taking them to court.

And the report says that the development of the rules and regulations to accompany the new Equality Act – which will replace the DDA – provides an opportunity to tackle some of the problems.

But it also calls on the government to consider setting up equality tribunals to hear legal cases on accessibility.

Guy Parckar, public policy manager for LCD, said that inaccessible goods and services “can contribute directly to the chances of a disabled person living in poverty through barriers to employment, education and other opportunities”.

He added: “Our report demonstrates that only a tiny minority are tackling the issue through legal action.

“The new Equality Act is a golden opportunity to make sure that the law works better for disabled people.”

**14 April 2010**

### **FA to expand opportunities for disabled footballers**

The governing body of English football has published plans to create hundreds of new disability football teams over the next two years.

The proposals are part of the FA’s new disability football strategy for 2010-2012, which it published this week.

The strategy says the FA will set up 140 new male and 150 new female disability teams by 2012, to add to the existing 400 male and 26 female teams.

And there should be 34 new disability county leagues by 2012, on top of the existing 14.

The FA will also develop a network of full-time county disability football officers to develop disability football, increase participation, raise coaching and playing standards, and develop local clubs and competitions.

And it will train 50 new disabled referees over two years, and ensure that 10 per cent of young people selected for an FA young coaches programme are disabled, while all “skill tests” for five to 11-year-olds will be “inclusive”.

The strategy also pledges that the FA will continue to support six elite national disability football squads: for players who are amputees, Deaf, blind, partially-sighted, have cerebral palsy and have learning difficulties.

The FA's goal is for each team to be ranked in the top four in Europe.

Lord Triesman, the FA's chairman, said: "Disabled sport needs to be in a position to reap the maximum benefits from the exposure that it will receive from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

"This strategy aims to put disability football into such a position."

The strategy was launched at the draw for the IBSA Blind World Football Championships, which will take place at the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford from 14-22 August.

**14 April 2010**

### **Police investigated after officer uses Taser on man with epilepsy**

Campaigners have expressed serious concerns after it emerged that a police officer used a 50,000 volt "Taser" stun-gun on a man who had just had an epileptic seizure.

Officers from Greater Manchester Police (GMP) are now facing an investigation by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).

Paramedics who were called to the Powerleague gym in Manchester last November were reportedly hit and bitten accidentally as they tried to assist the 40-year-old man.

When police officers arrived, one of them used his Taser on the man, who was also physically "restrained".

The IPCC said the incident – from the man's "collapse" to his transfer to hospital – lasted about an hour, and he spent two weeks recovering in hospital.

He lodged an official complaint with GMP, alleging that the officers were negligent and used excessive and unnecessary force.

His complaint was referred to the IPCC, which this week announced an investigation.

IPCC commissioner Naseem Malik said: "This man suffered an epileptic seizure and it is clear paramedics were struggling to treat him due to the violence of that seizure.

"Our investigation will be thorough and examine the appropriateness of the actions taken by the police officers who attended to assist the paramedics."

Monica Cooper, epilepsy services manager for the charity Epilepsy Action, said: "We are disturbed that the police used a Taser on a person who was clearly in, or recovering from, a medical emergency.

"A Taser should not be used on a person who is having, or has recently had, a seizure.

"During a seizure, and for a period of time afterwards, the person may not be fully aware of their surroundings or what is happening, and they may be confused.

"Police officers should be trained to recognise that seizure activity can be mistaken for violent or inappropriate behaviour."

The charity said it hoped the IPCC would recommend a review of training for police on dealing with seizures.

Peter Boatman, director of Protect Systems, which distributes Tasers in the UK, said police officers are "not told that they cannot use Tasers on someone who has epilepsy", but added: "Epilepsy is one of the areas where they are saying they need more research."

Superintendent Mike Freeman, of GMP, said: "Officers were called to this incident because the 40-year-old man in question was suffering a seizure and posing an immediate threat to the safety of himself and others and had assaulted a number of paramedics.

“As an IPPC investigation is underway it would be inappropriate for us to comment further.”

**14 April 2010**

### **ELECTION 2010: Green Party manifesto**

The Green Party has pledged to legalise assisted suicide, the most controversial of several policies around disability in its general election manifesto.

The party said it would “provide the right to an assisted death within a rigorous framework of regulation”, although it said it would also provide “the highest level of palliative care”.

The party’s manifesto includes a number of pledges around discrimination, with promises to ensure “effective action” is taken to prevent discrimination against disabled people, oppose discrimination in the workplace and “work towards ending stigma against people with mental health problems, including discrimination in employment”.

A Green government would provide cheaper local transport – accessible to disabled people – by investing in buses and subsidising some routes.

On welfare, it says it would repeal Labour’s “oppressive” Welfare Reform Act, and cancel Department for Work and Pensions contracts with private sector providers that assess benefit entitlements.

This is believed to refer to Atos Healthcare, the company that carries out medical assessments of people who apply for disability benefits, but no-one from the party was available to comment.

The manifesto pledges to provide free social care to older people, although it is not clear whether this would also extend to disabled adults of working age. It also promises to “heal the rift” between adults’ and children’s social services.

In education, a Green government would provide training for school staff “on all diversity and inclusion issues”, with schools to promote equal opportunities

in their anti-bullying procedures and “equality issues to be monitored in teaching recruitment”.

And it would campaign for crimes against disabled people – and homophobic and transphobic crime – to be “dealt with effectively and on a par with racist crimes”, with all police forces to appoint equality and diversity liaison officers to tackle, and take preventive action on, crimes against disabled people and other minorities.

It would also exempt disabled people from new laws it would introduce requiring parking charges for private car parks and banning new private retail parking in large developments.

**Green manifesto length: 48 pages**

**Mentions of the words “disabled”, “disability” and “disabilities”: 10**

**15 April 2010**

### **ELECTION 2010: Plaid Cymru manifesto**

The Welsh nationalist party has pledged in its manifesto to continue its commitment to free care for disabled and older people.

Plaid Cymru says the UK government should transfer the necessary powers to the Welsh national assembly so that it can implement the policy.

The party also pledges to campaign to “abolish the distinction between nursing and personal care”.

The manifesto says Plaid Cymru is opposed to the Welfare Reform Act introduced last year by the Labour government because it “threatens benefit sanctions for those unable to meet unfair and unrealistic government demands”.

The manifesto also includes opposition to the use of “punitive sanctions” for people with severe mental health conditions who claim incapacity benefit and fail to meet certain conditions, and says unemployed people “must be

supported into work, consistent with their abilities, capacity and their individual circumstances”.

It also calls for all powers over mental health to be devolved from Westminster to the Welsh national assembly, while pupils with special educational needs should have access to education in the Welsh language.

**Plaid Cymru manifesto length: 34 pages**

**Mentions of the words “disabled”, “disability” and “disabilities”: 1**

**14 April 2010**

### **ELECTION 2010: UKIP manifesto**

The UK Independence Party (UKIP) will be campaigning at the general election on policies that aim to turn back the clock on inclusion.

UKIP’s manifesto says the party supports “congregate” communities, believed to refer to village communities, in which people with learning difficulties live in large, segregated settings run by charities.

The manifesto also says that both “community care” and the policy of inclusion in education should be “re-examined”, with support for special schools for children with learning difficulties.

No-one from the party was available to provide further details about these policies.

UKIP’s manifesto also calls for the “misconceived” Human Rights Act to be repealed, while key benefits such as incapacity benefit and jobseeker’s allowance would be replaced by a single, flat rate “basic cash benefit”, set at the same weekly level as jobseeker’s allowance.

**UKIP manifesto length: 16 pages**

**Mentions of the words “disabled”, “disability” and “disabilities” in the UKIP manifesto: 2**

**14 April 2010**

### **ELECTION 2010: Liberal Democrat manifesto**

The Liberal Democrat general election manifesto includes disability policies across employment, education, social care and health.

The manifesto says there is more to do to tackle workplace discrimination, and that there are far too many barriers to work for disabled people.

It promises to extend the statutory right to request flexible working – currently only open to parents and carers – to all employees.

And it says a Liberal Democrat government would improve the support provided for disabled job-seekers, and reform the access to work scheme, so that disabled people could secure funding for workplace adjustments before they applied for a job.

In education, the party would guarantee special educational needs (SEN) “diagnostic assessments” for all five-year-olds, improve SEN provision and improve SEN training for teachers.

It would also introduce better recording of hate crimes against disabled people and other minorities.

And it would extend winter fuel payments to all severely disabled people, a long-standing demand of several disability organisations.

In social care, the party says it would “integrate health and social care to create a seamless service, ending bureaucratic barriers and saving money to allow people to stay in their homes for longer rather than going into hospital or long-term residential care”.

It would also scrap Labour’s “flawed” personal care at home act – which will provide free personal care at home to disabled and older people with the highest needs – and use the money to provide a week’s “respite” a year for carers who spend at least 50 hours a week looking after a relative.

The manifesto says a Liberal Democrat government would “immediately” establish an independent commission to develop “sustainable” proposals for long-term care that would attract all-party support, with any solution based on “fairness, affordability and sustainability”.

It would also improve access to cognitive and behavioural therapies for people with mental health conditions.

The manifesto says it is “deeply disappointing” that the government has failed to provide “adequate support” for people with haemophilia who were infected with hepatitis C and HIV through receiving contaminated NHS blood and blood products in the 1970s and 1980s. It says a Liberal Democrat government would set up a working group, involving service-users, to “determine appropriate levels of financial assistance”.

The manifesto also promises to move offenders with mental health conditions from prison into “more appropriate secure accommodation”.

**Manifesto length: 109 pages**

**Mentions of the words “disabled”, “disability” and “disabilities”: 6**

**14 April 2010**

### **ELECTION 2010: Conservative manifesto**

The Conservative Party’s disability policies focus strongly on welfare reform, as well as education, health and social care.

The party’s election manifesto includes its plans to scrap the government’s employment schemes, such as pathways to work, and replace them with a single jobs programme.

It says a Conservative government would reassess the remaining 1.5 million recipients of incapacity benefit (IB), and offer “targeted, personalised” support sooner than a Labour government.

Mark Harper, the shadow minister for disabled people, said last autumn that everyone on IB or the new employment and support allowance would be offered this support “straight away”.

Anyone on jobseeker’s allowance who refuses to join the new work programme will lose the right to claim out-of-work benefits until they do, while those refusing reasonable job offers could forfeit their benefits for three years.

The manifesto repeats the party’s support for segregated education, with a “moratorium on the ideologically-driven closure of special schools”, and a pledge to “end the bias towards the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools”.

But the manifesto promises to set up a £1 million fund to help disabled people with the extra costs of becoming MPs or other elected representatives.

A Conservative government would also cut government contributions to child trust funds, except for families with disabled children and the poorest third of families.

The manifesto also pledges to introduce single budgets – combining health and social care funding – for people with long-term conditions.

And it includes plans to allow anyone to “protect their home from being sold to fund residential care costs” by paying a one-off insurance premium of about £8,000, and to “top up” this premium to cover the costs of personal care in their own home.

Although the manifesto pledges to help disabled people live independently, there is no explicit mention of care and support for working age disabled adults, although the party promises to maintain disability living allowance and attendance allowance.

It also promises greater access to “talking therapies” for people with mental health conditions, while a key focus of overseas aid would be access to clean water, sanitation, healthcare and education, particularly for disabled people, women and children.

**Manifesto length: 120 pages**

## **Mentions of the words “disabled”, “disability” and “disabilities”: 6**

**13 April 2010**

### **ELECTION 2010: Labour manifesto**

Labour appears to have used its plans for a National Care Service as the focus for its bid for the votes of disabled people.

The election manifesto contains a lengthy section on the care and support reforms announced by health secretary Andy Burnham last month.

The manifesto pledges to remove “unfair postcode lotteries”, see more people receive care at home, and to provide “independence and control for everyone with a care need” through continued expansion of individual budgets.

The manifesto also pledges to help more disabled people into work through its “tough-but-fair” work capability assessment (WCA), which has been heavily criticised by campaigners.

It will also put the remaining 1.5 million people on incapacity benefit through the WCA by 2014.

The manifesto adds: “We will seek to ensure that disabled people are able to lead dignified and independent lives, free of discrimination and with the support to which they are entitled.”

The manifesto also says that the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the new Equality Act “will ensure that people are not held back at work because of their gender, age, disability, race and religious or sexual orientation”, while enforcement of the act will promote fairness “across our society”.

The manifesto pledges to protect Labour’s child trust funds, introduced in 2005, and the additional £100 a year given to disabled children.

It also repeats measures announced by schools secretary Ed Balls to improve the special educational needs (SEN) system, and promises to hold schools to account for how well they meet the high expectations for children with SEN.

The measures include expanding the number of specialist dyslexia teachers, improving teacher training for children with autism and improving the statementing process.

The manifesto says Labour is “determined to narrow the gap” between disabled children – as well as those with SEN, in care or on low incomes – and their peers, and will “continue to invest in specialist services”.

And it pledges more than 8,000 new therapists to ensure access to psychological therapy for all those with mental health conditions who need it, and promises to “seek to change our society’s attitudes to mental illness”.

The manifesto also says that everyone with a long-term condition will have the right to their own care plan and an individual budget.

A Labour spokesman said the party would “set out detailed proposals” on individual budgets for those with long-term conditions later this year, but the commitment would “give people with long-term conditions more say and control over how their NHS and care money is spent and on what”.

The manifesto also repeats Labour’s pledge to reduce the number of people with mental health conditions in prison, while it says a Labour government would continue to work with the charity Combat Stress to improve mental health services for veterans.

**Manifesto length: 76 pages**

**Mentions of the words “disabled”, “disability” and “disabilities”: 12**

**13 April 2010**

**News provided by John Pring at [www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)**