Tory policies a "U-turn in the fight against poverty"
say leading academics

- *Analysis shows Labour strongest in tackling the causes of growing poverty in the UK *

London, *8th June 2017***: An audit of the major political parties' policies contained in their election manifestos by ASAP (Academics Stand Against Poverty UK) has revealed that Conservative Party policies will fail to prevent growing poverty in the UK.**

The audit of the main party manifestos uses a scoring system to assess the likely effectiveness of party policies to reduce poverty. The Conservatives, with a score just 1.5 out of five, were substantially behind Labour and the Liberal Democrats, who both score more than 3.6 and 3.2 respectively.

The key results were:

- Labour scored highest across all policy areas except the Environment and Sustainability, with an overall score of 3.6, compared to 3.2 for the Liberal Democrats and just 1.5 for the Conservatives
- The Liberal Democrats came a close second to Labour, and stand out in comparison to the other parties for their environmental policies
- The Conservatives scored worst in every topic, never scoring higher than 2, indicating low confidence in their policies across the board

Catarina Tully, Co-Chair of ASAP UK, said, *"According to ASAP's audit, Labour's plans are the most transparent and detailed, and most likely to lead to improved quality of life for British society generally. The Conservative Party's manifesto is the vaguest and offers little that is concrete in the way of plans for raising quality of life. Since our last audit prior to the 2015 General Election, the Conservatives have gone backwards, scoring no more than two out of five across all policy areas, whilst the Labour Party has leapfrogged the Liberal Democrats, standing out particularly for their social agenda. The truth is that, all the parties could be doing more to tackle Britain's deep economic sustainability problems: significant current account and trade deficits plus rising household debt. "*

The audit is a detailed analysis of each of the parties' manifesto commitments by experts in a range of policy areas. Each area was rated on a scale of one to five of confidence level in how each party's manifesto addresses poverty and enables a flourishing life for the UK public.

The audit was undertaken by leading academics from 23 universities across the UK to help voters make informed decisions on election day. ASAP believes that recent trends in poverty have become more acute over the last two years suggesting austerity is affecting the most vulnerable in society disproportionately. It also has specific concerns about the quality of information and use of manifestos in the political debates.

Catarina Tully added, *"Never has the need for credible and authoritative analysis been more important. The proliferation of fake news weakens democratic systems, meaning trust in politicians, the media, and even institutions like charities is at an all time low. ASAP UK believes academics and their expertise play a critical*

role in better informing the debate around the election."

-Ends**-**

Notes to editors

The 2017 General Election audit is based on the expertise gained through ASAP's 2015 Election Manifesto Audit (http://ukpovertyaudit.academicsstand.org/2015/).

Headlines for each party

Labour

Of the three parties, our authors have the most confidence in Labour's policies to enable British society to flourish within planetary boundaries, both now and in the future. Overall, Labour scored 3.6 from a possible 5

This marks a significant shift since the 2015 election, when Labour scored just 2.6 and the authors had more confidence in the Liberal Democrats' policies

Labour scored highest, or joint highest, in every topic we looked at except the Environment and Sustainability

Liberal Democrats

The Lib Dems came a reasonably close second overall, with a final score of 3.2, and matched Labour's rating in both Education and Health

The Lib Dems' policies were also judged to be the best performing on the Environment and Sustainability. Our author noted that the Libs Dems were "clearly a step above" both other parties in relation to environmental policy making

The Lib Dems overall score is unchanged since our 2015 audit

Conservatives

The Conservatives scored worst in every topic, never being scored higher than a 2. Overall, they scored just 1.5

This is a similar result to 2015, where they scored just one 3, in Money and Banking (which, unfortunately, we weren't able to cover in 2017)

About Academics Stand Against Poverty

Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP) is an international association focused on helping researchers, students and teachers enhance their impact on poverty. It does so by:

a) advancing **collaboration** among poverty-focused academics, with an emphasis on South-North connections;
b) promoting effective **outreach** to policy makers and broader public audiences, and
c) helping academics pursue **applied research and intervention** projects as well as campaigns on specific issues.

This year we have focused only on the manifestos of the Conservative Party, Labour and the Liberal Democrats. This decision was partly driven by the timings of the release of each manifesto, but we believe it is a useful exercise to compare these three parties in particular. Although the SNP has, and is likely to retain, more seats than the Lib Dems, a combination of the 2015 election results and recent polls show that the Lib Dems are likely to be the third biggest party in terms of vote share.

The audit was co-ordinated by Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP) UK. The contributors, peer reviewers and advisors come from over twenty different universities in the UK. They include Sylvie Lomer, Malcolm Sawyer, Lee Gregory, Adrian Martin, Jason Hickel, Hannah Morgan, Chris Grover, Becky Tunstall, Nadine El-Enany Anthony Goodman, Gaby Atfield, Erika Kispeter, Sally Wright, Peter Dickinson, Juan Baeza, Anand Menon and Marc Stears.

Website: www.UKPovertyAudit.org

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