

# Election analysis

## What does the new government mean for health and care?

**Just seven weeks after the announcement of a UK general election, a whirlwind election campaign has resulted in a hung parliament. A new Conservative government will now be reliant on the support of the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland. The election outcome will have a big impact on the current policy agenda and on public services in this parliament. This briefing is an initial assessment of the main takeaways for the NHS and the wider health and care system. It identifies areas of alignment and disagreement between the two parties and the NHS Confederation's priorities for the new government.**

### Consensus is the only way to govern

The Conservative Party is the party of government, yet it will be unable to implement its policy agenda without support elsewhere. There is strong agreement on parity of esteem and on closing the mental health gap within society. The Conservatives pledged to increase mental health spending and improve treatment services, a move the NHS Confederation called on political parties to commit to and one that would seem to have cross-party support.

The Conservatives are committed to transformation delivered through sustainability and transformation partnerships (STPs). This would appear to link well with similar commitments by the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to transform the health system in Northern Ireland, as described in the *Bengoa* report. Other areas of alignment are more difficult to identify.

### Additional NHS funding is not certain

The Conservatives have pledged to increase NHS funding in England, estimated by the Institute of Fiscal Studies to increase real spending from 0.7 per cent to 1.3 per cent a year on average by 2020. These plans may depend on the ability to deliver other commitments, for example removing the pensions triple lock and means-testing winter fuel payments.

The DUP called for a dedicated transformation fund in Northern Ireland to support reform. This aligns with the NHS Confederation's pre-election proposal for a £2 billion fund in England for each of the next two years to support change. The DUP has also called for key decisions on the NHS to be 'free from party politics', which would be enhanced by the NHS Confederation's call for an Office for Budget Responsibility for Health to provide objective assessments of needs and resources.

## Social care plans are in disarray

All parties agree on the urgent need to make the social care system sustainable. The Conservatives proposed a radical plan to raise the threshold for means-tested support and to include property values in this assessment. This attracted public concern and it is uncertain whether the party will want to implement change.

The Conservatives have committed to implementing a social care costs cap and suggested they would look to consult on this immediately. A cap is supported across the political parties and the NHS Confederation has asked for immediate implementation, building on much-needed consensus on the issue.

## Brexit negotiations are going ahead

The government has indicated there will be no delay in the UK-EU negotiations on agreeing the terms for Brexit. Many issues need to be addressed early, but it is uncertain if issues of importance to the health and care system will be prioritised.

The Conservatives, along with the other parties, have promised to guarantee the status of EU staff in the NHS and it is important for this to be secured immediately, as asked for by the NHS Confederation. Few other health and care issues are expected to be covered in the initial discussions.

## NHS Confederation viewpoint

This will be a challenging political period, but we cannot lose any ground on delivering transformation in health and care. Many of our asks of the new government are still achievable and we will continue to make the case for action in this parliament.

To find out more, visit [www.nhsconfed.org/election](http://www.nhsconfed.org/election) and download *Securing a sustainable health and care system: Priorities for the next government*.

### About us

The NHS Confederation is the only membership body that brings together and speaks on behalf of all organisations that plan, commission and provide NHS services.

For more information, visit [www.nhsconfed.org](http://www.nhsconfed.org)