

2 November 2023

Dear Party Leaders and Party Chairs,

Leadership for honest general election campaigning

I am writing to ask you to publicly pledge that your party will run its campaign for the next general election honestly and transparently so that everyone can make an informed decision when they vote on polling day.

Full Fact is a charity focused on improving the quality of information in public life. We know that bad information damages public debate and erodes public trust. The public shares our concern that the way election campaigns have been run by political parties needs to change. They care deeply when they think parties and candidates are being misleading or dishonest.

To ensure the next general election is as honest and transparent as possible, Full Fact is asking you to publicly pledge your party to campaign honestly and do the following:

1. Make sure the claims you, your party and candidates make are truthful.

Anyone making serious claims in public debate should be prepared to get their facts right, back up what they say with evidence, correct their mistakes, and not repeat false and misleading claims. This is a fundamental part of ensuring honesty in public life, and it never matters more than when political actors are seeking to influence the votes of the country. We are calling on you to make sure that you, your party and its candidates operate on this basis.

2. Set out your manifesto in ways that allow meaningful scrutiny of your pledges.

In previous elections, manifestos have not always been set out in clear or meaningful ways. Vague or technical language has been used to overstate what a promise would mean in practice, numbers have been used in a misleading way, and important context has been left out in ways which make claims misleading. Manifestos should not replicate these kinds of past failures. No party should seek votes with a 'bullshit manifesto'.

We are calling on you to ensure your party produces its manifesto for the election and sets out its policy agenda in ways that enable the highest standards of scrutiny. Full Fact has developed 10 standards for the presentation of manifestos.¹ Your committing to them will allow for more meaningful scrutiny and enable voters to make informed decisions.

¹ https://fullfact.org/media/uploads/full_fact_10_election_manifesto_standards.pdf

3. Ensure your advertising is honest and truthful, and commit to have your political advertising independently regulated.

Misleading political advertising damages democracy, yet it persists unregulated and unaccountable. No political party should rely on falsehoods and misrepresentations to win votes. But parties will sometimes resort to this until there is adequate regulation of political advertising in this country.

Full Fact is calling on you to show bold leadership by making a unilateral commitment before the election to the independent regulation of political advertising according to clear principles of decency, honesty and truthfulness. With your party and other parties declaring they accept the need for this accountability, we can then move forward to establish oversight of advertising practices soon after the upcoming election.

In advance of the election, Full Fact is calling on you to make sure from now on that your advertising is honest and truthful, and to withdraw material that is shown not to be.

4. Do not use deceptive campaigning tactics to gain votes, and commit to new rules for honest party campaigning practices.

We continue to see instances of egregious misleading campaign material. For example, voters being targeted with campaign leaflets masquerading as polling cards and campaign newsletters masquerading as independent newspapers. These practices risk misleading voters and undermining trust in the local press and the electoral system itself.

Full Fact is calling for all political parties to end deceptive campaign practices that involve using formats that appear to be something they are not.

We call on whoever forms the next Government to take forward targeted legislation and regulation that drives out campaign material and tactics like this, and for all political parties to support new measures, including stronger requirements about the visibility and legibility of imprints (the origins of campaign material should be displayed in big, visible, immediately identifiable ways).

Full Fact would like to arrange a meeting to discuss these calls with you and how you can publicly pledge to meet these commitments. I should be grateful if you would please have your staff contact my colleague Glen Tarman, glen.tarman@fullfact.org to find a suitable time.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Morris
Chief Executive, Full Fact