

Fairness Test for tax rises and spending cuts to tackle deficit

We are writing to you and the other main party leaders to ask for your support for a Fairness Test to ensure that the decisions made in the next parliament on any tax rises or spending cuts necessary to reduce the deficit contribute to greater income equality, rather than worsening it.

The Fairness Test would be:

An inequality impact assessment to ensure that tax rises and spending cuts necessary to cut the deficit do not lead to an increase in inequality of incomes, assets or access to services.

Such a framework could be developed by the Treasury with input from other relevant government departments. It would also allow greater opportunity for scrutiny from independent bodies of how fair deficit reduction policies are, which will help restore trust in government.

[CONSERVATIVES]

Your manifesto describes fighting poverty and inequality as one of the progressive challenges of our age. It commits to “ensuring the whole country shares in rising prosperity.”

[LABOUR]

Your manifesto states that your aim is for a “modern progressive Britain, based on fairness” and that: “By taking hard decisions, being guided at all times by a sense of fairness, we believe that we can continue to advance towards the good society.”

[LIB DEMS]

Your manifesto states: “Our core aim is to hard-wire fairness back into national life. That way we can build a stronger society with growth that lasts, fairness and opportunity for all.”

The National Equality Panel has also warned in its recent major report that: “In the wake of the financial crisis and the recession, Government faces the challenge of rebalancing the public finances. How this is done will probably be the most important influence on how the inequalities both within and between groups evolve.”

We therefore request your swift response to confirm if you will commit to a Fairness Test, so that when voters make their decision on May 6th they will know if your party has a clear commitment to fairness in tackling the deficit.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Signatories:

Shan Nicholas, Director, Child Poverty Action Group

Professors Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, Universities of Nottingham
and York, co-founders of The Equality Trust
Geraldine Blake, CEO, Community Links
Brendan Barber, General Secretary, TUC
Fergus Drake, UK Programmes Director, Save the Children
Martin Narey, Chief Executive, Barnardo's
Malcolm Clark, Director, One Society
Helen Dent, Chief Executive, Family Action
Dr Ute Navidi, Chief Executive, London Play
Fiona Weir, Chief Executive, Gingerbread
Niall Cooper, Chief Executive, Church Action on Poverty