

CSP General Election briefing 12 May 2015

Contrary to predictions of a tightly contested election and possible hung parliament the Conservatives have won an overall majority. As predicted the SNP did very well in Scotland winning 56 seats, Liberal Democrats have lost most of their seats while UKIP and Greens held onto 1 seat each. The success of the SNP in Scotland will likely have implications on future devolution, including within England.

Although they only won one seat UKIP got over 12 per cent of the vote, behind Conservative (37 per cent) and Labour (30 per cent).

Although this is a UK-wide vote, decisions on health in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are devolved and will be less impacted by the outcome. Below is a re-cap of the [Conservative's position](#) on issues relevant to CSP members.

1. Implications for health care policy

- 1.1 The Conservatives will continue with implementation of the Health and Social Care Act which supports a market-based approach and have explicitly backed the NHS England's [Five Year Forward Vision](#) (FYFV).
- 1.2 The Conservatives have pledged to introduce 7 day a week (8am-8pm) GP and hospital services plus a guarantee that everyone over 75 will get a same day appointment 'if they need one', which has considerable implications on the model of primary care and how it can be delivered.
- 1.3 The Conservatives have pledged to continue to integrate health and social care through the Better Care Fund.
- 1.4 Although NHS charges are viewed as politically unacceptable with voters, anecdotally civil servants have said that the Conservatives (and MPs from other parties) privately talk about charges being introduced in the NHS in the future.
- 1.5 Related to this, there are implications yet to be worked out for integrating a system that is free (NHS) with a system that is charge means-tested (social care).
- 1.6 Jeremy Hunt has been reappointed as Minister for Health and has said that he wants to stay on until 2017.

2. Funding health and social care

- 2.1 The FYFV predicts a £30bn funding gap by 2020. To meet this NHS England plans to save £22bn through improved efficiency and needs and extra £8bn (28 per cent of the total budget) funding each year above inflation to make up the remaining shortfall.

- 2.2 The Conservatives have pledged to reach £8bn per year increase in spending above inflation by 2020 and said this will be paid for by reallocating NHS under spend and proceeds of predicted economic growth.
- 2.3 Adult social care spending has fallen 26 per cent since 2010 and the projected shortfall by 2020 is £4.3bn (29 per cent of the total budget), with significant implications for social care services (and for the integration agenda). The Conservatives have pledged to cut the local government budget by 33 per cent, within the planned reductions in public spending of £30 billion by 2019/20.

3. Pay, pensions and rights at work

- 3.1 NHS pay has been capped. Over the past five years CSP members have seen a pay cut of between 8-12 per cent in real terms.
- 3.2 The Conservatives are committed to the Pay Review Body (PRB) process going forward. After previously rejecting the recommendation by the PRB for 2014/15 they did not give a remit for the PRB to recommend a pay award in 2015/16 promising a 1 per cent rise instead. In 2014/15 staff got a 1 per cent unconsolidated rise and in 2015/16 the award was a 1 per cent consolidated uplift for the majority of staff, apart from the higher bands who did not get a rise and saw their increments frozen and the lowest bands who got an extra £200. The Conservatives have set in motion a review of the PRB. Conservative policy is also to reduce or abolish unsocial hours payments for NHS staff. These changes affect members in England - information on pay in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is [available online](#).
- 3.3 Conservatives will seek to further curtail time off for trade union duties, continue charging for employment tribunals and toughen anti-union laws. They want Industrial action in essential services (health, education, fire and transport) to require at least 40 per cent of all those entitled to take part in the ballot and a majority of those who turn out to vote, and to repeal restrictions banning employers from hiring agency staff to provide cover during strikes.
- 3.4 The Conservative government will be looking to introduce more welfare reform and cap overall welfare spending per household. A leaked document drawn up by civil servants in the DWP proposed a number of reforms. Proposals included stricter 'fit for work tests' and/or limits on eligibility for health benefits, excluding those under 25 from incapacity and housing benefits, and a proposal to abolish statutory maternity pay.

4. Working with the other parties

- 4.1 Although the Conservatives have won a majority they will need to keep a close eye on their own backbenches and may need to work with some of the smaller parties on a case by case basis to get support.
- 4.2 Liberal Democrats had previously stated they were willing to form a coalition with either Conservative or Labour. Even though they only have 8 seats this will give them space to vote on a case by case basis. Labour, SNP, Greens and Plaid Cymru are expected to be unsupportive of Conservative policies.

5. Implications for CSP stakeholder engagement and influencing activity

- 5.1 With an overall majority the Conservatives will push ahead with the agenda outlined in their manifesto including the FYFV and ongoing implementation of the Health and Social Care Act. They will also move forward with devolution in Greater Manchester.
- 5.2 The formation of a government should now proceed smoothly. This situation means that CSPs stakeholder engagement with parliamentarians and officials can begin without delay. The CSP will need to maintain positive engagement with both Labour and the Conservatives, but the latter will have priority.
- 5.3 The number of SNP seats in Westminster has implications for CSP engagement with the SNP in relation to Westminster as well as the Scottish Government and Holyrood.
- 5.4 There are still growing opportunities for the CSP to engage with MPs as key local stakeholders, with the trend of MPs focussing on maintaining and improving their local profile and their direct relationship with constituents.
- 5.5 The CSP has a strategic orientation towards the policy goals of FYFV, in deepening the political consensus around this and positioning the profession as leaders in delivering this change.
- 5.6 Key issues likely to come up on the horizon for the CSP will include changes to primary care, funding and charges, integration, devolution and rights at work including pay (including the possibility of regional pay coming back onto the agenda), statutory rights at work and trade union activities. There may be some areas where it is in the interests of the CSP to work as part of alliances with others.