

Liberal Democrat Plan for the Future – Manifesto 2019

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Foreword

For more than three and a half years, our country's future has been on pause as the Brexit debate has raged on. This election gives us the opportunity to transform our country and create a brighter future. The Liberal Democrats have an ambitious vision for who we can be – a society where every child and young person is nurtured to become whoever they want to be, where if you play your part in society, you can live a happy and fulfilling life, and where we do everything in our power to save our planet for future generations.

And the opportunity for the Liberal Democrats at this election is huge. There are no limits to my ambition for our party as we take our positive vision for a brighter future to the country.

In the last few months, tens of thousands of people have joined our party as our membership continues to hit new records. We've had our best-ever local elections and beat both Labour and Conservatives in a national election for the first time in a hundred years, returning 16 Liberal Democrat MEPs. And former Labour and Conservative MPs have joined us because they know that we want to build an open, fair and inclusive society. The Liberal Democrats are standing strong, growing every day, and I am so proud to be the Liberal Democrat candidate for Prime Minister at this election.

Voters are being told that the only choice is between the Conservatives and Labour. But when I look at Boris Johnson and Jeremy Corbyn, I know that I could do a better job as Prime Minister than either of them. Our country deserves better than what is on offer from the two tired old parties, each led by men who want to reuse ideas from the past – whether the 1870s or the 1970s – and gamble with our children's futures.

We can make a better choice. At this general election, people can choose to vote Liberal Democrat. They can choose a government that will build the kind of country and society we deserve, where every person, every community and our planet can thrive. They can choose what kind of country we are – open and generous, or closed and selfish. And they can choose whether we work with our closest allies or stand alone in the world.

For too many people, things aren't working as they should be. They are working hard and playing fair, and yet they struggle to pay the rent, or put food on the table and they don't feel confident that their children will go on to have better opportunities than they had. That's not good enough.

And instead of focusing on how we create a brighter future for everyone, our politics has been utterly dominated by Brexit. Leaving the European Union is not the answer to the single parent who is struggling to make ends meet, to the child who needs extra support at school, or to saving our planet. In fact, it will only make those problems worse.

Our politics is in a state of flux, and this general election could lead to seismic change out of which a new and different politics can emerge. A politics based on hope, not fear. A politics where every individual and community can thrive, and where we work together to save our planet for future generations.

For me, the choice is clear. To stop Brexit and build that brighter future, vote Liberal Democrat. We have the plan that this country deserves, and we are ready to deliver it.

Jo Swinson, Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Introduction

The Liberal Democrats are the only party contesting this election with a clear plan for how we will build a brighter future. The first step of our plan for a brighter future is simple: stop Brexit and use the Remain Bonus to invest in public services.

We are unashamedly fighting to stay in the European Union, and we are the strongest party of Remain. We believe that our best future as a country is as a member of the European Union. Any form of Brexit will damage our economy, put jobs at risk, hurt our NHS and put our family of nations under enormous strain. There is no Brexit deal that will ever be as good as the deal we currently have as a member of the European Union.

Our determination to stop Brexit isn't just about retaining membership of this or that EU institution. It's about who we are as a country and the values that drive our choices. It's about choosing to work with others in taking on the big challenges that we face, whether it's the climate crisis or cybercrime. It's about recognising that the zero-sum games of the past no longer apply to a world where our future prosperity is so interlinked with that of our closest allies.

Staying in the European Union will secure a £50 billion Remain Bonus, with the economy two per cent larger by 2024-25. We can invest that bonus in our schools, and on tackling in-work poverty and inequality.

A Liberal Democrat government will take urgent action to save our planet. We are the last generation that can stop irreversible climate change. We've already seen how floods and wildfires are becoming an ever more regular occurrence in our country. And, though we should be proud to be the first country to declare a climate emergency, we cannot ignore the fact that the government has done little else since then. In the meantime, it's been young people who have consistently put the climate crisis back on the agenda with their inspirational climate strikes.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party with a radical, credible and detailed plan to tackle the climate emergency as soon as possible. We will deliver a ten-year emergency programme to cut greenhouse gas emissions substantially straightaway and phase out emissions from the remaining hard-to-treat sectors by 2045 at the latest. By 2030 we will generate 80 per cent of our electricity from renewables and cut energy bills and emissions by insulating homes, prioritising bringing 3.5 million households out of fuel poverty by 2025.

In government, we will give every child the best start in life, no matter their ability or background, and we will empower them to make the most of the challenges ahead. But currently too many of our schools are falling behind, teaching assistants are being laid off and cash-strapped councils are struggling to support children with complex needs.

Liberal Democrats will invest in schools to build a brighter future for our children. We will reverse school cuts with an emergency cash injection so that pupils have the resources they need to learn. We will increase teacher numbers by 20,000 and let them get on with their jobs, instead of worrying about budgeting for the basics.

We will create a fairer economy, where every person can live a secure, happy and fulfilling life. To do that, we will provide free childcare for all children with parents in

work from nine months and for all children from two years, up to the time they start school. This will plug the gap in provision, ensuring that parents have an easier choice when it comes to returning to work after parental leave.

The great advancements in technology and the ever-changing nature of the world of work mean that more of us will change careers throughout our lives. And it simply isn't good enough to say that education stops after school or university.

A Liberal Democrat government will set up a new Skills Wallet for every adult, giving people £10,000 to spend on approved education and training courses to gain the right skills for the jobs of the future.

Creating a fairer economy is about reinventing the relationship between business and the communities in which they operate, so that they are part of the solution to our biggest challenges, not the problem.

Finally, we will transform our mental health service by treating it with the same urgency as physical health. About one in four people in the UK experience a mental health problem each year, and while the NHS may be the envy of the world, our mental health service falls far short of what patients deserve.

Nearly two-thirds of children and young people with diagnosable mental health conditions are not receiving treatment, and waiting times for psychological therapy can range from just over two weeks to six months, depending on where you are in the country.

Over the next Parliament, a Liberal Democrat government will invest £11 billion in mental health to expand access to therapies and increase the number of psychiatrists and specialist mental health practitioners. We will make mental health services 24-hour, including placing mental health liaison teams in all hospitals so that those facing a mental health crisis are not put in police cells.

This is the Liberal Democrat plan for a brighter future.

Stop Brexit

Every vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote to stop Brexit and stay in the European Union.

For over three years Liberal Democrats have led the fight to stop Brexit. We campaigned to stay in the EU in 2016 and we unequivocally believe that the UK is stronger as part of the EU.

The election of a Liberal Democrat majority government on a clear stop Brexit platform will provide a democratic mandate to stop this mess, revoke Article 50 and stay in the EU. In other circumstances, we will continue to fight for a people's vote with the option to stay in the EU, and in that vote we would passionately campaign to keep the UK in the EU.

Electing a Liberal Democrat government is the only way to get the Brexit process over. Although the Conservatives claim that a vote for them will 'get Brexit done', it won't: it will simply usher in more years of difficult negotiations over the UK's trade deal with the EU, with a very high chance of Britain crashing out and trying to survive on so-called 'WTO terms' – a deal so bad that almost no other country anywhere in the world trades on that basis.

Labour want to reopen the Withdrawal Agreement all over again and negotiate a new deal – but they will not say whether they want Britain to remain in the EU or leave. The fact is that whether Labour Red or Tory Blue, Brexit is bad for the UK.

The importance of the UK's membership of the EU has never been clearer. Working together through the EU, the countries of Europe have achieved peace and prosperity on a continent historically wracked by war and division. That is a tremendous achievement; it should not be taken for granted, particularly as Europe faces new dangers from an increasingly aggressive Russia and as the US turns away from its old alliances.

Many of the great challenges of the 21st century are global: climate change, human trafficking, the arms trade, the power of multinationals, global poverty and inequality. By separating itself from the EU, Britain diminishes its capacity to respond to these threats. By working together with our European neighbours, we increase the UK's ability to meet those challenges: for example, in international negotiations, in regulating the tech giants or in creating markets for climate-friendly products.

There is no doubt that full membership of the EU is good for the British economy. Brexit would bring to an end businesses' unfettered access to the European single market – the destination of almost half of Britain's exports – and to the smooth flow of goods that complex industrial supply chains require. The prospect of tariffs and border checks is already causing manufacturers to shift their operations to other EU states and UK manufacturers are already reporting that export orders have dried up.

There is no prospect of replacing lost EU markets with free trade agreements with other countries thousands of miles away. If the UK gives in to President Trump's demands to lower environmental and health standards for a trade deal with the US, we would lose the ability to export to the EU, which would drive many British businesses, including most farmers, out of business. Brexit is bad for jobs, growth and prosperity.

Brexit will also mean an end to freedom of movement, which has brought the UK tremendous social, economic and cultural benefits. It gives British people the opportunity to work, be together with their loved ones, study and retire anywhere in the EU. There is no contradiction between our European and our British, national and regional identities: they enrich one another. By stopping Brexit, Liberal Democrats will protect and maintain freedom of movement, safeguarding the rights of UK citizens living elsewhere in the EU and EU citizens in the UK. Liberal Democrats will also support the right of the people of Gibraltar to remain in the European Union.

EU citizens are valued members of our communities and we believe that they should be afforded the right to full participation in civic life, including the ability to stand for office and vote in UK referendums, European elections and general elections as well as local elections. Liberal Democrats will extend these rights to all EU citizens who have lived in the UK for five years or longer.

To ensure that EU citizens are not denied their vote in any election or referendum, we will also implement urgent electoral law reform, in line with the Electoral Commission's 2014 recommendations, including introducing a legal requirement for councils to inform citizens of the steps they must take to be successfully registered and making the necessary changes to ensure that the UK has an automatic system of inclusion in elections.

The national humiliation of Brexit puts so much at risk – the NHS, public services, jobs across the country, scientific collaboration, peace in Northern Ireland, the unity of the UK, our ability to tackle global crises such as climate change and our global reputation as a country that is confident and outward-facing. By keeping the UK in the EU, we can get on with tackling the real issues facing our country, using the Remain Bonus of £50 billion to invest in public services and tackle inequality.

A Liberal Democrat government will stop Brexit – and build a brighter future for the

UK by keeping us at the heart of the European Union.

Our Plan for a Stronger Economy

People who work hard and contribute to society should have good, fulfilling and well-paid jobs. Businesses and entrepreneurs who innovate and invest and behave responsibly to their employees and to the environment should be supported. But this is not how the UK is today: too many people can't get on, and live secure, happy and fulfilling lives. The failure of governments to invest in infrastructure and skills has undermined productivity, and now the Conservatives threaten to make the vast majority of people poorer and punish business and enterprise through a hard Brexit.

Meanwhile, we are facing profound economic changes that demand new partnerships between government and business: the emergence of artificial intelligence requires new approaches to work, and the challenge of transitioning to a zero-carbon economy must be managed in a way that does not hurt the least well-off and makes the UK more competitive. The UK's strengths in science, financial services, the creative industries and high-tech manufacturing mean that we should be well placed to build an economy that treats business as part of the solution and spreads opportunity to everyone.

However, neither Labour nor the Conservatives are capable of guiding the economy through these challenges. Both parties are reaching to the past for answers that are no longer relevant. The Conservatives are pursuing a deregulated, low-tax Brexit that will set our economy back for generations; Labour are facilitating Brexit while seeking to renationalise their way back to a form of 1970s socialism.

Liberal Democrats are now the natural home of business: we are the only party with a new plan for a brighter economic future. A plan to invest in climate-friendly infrastructure and technology and create new green businesses and jobs; a plan to build on our scientific, technological and creative strengths; a plan to stop Brexit and build a more prosperous, equal and inclusive economy. Whichever part of the country people are from and whatever stage of their career they are at, our plan will mean greater opportunities and good, well-paid jobs.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Investing £130 billion in infrastructure – upgrading our transport and energy systems, building schools, hospitals and homes, empowering all regions and nations of the UK and developing the climate-friendly infrastructure of the future.
- Enabling an adaptable, future-focused workforce – empowering individuals through new Skills Wallets worth £10,000 for every individual.
- Introducing a wellbeing budget and basing decisions for government spending on what will improve wellbeing as well as on economic and fiscal indicators.

Investment for the Future across the UK

Opportunity and access to education, employment and services are not fairly spread around the country. This means that many people become stuck in insecure work in which they have no prospect of promotion. The Conservatives pay lip service to the idea of regional growth while pursuing a reckless Brexit that will deepen inequality and place trade barriers between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK; Labour's backwards-looking approach of Whitehall running renationalised industries denies

people and communities autonomy and will hit investment and stifle innovation. Liberal Democrats are the only party looking to the future with a plan to kickstart a devolution revolution that will give all parts of the UK a real say backed by meaningful financial muscle. This is the only sustainable answer to the regional divide. We will:

- Give local authorities and regions the power to make decisions about their areas.
- Introduce a capital £50 billion Regional Rebalancing Programme for infrastructure spend across the nations and regions of the UK, with local and devolved authorities given a say in how it is used, reinforced by a Just Transition Fund to support communities negatively affected by policies to tackle the climate emergency.
- Continue to champion investment in the Northern Powerhouse and the Midlands Engine, putting significant capital resources into infrastructure projects across these regions.
- Set an ambitious National Industrial Strategy to transform the economy and develop Local Industrial Strategies within it that incentivise clustering by businesses and universities with particular specialisations.
- Work with the major banks to fund the creation of a local banking sector dedicated to meeting the needs of local small and medium-sized businesses.
- Expand the British Business Bank to perform a more central role in the economy, to ensure that viable small and medium-sized businesses have access to capital, even when the rest of the commercial banking system can't provide it.
- Support the tourist industry which is vital for many local economies by:
 - Upgrading the status of tourism within government, by creating a Department of Digital, Culture, Media, Sport and Tourism, with a designated Minister of State for Tourism.
 - Enabling local authorities to bring in tourist levies to fund local tourism infrastructure.

Liberal Democrats want to take advantage of historically low interest rates to increase borrowing for investment to build the economy of the future. We are committed to a responsible and realistic £130 billion package of additional infrastructure investment, which will prioritise:

- Significant investment in public transport, including converting the rail network to ultra-low-emission technology (electric or hydrogen) by 2035, and a continued commitment to HS2, Crossrail 2 and other major new strategic rail routes.
- A programme of installing hyper-fast, fibre-optic broadband across the UK – with a particular focus on connecting rural areas.
- New direct spending on housebuilding to help build 300,000 homes a year by 2024, including 100,000 social homes.
- An emergency ten-year programme to reduce energy consumption from all the UK's buildings, cutting emissions and fuel bills and ending fuel poverty.
- Capital investment in schools and hospitals to support capacity increases and modernisation.
- £5 billion of initial capital for a new Green Investment Bank, using public money to attract private investment for zero-carbon priorities.

We will ensure that the National Infrastructure Commission takes fully into account the climate and environmental implications of all national infrastructure decisions.

UK2050: Our Vision for an Innovation-Led Economy

We want to lay the foundations for the UK to be the best place in the world for innovation-led businesses in the long-term – to be a place where people come from across the EU and the world to turn their ideas into reality. But with R&D and innovation investment lagging behind other countries and being overly concentrated in South East England, it needs major change to make this vision a reality. Only the Liberal Democrats can deliver this; the Conservatives are harking back to a romanticised imperial past, while pursuing a Brexit that will hit research and innovation, which is so dependent on European and other international collaboration, while Labour has no plan for the economy of the future.

Liberal Democrats have a transformative plan to make the UK a world leader in responsible innovation by taking advantage of the UK's strengths and what we are good at as a nation: our natural advantages in renewable energy; our strong university sector; and our regional strengths such as bioscience in the Midlands, advanced materials in Yorkshire, zero-carbon technology in the North West and photonics in Scotland. We will build a growing economy in which people will have well-paid and fulfilling jobs. We will:

- Increase national spending on research and development to three per cent of GDP. We will publish a roadmap to achieve this ambition by the earliest date possible, via an interim target of 2.4 per cent of GDP by no later than 2027.
- Support innovation, with a goal of doubling innovation spending across the economy.
- Increase the Strength in Places Fund, to boost research and development outside the 'golden triangle' of Oxford-Cambridge-London.
- Build on the industrial strategy developed by Liberal Democrat ministers in government, working with sectors which are critical to the UK's ability to trade internationally, creating more 'Catapult' innovation and technology centres and backing private investment in particular in zero-carbon and environmental innovation.
- Develop the skilled workforce needed to support this growth by introducing a new two-year visa for students to work after graduation and a major expansion of high-quality apprenticeships including Higher Apprenticeships, backed up by new sector-led National Colleges.
- Develop a national skills strategy for key sectors, including zero-carbon technologies, to help match skills and people; our new Skills Wallets will allow people to retrain and upskill when they need to. (also see Opportunities Throughout Life section, p.25)
- Reform building standards to ensure that all new homes built from 2022 have full connectivity to ultra-fast broadband and are designed to enable the use of smart technologies.
- Continue to support investment in new UK digital start-ups by reforming the British Business Bank's support for venture capital funds to enable it to help funds 'crowd in' new backers rather than acting as a funder of last resort.
- Support growth in the creative industries, including video gaming, by continuing to support the Creative Industries Council and tailored industry-specific tax support, promoting creative skills, supporting modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules, and addressing the barriers to finance faced by small creative businesses.
- Create creative enterprise zones to grow and regenerate the cultural output of areas across the UK.

Harnessing the Benefits of New Technology

Our ambition is for the UK to lead the world in ethical, inclusive new technology, including artificial intelligence. We will invest in education to equip people with the skills they need – whether to use new technology or to create it – while also attracting and welcoming the best talent from around the world. We will enable innovators and entrepreneurs to experiment and take risks, while taking on concentrations of power that stifle competition, limit choice for consumers and hamper progress. And we will ensure that new technology is developed and deployed ethically, so that it respects people’s fundamental rights, including the rights to privacy and non-discrimination. We will:

- Support the UK’s diverse, inclusive tech sector by teaching core skills such as logic, verbal reasoning and creativity in schools, and by reforming immigration rules – including enabling industry bodies to sponsor work visas.
- Support the growth of new jobs and businesses in the tech sector by allowing companies to claim R&D tax credits against the cost of purchasing datasets and cloud computing, simplifying the regulatory landscape and speeding up regulatory change.
- Ensure that new technologies are used in ethical and responsible ways by:
 - Introducing a Lovelace Code of Ethics to ensure the use of personal data and artificial intelligence is unbiased, transparent and accurate, and respects privacy.
 - Giving the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation the power to ‘call in’ products that appear to breach this Code.
 - Requiring all courses relating to digital technologies to include teaching about ethics and the Code specifically.
 - Introducing a kitemark for companies that meet the highest ethical standards in their development and use of artificial intelligence and other new technologies.
 - Convening a citizens’ assembly to determine when it is appropriate for the government to use algorithms in decision-making.
- Develop a mechanism to allow the public to share in the profits made by tech companies in the use of their data.
- Empower consumers and ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits of new technology, by setting a UK-wide target for digital literacy and requiring all products to provide a short, clear version of their terms and conditions, setting out the key facts as they relate to individuals’ data and privacy.
- Enable people whose jobs are affected by automation to gain new skills and retrain with our new Skills Wallets, so that they can work in the good, well-paying jobs of the future.

A Better Deal for Entrepreneurs and Small Business

Dynamic, entrepreneurial businesses are a force for good: entrepreneurs, the self-employed and small businesses form the backbone of local economies and government should support them. However, the Conservatives are pursuing policies that make it harder to start successful new businesses and Labour do not understand or value start-ups and small businesses. Liberal Democrats are the only party who understand the importance of these businesses and who will ensure that they have the access to funding and long-term capital that they need. We will:

- Create a new ‘start-up allowance’ to help those starting a new business with their living costs in the crucial first weeks of their business.

- Support fast-growing businesses seeking to scale up, through the provision of mentoring support.
- Prioritise small and medium-sized businesses in the rollout of hyper-fast broadband.
- Require all government agencies and contractors and companies with more than 250 employees to sign up to the prompt payment code, making it enforceable.
- Ensure that the company at the top of a supply chain cannot abuse its position to shore up its own cashflow at the expense of smaller suppliers.
- Expand the activities of the British Business Bank, enabling it to perform a more central role in the economy by tackling the shortage of equity capital for growing firms and providing long-term capital for medium-sized businesses.
- Provide a supportive framework to develop social enterprises – businesses with a social focus rather than a profit motive.
- Expand the rights and benefits available to those in insecure forms of employment, such as offering parental leave and pay to the self-employed.
- Finance the transformation of town centres by expanding the Future High Streets Fund.
- Help protect our high streets and town centres by scrapping the rule which allows developers to convert offices and shops into residential properties without planning permission.

Better Business

Business can be a force for good in our economy: we need thriving businesses to create wealth and a model of responsible capitalism generates good jobs, shares prosperity and sees businesses promote rights and protect the environment. But the system is not working as it should: unscrupulous employers are still able to exploit their workforce and even when businesses fail, those at the top often receive huge rewards while staff lose their jobs. And we do not yet have a framework that sufficiently rewards businesses for environmentally sustainable behaviour – or penalises them for environmentally damaging activities. Labour do not recognise the good that business can do; the Conservatives don't care about the consequences of businesses that are run irresponsibly. Only the Liberal Democrats will promote responsible capitalism that works for the future. Our plan is for an economy that works for everyone, fosters a diversity of types of business – mutuals, social enterprises and community interest companies – and empowers employees. We will:

- Encourage employers to promote employee ownership by giving staff in listed companies with more than 250 employees a right to request shares, to be held in trust for the benefit of employees.
- Strengthen worker participation in decision-making, including staff representation on remuneration committees, and require all UK-listed companies and all private companies with more than 250 employees to have at least one employee representative on their boards with the same legal duties and responsibilities as other directors.
- Introduce a general duty of care for the environment and human rights – requiring companies, financial institutions and public sector agencies to exercise due diligence in avoiding specified activities such as child labour or modern slavery, or specified products such as commodities produced with deforestation, in their operations and supply chains, and to report on their actions.
- Reform fiduciary duty and company purpose rules to ensure that all large companies have a formal statement of corporate purpose, including considerations such as employee welfare, environmental standards, community

benefit and ethical practice, alongside benefit to shareholders, and that they report formally on the wider impact of the business on society and the environment.

- Encourage new forms of incorporation and a diversity of business types, such as for large firms contracting with the public sector or providing essential utilities and for smaller firms wanting a dual purpose to be profit-making and have a positive impact on society, workers, communities and the environment.
- Require binding and public votes of shareholders on executive pay policies.
- Extend the scope of the existing 'public interest' test when considering approvals for takeovers of large or strategically significant companies by overseas-based owners to recognise the benefits to the UK economy, workers and consumers of protecting UK companies from speculative or short-term interests.

Fair Taxes

Government must ensure the tax system meets the needs of a modern economy and is ready for the transition to a digital and zero-carbon economy. Businesses and individuals who benefit from being based in the UK should pay their fair share in tax – and responsible businesses are willing to do this. They benefit from public goods such as an educated workforce, a stable economy and publicly-funded infrastructure, and it is right that they should contribute towards them. But the taxation system is unbalanced and unfair: it is too easy for tech giants and large monopolies to avoid tax and income from employment is taxed more harshly than income generated by wealth.

Labour and the Conservatives are looking to the past for answers that will not work today: Labour want to hike up income tax in a way that will not even ensure that more tax is paid; the Conservatives have no interest in making the taxation system fairer. Our plan for the future will see big businesses paying their fair share, support small- and medium-sized enterprises and ensure that income earned from wealth is not privileged when compared to income from employment – making sure the tax system is fair to all. We will:

- Restore Corporation Tax to 20 per cent – reversing the Conservatives' reduction of this tax to 17 per cent – and keep the rate is stable with a predictable future path.
- Taxing income from capital more fairly compared to income from work by abolishing the separate Capital Gains Tax-free allowance and instead taxing capital gains and salaries through a single allowance.
- Simplify business taxation to lower administration costs – supporting smaller companies – and reduce opportunities for tax avoidance.
- Replace Business Rates in England with a Commercial Landowner Levy based solely on the land value of commercial sites rather than their entire capital value, thereby stimulating investment, and shifting the burden of taxation from tenants to landowners.
- Take tough action against corporate tax evasion and avoidance especially by international tech giants and large monopolies, including by:
 - Introducing a General Anti-Avoidance Rule, setting a target for HM Revenue and Customs to reduce the tax gap and investing in more staff to enable them to meet it.
 - Reforming place of establishment rules to stop multinationals unfairly shifting profits out of the UK.
 - Improving the Digital Sales Tax to ensure tech giants pay their fair share.

- Support and build on the OECD's proposals to require multinationals to pay a level of tax which is more closely related to their sales in every country in which they operate.
- End retrospective tax changes like the loan charge brought in by the Conservatives, so that individuals and firms are treated fairly, and review recent proposals to change the IR35 rules.
- Scrap the Marriage Tax Allowance.

Future of Work

People should have secure jobs, with proper rights and fair pay. However, changes in technology and the nature of employment have outgrown the existing system of employment rights and protections. The Conservatives have not done enough to support workers as they are sucked into insecure, poorly paid jobs; Labour's dogmatic, backward-looking approach would destroy flexible jobs that people value and harm the economy. Liberal Democrats are the only ones with a plan for 21st century work: a plan that will give employees protection and a voice at work while enabling innovative business models to flourish in the modern economy. We will make work pay and ensure that there are good and well-paid jobs available for people to do. We will:

- Establish an independent review to consult on how to set a genuine Living Wage across all sectors. We will pay this Living Wage in all central government departments and their agencies, and encourage other public sector employers to do likewise.
- Establish a powerful new Worker Protection Enforcement Authority to protect those in precarious work.
- Change the law so that flexible working is open to all from day one in the job, with employers required to advertise jobs accordingly, unless there are significant business reasons why that is not possible.
- Modernise employment rights to make them fit for the age of the 'gig economy', including by:
 - Establishing a new 'dependent contractor' employment status in between employment and self-employment, with entitlements to basic rights such as minimum earnings levels, sick pay and holiday entitlement.
 - Reviewing the tax and National Insurance status of employees, dependent contractors and freelancers to ensure fair and comparable treatment.
 - Setting a 20 per cent higher minimum wage for people on zero-hour contracts at times of normal demand to compensate them for the uncertainty of fluctuating hours of work.
 - Giving a right to request a fixed-hours contract after 12 months for 'zero hours' and agency workers, not to be unreasonably refused.
 - Reviewing rules concerning pensions so that those in the gig economy don't lose out, and portability between roles is protected.
 - Shifting the burden of proof in employment tribunals regarding employment status from individual to employer.
- Strengthen the ability of unions to represent workers effectively in the modern economy, including a right of access to workplaces.

Opportunities Throughout Life

With technology advancing and the world of work always and rapidly changing, skills learned at 18 or 21 will not last a lifetime and it has never been more important for people to continually develop new skills. The system is not set up for this though – opportunities are limited and people do not get the chance to make the most of their talents. We need to empower people to develop new skills so that they can thrive in the technologies and industries that are key to Britain's economic future. Both the Conservatives and Labour are stuck pursuing 20th century solutions to this new challenge. Only the Liberal Democrats are embracing the future, championing flexible lifelong learning that gives people the power to follow the path that best suits their ability. We will:

- Introduce new Skills Wallets for every adult in England, giving them £10,000 to spend on education and training throughout their lives:
 - The government will put in £4,000 at age 25, £3,000 at age 40 and £3,000 at age 55.
 - Individuals, their employers and local government will be able to make additional payments into the wallets.
 - Individuals can choose how and when to spend this money on a range of approved education and training courses from providers who are regulated and monitored by the Office for Students.
 - Individuals will have access to free careers guidance to help them to decide how to spend the money in their Skills Wallets.
 - Government will work with industry to identify skills needs and to evaluate and certify courses.
- Expand the apprenticeship levy into a wider 'Skills and Training Levy' to help prepare the UK's workforce for the economic challenges ahead with 25 per cent of the funds raised by the levy going into a 'Social Mobility Fund' targeted at areas with the greatest skill needs.
- Develop National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.
- Identify and seek to solve skills gaps such as the lack of advanced technicians by expanding higher vocational training like foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates and Higher Apprenticeships.

Responsible Finances

A good government should responsibly manage the nation's finances: taking advantage of opportunities to borrow to invest in key infrastructure while making sure that day-to-day spending does not exceed the amount of money raised in taxes. The Liberal Democrats are the only party who will manage the country's finances properly. The Conservatives are pursuing a Brexit that will wreck the economy for a generation, making it impossible to sustainably invest in public services. Labour will waste billions nationalising utilities – spending money that could be used to improve them just to bring them under state control. Our plan for the future is built on responsible management of the country's finances: stopping Brexit and using the increased revenue from a bigger economy to invest in services and using the money that Labour would waste to tackle the climate emergency and invest in transport and energy infrastructure. We will:

- Use the £50 billion Remain Bonus to invest in services and tackle inequality, giving a major boost to schools and combatting in-work poverty.

- Ensure that key services are properly funded and responsibly manage their budgets so that they rise year-on-year.
- End the continual erosion of local government funding and commit to a real increase in local government funding throughout the Parliament.
- Ensure overall national debt continues to decline as a share of national income.
- Protect the independence of the Bank of England and keep the inflation target of two per cent.

Promoting Wellbeing

There is no more fundamental purpose for government than supporting people to expand their quality of life. A successful economy is important, because it supports jobs, income and well-funded public services – all of which matter for individuals' wellbeing. But the conventional focus on GDP as the objective not only of government but society as a whole is clearly insufficient. People in the UK deserve to have their wellbeing considered and invested in, and a Liberal Democrat government will do just that. Liberal Democrats understand that wellbeing requires both a strong economy and a government that considers many other aspects of life, including support for people's mental health and good working conditions. Only a Liberal Democrat government will put the wellbeing of people and the planet first. We will:

- Introduce a wellbeing budget, following the example of New Zealand – basing decisions on what will improve wellbeing as well as on economic and fiscal indicators.
- Appoint a Minister for Wellbeing, who will make an annual statement to Parliament on the main measures of wellbeing and the effects of government policies on them.
- Introduce wellbeing impact assessments for all government policies.
- Prioritise government spending on the things that matter most to people's wellbeing – both now and in the future – including:
 - Access to high-quality mental health and other health services.
 - Schools that build emotional resilience and properly prepare our children for both work and relationships.
 - Jobs for the future, through further education and Skills Wallets.
 - Community services that tackle loneliness and prevent isolation.
 - Targeted support for those most at risk of poor wellbeing: vulnerable children, people who are homeless, victims of trafficking and exploitation.
 - Providing welfare support to those who need it.
 - Reducing Adverse Childhood Experiences by investing further in services during pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life.
- Ensure that the environment is protected for future generations with clean air to breathe and urgent action to tackle the climate emergency.

Our Plan for Better Education and Skills

Education is about achieving the best, about exploring possibilities and seeking new challenges, about fulfilling people's promise for the good of themselves and the whole of society. The next generation will face a complex, technologically advanced and ever-changing world. England's education system – from nurseries and schools, to universities and colleges – should be world-class, helping every child to make the most of the opportunities ahead, no matter their ability or background. It must nurture not only academic excellence but also creativity, adaptability, and teamwork.

Instead, nurseries are struggling, and the attainment gap between rich and poor is widening. Teaching assistants are being laid off. Cash-strapped councils are struggling to support children with complex needs. Too many schools are unable to keep their doors open for a full five-day week.

The Conservatives are failing our children. They have cut school and college budgets to the bone. They focus too heavily on test results at the expense of giving children a good all-round education. The closest they have to a big idea is the backward-looking and divisive plan to create more grammar schools, despite the evidence that shows that they harm social mobility. Labour want to waste time and money on a massive top-down reorganisation which will do nothing to improve standards.

The high-stakes culture of Ofsted inspections and testing – especially in primary schools – has led to pupils and teachers being anxious and stressed about going to school. Creative subjects are being squeezed out of the classroom.

Liberal Democrats will build a brighter future for every one of our children. We have a plan to boost quality at every stage of education.

We will start with a bold offer of free childcare from the of age nine months (the end of paid parental leave), transforming the opportunities for early years education and helping parents who want to combine caring and working.

We will reverse school cuts with an immediate emergency cash injection so that pupils have the resources they need to learn, and let teachers get on with the job of raising standards rather than having to worry about budgeting for the basics.

Parents should get the full picture of how their school is doing. Primary schools cannot be properly measured by just one week of tests. There must be robust inspections that measure social and emotional development alongside attainment. They should support schools to succeed, instead of punishing them for failure.

Parents should not have to be kept waiting for their child's needs to be identified and supported. Liberal Democrats will put wellbeing at the heart of every school, and better fund special needs education.

Further Education colleges have a vital role in giving opportunities to young people who want to pursue vocational study, and Liberal Democrats will end the neglect they have suffered for too long. The UK has some outstanding universities and research institutions and we need to build on their success.

In the brighter Liberal Democrat future, children will come home from school happier, healthier and with all the skills they need to succeed in life. Free childcare will allow parents to choose the balance of work and childcare that suits them, and help close attainment gaps in education and gender gaps in pay. Revitalised vocational and Higher Education will equip individuals and the economy to thrive.

Our top priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Providing free, high-quality childcare for children of working parents from nine months.
- Reversing cuts to school funding, employing an extra 20,000 schoolteachers, and clearing the backlog of repairs to school and college buildings.
- Ending teaching to the test by scrapping mandatory SATs, and replacing existing government performance tables ('league tables') of schools with a broader set of indicators.

The Best Start in Life

Nurseries are struggling. With no government support for most families between the end of parental leave and age three, and the average price for 25 hours a week of nursery childcare for a child under two now at £6,600 a year, too many new parents are forced to choose between caring for their child and their careers. At the same time, the achievement gap between richer and poorer, which can best be tackled in the early years, is rising.

The Conservatives have promised to help, but their childcare policy only covers three- and four-year-olds in working families, only amounts to 30 hours a week – less time than children spend in school – and doesn't cover school holidays. Even the hours they do offer are underfunded and this means that many providers struggle to deliver a quality Early Years education. Many parents who want to work, especially mothers, can spend several years out of the workplace because they can't afford childcare. This affects their career trajectory, their confidence, and their long-term earning potential.

Liberal Democrats have a plan to deliver the best start in life for children: free high-quality childcare from nine months for all working parents, properly funded. Parents wanting to go back to work will get the help they need, knowing that their child will be happy, healthy and ready to start school. And by tripling the Early Years Pupil Premium and expanding Children's Centres, we can give further help to the most disadvantaged children, narrowing the achievement gap. We will:

- Offer free, high-quality childcare for every child aged two to four and children aged between nine and 24 months where their parents or guardians are in work: 35 hours a week, 48 weeks a year.
- Increase the funding for these free hours to cover the actual cost of nursery provision.
- Invest £1 billion a year in Children's Centres to support families and tackle inequalities in children's health, development and life chances.
- Triple the Early Years Pupil Premium (to £1,000) to give extra help to disadvantaged children who are at risk of falling behind from the very beginning of their education.
- Require all Early Years settings to have a training programme for staff, with the majority of staff working with children to have a relevant Early Years qualification or be working towards one.
- In the long run, each Early Years setting should have at least one person qualified to graduate level.
- Introduce 'baby boxes' in England, as advocated by the Royal College of Midwives, to provide babies and parents with essential items to help with health and development.

Schools that Prepare Children for Life

An education system which focuses only on a narrow range of academic subjects and measures pupils' abilities in a handful of high-pressure exams, does not give young people the skills they need to get on in life. It also lets down those children who do not work well in exam conditions. Liberal Democrats will ensure England's education system delivers high academic standards while also helping children grow into happy, healthy and confident adults; and nurtures and values all styles of learning. We will:

- Reverse cuts to school funding, allowing schools to employ an extra 20,000 teachers and reduce class sizes, restoring them to 2015 levels per pupil with an emergency cash injection.

- Invest to clear the backlog of repairs to school and college buildings so we have schools that are safe places to learn in.
- End the crisis in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities funding by allocating additional cash to local authorities to halve the amount that schools pay towards the cost of a child's Education Health and Care Plan.
- Introduce a 'curriculum for life', in all state-funded schools. This will include Personal, Social and Health Education, financial literacy, environmental awareness, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, mental health education, citizenship and age-appropriate Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Teaching about sexual consent, LGBT+ relationships, and issues surrounding explicit images and content will be included in RSE.
- Establish an independent body of education experts who will use the most up-to-date educational evidence to oversee any future curriculum changes. It would take these decisions out of the hands of politicians and put an end to unnecessary and often politically motivated changes, which disrupt children's learning and place an extra burden on teachers.
- Reduce unnecessary stress on pupils and teachers and end 'teaching to the test', by scrapping existing mandatory SATs and replacing them with a formal, moderated teacher assessment at the end of each phase and some lighter-touch testing.
- Give parents school performance measures they can trust, by replacing existing government performance tables ('league tables') with a broader set of indicators including information about pupils' and teachers' wellbeing, as well as academic attainment.
- Replace Ofsted with a new HM Inspector of Schools. Inspections should take place every three years and should consider a broader range of factors including the social and emotional development of children, and the wellbeing of staff and pupils. Independent schools should be subject to the same inspection regime.
- Improve the quality of vocational education, including skills for entrepreneurship and self-employment, and improve careers advice and links with employers in schools and colleges.
- Protect the availability of arts and creative subjects in the curriculum and act to remove barriers to pupils studying these subjects, including by abolishing the English Baccalaureate as a performance measure.
- Teach the core skills required for children to flourish in the modern world, including critical thinking, verbal reasoning and creativity.

Accountable Local Schools

The fragmentation of the education system, with more than half of secondary schools and one quarter of primary schools in Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), had led to a lack of accountability to local communities. There is competition rather than cooperation between schools, with some operating unfair admissions systems and off-rolling pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability or those unlikely to succeed in examinations.

With academies standing outside the oversight of Local Authorities, and many MAT schools not even having a local governing body, parents are finding it increasingly difficult to raise issues with schools, and there is little evidence that the children's voice is heard. There is an increasing trend to exclude children (or use internal exclusion units), which is damaging and dangerous to the young people involved. The Conservatives' ideological obsession with more grammar schools will only add further division to the system. Liberal Democrats want to restore accountability and give

every child the chance of attending an excellent local school. We will:

- Give local authorities with responsibility for education the powers and resources to act as Strategic Education Authorities for their area, including responsibility for places planning, exclusions, administering admissions including in-year admissions, and SEND functions.
- Create a level playing field by requiring MATs to undergo external inspection and allowing local authorities to open new Community Schools where needed.
- Oppose any future expansion of grammar schools and devolve all capital funding for new school spaces to local authorities.

A Better Deal for Teachers

There is a crisis in teacher retention and recruitment in our schools, driven by years of real-terms pay cuts, and an increasingly unmanageable workload created by unnecessary bureaucracy. Teachers feel demoralised and undervalued, as the funding crisis in our schools coupled with the culture of excessive high-stakes testing prevent them from giving every child the high-quality education they deserve.

Liberal Democrats will ensure teachers are paid a fair wage for the vital work they do, and that they are empowered to focus on delivering a high-quality education to their pupils, rather than being put under unnecessary pressure from testing and inspections which offer little-to-no educational benefit. Teachers are the biggest and most important asset in our education system. They need world-class levels of training and support to help them deliver the great teaching we want in our schools. We will:

- Raise the starting salary for teachers to £30,000 and increase all teachers' pay by at least three per cent per year throughout the parliament.
- Introduce a clear and properly funded entitlement to genuinely high-quality professional development for all teachers – rising to the level of 50 hours per year by 2025. We will also give extra training to teachers who are required to teach subjects at secondary level where they themselves do not have a post A-level qualification.

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Children and Families Ready to Learn

Education doesn't begin and end at the school gates. A love of learning can be nurtured from early childhood, and continue throughout life. However, our young people are some of the most anxious and unhappy in the world. Schools are on the front line in dealing with children and young adults with mental health issues. We also know that children cannot learn properly if they are undernourished.

Parents are under huge pressure and receive little support even though home is the biggest influence on children's learning. Liberal Democrats believe that parents need to be properly empowered and supported with the tools they need to raise the next generation. To ensure children and adults are able to make the most of the educational opportunities which are open to them, the government must also do more to support health and wellbeing. We will:

- Extend free school meals to all children in primary education and to all secondary school children whose families receive Universal Credit, as well as promoting school breakfast clubs.
- Ensure that all teaching staff have the training to identify mental health issues and that schools provide immediate access for pupil support and counselling.

- Ensure there is a specific individual responsible for mental health in schools, who would provide a link to expertise and support for children experiencing problems. They would also take a lead on developing whole-school approaches to mental well-being.
- Give schools a statutory duty to promote the wellbeing of their pupils as part of the inspection framework.
- Tackle bullying in schools, including bullying on the basis of gender, sexuality, gender identity, or gender expression, by promoting pastoral leadership in schools and delivering high-quality sex and relationships education.
- Require inclusive school uniform policies that are gender-neutral and flexible enough to suit different budgets, and provide training for school staff on how to review and improve their uniform policies.
- Challenge gender stereotyping and early sexualisation, working with schools to promote positive body image and break down outdated perceptions of gender appropriateness of particular academic subjects.
- Include teaching about how to use social media responsibly in our 'curriculum for life' and provide advice and support for parents on how to help their children protect themselves online.

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Learning Throughout Life

British universities are examples of excellence throughout the world. Their ability to maintain top-quality research activity, to attract funding and to deliver the best teaching depends on being open and outward looking – which this Government's disastrous approach to Brexit is already damaging. Liberal Democrats will protect our world-leading higher education sector by stopping Brexit, enabling it to continue to rely on international collaboration and being able to attract leading academics from around the world. Further Education is vital route to learning and we will invest to support it. We will:

- Reverse the damage to universities posed by Brexit and related uncertainty by stopping Brexit and keeping the UK at the heart of the EU.
- Invest an extra £1 billion in Further Education funding, including by refunding colleges for the VAT they pay.
- Help children from poorer families to remain in education and training beyond the age of 16 by introducing a 'Young People's Premium'. This would be based on the same eligibility criteria as the Pupil Premium, but a portion of it would be paid directly to the young person aged 16-18.
- Raise standards in universities by strengthening the Office for Students, to make sure all students receive a high-quality education.
- Require universities to make mental health services accessible to their students, and introduce a Student Mental Health Charter through legislation.
- Reinstate maintenance grants for the poorest students, ensuring that living costs are not a barrier to disadvantaged young people studying at university.
- Establish a review of higher education finance in the next parliament to consider any necessary reforms in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation and quality, and make sure there are no more retrospective raising of rates or selling-off of loans to private companies.
- Ensure that all universities work to widen participation by disadvantaged and underrepresented groups across the sector, prioritising their work with students in schools and colleges, and require every university to be transparent about selection criteria.

Access to Culture and Sport

Arts, media and sports are essential for personal fulfilment and quality of life – they enlarge people’s experience and are part of what turns a group of people into a community. Funding for these organisations is put at risk with Brexit. Liberal Democrats will ensure that we continue to invest in our cultural capital. We will:

- Maintain free access to national museums and galleries.
- Move towards introducing ‘safe standing’ at football clubs, requiring the Sports Grounds Safety Authority to prepare guidance for implementing this change.
- Support anti-racism and anti-homophobia campaigns in sport.
- Protect the independence of the BBC and set up a BBC Licence Fee Commission, maintain Channel 4 in public ownership and protect the funding and editorial independence of Welsh language broadcasters.
- Protect sports and arts funding via the National Lottery.
- Examine the available funding and planning rules for live music venues and the grassroots music sector, protecting venues from further closures.

Our Plan for a Green Society and a Green Economy

The UK should be leading the world in tackling the climate emergency. We are the first generation to know we are destroying the environment, and the last generation with a chance to do something about it before it is too late. There is no Planet B. If we fail to act, millions of people – at home and abroad – will suffer the impacts of floods, storms and heatwaves, rising food prices and the spread of diseases; the global financial system will be destabilised, poor countries could collapse and the number of refugees will soar.

The Conservatives have shown themselves unfit to lead in response to this historic challenge. They have repeatedly flouted EU limits on air pollution and scrapped energy efficiency schemes that would reduce energy bills and end the scourge of fuel poverty. They have cut support for renewable energy while trying to force fracking on communities that don’t want it. They are not on track to meet the UK’s climate targets and are dragging their feet on reducing the use of plastics. They promised to restore the natural environment, but have presided over declines in many species of wildlife, and repeatedly failed to meet air and water quality goals.

Meanwhile, Labour’s policies are a distraction from meaningful action on the environment. They want to spend billions to renationalise the companies running the electricity grid, the water industry and the railways. But this would not only be enormously disruptive and ruinously costly; it would be pointless, as in reality, ambitious environmental and consumer aims can be achieved through tougher regulation. A socialist planned economy is no way to tackle the environmental crisis.

The failures of Conservatives and Labour are not only morally indefensible but economically illiterate. Climate change and the collapse of natural systems are huge crises but they also represent a massive opportunity to create a different future, where people breathe clean air, drink clean water and use clean energy, where communities and industries live in harmony with nature, not at its expense.

We need a new government with the vision and the will to seize that opportunity. Liberal Democrats offer a new plan to innovate our way out of crisis. To mobilise every community in the country, and the resources of both the public and private sector to achieve it. To turn the birthplace of the industrial revolution into the home of the new

Green Revolution.

The Liberal Democrats have the thought-through, deliverable plan for that new Green Future – in place of the Dutch auction of fantasy dates for Britain to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions offered by the other parties. We will deliver a ten-year emergency programme to cut emissions substantially straight away, and phase out emissions from the remaining hard-to-treat sectors by 2045 at the latest.

Our first priorities in the next parliament will be:

- An emergency programme to insulate all Britain's homes by 2030, cutting emissions and fuel bills and ending fuel poverty.
- Investing in renewable power so that at least 80 per cent of UK electricity is generated from renewables by 2030 – and banning fracking for good.
- Protecting nature and the countryside, tackling biodiversity loss and planting 60 million trees a year to absorb carbon, protect wildlife and improve health.
- Investing in public transport, electrifying Britain's railways and ensuring that all new cars are electric by 2030.

Climate Action Now

The climate emergency can only be tackled effectively by ensuring that every relevant decision taken by national government, local councils, businesses, investors, communities and households makes progress towards the net zero objective. We will set a new legally binding target to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2045 at the latest, and implement a comprehensive climate action plan, cutting emissions across all sectors. To realise these goals, we will:

- Require all companies registered in the UK and listed on UK stock exchanges to set targets consistent with the Paris Agreement on climate change and to report on their implementation; and establish a general corporate duty of care for the environment and human rights (also see Better Business section p.21).
- Regulate financial services to encourage green investments, including requiring pension funds and managers to show that their portfolio investments are consistent with the Paris Agreement, and creating new powers for regulators to act if banks and other investors are not managing climate risks properly.
- Establish a Department for Climate Change and Natural Resources, appoint a cabinet-level Chief Secretary for Sustainability in the Treasury to coordinate government-wide action to make the economy sustainable resource-efficient and zero-carbon, and require every government agency to account for its contribution towards meeting climate targets.
- Establish UK and local Citizens' Climate Assemblies to engage the public in tackling the climate emergency.
- Create a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce a Zero Carbon Strategy, including plans for local energy, transport and land use, and devolve powers and funding to enable every council to implement it.
- Guarantee an Office of Environmental Protection that is fully independent of government, and possesses powers and resources to enforce compliance with climate and environmental targets.
- Increase government expenditure on climate and environmental objectives, reaching at least five per cent of the total within five years.
- Support investment and innovation in zero-carbon and resource-efficient infrastructure and technologies by creating a new Green Investment Bank and increasing funding for Innovate UK and new Catapult innovation and technology centres on farming and land use and on carbon dioxide removal.

- Implement the UK's G7 pledge to end fossil fuel subsidies by 2025, and provide Just Transition funding for areas and communities negatively affected by the transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Renewable Energy

Thanks to Liberal Democrat policies in government, the UK has made major strides in cutting emissions from power generation; wind power is now the cheapest form of electricity generation. Now we can go further: we aim to decarbonise the power sector completely, supporting renewables and household and community energy to create jobs and cut fossil fuel imports. We will:

- Accelerate the deployment of renewable power, providing more funding, removing the Conservatives' restrictions on solar and wind and building more interconnectors to guarantee security of supply; we aim to reach at least 80 per cent renewable electricity in the UK by 2030.
- Expand community and decentralised energy, support councils to develop local electricity generation and require all new homes to be fitted with solar panels.
- Ban fracking because of its negative impacts on climate change, the energy mix and the local environment.
- Support investment and innovation in cutting-edge energy technologies, including tidal and wave power, energy storage, demand response, smart grids and hydrogen.
- Provide an additional £12 billion over five years to support these commitments, and ensure that the National Infrastructure Commission, National Grid, the energy regulator Ofgem, and the Crown Estate work together to deliver our net zero climate objective.

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Warm Homes and Lower Energy Bills

Everyone should be able to afford to heat their home so that it is warm enough for them to live in. However, an estimated 2.5 million households in England live in fuel poverty, where they cannot afford to heat their homes to a decent standard partly due to poor insulation and heat loss – contributing to climate change and causing ill-health and early deaths. We will implement an emergency ten-year programme to reduce energy consumption from all buildings, cutting emissions and energy bills and ending fuel poverty – and generating employment – supported by investing over £6 billion a year on home insulation and zero-carbon heating by the fifth year of the Parliament. We will:

- Cut energy bills, end fuel poverty by 2025 and reduce emissions from buildings, including by providing free retrofits for low-income homes, piloting a new subsidised Energy-Saving Homes scheme, graduating Stamp Duty Land Tax by the energy rating of the property and reducing VAT on home insulation.
- Empower councils to develop community energy-saving projects, including delivering housing energy efficiency improvements street by street, which cuts costs.
- Require all new homes and non-domestic buildings to be built to a zero-carbon standard (where as much energy is generated on-site, through renewable sources, as is used), by 2021, rising to a more ambitious ('Passivhaus') standard by 2025.
- Increase minimum energy efficiency standards for privately rented properties

- and remove the cost cap on improvements.
- Adopt a Zero-Carbon Heat Strategy, including reforming the Renewable Heat Incentive, requiring the phased installation of heat pumps in homes and businesses off the gas grid, and piloting projects to determine the best future mix of zero-carbon heating solutions

Green Industry, Green Jobs and Green Products

Given the right support, British businesses have the chance to be world leaders in green technology. UK low-carbon businesses already have a combined turnover of £80 billion and directly employ 400,000 people, and under our proposals these will grow. We will provide support for innovation to cut energy and fossil fuel use in industrial processes – reducing emissions, cutting dependence on fossil fuel imports and generating jobs and prosperity. We will:

- Reduce emissions from industrial processes by supporting carbon capture and storage and new low-carbon processes for cement and steel production.
- Provide more advice to companies on cutting emissions, support the development of regional industrial clusters for zero-carbon innovation and increase the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund.
- Expand the market for green products and services with steadily higher green criteria in public procurement policy.
- End support from UK Export Finance for fossil fuel-related activities, and press for higher environmental standards for export credit agencies throughout the OECD.

The successful economies of the future will be those which adopt 'circular economy' techniques, cutting resource use, waste and pollution by maximising recovery, reuse, recycling and remanufacturing. This will cut costs for consumers and businesses, protect the environment and create new jobs and enterprises. We will introduce a Zero-Waste and Resource Efficiency Act to ensure that the UK moves towards a circular economy, including:

- Banning non-recyclable single-use plastics and replace them with affordable alternatives, aiming for their complete elimination within three years, as a first step towards ending the 'throwaway society' culture and an ambition to end plastic waste exports by 2030.
- Benefitting consumers through better product design for repairability, reuse and recycling, including extending the forthcoming EU 'right to repair' legislation for consumer goods, so helping small repair businesses and community groups combat 'planned obsolescence'.
- Introducing legally binding targets for reducing the consumption of key natural resources and other incentives for businesses to improve resource efficiency.
- Extending deposit return schemes for all food and drink bottles and containers, working with the devolved administrations to ensure consistency across the UK.
- Establishing a statutory waste recycling target of 70 per cent in England, extend separate food waste collections to at least 90 per cent of homes by 2024, and strengthen incentives to reduce packaging and reduce waste sent to landfill and incineration.

Saving Nature and the Countryside

A healthy natural environment, where people breathe clean air, drink clean water and enjoy the beauty of the natural world, lies at the heart of the society and the economy

Liberal Democrats want to create. Yet nature is under threat: unsustainable farming practices are depleting the soil and, together with air and water pollution, contributing to a rapid decline in the numbers of insects, birds and other animals. One in seven UK species are at risk of extinction.

We will protect the natural environment and reverse biodiversity loss at the same time as combating climate change. We will support farmers to protect and restore the natural environment alongside their critical roles in producing food, providing employment and promoting tourism, leisure and health and wellbeing. We will:

- Introduce a Nature Act to restore the natural environment through setting legally binding near-term and long-term targets for improving water, air, soil and biodiversity, and supported by funding streams of at least £18 billion over five years.
- Combat climate change, and benefit nature and people by coordinating the planting of 60 million trees a year and introducing requirements for the greater use of sustainably harvested wood in construction.
- Invest in large scale restoration of peatlands, heathland, native woodlands, saltmarshes, wetlands and coastal waters, helping to absorb carbon, protect against floods, improve water quality and protect habitats, including through piloting 'rewilding' approaches.
- Reduce basic agricultural support payments to the larger recipients and redeploy the savings to support the public goods that come from effective land management, including restoring nature and protecting the countryside, preventing flooding and combating climate change through measures to increase soil carbon and expand native woodland.
- Introduce a National Food Strategy, including the use of public procurement policy, to promote the production and consumption of healthy, sustainable and affordable food and cut down on food waste.
- Support producers by broadening the remit of the Groceries Code Adjudicator and supporting them with access to markets.
- Significantly increase the amount of accessible green space, including protecting up to a million acres, completing the coastal path, exploring a 'right to roam' for waterways and creating a new designation of National Nature Parks.
- Give the Local Green Space designation the force of law.
- Protect and restore England's lakes, rivers and wetlands, including through reform of water management and higher water efficiency standards, and establish a 'blue belt' of marine protected areas covering at least 50 per cent of UK waters by 2030, in partnership with UK overseas territories.
- Create a new 'British Overseas Ecosystems Fund' for large-scale environmental restoration projects in the UK Overseas Territories and sovereign bases, home to 94 per cent of our unique wildlife.
- Establish a £5 billion fund for flood prevention and climate adaptation over the course of the parliament to improve flood defences, and introduce high standards for flood resilience for buildings and infrastructure in flood risk areas.
- Ensure that sustainability lies at the heart of fisheries policy, rebuilding depleted fish stocks to achieve their former abundance. Fishers, scientists and conservationists should all be at the centre of a decentralised and regionalised fisheries management system. Immigration policy should also be flexible enough to ensure that both the catching and processing sectors have access to the labour they need.
- Increase the budget for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, ensuring that agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency are properly funded.

Improving Transport

Britain's transport systems are broken. Commuting by rail is expensive, unreliable and unpleasant, and away from the major commuter routes, buses, trams and trains are so infrequent and expensive that cars are essentially made a necessity. This in turn has made air pollution – mostly caused by cars – one of the biggest causes of preventable illness in the UK, causing at least 40,000 premature deaths a year and costing the NHS £15 billion. And surface transport is now the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK, with almost no progress in reducing them since 1990. The UK's share of international aviation and shipping emissions has risen by almost 80 per cent since 1990. Liberal Democrats will meet this challenge by:

- Investing in public transport, buses, trams and railways to enable people to travel more easily while reducing their impact on the environment.
- Placing a far higher priority on encouraging walking and cycling – the healthiest forms of transport.
- Accelerating the transition to ultra-low-emission transport – cars, buses and trains – through taxation, subsidy and regulation.

Together these steps will tackle the clean air crisis, meet the challenge of climate change, improve people's health, stimulate local and regional prosperity and develop British zero-carbon industries, with benefits for jobs, growth and exports.

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Clean and Green

To achieve our net-zero climate target by 2045, we aim to reduce emissions from surface transport to near zero; at the same time the transition to electric vehicles and from private to public transport will drastically cut air pollution. Emissions from the UK's share of international aviation are much more difficult to tackle; we need to accelerate the development of new technologies and cut demand for flying, particularly from the 15 per cent of individuals who take 70 per cent of flights. We will:

- Accelerate the rapid take-up of electric vehicles by reforming vehicle taxation, cutting VAT on EVs to 5 per cent and increasing the rate of installation of charging points, including residential on-street points and ultra-fast chargers at service stations. We will ensure that, by 2030, every new car and small van sold is electric.
- Pass a Clean Air Act, based on World Health Organisation guidelines, enforced by a new Air Quality Agency. The Act will enshrine the legal right to unpolluted air wherever you live.
- Extend Ultra-Low Emission Zones to ten more towns and cities in England and ensure that all private hire vehicles and new buses licensed to operate in urban areas are ultra-low-emission or zero-emission vehicles by 2025; we will provide £2 billion to support this transformation.
- Shift more freight from road to rail, including electrifying lines leading from major ports as an urgent priority, and amend the current HGV road user levy to take account of carbon emissions.
- Support innovation in zero-emission technologies, including batteries and hydrogen fuel cells, supplementing government funding with a new Clean Air Fund from industry.
- Reduce the climate impact of flying by reforming the taxation of international

flights to focus on those who fly the most, while reducing costs for those who take one or two international return flights per year, placing a moratorium on the development of new runways (net) in the UK, opposing any expansion of Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted and any new airport in the Thames Estuary, and introducing a zero-carbon fuels blending requirement for domestic flights.

Reducing the Need for Car Travel

Liberal Democrats will invest in public transport, improving its reliability and affordability, reform the planning systems to reduce the need to travel and promote cycling and walking. We will:

- Give new powers to local authorities and communities to improve transport in their areas, including the ability to introduce network-wide ticketing, like in London.
- Implement, in cooperation with local authorities, light rail schemes for trams and tram-trains where these are appropriate solutions to public transport requirements.
- Restore bus routes and add new routes where there is local need; we will provide £4.5 billion over five years for this programme.
- Introduce a nationwide strategy to promote walking and cycling, including the creation of dedicated safe cycling lanes, increasing spending per head five-fold to reach 10 per cent of the transport budget.
- Build on the successful Local Sustainable Transport Fund established by the Liberal Democrats when in government, and workplace travel plans, to reduce the number of cars – particularly single-occupancy cars – used for commuting, and encourage the development of car-sharing schemes and car clubs and autonomous vehicles for public use.
- Amend planning rules to promote sustainable transport and land use.

Fixing Britain's Railways

There is enormous scope to improve Britain's railways, providing reliable and affordable train services and cutting emissions. The Tories' and Labour's ideological obsessions – the former with privatisation, the latter with nationalisation – only serve to get in the way of making real improvements through investment and regulation. We will improve the railways, reform the franchising system and improve services to customers. We will:

- Freeze rail fares for commuters and season ticket holders for a parliament, while we fix our railways.
- Extend Britain's rail network, improve stations, reopen smaller stations and restore twin-track lines to major routes.
- Convert the rail network to ultra-low-emission technology (electric or hydrogen) by 2035, and provide funding for light rail and trams.
- Support High Speed 2, Northern Powerhouse Rail, East-West Rail and Crossrail 2, but ensure far tighter financial controls and increased accountability to ensure that these projects are value for money, and address problems with implementation to ensure that HS2 opens as early as possible to meet our decarbonisation goals while minimising the destruction of precious UK habitats and woodland.
- Start a revolution in rail franchising by opening up the bidding process to public

- sector companies, local or combined authorities, not-for-profits and mutuals – which have the potential to deliver much better services than private operators.
- Build into new rail franchise agreements a stronger focus on customers, including investment in new stations, lines and modern trains.
 - Create a new Railways Agency to oversee the operations of the railway network, removing the Department for Transport from day-to-day decision-making.
 - Be far more proactive in sanctioning and ultimately sacking train operators if they fail to provide a high-quality public service to their customers.
 - Improve the experience of people who rely on the railways for work by investing in commuter routes and the integration of rail, bus and cycle routes.
 - Fix the broken fares and ticketing system so that it provides better value for money.
 - Improve disabled access to public transport via the Access for All programme.

Animal Welfare

Liberal Democrats believe that all possible steps should be taken to promote animal welfare and prevent animal suffering, with better protection for animals, and full regard for animal welfare. We will:

- Enshrine the principle of animal sentience in UK law to ensure that due regard is paid to animal welfare in policymaking.
- Introduce stronger penalties for animal cruelty offences, increasing the maximum sentencing from six months to five years, and ensure that the National Wildlife Crime Unit is properly funded.
- Ban the sale of real fur, end the use of primates as pets, clamp down on illegal pet imports and establish an independent regulatory body for horse welfare to prevent the abuse and avoidable deaths of racehorses.
- Improve standards of animal health and welfare in agriculture, including a ban on caged hens, and promote the responsible use of antimicrobials.
- Develop safe, effective, humane, and evidence-based ways of controlling bovine TB, including by investing to produce workable vaccines.
- Minimise the use of animals in scientific experimentation, including by funding research into alternatives.
- Work within the EU to ensure that future trade agreements require high environmental and animal welfare standards, and legislate to ban the importing of hunting trophies where the hunting does not contribute to environmental protection.

Our Plan for Health and Social Care

Everyone should be able to live a healthy life with the support they need in their local community. That means properly investing in the NHS and social care, doing more across government to promote wellbeing and to reduce inequality at every stage of life. It means making the shift from healthcare that kicks in only when people are ill to systems of wellbeing that help them to stay healthy and minimise levels of physical and mental ill-health.

Under the Conservatives our NHS and social care services are in a state of crisis. The average wait for patients for a routine GP appointment is now more than two weeks and waiting times are rising in A&E and for operations. Health inequalities are widening and life expectancy stalling, and we have one of the worst rates of

depression in the EU.

The Conservatives have failed the people who rely on health and care services. Cuts have left hospitals and community facilities crumbling and struggling with overwhelming debts, and they have damaged the services that keep us healthy. Labour's approach is no better: their plan for the NHS is a backward-looking, top-down reorganisation which would leave it in chaos.

Liberal Democrats are the only party which is forward-thinking and committed to pursuing the preventative measures that will secure the future of the NHS and Social Care. We recognise that a well-trained and well-funded workforce lies at the heart of making sure that people can receive the care they need. We cannot continue to leave our NHS and care staff undervalued, overstretched and demoralised.

We have a bold plan to urgently invest in the workforce and facilities and to deliver equality for mental and physical health. A Liberal Democrat government will build a better health and care system.

Our first priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Raising £7 billion a year in additional revenue by putting 1p on Income Tax, with this money to be ringfenced for spending on the NHS and social care.
- Transforming mental health by treating it with the same urgency as physical health.
- Reforming the Health and Social Care Act as recommended by the NHS, to make the NHS work in a more efficient and joined-up way, and to end the automatic tendering of services.

Leaving the European Union would pose serious threats to the sustainability of the NHS and Social Care systems. It would severely threaten the scope to recruit or retain staff from elsewhere in Europe (a problem which will be made worse by the Conservatives' proposed 'nurse tax'). It risks potential delays to medicines, cancer tests, and treatments using radioisotopes. If Donald Trump has his way, it means increased access by US corporations to services currently provided by the NHS and the UK drugs market. Above all it means a long-term loss of financial resources as a result of reduced UK economic growth. Only a Liberal Democrat government can be trusted to avoid these risks by stopping Brexit.

Funding for Health and Social Care

Health and social care services are in a state of crisis. After years of underinvestment our hospitals are crumbling and there is now a staggering £6.5 billion backlog of repairs, meaning that many of our hospitals are not fit for purpose and lack money even to repair leaky roofs and replace windows. The workforce feels undervalued and services are struggling to retain staff. Local authorities have been starved of resources, and are using up their reserves to try and cope with the demand for social care. More than a million people are unable to get the care they need. Too often, people are left stranded in hospital after they finish their treatment and no longer need to be there because the follow-up care and support they need to go home is not available in the community.

Liberal Democrats are the only party with a long-term plan for health and care services: Labour and Conservatives make short-term promises but have no long-term vision for ensuring the sustainability of these services. We know that any party seeking to lead the country at this election should be prepared to take bold action to safeguard health and social care. This isn't about doing the easiest thing, it is about doing what is right and what is essential. To tackle the immediate problem, we will:

- Raise £7 billion a year additional revenue which will be ring-fenced to be spent

only on NHS and social care services. This revenue will be generated from a 1p rise on the basic, higher and additional rates of Income Tax (this revenue will be neither levied nor spent in Scotland.)

- Use this cash to relieve the crisis in social care, tackle urgent workforce shortages, and to invest in mental health and prevention services. This represents the most efficient and effective way of spending these extra resources – ensuring they will have the greatest impact on the quality of care patients receive.
- Also use £10 billion of our capital fund to make necessary investments in equipment, hospitals, community, ambulance and mental health services buildings, to bring them into the 21st century.

In the longer term, to put the funding of health and care on a sounder footing we will:

- Commission the development of a dedicated, progressive Health and Care Tax, offset by other tax reductions, on the basis of wide consultation and extensive engagement with the public. The intention is to bring together spending on both services into a collective budget and set out transparently, on people's payslips, what the Government is spending on health and social care.
- Establish a cross-party health and social care convention that builds on the existing body of work from previous conventions, select committees and the 2018 citizens' assembly to reach agreement on the long-term sustainable funding of a joined-up system of health and social care. We will invite patients' groups, professionals, the public and the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to be a part of this work. Introducing a cap on the cost of care as provided for in the Care Act but not so far delivered by the Conservatives would be a key starting point for Liberal Democrat participants.
- Introduce a statutory independent budget monitoring body for health and care, similar to the Office for Budget Responsibility. This would report every three years on how much money the system needs to deliver safe and sustainable treatment and care, and how much is needed to meet the costs of projected increases in demand and any new initiatives – to ensure any changes in services are properly costed and affordable.

Our ultimate objective will be to bring together NHS, Social Care and public health seamlessly – pooling budgets in every area and supporting integrated care systems. We want to see services that work in a more joined-up way for the people who depend on them and with local democratic accountability and transparency.

Fixing Mental Health Services

Physical and mental health should be treated equally in the NHS. In government, we fought tirelessly to bring this about and are proud of the strides forward that we made by legislating to give mental and physical health equality under the law. But we know that not enough resources reach front line mental health services and that in the fight for parity of esteem, there is still a very long way to go to achieve real equality for mental health. Our plan prioritises early intervention to prevent people from experiencing a mental health crisis and to minimise the number and duration of in-patient stays. This means ensuring all young people can access support quickly. We will:

- Ring-fence funding from the 1p Income Tax rise to provide additional investment in mental health.
- Introduce further mental health maximum waiting time standards, starting with children's services, services for people with eating disorders, and severe and

- enduring conditions. We want to ensure that all children and young people with a diagnosable condition receive NHS treatment (currently only 35 per cent do).
- Increase access to a broader range and number of clinically effective talking therapies so that hundreds of thousands more people can receive this support, with equal access for older people, BAME and LGBT+ patients, and people with autism or learning disabilities.
 - Make prescriptions for people with chronic mental health conditions available for free on the NHS, as part of our commitment to review the entire schedule of exemptions for prescription charges, which has not been fully updated since 1968 and contains many anomalies.
 - Transform perinatal mental health support for those who are pregnant, new mothers and those who have experienced miscarriage or stillbirth, and help them get early care when needed.
 - Ensure every new mother gets a dedicated maternal postnatal appointment as well as introducing other measures to tackle under-diagnosis of maternal physical and mental health problems.
 - Implement all the recommendations of the Wessely review of the Mental Health Act, including bringing forward the necessary investment to modernise and improve inpatient settings and ambulances. We will apply the principle of 'care not containment' to mental health, while ensuring an emergency bed is always available if needed.
 - Ensure that no one in crisis is turned away, improving integration between mental health trusts, local authorities and hospitals, to promote a holistic approach to improving mental health services. We will work to make mental health crisis services 24-hour, including mental health liaison teams in all hospitals, and ending the use of police cells for people facing a mental health crisis.
 - Ensure those admitted to hospital for mental ill-health are able to be treated close to home for all but the most specialist mental health services, minimising the use of hospital admissions through high-quality community and housing support for people who don't need an admission.
 - Ensure that all frontline public service professionals, including in schools and universities, receive better training in mental health, and add a requirement for mental health first aiders in the Health and Safety First Aid Regulations.
 - Fully introduce Sir Stephen Bubb's 'Time For Change' report recommendations and ensure that Assessment and Treatment Units are closed urgently. Too many people with profound learning disability or autism are being detained in unacceptable institutions and it is disgraceful that the Transforming Care closure programme has not been implemented by the Conservatives.
 - Stop the cliff edge of young people transitioning to adult services and ensure uninterrupted care.
 - Establish a Student Mental Health Charter which will require all universities and colleges to ensure a good level of mental health provisions and services for students.
 - Tackle stigma against mental ill-health through investment in public education including Time to Talk.
 - Require that a fair proportion of all public funding for health research should be focused on research into mental ill-health, including research into the different mental health needs of different communities within the UK such as BAME and LGBT+ people.
 - Improve mental health support and treatment within the criminal justice system and ensure continuity of mental health care and addiction treatment in prison and the community.
 - Regard every suicide as preventable. We will take an evidence led approach to

prevention, making it easier for people at risk to get the help they need, and equipping more members of the public with the skills and confidence to talk about suicide.

- Ensure that LGBT+ inclusive mental health services receive funding and support.
- Develop a scheme to reward employers who invest in the mental wellbeing of their employees, piloting reduced business rates for employers who support employees' mental wellbeing and provide mental health first aid training to staff.

We know that there is a strong link between financial debt and suicide, with over 100,000 people in problem debt attempting suicide every year. A Liberal Democrat government will build a more compassionate culture towards those in debt by ending threatening debt collection practices and stopping firms profiting from consumers' poor mental health.

There are 340,000 problem gamblers in the UK including some 55,000 children aged 11 to 16. The Liberal Democrats will introduce further measures to protect individuals, their families and communities from problem gambling. We will:

- Introduce a compulsory levy on gambling companies to fund research, education and treatment of problem gambling.
- Ban the use of credit cards for gambling.
- Restrict gambling advertising.
- Establish a Gambling Ombudsman.

Access to Care

Most people's experience of the NHS is their local GP, or the nurses and support staff who visit them at home or work in community clinics. We know that people want care closer to home and that this is better for patients and helps to reduce pressure on hospitals. The Conservatives have demoralised the community health workforce and failed to maintain outdated premises and equipment. Our health and social care services' greatest resource is their staff, but we know the NHS and social care workforce are subject to immense pressure, causing too many to leave. Liberal Democrats will take the action needed to recruit and retain the staff needed to deliver services. We will:

- End the GP shortfall by 2025 by both training more GPs and making greater appropriate use of nurses, physiotherapists and pharmacists, and also phone or video appointments, where clinically suitable. The Conservative government has created a scandalous situation where the average wait for a routine GP appointment is now more than two weeks. They have again promised to train more GPs, but it is difficult to put faith in this when they have completely failed to deliver their previous similar pledge, because of their approach to NHS workforce planning, Brexit and NHS funding and morale generally. We will tackle all these problems. We want health professionals to have time to talk and to offer holistic care that is linked in with social prescribing within local communities. We must also make sure they are based in premises that are fit-for-purpose and equipped with modern technology and well-connected to other parts of the healthcare system.
- Support GPs, nurses, physiotherapists, mental health and other professionals to work together across their local areas to provide multi-disciplinary health and care services, to improve appointments outside of normal working hours, including mobile services.

- Review the NHS's future needs for all staff, and produce a national workforce strategy, taking the long view and matching training places to future needs. We need to do more to retain staff as well as to train them. We will take a 'what works' approach to improving retention including continuing professional development, better support, and more flexible working and careers. This will help to retain staff through more flexible working, so that we never again experience a shortage of the GPs, hospital doctors, dentists, nurses and other professionals that the NHS needs. We will listen and act on the pensions crisis that is driving away our most experienced clinicians and worsening waiting times and the workforce crisis.
- Target extra help for nursing students, starting with bursaries for specialties where shortages are most acute such as mental health and learning disability nursing, linked to clinical placements in areas that are particularly understaffed.
- Attract and support talented professionals from countries with developed health systems, with an ethical recruitment policy in line with World Health Organization guidance, and make the current registration process more flexible and accessible without lowering standards. In particular we will look to attract staff back from EU member states, encouraging them to once again come and work in our public services.
- Encourage healthcare professionals to work in areas where there are shortages, especially inner city and remote rural areas, through our Patient Premium – which would give incentive payments to clinicians.
- Implement the recommendations of Roger Kline's report into the lack of diversity in senior management in the NHS and commission a strategic analysis of racial discrimination in the NHS.
- Address continuing inequalities in health services access faced by same-sex couples, and continue to improve LGBT+ healthcare overall.

We need services that fit around people's lives, not ones that force them to fit their lives around the care they need. This will become increasingly important as our population ages and the number of people living with long-term conditions continues to grow. We must move away from a fragmented system to an integrated service with more joined-up care, so that people can design services for their own individual needs. Services for local people should be accountable to them, and the NHS needs to do more to achieve this. As local areas continue to develop new ways of partnership and joint working suitable to their area, we will encourage them to develop ways to become more accountable to local people. We will:

- Support the changes to the Health and Social Care Act recommended by the NHS, with the objective of making the NHS work in a more efficient and joined-up way, and to end the automatic tendering of services.
- Move towards single place-based budgets for health and social care – encouraging greater collaboration between the local NHS and Local Authorities in commissioning. We will particularly encourage Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Councils to collaborate on commissioning, including further use of pooled budgets, joint appointments and joint arrangements, and encourage emerging governance structures for Integrated Care Systems to include local government, and be accountable to them.
- Support the creation of a new Professional Body for Care Workers, to promote clear career pathways with ongoing training and development, and improved pay structures.
- Introduce a new requirement for professional regulation of all care home managers, who would also be required to have a relevant qualification. For care staff, we will set a target that 70 per cent of care staff should have an NVQ level

2 or equivalent (currently levels are around 50 per cent). We will provide support for ongoing training of care workers to improve retention and raise the status of caring.

- Provide more choice at the end of life, and move towards free end-of-life social care, whether people spend their last days at home or in a hospice.

The number of family carers is rising. Carers are unsung heroes; we need to do more to help them. We will:

- Introduce a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks for unpaid carers, and require councils to make regular contact with carers to offer support and signpost services.
- Provide a package of carer benefits such as free leisure centre access, free bus travel for young carers, and self-referral to socially prescribed activities and courses.
- Raise the amount people can earn before losing their Carer's Allowance from £123 to £150 a week, and reduce the number of hours' care per week required to qualify for it.

Help to Stay Healthy

It is better for people and for the NHS if we keep people healthy in the first place, rather than just waiting until people develop illnesses and come for treatment, but with 40 per cent of NHS spending on diseases that are preventable, we need to do more to support people to lead more active and healthy lives, and to help to improve the mental health and wellbeing. This is everybody's business – in our communities, places of work and education; the NHS, social care and public health can't do it alone.

Our understanding of what causes physical and mental ill health is evolving all of the time. It is clear that there are strong links between illness and both environmental and social factors. We know that poor housing, unsafe streets, poor air quality, unhealthy diets and financial uncertainty can create the conditions for people to become both physically and mentally unwell. We will:

- Publish a National Wellbeing Strategy, which puts better health and wellbeing for all at the heart of government. Ministers from all departments will be responsible for implementing the strategy.
- Pursue a Health in All Policies approach, as recommended by the World Health Organization. This means that national and local decision making, policies and interventions will only take place after the full impact on people's mental and physical health has been fully assessed.
- Keep public health within local government, where it is effectively joined-up with preventive community services. We will re-instate the funding that was cut from public health budgets by the Conservatives and join up services across public health and the NHS.
- Introduce a new statutory requirement for public health interventions evaluated as cost effective by NICE to be available to qualifying people, within three months of publication of guidance.
- Develop a strategy to tackle childhood obesity including restricting the marketing of junk food to children, and closing loopholes in the Soft Drinks Industry Levy. We will extend it to include juice- and milk-based drinks that are high in added sugar.
- Guarantee that every child who is eligible for free school meals has access to at least an hour a day of free activities to improve their health and wellbeing. Local authorities will be funded through the public health grant to deliver the

'Wellbeing Hour' according to local needs, for example through voluntary organisations or after-school clubs. We recognise the importance of active play to children and the need for this to be supported.

- Require labelling for food products, in a readable font size, and publication of information on calorie, fat, sugar and salt content in restaurants and takeaways.
- Restrict how products high in fat, salt and sugar are marketed and advertised by multiple retailers.
- Reduce smoking rates by introducing a new levy on tobacco companies to contribute to the costs of health care and smoking cessation services.
- Legislate for the right to unpolluted air, and take urgent action to reduce pollution especially from traffic.
- Introduce minimum unit pricing for alcohol, taking note of the impact of the policy in Scotland. We will also ensure universal access to addiction treatment.
- Fund public information campaigns to tackle stigmas within specific communities.
- Address the scandal of women with learning disabilities dying an average 20 years younger, setting a national target for reducing this gap. We will ensure people with learning disabilities can access screening, prevention, health and care services fairly.
- Review on the basis of evidence any unscientific and discriminatory practices aimed solely at LGBT+ people, such as around blood donations.
- Ensure Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention is fully available to all who need it on the NHS.

The prohibitionist attitude to drug use of both Labour and Conservative Governments over decades has been driven by fear rather than evidence and has failed to tackle the social and medical problems that misuse of drugs can cause to individuals and their communities. Liberal Democrats will take a different approach, and reform access to cannabis through a regulated cannabis market in UK, with a robust approach to licensing, drawing on emerging evidence on models from the US and Canada. To combat the harm done by drugs, we will:

- Move the departmental lead on drugs policy to the Department of Health and Social Care, and, crucially, invest in more addiction services and support for drug users.
- Divert people arrested for possession of drugs for personal use into treatment, and imposing civil penalties rather than imprisonment.
- Help to break the grip of the criminal gangs by introducing a legal, regulated market for cannabis. We will introduce limits on the potency levels and permit cannabis to be sold through licensed outlets to adults over the age of 18.

Our approach will support and encourage more clinical trials of cannabis for medicinal use to establish a clear evidence base. In the meantime, we will allow those who feel that cannabis helps to manage their pain to do so without fear of criminal prosecution.

We believe that everyone has a right to make independent decisions over their reproductive health without interference by the state, and that access to reproductive healthcare is a human right. We will:

- Decriminalise abortion across the UK while retaining the existing 24-week limit and legislate for access to abortion facilities within Northern Ireland.
- Enforce safe zones around abortion clinics, make intimidation or harassment of abortion service users and staff outside clinics, or on common transport routes to these services, illegal.
- Fund abortion clinics to provide their services free of charge to service users

regardless of nationality or residency.

We will act on the recommendations of the Public Inquiry into Infected Blood, ensuring a just settlement for victims and their families

Our Plan to Build a Fair Society

People should have enough money to keep a roof over their heads, buy food, heat their home, access services and opportunities online, or afford a simple bus journey to visit or care for family. But this is sadly beyond the reach of too many people: life has become unaffordable. While the UK is one of the world's richest countries, the benefits and opportunities that should follow from that are felt increasingly unevenly across our communities. A fifth of the country live in poverty, one and half million people are destitute and can't afford the most basic essentials – the situation is so bad that the UN felt the need to send its Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty to the UK to assess the situation.

Labour and the Conservatives are both unable to tackle these challenges. The Conservatives have intentionally designed the welfare system for a traditional family with a main breadwinner and two children, which is entirely out of step with the modern world. Labour have a nostalgic attachment to a nine-to-five working life that does not suit modern life either, as increasingly households have two earners and people want to be able to work flexibly.

Liberal Democrats are the only party with a plan to tackle poverty and inequality that makes sense in the modern world. A plan that will mean a social security system that provides a real safety net for those that need it, and effectively supports people to get back into work; a plan that will support disabled people and help them find meaningful work that they can reasonably do; a plan that will rebalance the economy and help rural and coastal communities thrive; a plan that will ensure that – wherever people are in the country – they have access to the services that they need. We will build a future in which people are supported in hard times and in which opportunity is spread across the whole country.

The importance of tackling poverty and inequality goes beyond ensuring that life is affordable: it is the poorest and most vulnerable people and areas of the country that are most impacted by crime. We believe that preventing crime and ensuring people feel safe are crucial to achieving social justice. We want to build a police force that is fit for the 21st century, in which police officers feel valued and able to focus on cutting crime.

Liberal Democrats are the only party capable of building a criminal justice system that can effectively prevent crime. For 25 years, both the Conservatives and Labour have been looking to the failed approaches of the past and competing to seem tough on crime, without being willing to take the preventative measures that actually work. We will build safe communities in which people do not need to fear crime. Our plan for the police will see investment in community policing and a public health approach to serious violence. Instead of wasting money locking people up on short sentences that don't work, we will spend it on the things that really do prevent crime.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Investing £6 billion per year to make the benefits system work for people who need it and reducing the wait for the first benefits payment from five weeks to five days.
- Introducing a principle of universal access to basic services: starting by building 100,000 social homes a year, ending rough sleeping and bringing in a new legal right to food.

- Creating a £50 billion Regional Rebalancing Programme to address the historic investment disparities between our nations and regions.
- Adopting a public health approach to serious violence: restoring community policing and youth services and supporting them to work together with other services to reverse the spread of violence.

A Safety Net that Works

The social security system is not working as it should: it is driving people further into poverty and forcing families to rely on foodbanks to get by. The Conservatives have designed the welfare system based on their backward-looking view of work and families and are making the matter worse. Liberal Democrats are looking to the future and will build a system that works for the modern world to support those who need it and help people back into work. We will:

- Make the welfare system work by:
 - Reducing the wait for the first payment from five weeks to five days.
 - Tackling child poverty by removing the two-child limit and the benefits cap.
 - Making work pay by increasing work allowances and introducing a second earner work allowance.
- Establish a legal right to food to enshrine in law the government's responsibility to ensure that existing and new public policy is audited for its impact on food security.
- Reform Universal Credit to be more supportive of the self-employed.
- Increase Local Housing Allowance in line with average rents in an area.
- Abolish the bedroom tax and introduce positive incentives for people to downsize.
- Ensure that everyone gets the help they need by separating employment support from benefits administration and increase spending on training and education.
- Introduce an incentive-based scheme to replace the current sanctions system, which does not encourage people into work, penalises people with mental health issues and deters people from claiming support.
- Reverse the cuts to Employment Support Allowance for those in the work-related activity group.
- End Work Capability Assessments and replace them with a new system that is run by local authorities and based on real-world tests.
- Reinstate the Independent Living Fund.
- Radically overhaul the Bereavement Allowance, slashed by the Conservatives, so that widows and widowers receive far more support and extend the payments to unmarried couples when a parent dies.
- Aim to end fuel poverty by 2025 by providing free energy retrofits for low-income homes as part of our emergency programme to reduce energy consumption from all the UK's buildings.

Support for Pensioners

Everybody should have enough to live on when they retire, but low wages and underemployment mean that people are not able to save as much for their retirement as they need. Because people are living longer – meaning that their pensions need to last for 20, 30 or even 40 years – many people find themselves in an even more

vulnerable position. Liberal Democrats are looking to the future and will build a country that is the best place in the world to save for, and enjoy, retirement. We will:

- Retain the Triple Lock on the basic state pension, so that it rises in line with the highest of wages, prices or 2.5 per cent.
- Ensure that the women born in the 1950s are properly compensated for the failure of government to properly notify them of changes to the state pension age, in line with the recommendations of the parliamentary ombudsman.
- Address continuing inequalities in pensions law for those in same-sex relationships.

Access to Affordable Housing

People are struggling to afford good homes in in the right location: house prices are too high and the possibility of owning a home seems remote for many people; the private rental market is expensive and insecure; and there are not enough homes for social rent to meet demand. We need to build 300,000 homes per year just to meet current demand, but are barely building half that amount. The Conservatives, looking back to the 1980s, have tried to solve the problem of unaffordable homes by extending Right to Buy, but that has only served to deplete stock and deepen the crisis in social housing. Liberal Democrats are looking to the future and will oversee a substantial building programme to ensure that everybody has a safe and secure home. We will:

- Build at least 100,000 homes for social rent each year and ensure that total housebuilding increases to 300,000 each year.
- Help finance the large increase in the building of social homes with investment from our £130 billion capital infrastructure budget.
- Build new houses to zero-carbon standards and cut fuel bills through a ten-year programme to reduce energy consumption from all the UK's buildings.
- Devolve full control of Right to Buy to local councils.

To support people to find and keep homes of their own we will:

- Help people who cannot afford a deposit by introducing a new Rent to Own model for social housing where rent payments give tenants an increasing stake in the property, owning it outright after 30 years.
- Allow local authorities to increase council tax by up to 500 per cent where homes are being bought as second homes with a stamp duty surcharge on overseas residents purchasing such properties.

To reform the private rental sector, we will:

- Help young people into the rental market by establishing a new Help to Rent scheme to provide government-backed tenancy deposit loans for all first-time renters under 30.
- Promote longer tenancies of three years or more with an inflation-linked annual rent increase built in, to give tenants security and limit rent hikes.
- Improve protections against rogue landlords through mandatory licensing.

To improve social renting, we will:

- Set clearer standards for homes that are socially rented.
- Require complaints to be dealt with in a timely manner.
- Proactively enforce the regulations that are intended to protect social renters.
- Fully recognise tenant panels so that renters have a voice in landlord governance.

End Rough Sleeping

Nobody should have to spend a night sleeping on the streets. However rough sleeping has been increasing since the 2008 recession and is one of the most visible signs of increasing poverty and inequality. Liberal Democrats will end rough sleeping within five years. To do this, we will:

- Urgently publish a cross-Whitehall plan to end all forms of homelessness.
- Exempt groups of homeless people, and those at risk of homelessness, from the Shared Accommodation Rate.
- Make providers of asylum support accommodation subject to a statutory duty to refer people leaving asylum support accommodation who are at risk of homelessness to the local housing authority.
- Introduce a 'somewhere safe to stay' legal duty to ensure that everyone who is at risk of sleeping rough is provided with emergency accommodation and an assessment of their needs.
- Ensure sufficient financial resources for local authorities to deliver the Homelessness Reduction Act and provide accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse.
- Legislate for longer term tenancies and limits on annual rent increases.
- Scrap the Vagrancy Act, so that rough sleeping is no longer criminalised.

Rural and Coastal Communities

People in rural and coastal areas should be able to work and live locally, to have access to a well-funded and integrated transport network and to have equal access to the new technology that is shaping modern life. This, however, is far from the current reality: a proliferation of second homes and holiday cottages means that there is a shortage of affordable homes for the people that make communities work – teachers, nurses, carers, agricultural workers, police officers, and shopkeepers, among others; transport is usually limited to an expensive, infrequent and unreliable bus service; broadband and mobile services aren't fit for purpose; and people have limited access to services. Our plan is to build thriving communities which are innovative, flexible, resilient and prepared for the future. We will:

- Set up a £2 billion Rural Services Fund to enable the co-location of services in local hubs around existing local infrastructure.
- Invest in bus services by:
 - Substantially increasing funding for buses, enabling local authorities to restore old routes and open new ones.
 - Supporting rural bus services and encouraging alternatives to conventional bus services where they are not viable.
 - Encouraging local authorities to use their new powers under the Bus Services Act, including franchising powers and repealing the rule preventing local councils from running their own bus companies.
 - Providing funding to accelerate the transition to electric buses.
- Ensure that all households and businesses have access to superfast broadband (30Mbps download and 6Mbps upload).
- Invest £2 billion in innovative solutions to ensure the provision of high-speed broadband across the UK, working with local authorities and providing grants to help areas replicate the success of existing community-led projects.
- Invest in mobile data infrastructure and expand it to cover all homes.

- Launch a National Fund for Coastal Change, to enable local authorities to properly manage their changing coastlines.
- Reform planning to ensure developers are required to provide essential local infrastructure from affordable homes to schools, surgeries and roads alongside new homes.

A Public Health Approach to Violence

People should feel safe in their homes and on their streets. But this is not how it is for too many people today: knife crime has increased by over 75 per cent since 2015; homicides are at their highest rate for a decade; robberies and thefts are increasing and almost all go unsolved; and there are more and more places in the country where people simply don't see police officers. The Conservatives, having unnecessarily cut police funding in England and Wales, are now trying to seem tough on crime without actually doing what is needed to prevent it. We understand that the situation needs more than tough talk: our plan means more police, properly supported by the government and focused on the community policing that prevents crime and makes people feel safe while investing in the services that will help people build lives free from crime. We will:

- Invest £1 billion to restore community policing, enough for two new police officers in every ward.
- Adopt a public health approach to the epidemic of youth violence: identifying risk factors and treating them, rather than just focusing on the symptoms. This means police, teachers, health professionals, youth workers and social services all working closely together to prevent young people falling prey to gangs and violence.
- Invest in youth services. We will provide a £500m ringfenced youth services fund to local authorities to repair the damage done to youth services and enable them to deliver a wider range of services, reach more young people and improve training for youth workers.
- Embed Trauma-informed Youth Intervention Specialists in all Major Trauma Centres.
- Introduce a target of one hour for handover of people suffering from mental health crisis from police to mental health services and support the police to achieve adequate levels of training in mental health response.
- Fully fund an immediate two per cent pay-rise for police officers to support recruitment and retention, and future pay rises in line with recommendations from the independent Police Remuneration Review Body.
- Properly resource the National Crime Agency to combat serious and organised crime, and tackle modern slavery and human trafficking through proactive, intelligence-led enforcement of labour market standards.
- Create a new Online Crime Agency to effectively tackle illegal content and activity online, such as personal fraud, revenge porn and threats and incitement to violence on social media.
- End the disproportionate use of Stop and Search.
- Prevent violence against women and girls and domestic abuse, and support survivors, by:
 - Ratifying and bringing into law the Istanbul Convention.
 - Legislating for a statutory definition of domestic abuse that includes its effects on children.
 - Expanding the number of refuges and rape crisis centres to meet demand.

- Ensuring sustainable grant-funding for specialist independent support services.
- Giving local authorities the duty and funding to provide accommodation and support for survivors of abuse.
- Establishing a national rape crisis helpline.
- Ensuring access to special measures for survivors in all courts and preventing direct cross-examination of survivors by their abusers.
- Replace Police and Crime Commissioners with accountable Police Boards made up of local councillors.
- Stop Brexit and maintain the European crime-fighting tools that keep us all safe, including: Europol, the European Arrest Warrant and direct access to shared police databases.

Reducing Reoffending

Prisons should be places of rehabilitation: when people leave them they should be ready to reintegrate into society with work and a place to live. But, the prison system is in crisis and not delivering this: prisons are overcrowded and understaffed and riots, drug use, suicide and extreme violence have all become far too common. For decades, Labour and Conservative governments have repeated the same failed policies, desperate to appear tough on crime while failing to properly provide the services that help people build lives free from crime. Only the Liberal Democrats have a vision for making the justice system work. Instead of wasting money locking people up on short sentences that don't work, we will spend it on the things that actually prevent crime. We will protect people from becoming victims of crime by focusing on what works to stop re-offending. We will:

- Transform prisons into places of rehabilitation and recovery by recruiting 2,000 more prison officers and improving the provision of training, education and work opportunities.
- Reduce the number of people unnecessarily in prison, including by: introducing a presumption against short prison sentences; ending prison sentences for the possession of drugs for personal use; and increasing the use of tough community sentences and restorative justice where appropriate.
- Establish a Women's Justice Board and provide specialist training for all staff in contact with women in the criminal justice system.
- Reduce the overrepresentation of people from BAME backgrounds throughout the criminal justice system, including by:
 - Uniformly recording data on ethnicity across the criminal justice system and publishing complete data to allow analysis and scrutiny.
 - Introducing a principle of "explain or reform": if the criminal justice system cannot explain disparities between ethnic groups, then it must be reformed to address them.
 - Promoting greater diversity in the criminal justice system by ensuring that the police, prison service and judiciary all adopt ambitious targets for improving the diversity of their workforce and requiring regular reports on progress to parliament.
- Improve and properly fund the supervision of offenders in the community, with far greater coordination between the prison service, probation service providers, the voluntary and private sectors and local authorities, achieving savings in the high costs of reoffending.
- Ensure that all prison-leavers have a suitably timed release and are supported with suitable accommodation, a bank account and employment or training, and

- are registered with a local GP.
- Improve mental health support and treatment within the criminal justice system and ensure continuity of mental health care and addiction treatment in prison and the community.
- Reform criminal record disclosure rules so that people do not have to declare irrelevant old and minor convictions, and remove questions about criminal convictions from initial application forms for all public-sector jobs.

Our Plan for Freedom, Rights and Equality

People should be able to live their lives free from discrimination or intrusion and without fear of having their most fundamental rights violated. But this is not the reality in the UK today. The hostile environment has unacceptably trampled on people's rights and people are still discriminated against on the basis of their gender, race, age, sexuality, gender identity, religion or whether they are disabled. Inequalities are rife – children from Black households are more likely to be in persistent poverty and both hate crimes and violence against women and girls are far too prevalent.

The Conservatives and Labour have entirely failed to stand up to hatred or combat entrenched inequalities. The Conservatives have been relentlessly hostile in their rhetoric and policy around migration and have failed to take allegations of Islamophobia within their party seriously; Jeremy Corbyn has failed to tackle institutional anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. For decades, both parties have seen civil liberties as an inconvenience standing in the way of other priorities, which has meant attacks on individual rights and surveillance of citizens conducted outside the law.

Our plan is for a free society where every person's rights and liberties are protected and where the contribution of migrants to our society is celebrated. A plan for a world where everybody's rights are respected and society is fair and diverse; a plan to allow everyone to get on and live as who they are, free from discrimination or state intrusion; a plan that means that those who choose to come to the UK to work, study or join their families are welcomed for the skills and contributions that they bring; a plan where family unity is protected and the rule of law is respected.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Standing up for human rights by championing the Human Rights Act and the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Fixing the broken immigration system by scrapping the Conservatives' hostile environment, ending indefinite detention and taking powers away from the Home Office.
- Giving asylum seekers the right to work three months after they have applied and resettling 10,000 unaccompanied refugee children in the UK over the next ten years.

Protect Civil Liberties

Our rights and freedoms are under threat. Labour and Conservatives consistently vote for new laws that curtail civil liberties and Conservatives repeatedly threaten the Human Rights Act that safeguards our individual freedoms. Liberal Democrats will build a society where rights and liberties are protected and where nobody has their privacy violated by prying instruments of the state. We will:

I Defend the Human Rights Act, resist any attempt to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights and oppose any laws that unnecessarily erode civil liberties.

- Establish a new right to affordable, reasonable legal assistance, and invest £500 million to restore Legal Aid, making the system simpler and more generous.
- End the bulk collection of communications data and internet connection records.
- Introduce a Lovelace Code of Ethics to govern the use of personal data and artificial intelligence to ensure it is unbiased, transparent and accurate, and respects privacy.
- Immediately halt the use of facial recognition surveillance by the police.
- Introduce a right to no-fault divorce.
- Extend limited legal rights to cohabiting couples, for example, to give them greater protection in the event of separation or a partner's death.
- Complete the introduction of equal marriage, by:
 - Removing the spousal veto.
 - Allowing those marriages that were dissolved solely due to the Gender Recognition process to be retrospectively restored.
 - Enabling the Church of England and Church in Wales to conduct same-sex marriages.
- Introduce legal recognition of humanist marriages.

Demand Equality

People should be able to go about their lives without fear of discrimination. However, hate crimes are on the rise and too many groups of people no longer feel safe. We believe that government needs to take an active role both in punishing discrimination and ensuring that it does not happen in the first place. We will:

- Tackle the rise in hate crimes by making them all aggravated offences, giving law enforcement the resources and training they need to identify and prevent them, and condemning inflammatory rhetoric – including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia – by those with public platforms.
- Provide funding for protective security measures to places of worship, schools and community centres that are vulnerable to hate crime and terror attacks.
- Complete reform of the Gender Recognition Act to remove the requirement for medical reports, scrap the fee and recognise non-binary gender identities.
- Introduce an 'X' gender option on passports and extend equality law to cover gender identity and expression.
- Ensure accurate population data on sexual orientation and gender identity by including a question on LGBT+ status within the 2021 Census.
- Increase accessibility to public places and transport by making more stations wheelchair accessible, improving the legislative framework governing blue badges, setting up a benchmarking standard for accessible cities, and banning discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis.
- Introduce a British Sign Language Act to give BSL full legal recognition.
- End period poverty by removing VAT on sanitary products and providing them for free in schools, hospitals, hostels, shelters, libraries, leisure centres, stadiums, GP surgeries, food banks, colleges and universities.
- Scrap the so-called 'Pink Tax', ending the gender price gap.
- Require schools to introduce gender-neutral uniform policies and break down outdated perceptions of gender appropriateness of certain subjects.
- Outlaw caste discrimination.

Promote Diversity

Liberal Democrats believe that in the diversity of the UK should be represented in public and working life. That means that women, ethnic minority groups, LGBT+ people and disabled people should be properly represented and paid fairly. But deep-seated and – normally – unconscious biases mean that too many workplaces lack diversity and inequalities remain entrenched. We will tackle institutional biases, promote equality and hold power to account through applying values of openness, transparency and accountability. We will:

- Increase statutory paternity leave from the current two weeks up to six weeks and ensure that parental leave is a day-one right, and address continuing inequalities faced by same-sex couples.
- Require organisations to publish parental leave and pay policies.
- Continue the drive for diversity in business leadership, pushing for at least 40 per cent of board members being women in FTSE 350 companies and implementing the recommendations of the Parker review to increase ethnic minority representation.
- Extend the Equality Act to all large companies with more than 250 employees, requiring them to monitor and publish data on gender, BAME, and LGBT+ employment levels and pay gaps.
- Extend the use of name-blind recruitment processes in the public sector and encourage their use in the private sector.
- Improve diversity in public appointments by setting ambitious targets, which go further than targets for the private sector, and require reporting against progress with explanations when targets are not met.
- Develop a free, comprehensive unconscious bias training toolkit and make the provision of unconscious bias training to all members of staff a condition of the receipt of public funds.
- Develop a government-wide plan to tackle BAME inequalities and review the funding of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure that it is adequate.
- Establish a national fund for projects that work in schools to raise the aspirations of ethnic minority children and young people.

A Compassionate and Effective Immigration System

Britain's immigration system is in desperate need of reform. The Conservatives' hostile environment has caused far too many innocent people to have their rights violated – most notably the Windrush generation. The NHS can't recruit the doctors and nurses it needs; families are separated by unfair, complex visa requirements; people are detained indefinitely, in inhumane conditions and at great expense. Decades of incompetence, cruelty and hostile rhetoric from Labour and Conservative Home Secretaries have shattered confidence in the system.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party with a plan for a fair migration system that works for everyone. A plan to ensure that migrants coming to the UK are welcomed for the skills and contribution that they bring, while ensuring that everyone has confidence that the immigration system is functioning as it should. We will:

- Stop Brexit and save EU freedom of movement.
- Scrap the Conservatives' hostile environment.

- Invest in officers, training and technology to prevent illegal entry at Britain's borders, assist seekers of sanctuary and combat human trafficking and the smuggling of people, weapons, drugs and wildlife.
- Make immigration detention an absolute last resort, introduce a 28-day time limit on detention and close seven of the UK's nine detention centres.
- Establish a firewall to prevent public agencies from sharing personal information with the Home Office for the purposes of immigration enforcement and repeal the immigration exemption in the Data Protection Act.
- Move policymaking on work permits and student visas out of the Home Office and into the Departments for Business and Education respectively, and establish a new arms-length, non-political agency to take over processing applications.
- Replace Tier 2 work visas with a more flexible merit-based system.
- Introduce a 'Training up Britain' programme to make the most of migrants' skills.
- Create a new two-year visa for students to work after graduation.
- Reduce the fee for registering a child as a British citizen from £1,012 to the cost of administration.
- Abolish the arbitrary, complex minimum income requirement for spouse and partner visas.
- Waive application fees for indefinite leave for members of the Armed Forces on discharge and their families.
- Enable people who came here as children to apply for resident status.

Dignity for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Applies to:

We must do all we can to protect people forced to flee their homes to escape war and persecution. The UK has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those in need, but Labour and Conservative governments have introduced a harsh system that fails to respect people's dignity. Thousands of asylum seekers are forced to wait many months for a decision, unable to work, rent a home or support their families. Too many people are wrongly denied asylum, with 40 per cent of refusals overturned on appeal. Liberal Democrats are the only party who can make the system work fairly for seekers of sanctuary. We will:

- Give asylum seekers the right to work three months after they have applied, enabling them to work in any role so that they can support themselves, integrate into their communities and contribute through taxation.
- Provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary in the UK by resettling 10,000 vulnerable refugees each year and a further 10,000 unaccompanied refugee children from elsewhere in Europe over the next ten years, and expanding family reunion rights.
- Fund community-sponsorship projects for refugees, and reward community groups who develop innovative and successful ways of promoting social cohesion.
- Offer asylum to people fleeing the risk of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identification, end the culture of disbelief for LGBT+ asylum seekers and never refuse an LGBT+ applicant on the basis that they could be discreet.
- Move asylum policymaking from the Home Office to the Department for International Development and establish a dedicated unit to improve the speed and quality of decision-making.
- Provide free basic English lessons to refugees and asylum seekers and scrap the

16 hours-per-week rule with respect to financial support for those unable to work due to insufficient English.

- Provide public health services, including maternity services, to people from the moment they arrive in the UK.
- Increase the 'move-on period' for refugees from 28 days to 60 days.

Our Plan for Better Politics

Everybody, wherever they live, should be given a proper chance to influence the decisions that affect them. But, as it stands, British politics is far from delivering this for people. Too many are being cheated out of a voice and a vote. For some, that is because they live in a constituency where they feel that it does not matter who they vote for – the same party will always get elected. For young people, EU citizens and many British people living abroad, it is because they are denied any say at all in elections to parliament. The failure of the UK's democratic system to reflect the diversity of the public's views in parliament has played a major role in creating the current political crisis – fixing this is a matter of urgency.

Neither Labour nor Conservatives are interested in changing our broken system, because it works to keep them in power. They have been driven to the extremes and their leaders seek to win power by being slightly more palatable than the alternative – but the UK deserves better than the choice of the lesser of two evils.

Liberal Democrats have a plan to radically transform our political system so that it works for a modern democracy. A plan that will mend our broken politics so that we can get on with building a fairer society that protects our planet.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Giving people a voice with a fair voting system so that everyone's vote counts equally, letting people vote at the first election or referendum after they turn 16 and giving votes to all British citizens abroad and to EU citizens who have made the UK their long-term home.
- Embarking on a radical redistribution of power away from Westminster to the nations, regions and local authorities, giving power to communities to hold local services to account and decide how their taxes are raised and spent.
- Introducing a written constitution for a federal United Kingdom.

Fair Votes

The current voting system is not working: it means that too many people do not have their voices heard. Liberal Democrats are the only party that realises that the system is broken and will change it so that it works for the future: Labour and Conservatives will not change the system that has always entrenched their privileged position. We understand that British politics needs to be reformed to make it more representative and empower citizens. We will:

- Put an end to wasted votes, by introducing proportional representation through the Single Transferable Vote for electing MPs, and local councillors in England.
- Give 16- and 17-year olds the right to vote in elections and referendums.
- Extend the right to full participation in civic life, including the ability to stand for office or vote in UK referendums, Local Elections and General Elections, to all EU citizens who have lived in the UK for five years or more.
- Introduce a legal requirement for local authorities to inform citizens of the steps

they must take to be successfully registered with far greater efforts in particular to register under-represented groups; and ensure that the UK has an automatic system of inclusion in elections.

- Enable all UK citizens living abroad to vote for MPs in separate overseas constituencies, and to participate in UK referendums.
- Scrap the plans to require voters to bring identification with them to vote.
- Reform the House of Lords with a proper democratic mandate.
- Enabling Parliament, rather than the Queen-in-Council, to approve when parliament is prorogued and for how long.
- Ensure that a new Prime Minister, and their programme for government, must win a confidence vote of MPs.
- Take a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and bullying in Westminster and legislate to empower constituents to recall MPs who commit sexual harassment.
- Legislate to allow all-BAME and all-LGBT+ shortlists.
- Bring into force Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010, requiring political parties to publish candidate diversity data.

Power for Communities

Communities should be empowered to have maximum control over their local services. Liberal Democrats are the only party with a vision for the future: Labour's instinct is towards centralisation and taking power from communities; the Conservatives' cuts to local government budgets have led to a huge reduction in services. We will drive a devolution revolution to give power to people and communities and help fund the services that people need. We will:

- Decentralise decision-making from Whitehall and Westminster, by inviting local areas to take control of the services that matter to them most.
- Give democratic local government enhanced powers to call on new income sources appropriate to their area to support local services and investment.
- Give people more power, with customers holding companies delivering services to account for their failures, and with communities able to take charge of aspects of their own local development – through, for example, establishing local banks and community energy cooperatives.
- Devolve further revenue-raising powers away from Westminster, to regions from Cornwall to North East England. We will legislate to empower groups of authorities to come together to establish devolved governance and ensure that any powers devolved are matched by the funding to deliver on the needs of local people.
- Devolve more decision-making power over key levers of economic development including transport, energy, housing and skills.

High-Quality Public Debate

A well-functioning democracy should have a high standard of public debate in which: citizens are supported, educated and empowered to distinguish between facts and lies; there is a pluralistic media environment where journalists have the resources they need to find the truth and to hold the powerful to account; civility in public discourse is protected; election procedures and rules are upheld robustly and quickly. However, these foundations of our democratic way of life are under threat. Liberal Democrats are the only party forward-looking enough to do what it takes to foster high quality public debate. We will:

- Mandate the provision of televised leaders' debates in general elections, based on rules produced by Ofcom.
- Introduce a Leveson-compliant regulator to be given oversight of both privacy and quality, diversity and choice in both print and online media and proceed with Part Two of the Leveson Inquiry.
- Take big money out of politics by capping donations to political parties and introduce wider reforms to party funding along the lines of the 2011 report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.
- Establish UK and local citizens' assemblies to ensure that the public are fully engaged in finding solutions to the greatest challenges we face, such as tackling the climate emergency and the use of artificial intelligence and algorithms by the state.
- Expect the BBC both to provide impartial news and information, and to take a leading role in increasing media literacy and educating all generations in tackling the impact of fake news.
- Strengthen and expand the lobbying register and ban MPs from accepting paid lobbying work.
- Work towards radical real-time transparency for political advertising, donations and spending, including an easily-searchable public database of all online political adverts.
- Make algorithms used by the data companies available for close inspection by regulators acting for democratically elected governments, along with access for regulators to the programmers responsible for designing and operating them.
- Review the need for any election safeguarding legislation that is needed to respond to emerging challenges of the internet age, such as foreign interference in elections.

Power for the Nations and Regions

The people who best understand what the UK's nations and regions need are those who live in them. However, the Conservative government has a terrible record at meeting the needs of the UK outside its heartlands in the south of England – this is most clear in the way that the Conservative government has excluded voices from the nations in the Brexit negotiations.

Liberal Democrats want home rule for each of the nations of a strong, federal and united United Kingdom. We have a proud record of leading the way on giving greater powers to Scotland and Wales. We will not allow Brexit to reverse devolution and will oppose attempts to use Brexit to go back to the past when powers were hoarded at Westminster. We will champion a federal future for the UK.

Our plans for a written, federal constitution will include a permanent Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales and we will take forward practical steps to ensure that Scotland and Wales both have strong voices in the future of the family of nations. We will:

- Extend the involvement of the Scottish Government and Welsh Government in the development of UK-wide policy frameworks.
- Specifically include health and education departments of the Scottish and Welsh governments in UK policymaking on drug policy and student visas.
- Create a Joint Climate Council of the Nations to coordinate action to tackle the climate emergency.
- Improve joint ministerial work on new cross-cutting policies, such as the UK industrial strategy.

- Establish a dispute resolution process to resolve differences between the administrations

Scotland

In addition to the steps to ensure Scotland has a strong voice within the UK, we will:

- Work hard to ensure that Scotland remains a part of the United Kingdom. We will oppose a second independence referendum and oppose independence.
- Allocate to the Scottish Parliament all of the powers set out in the Scotland Act 2016, many of which have already been used by the Scottish Parliament, with others awaiting the request of the Scottish Government.
- Build on the recommendations of the Smith Commission by extending the accountability of UK-wide bodies such as the BBC and Ofgem to the Scottish Parliament.
- Continue to develop city deals in Scotland by bringing together all spheres of government.
- Review the UK excise duty structure to better support whisky exports.

Scotland benefits from being inside the UK and EU single markets. Each is worth billions of pounds and supports tens of thousands of Scottish jobs. Under the Liberal Democrats inclusion in those single markets will continue.

Wales

In the 20 years since the National Assembly for Wales was created, we have proudly played our part in Wales' devolution journey: 20 years of devolution has allowed the Welsh National Assembly to mature into a Welsh Parliament. Yet Brexit now threatens much of this progress. We recognise that stopping Brexit and protecting existing levels of devolution will not be enough to create the federal Britain that Wales needs to achieve its potential.

We will complete the next stage of devolution in Wales by implementing the remaining Silk proposals and substantially reducing the number of powers reserved to Westminster.

In addition to the steps to ensure Wales has a strong voice within the UK we will:

- Devolve Air Passenger Duty to put Wales on a fair playing field with Scotland and Northern Ireland and put Cardiff Airport on a fair playing field with regional airports in England.
- Create a distinct legal jurisdiction for Wales to reflect the growing divergence in law as a result of devolution.
- Devolve powers over youth justice, probation services, prisons and policing to allow Wales to create an effective, liberal, community-based approach to policing and tackling crime.

We firmly believe Wales is best off as part of both the UK and the EU. Each union is worth billions of pounds to the Welsh economy and supports tens of thousands of jobs.

For Wales, a federal UK will mean a truly equal family of nations, ensuring that every part of this union has a voice, backed up by real, meaningful devolution. We will work to create a Wales that is able to shape its own destiny as part of a strong United Kingdom playing a leading role within the EU.

Northern Ireland

We wish to see a permanently peaceful Northern Ireland, with stable devolved government and a truly shared society. Northern Ireland and its institutions rely on sharing and interdependence, but Brexit has already increased tensions and risks new

divisions, barriers and friction. We will:

- Work constructively with the political parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government to urgently restore the devolved institutions.
- Support policies and initiatives that promote sharing over separation and counter the cost of division.
- Help to grow the economy in Northern Ireland, boost infrastructure and support local businesses.

Funding Devolution

The nations of the United Kingdom have long had different needs with regard to funding. The Liberal Democrats when in government delivered a substantial extension of financial powers to the nations of the UK and we will devolve further fiscal powers. To ensure reliable funding, we will retain the Barnett formula to adjust spending allocations across the UK. This will protect the individual nations' budgets from external shocks. However, we recognise the findings of the Holtham Commission that the current formula underfunds Wales and will commission work to update this analysis. We will address the imbalance by immediately ensuring that the Barnett floor is set at a level that reflects the need for Wales to be funded fairly and seek over a parliament to increase the Welsh block grant to an equitable level.

England

Devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has implications for the UK parliament and its dual role in legislating for England as well as the federal UK. Liberal Democrats support an English-only stage in legislation affecting England, so that English MPs can have a separate say on laws that only affect England. However, this should be on a proportional basis, genuinely reflecting the balance of opinion in England.

In some areas of England there is a greater appetite for powers, but not every part of the country wants to move at the same speed and there cannot be a one-size fits-all approach. All areas should however have access to the same opportunities and mayoral authorities should not be ranked higher in terms of the powers with which they can be granted. We will enact permissive legislation to empower groups of authorities to come together to establish devolved governance – for example to a Cornish Assembly or a Yorkshire Parliament, building on the One Yorkshire campaign. We will proceed by consensus as far as possible but will not allow one local authority to veto a coherent proposal.

×× Close

Our Plan for a Better World

The world today feels increasingly unstable and unsafe. Nationalism and authoritarianism are on the rise in countries across the globe. President Trump has repeatedly acted to cause instability, whether by initiating trade wars or abandoning Kurdish allies in Syria; Putin's Russia is persistently threatening the international rules-based order; and tensions continue to rise across the world – a brutal war still rages in Yemen, relationships with Iran are increasingly difficult and citizens are protesting against their leaders in places such as Hong Kong, Pakistan and Chile. The UK should be playing a leading role as part of a coalition of liberal democracies to respond to these challenges, but Brexit has already undermined our ability to shape world events.

Both the Conservatives and Labour would pursue a mistaken and backwards-looking approach to foreign affairs that would further undermine the UK's position in the world. The Conservatives base their plans on an invented past, blind to the realities of

Empire, and Boris Johnson has shown, with his comments about Nazanin Zaghari-Radcliffe, that he cannot be trusted to protect British citizens; the Labour leadership, wedded to an anti-Western obsession that makes them persistent apologists for an increasingly aggressive Russian government, likewise cannot be trusted to protect the UK's interests.

Only the Liberal Democrats have a plan to renew international liberalism in Britain and ensure that the UK plays an active role in building a better world. A plan that will tear down walls, not build them; a plan that will champion the values of human rights, democracy, and equality; a plan that means working through multilateral organisations such as the EU, UN, NATO, and the WTO, rather than undermining or leaving them entirely. By clearly committing to these multilateral organisations, we can tackle our shared challenges, live up to our values internationally and shape international events in the interests of the UK.

Our priorities in the next parliament will be:

- Defending international cooperation against the rising tides of nationalism and isolationism, supporting multilateral organisations like the UN and NATO which are increasingly under threat.
- Spending 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income on aid: reducing poverty, defending human rights, protecting the environment and preventing violent conflict worldwide.
- Cooperating with the UK's European and global partners in tackling the climate and environmental emergencies.
- Controlling arms exports to countries with poor human rights records and, as part of this, suspending arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

A Peaceful World

Liberalism and cooperation have a vital role to play in securing peace, promoting democracy and defending human rights across the world. But the rules-based international order that has governed international relations for the past 70 years is under threat. The Liberal Democrats are the only party that is looking forward: neither the Conservatives nor Labour have a convincing vision of the UK's role in the world. We will build on the UK's proud record of international leadership through the EU, UN, NATO and the Commonwealth by promoting values of freedom and opportunity for all. It has never been more important for the UK to work with allies as a champion of this message. We will:

- Champion the liberal, rules-based international order, which provides a strong basis for multilateral action to address the world's biggest problems.
- Use all aspects of government policy – trade, aid and diplomacy as well as military cooperation – to strengthen UK efforts to prevent violent conflict.
- Increase overseas financial support for the ongoing refugee crisis, focussing on countries that have accepted millions of refugees.
- Work with European partners to introduce a European Magnitsky Act that would enable sanctions against corrupt individuals and perpetrators of human rights abuses.
- Improve control of arms exports, including by introducing a policy of 'presumption of denial' for arms exports to countries listed as Human Rights Priority Countries in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's annual human rights report.

Liberal Democrats believe that despite efforts to prevent violent conflict, sometimes

military intervention is necessary. The UK should only intervene militarily when there is a clear legal or humanitarian case, endorsed by a vote in parliament – working through international institutions whenever possible. We will encourage dialogue and mediation to reduce conflict between and within countries, working through the UN and other agencies. In response to current crises, we will:

- Legislate to ensure there is a parliamentary vote before engaging in military action, while preserving the ability to engage in action in emergencies or under treaty obligation without requiring parliamentary approval.
- Focus on the diplomatic priorities of the UN's Responsibility to Protect doctrine and establish new tests to ensure that any UK action has regional support, a reasonable prospect of defined success, and a sound legal and humanitarian case.
- Work with international partners to tackle violent extremism, paying special attention to UK citizens who have fought overseas for terrorist organisations who may become significant sources of terrorist activity if they return to Britain.
- On Syria, cooperate internationally to stabilise the region and provide humanitarian assistance.
- Work with the EU to revive the Iran nuclear deal.
- Officially recognise the independent state of Palestine, condemn violence on all sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and support Israel's right to security. We remain committed to a negotiated peace settlement, which includes a two-state solution.
- Suspend UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia in response to their consistent targeting of civilians, in breach of international humanitarian law, in Yemen.
- Promote democracy and stability in Ukraine and neighbouring countries against an increasingly aggressive Russia, by working closely with the EU and international partners to exert maximum economic and political pressure, and standing by our NATO treaty obligations.
- Honour our legal and moral duty to the people of Hong Kong by reopening the British National Overseas Passport offer, extending the scheme to provide the right to abode to all holders.

A Secure Defence in the 21st Century

The Armed Forces play a vital role in the defence of the nation: government should have a deep sense of duty to properly support service personnel and veterans. Neither the Conservatives nor Labour have shown a commitment to this: the Conservative government in particular has spread chronic low morale, misspent money on vanity projects and failed to recruit and retain people with the skills needed for 21st century warfare. Liberal Democrats are the only party who understand the new challenges faced by the Armed Forces and who are committed to properly supporting them. We will:

- Commit to the principle of collective self-defence as laid out in the North Atlantic Treaty and spending two per cent of GDP on defence in line with NATO recommendations: as the economy grows after we have stopped Brexit, this will mean an extra £3 billion over the parliament.
- Strengthen our armed services and address critical skills shortages by recruiting STEM graduates to be armed forces engineers, providing 'golden handshakes' of up to £10,000.
- Promote an international treaty on the principles and limits of the use of technology in modern warfare.
- Recognise the expansion of warfare into the cybersphere by investing in our

- security and intelligence services and acting to counter cyberattacks.
- Maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent, while pursuing multilateral nuclear disarmament: continuing with the Dreadnought programme, the submarine-based replacement for Vanguard, but procuring three boats and moving to a medium-readiness responsive posture and maintaining the deterrent through measures such as unpredictable and irregular patrolling patterns.
- Support the Armed Forces Covenant and ongoing work to support veterans' mental health.
- Improve the quality of housing for service personnel by bringing the Ministry of Defence into line with other landlords, giving tenants the same legal rights to repair and maintenance as private tenants.

Trade, Aid and Investment

The liberal, international rules-based order has created peace and prosperity: trade has helped millions out of poverty and to live longer, healthier lives. But the system is imperfect and must improve to tackle global inequalities: gender inequality remains widespread and the climate crisis will disproportionately impact the poorest people and poorest countries. Liberal Democrats are the only party with a vision for the future based on championing liberalism: the Conservatives are inward-looking and nationalist and committed to leaving the EU, the biggest champion of the liberal order in our part of the world; Jeremy Corbyn's Labour spring to the defence of authoritarian regimes in Venezuela and Iran, while failing to fight to stop Brexit. Our plan for the future is built on championing liberal and international values, ending poverty and promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals both in the UK and abroad. We will:

- Remain firmly committed to spending 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income on aid, prioritising development that both helps the poorest and ties in with our strategic international objectives on gender equality, climate change and the environment, human rights, conflict prevention and tackling inequality.
- Increase the proportion of the aid budget committed to tackling climate change and environmental degradation: helping countries mitigate the impact of climate change and other environmental crises and support climate refugees.
- Pursue a foreign agenda with gender equality at its heart, focusing on: the transformation of the position of women through economic inclusion, education and training; ensuring the lives of women and girls are not ignored in favour of trade or regional alliances; working to extend reproductive rights and end female genital mutilation; and ending sexual violence in conflict zones.
- Protect, defend, and promote human rights for all, including LGBT+ individuals who are persecuted across the world as well as those persecuted for their religion or belief.
- Develop a global education strategy to address the urgent crisis of 263 million children missing out on schooling.
- Work through international bodies for better regulation and scrutiny of international trade and investment treaties to ensure they do not worsen inequalities or undermine human rights or developing countries' ability to regulate the environmental and social impacts of businesses.
- Champion global anti-corruption initiatives and ensure the UK and British Overseas Territories have publicly-accessible registers of beneficial ownership of companies registered in their jurisdictions.