It is deeply depressing that the leaders of both main parties plan to steer clear of any fresh statements of intent on the crisis adult social care in their respective election pitches. Neither want to walk into the trap that caught Theresa May or repeat the hollow pledge of a generational plan that Boris Johnson made.

By contrast, the Liberal Democrats promised to make health and social care its number one priority heading into the election, based on free personal care as in Scotland, a preventative approach and investment in the skills and wages of care workers.

For the Conservatives, the fate of adult social care is wrapped up in their promises for the NHS. They seem to have completely walked away from their earlier, broader ambitions for investment and reform. Announcements, such as they were, focused on speeding up hospital discharges, market sustainability and workforce support.

In Labour circles there seems a real disconnect between what was said, or rather not said, at the podium by senior figures and what still seems to be the understood direction of travel by junior ministers and policy advisers. Central to this are previously announced plans for a National Care Service to parallel the NHS and receive similar esteem.

Scotland is further advanced with its National Care Service with the Bill in its early stages in the Scottish Parliament. While a consensus seems to have been reached between government and councils on shared legal accountability for integrated care services, the detailed proposals on social care have been delayed for further consultation.

Meanwhile the state of social care continues to deteriorate. It is a significant (but not sole) contributor to the eye-watering deficits declared by a growing number of insolvent councils. Skills for Care reported continuing pressures on the workforce with growing rates of turnover and recruitment difficulties. Council leaders query the fairness of a one-word judgment from the CQC assurance process.

The NHS is already predicting this may well be its worst ever winter, buffeted by continuing disputes with doctors and huge waiting lists.

Campaign strategists will be telling their leaders that there are no votes in social care and jeopardy in trying to engage with it. The public’s attention will continue to be drawn to the economy, the costs of welfare, immigration, and crime, with contrasting narratives of fear and hope for change.

Sector leaders continue to gain little traction with the current political priorities but that will change post-election.

A new government will need to return to the social care crisis very quickly. Energy is best directed to presenting a set of proposals that shift the emphasis from crisis to opportunity, from reaction to prevention, and from failure to economic contribution.

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