



Open Letter to Party Leaders

Dear Prime Minister, Mr Cameron, and Mr Clegg,

As you will all be well aware, the last possible date for the next general election is Thursday 3 June 2010. It is likely though, that the general election will be combined with local elections, due to be held on 6 May. And it is therefore even more likely that all parties will currently be deep in discussions with Ministers, Cabinet, and Party Members to formalise party manifestos.

There will be much talk of, "Getting the message across" and talk of how, "We can't go on like this" and even more talk of, "Commitments", "Guarantees" and "Pledges". Certainly there is bound to be much deliberation, about which policy or announcement is likely to achieve, "Quick wins", should your Party be elected.

So, whilst you debate these issues, we would like you to consider, that as public health professionals, we deal daily with real life problems, of real life people, let down by real life departments and agencies run by real life politicians from all Parties; and we've heard all the promises and pledges before.

We apologise if this sounds like a 'sound bite', but the current public health model simply does not work. Despite the positive rhetoric, reports and policies of successive governments; the divide in health equalities has continued to grow as confirmed in the report of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (2008).

Although individual lifestyle choices, such as smoking and drinking, play some part in health inequalities. Environmental factors beyond the immediate control of individuals are the single most significant aspect of health inequalities. At Sanctum Consultants we see the daily impact these factors have on the ability of individuals to lead healthy lives. And, even though it may seem like a good idea on paper to devolve more power to local communities or local politicians; for the disenfranchised who do not feel part of or involved in a local community, these proposals will make little or no tangible difference to their lives.

So as you confer and plan your strategies to win power, we would like you to think carefully about the responsibility that such power will bring; and include real life measures to make a real difference, to real life peoples' lives. These include:

- Exclude housing benefit and income support when calculating fuel poverty payments for low income households. Any calculation should be based on the actual disposable income of a household, minus housing costs or other means tested benefits.
- Prohibit energy companies from charging low income households or those on pre payment meters higher tariffs. And require energy companies to produce a social tariff for households in receipt of income support and housing benefit.
- Require water companies to produce a social tariff for households in receipt of income



support and housing benefit.

- Implement a National Food Access strategy to address the issue of healthy, affordable food for all members of society. A central component of such a strategy would include banning all advertising of unhealthy food to children, the reintroduction of free school meals for all school children; whether in state, independent or public schools. And a requirement for all establishments, public or private, which care for children, to provide food in accordance with national nutritional guidelines.
- Require every single landlord, whether private or social, to produce at the beginning of every tenancy a certificate to give to prospective tenants; confirming that the dwelling will provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and any visitors. And is free from Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Amend the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to allow any person aggrieved by a Category 1 Hazard within their dwelling, to apply to the local Magistrates Court for the abatement of the Hazard.
- Require all Licensed premises where a Review (called by a Responsible Authority or Interested Party) has been successful, to make annual Licence applications with full Licence fee's payable. And that all premises Licence conditions apply to all TENs events, to safeguard the amenity of those living and working nearby.
- Stop the postcode lottery for investigating noise complaints. Why is it that a resident who lives in Westminster does not have to 'pre-arrange to have a noise problem' before contacting the Council's 24 service for a visit. When if you live in Manchester, you have to register your noise problem, then wait for the Council to write a letter, before they even consider visiting your home; 3 weeks in the case of Scarborough Council, to assess the noise that keeps the noise sufferer awake until 3am.
- Require anyone carrying out repairs or improvements to private homes, such as builders, decorators, plumbers, double glazing companies etc. to be registered with their local Council and pay an annual registration fee of £50. Local Councils should be required to use the proceeds of the registration fee to keep and maintain a public register (available online) which records the trading name and address of the company or person providing the service, details of any consumer complaints, any prosecutions or County Court judgments against the company, or individual providing services to private homes.

Sanctum Consultants are happy to discuss these ideas for real change, with any political party or politician, who is willing to listen and is *really* committed to making a difference to the real problems in real people's lives.

So we really hope that you will consider our ideas, because whilst they may not give you instant headlines, they will help to deliver chances and opportunities to ordinary people to improve their health and wellbeing and feel that they live in a society that really cares about them.

Yours sincerely,



SANCTUM CONSULTANTS