



 **MANIFESTO**
General Election 2024

A decorative graphic consisting of a grey curved line that starts under the word "MANIFESTO" and ends under "General Election 2024". Below this line is a grey spiral-bound notebook with a yellow star to its right. Another yellow star is located below the notebook, and a grey star is positioned further down and to the right.



1. LAUNCH A FOSTER CARER RECRUITMENT PLAN

We ask that all UK governments commit to a comprehensive and long-term foster carer recruitment campaign. This should include a headline initiative to recruit and retain foster carers, such as forgiving Council Tax for all registered foster carers.

2. CARE EXPERIENCE TO BECOME A PROTECTED CHARACTERISTIC

We believe that Care Experience should be made a protected characteristic. Having decisions made by a system, instead of a person or group, can have a lifelong impact. We, therefore, ask that Care Experience is made a protected characteristic.

3. EXTEND THE VOTING AGE TO 16

We welcome the commitment of some parties to extend the right to vote to 16 and 17-year-olds. It's important that those whose life chances are partially dependent on choices about education, youth service, children's social care, and funding and policy, are given a chance to vote for those making the decisions. Our care experienced community ask that this development is accompanied by schools teaching civics at ages 14-16, and holding mock elections in school, so that young people can understand our political system and the importance of voting.

4. ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION INTO ADULthood

Foster Care is intended to provide family life. The average age that children leave home in the UK is twenty-five and children in Foster Care are likely to be more vulnerable, therefore, there should be no set age at which they move out. Aligned to this, Staying Put/When I'm Ready/ Continuing Care, should be fully funded, with weekly fees/ allowances on par with those paid for sixteen to eighteen years olds, and with no reliance on benefits. In addition, too many young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) face a cliff edge. The existing challenges faced by disabled children leaving care are exacerbated by an underfunded/ under resourced, and inadequate system of transition support.

5. FOCUS ON BUILDING LIFELONG LINKS WITH BIRTH FAMILIES

Building on the excellent work of the Family Rights Group and North Yorkshire Council, we need to focus on lifelong links for children with their birth family. We must support foster and birth families to manage this by delegating authority to them and encouraging them to organise and manage family time together, offering skilled support to overcome any issues.

6. INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS THAT MATTER

Building on point five, we need to use limited resources to invest in the relationships that matter to children and are likely to last into adulthood. The majority of children in care do not have access to long term relationships with their social worker or special advisors, which will carry through to adult life. We should, therefore, look at the need for these roles and, instead, invest in the relationships that will last into adult life.

7. IMPLEMENT THE REVIEWS INTO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

We ask that the UK government implement the reviews into children's social care they commissioned, and that they do this fully and with the necessary funding. There is no saving to be made by not doing this, as more money will be spent on remedial services later, if we do not invest in our children and young people.

8. REMOVE PROFIT FROM CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The profiteering from children's social care, whilst children's needs go unmet, is obscene. We call on all UK governments to legislate that only the State and registered charities may provide children's social care. This is the only way of ensuring that the profiteering does not continue.

CONCLUSION

We will be part of a group of sector providers who will join with experts by experience, local authorities, regulators and academics, to look at changing the care system's language, practice and culture. There is much to do that central government cannot do for us, so we must act. If government can fulfil the asks in our manifesto, and if the sector changes how we enact the care system, then we will achieve the transformative change care experienced children, young people and adults so desperately need.





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A simple line-art illustration of a spiral-bound notepad with a few lines of text on the page, positioned below the main title.

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