

# Public services

## *Quality services – public accountability*

**The Green Party believes wholeheartedly in high quality public services that are publicly funded, publicly owned, and publicly accountable.**

**The Green Party opposes privatisation of public services. Not only does the UK have pressure from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), the other main parties all promote privatisation policies such as the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), which undermine public accountability and leave communities with a future bill to pay and no guarantee of quality.**

**Local provision and access to public services such as schools, libraries, hospitals, nurseries, post offices and public transport are essential to maintain thriving communities and a good quality of life for all.**

**The Green Party believes that it remains the responsibility of government to ensure high quality provision, to retain full democratic control over them for the people, and to be held fully accountable to the citizens of the UK.**

**The Green Party believes in:**

- Local accountability under national standards;
- Defending the public service ethos;
- Good quality local services rather than false 'choice';
- Free prescriptions, eye tests and dentistry;
- Mandatory youth services with extra funding;
- Scrapping fees in higher education and also 'foundation' status for local education provision.

**Are you against choice in public services?**

The promotion of a spurious concept of consumer choice between geographically dispersed large-scale public facilities like schools and hospitals is absurd. People can't just shop around for good schools and services; they want them in where they live.

**How will you pay for public services?**

Sources of greater public funding include funds released by making the tax system more progressive, including increasing income tax on the top earners, and where necessary, public borrowing. Taking the railways back into public ownership would reduce costs because there would be no extraction of profits for private companies.

**Will the unions regain an unnecessary amount of power?**

The notion that unions had unnecessary power stopped being relevant in the 1980s. It is no longer possible for the unions to have too much power. It is a pity the same cannot be said of unaccountable private companies to whom the taxpayer hands over millions every year. Unions play a vital role in representing many public sector workers, and the Green Party would

expect them to play a role in the rebuilding of the public services, including the working conditions for the nurses and teachers that any society is dependent upon for health and knowledge.

**What's wrong with PFI if it brings the necessary money into a service?**

In fact the opposite is true. PFI costs the taxpayer more as it costs more for the private sector to borrow money for infrastructure like schools and hospitals. Also PFI schemes give massive profits to private companies with very little accountability to the public, because of 'commercial confidentiality'. The government's own National Audit Office has produced reports that show that PFI costs more.

**How would the Greens improve typical low public sector efficiency without privatisation?**

In fact, the Government's own Offices of Public Service Reform accepts that UK public services are the most efficient in Europe. We would consult users and front line staff over how to improve services.

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