



Federal Conference Report

Glasgow
14 – 18 September 2013

This report contains the policy motions, business motions, and constitutional amendments passed by Conference, as amended. Defeated motions have not been included. It also includes questions on reports of party bodies.

Policy Motions

A Balanced Working Life (Low- and Middle-Income Households Policy Paper)

Conference affirms that Liberal Democrats are working for a stronger economy in a fairer society, enabling every person to get on in life.

Conference recognises that life can be very tough for people on low- and middle incomes and that they have felt the impact of the economic crisis particularly acutely.

Conference endorses policy paper 108, *A Balanced Working Life*, to help people on low and middle incomes juggle working and caring responsibilities, and welcomes the approach taken in suggesting policies in the areas of household budgets, childcare and other caring responsibilities, flexible working practices and family friendly public services.

Conference notes that the economic crisis has had an adverse impact on public spending and that some of the policies detailed in policy paper 108 will need to be phased in over time as finances allow.

Conference believes:

1. The introduction of the minimum wage (NMW) in 1998 has driven living standards higher and increased social mobility, has contributed to a fairer society through the protection of low-paid workers, and its national recognition and simplicity has contributed to the emergence of a more empowered workforce and resulted in a far stronger economy.
2. That through tax credits and other in-work benefits the government is effectively subsidising low wages when in some cases the employer could afford to pay a higher wage without profoundly affecting profits.
3. Government should help people who struggle with the cost of living and to make ends meet by:
 - a) Creating a commission to establish an official living wage – including the level, method of delivery, deciding eligibility taking a view on which employment sectors are resilient enough to sustain a living wage and other factors.

- b) Ensuring the living wage is paid by central government and encouraging local government also to lead by example.
 - c) Making companies that employ over 250 people be transparent about how many of their employees are not paid the living wage.
 - d) Government procurement recognising the added value of those employers who pay the newly established living wage.
 - e) Reviewing Universal Credit two years after its full roll-out with a view to possibly increasing work incentives or introducing a disregard for families with disabled children and a disregard for second earners.
 - f) Revising the status of various market regulators and bringing them under one roof to save on running costs – this new ‘one-stop shop’ would have consumer interest as its central focus.
4. A decent supply of good quality and affordable childcare and early years education can enable parents who so wish to return to work with clear economic benefits, whilst also having an important impact on the early development of the child, and is critical to social mobility.
5. Greater support should be provided for the over 200,000 kinship carers in the UK who are bringing up children because their parents cannot look after them with particular reference to the 60,000 kinship carers who have fallen out of the labour market as a result of taking on the care of a child and those kinship carers who take responsibility for a new-born baby by:
- a) The introduction of unpaid adjustment leave for kinship carers for a period of 6 weeks when a child first moves in.
 - b) The introduction of a period of paid leave for kinship carers when a child first moves in, similar to adoption leave and maternity leave, to enable the child to settle and bond.
 - c) The equivalent of maternity leave rights to be available to another relative in exceptional circumstances where the mother is unable to take care of the baby herself and the kinship carer takes that responsibility.
 - d) Recognition of the special needs of many of the children who are being brought up by kinship carers and access to support from statutory agencies on a basis comparable to that provided to adopted and fostered children.
6. Government should improve the affordability, quality, convenience and provision of childcare by:
- a) Introducing a local information pack as well as a new high profile online source of information to help new parents with information about services and entitlements and how to access them.
 - b) As Local Authority finances allow, continuing the roll-out of Children and Family Centres, which can serve as centres of excellence and multi-disciplinary hubs for childcare providers in the area, making it easier for parents to access the childcare they need in one place.
 - c) Increasing the allocation of free childcare, starting with the current gap between maternity pay and free entitlement at age two, to:
 - i) 10 hours for babies between the ages of one and two.
 - ii) 15 hours for all 2–3 year olds, rather than just the most deprived 40%.

- iii) 20 hours for 3–4 year olds, increasing the current entitlement by 5 hours.
 - iv) 25 hours for 4–5 year olds.
- d) Ensuring that by 2015 the leader of the team working with children in each Local Children and Family Centre is educated to degree level.
 - e) Introducing a use-it-or-lose-it 'Daddy Month' based on the Swedish model, to encourage uptake of parental leave amongst fathers in addition to shared parental leave entitlements, enabling parents to spend time together, and supporting each other, with their newborn infant.
 - f) Encouraging employers to allow employees with caring commitments to take 6 months 'Carer's Leave' during periods of acute crisis.
 - g) Creating an awareness campaign aimed at business to raise awareness of the needs of the 'sandwich generation' who have caring needs towards both children and elderly relatives.
7. It is important to strike the right balance between assisting businesses to grow and ensuring employees are given a fair deal to achieve a balanced working life, and therefore the government should:
- a) Set up a small, time-limited Challenge Fund to provide SMEs with access to a pool of consultants who can advise on introducing practical wellbeing programmes in companies including help to introduce flexible working.
 - b) Encourage Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups to promote wellbeing in the work-place by liaising with companies to actively promote health and wellbeing, using the new Health and Wellbeing Boards protocols established in April 2013.
 - c) Encourage the use of flexi-time banking and annualised hours for employees with caring responsibilities.
 - d) Introduce mandatory work-life balance councils in businesses of more than 250 employees with employee/union representatives and HR/management to develop tailor-made policies for a balanced working life and improved working conditions.
 - e) Review the impact of the extension to request flexible working two years after its introduction, with a view to introducing legal presumption in favour of flexible working if take up for both men and women does not improve.
 - f) Introduce a 'national work-life balance awareness week' to promote the benefits of flexible working and other policies.
 - g) Introduce a kite-marking system, the criteria of which should be introduced as standard practice in Company Annual Reports, either by statutory regulation or through incentives to companies, allowing shareholders and external stakeholders to judge how well a company was performing in relation to the wellbeing of its staff.
 - h) Encourage corporate models, such as mutuals, that give employees a stake in their organisations.
 - i) Underwrite the debt of successful claimants at employment tribunals.
8. Family-friendly approaches to public services should be introduced, such as:
- a) Further roll-out of community budgets to allow local people to prioritise access to those services upon which they most rely.

- b) Piloting a programme of support offered to those people furthest away from the job market to bring together their social care needs – this would include support for those with mental health problems or disabilities, treatment for those with drug and alcohol problems and rehabilitation support for ex-offenders.
- c) Allowing patients the flexibility of Skype or telephone consultations with their GPs when both parties prefer that option and also create a family appointment option, as a means of enhancing flexibility and efficiency specifically for parents and their children.
- d) Allowing people to choose a GP based on proximity to work as opposed to home.
- e) Enabling local people have a greater say in the tendering process for local bus services, including the power to insist that certain local services are included on routes.

Applicability: Federal, except 4, 5, 6 b) and 7, which are England only.

Background briefing: This motion and the accompanying policy paper 108, A Balanced Working Life, develop policy on a range of issues relevant to low- and middle-income households including on flexible working, childcare and early years education, and wellbeing at work. It creates new policy on the living wage.

Previous party policy on the provision of childcare and flexible working is set out in conference motion Early Years (2012), the 2010 General Election Manifesto Change That Works For You and policy paper 88, The Best Start for Children. Existing policy on wellbeing at work is set out in policy paper 102, A New Purpose for Politics: Quality of Life (2011).

Federal Conference Committee accepted drafting amendments to the motion which:

In 4. after “childcare” inserted: “and early years education”.

In e) after “fathers” inserted: “in addition to shared parental leave entitlements, enabling parents to spend time together, and supporting each other, with their newborn infant”.

Conference voted against hearing a reference back.

Conference voted in support of an amendment which in 3. a) after “eligibility” inserted “, taking a view on which employment sectors are resilient enough to sustain a living wage”.

Conference voted in support of a second amendment which inserted 5.

Cohabitation Rights

Conference notes that:

- a) More and more couples, different sex and same sex, choose to live together without entering into civil partnerships or getting married.
- b) English law currently gives extremely limited protection to people living together in cohabiting relationships, when their relationships break down and they separate.
- c) There is a widespread mistaken belief that couples who cohabit enjoy rights arising out of so-called ‘common law marriage’.
- d) When couples cohabit, one partner frequently gives up his or her time, resources or career or business opportunities for the benefit of the other, and, under current law such sacrifices go unrewarded and uncompensated.

- e) The Law Commission, after a full consultation, produced a comprehensive report in 2007, *Cohabitation: the Financial Consequences of Relationship Breakdown*, proposing a statutory scheme, under which:
 - i) Where one partner to a cohabiting relationship has suffered an economic disadvantage or acquired a retained benefit from that relationship, a court would be able to make an order adjusting the retained benefit and/or sharing that economic disadvantage between them.
 - ii) Such relief would be available to couples who had lived together for a fixed period (a period to be fixed by Parliament at between two and five years was recommended by the Law Commission) or who had lived together and had children together.
 - iii) It would be open to couples to opt out of the statutory scheme by agreement freely entered into between them.
- f) The Law Commission's proposals do not in any sense equate cohabitation with marriage or civil partnership.
- g) The Law Commission's proposals have been widely welcomed by the judiciary and family lawyers in England and Wales.
- h) Scotland, the Republic of Ireland and other jurisdictions now give protection for cohabiting couples on relationship breakdown.
- h) The judiciary have repeatedly called for fair provision to be made for cohabiting couples, most recently and forcefully in the 2012 United Kingdom Supreme Court's decision in *Gow v Grant*, in which the Scottish provisions were held to provide fair and reasonable relief for cohabitants on the breakdown of their relationships.
- i) The Labour Government in 2009 refused to implement the proposals of the Law Commission or to support the private member's Cohabitation Bill introduced in the House of Lords in 2008 by Liberal Democrat peer Lord Lester of Herne Hill.
- j) The Law Commission produced a further report in 2011, *Intestacy and Family Provision Claims on Death*, proposing that the law on intestacy should be reformed so that upon the death without a will of one partner in a cohabiting couple, the other should benefit from his or her estate provided that certain qualifying conditions were met.

Conference believes that:

1. The present lack of provision protecting cohabiting couples upon relationship breakdown is unsatisfactory and unfair to them and their children.
2. The law of intestacy also needs reform to protect the position of those in cohabiting relationships when their partners die.
3. The Law Commission's proposals are fair, proportionate and workable.
4. The Law Commission's proposals would not in any sense undermine marriage or civil partnerships.
5. Achieving fair arrangements for cohabiting couples on relationship breakdown and intestacy accords with fundamental Liberal Democrat principles and is a necessary part of creating a fair society.

Conference therefore calls for the implementation without delay of proposals giving cohabiting couples fair and reasonable redress upon relationship breakdown and upon intestacy, based upon the proposals made in the Law Commission's 2007 and 2011 reports.

Applicability: England and Wales.

Background briefing: This motion creates new policy.

Cycling Reform

Conference believes that:

- I. Cycling is an extremely efficient and relatively safe form of transport.
- II. The Government should encourage people to cycle for the benefits it brings to health and wellbeing, the environment, the economy and the alleviation of congestion.
- III. As progress is made to make Britain fit for cycling, the rights and safety of pedestrians must continue to be considered and respected.

Conference therefore welcomes:

- i) The Coalition commitment to support sustainable travel initiatives, including the promotion of cycling and walking.
- ii) The recent Get Britain Cycling report from the All Party Parliamentary Cycling Group.
- iii) The £600 million Local Sustainable Transport Fund for the development of transport measures focused on economic growth and reducing carbon emissions.
- iv) The inclusion of cycling measures in 94 of 96 Local Authority bids for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, and the additional UK Government investment of £107 million in cycling in the last year alone, including funding to address dangerous junctions.
- v) The Times' Cities Fit for Cycling campaign, highlighting methods for promoting cycling and road safety nationwide, and the creation of an interactive website which to date has identified over 10,000 junctions requiring attention.
- vi) Funding for the integration of rail and bikes, Bikeability and the continuation of the Cycle to Work scheme.
- vii) The Government's policy to promote 20 mph speed limits as the default value on residential roads.
- viii) The positive legacy of the Olympics which has resulted in more people taking up cycling for pleasure and exercise.

But conferences notes that:

- A. Unsustainable transport policies pursued over many decades are costing the economies of our towns and cities tens of billions of pounds through congestion, road casualties, poor air quality and the impact of inactivity on mental and physical health.
- B. Three-quarters of all journeys made in the UK are five miles or less.
- C. Cycling accounts for 2% of journeys made in the UK compared with 30% for the Netherlands, in part due to their dedicated fund for cycling.
- D. 74% of adults in Britain are frightened by the idea of cycling on busy roads.
- E. Lorries make up 5% of traffic, yet are currently responsible for half of cyclist fatalities; 75% of cyclists' injuries occur at or near junctions.

- F. More needs to be done to encourage cycling amongst women, ethnic minorities and young people, whom research indicates currently tend to cycle less.
- G. Improving the environment for cyclists must not be to the detriment of pedestrians.

Conference therefore calls for:

1. The Government to further improve cycling in the UK by aiming to raise the number of journeys made by bike to 10% in 2025, rising to 25% by 2050.
2. Better cycling infrastructure through:
 - a) Creating a cycling budget of at least £10 per person per year, increasing to £20.
 - b) A requirement for Local Authorities to provide for cyclists in the planning system as well as in the design of all highways and traffic schemes, and training in how to do this.
 - c) Expansion of the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.
 - d) Integration of the cycle network with rail and bus travel.
 - e) Creation of high-quality, segregated cycle routes where appropriate.
3. The promotion of cycling through:
 - a) A Government strategy to increase Bikeability cycle training courses for people of all ages and backgrounds.
 - b) The provision of training and facilities in schools and places of work.
 - c) A cross-departmental 'Cycling Action Plan' drawn up in conjunction with relevant stakeholders and partners.
4. A commitment to improving the safety of cyclists on the roads through:
 - a) An increase of priority traffic lights for cyclists and Trixi mirrors that allow drivers to see cyclists on their near-side.
 - b) The adoption of vehicle safety measures such as sensors, alarms, safety bars and extra mirrors on lorries.
 - c) The inclusion of a cyclist safety section in the national driving test and cyclist awareness training for drivers of large vehicles.
5. Justice for victims of accidents on the roads through:
 - a) Consultation on the introduction of proportionate liability rules so that the default assumption after collisions is that the larger vehicle is at fault.
 - b) Review of existing road traffic laws and their enforcement to ensure that dangerous and careless driving is dealt with the seriousness it merits.
 - c) By ensuring cyclists, like all other road users, obey the rules of the road about rights of way, traffic lights and lights at night.
 - d) Implementation of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 to permit local authorities to enforce moving traffic offences, including the illegal use of cycle lanes.

Applicability: England, except 4 b) and c) and 5 b) and c), which are Federal, and 5 a), which is England and Wales.

*Background briefing: This motion develops public transport infrastructure policy and policy on improving the safety of cyclists as well as justice for victims of road accidents. The motion builds on policy on low-carbon transport as contained in conference motion *The Greenest Government Ever (2012)* and welcomes policy developments made since conference motion *20 is Plenty – Saving Lives on the Road (2012)**

Previous party policy on public transport is set out in policy paper 85, Fast Track Britain (2008).

Federal Conference Committee accepted a drafting amendment to the motion which inserted 'safe' before 'relatively' in I.

Defending the Future – UK Defence in the 21st Century (Defence Policy Paper)

Conference believes that:

- a) It is a significant role of government to provide a secure UK in a stable neighbourhood; while good international relations and strong international law are crucial to security, when they fail effective military capabilities are required.
- b) The UK's vision of its place in the world appears virtually unchanged since 1945; the UK needs to re-assess its role, ensure that ambitions match resources and respond to 21st century threats, not those of the Cold War.
- c) The UK does not face any current existential military threat from any other state actor and that most credible threats to the UK also challenge our neighbours in Europe, yet international terrorism, cyber warfare and the consequences of major natural disasters such as those arising from climate change all pose security threats and most recent conflicts have not been predicted, hence we cannot be complacent about defence.

Conference therefore welcomes and approves policy paper 112, *Defending the Future – UK Defence in the 21st Century*, as a statement of Liberal Democrat policies on defence.

Conference accepts that the UK cannot aspire to full-spectrum capabilities but must be able to defend the UK and the territories for which it has responsibility, support its neighbours and allies, and to engage in humanitarian intervention. Conference therefore proposes that the UK should:

1. Maintain a credible contribution to Expeditionary Forces, including carriers, land- and sea-based airpower and land forces rapidly deployable by sea or air.
2. Re-establish effective maritime surveillance of our own shores.

Conference favours greater integration of EU and NATO Europe military capabilities and procurement to address common problems, to overcome economic constraints and to redress waning American commitment in our neighbourhood.

Conference recognises that all three armed services have already been reduced and warns that further reduction should remain under review until government plans to recruit more reservists to compensate are shown to be successful. We support the proposed increase in mandatory reserve training.

Conference deeply regrets that defence procurement has proved a major problem for successive governments with tens of billions of pounds wasted.

Conference believes that these problems arise from bespoke 'gold-plated' solutions despite good off-the-shelf options often being available; weaknesses in procurement management; budgetary uncertainty; the lack of a coherent defence industrial strategy; and the excessive influence of the defence industry on procurement, in particular due to strong informal networks between senior ex-military staff, now working for industry via the 'revolving door', and their former colleagues in MOD.

Conference recognises that the government's proposed changes to procurement, including the so-called GOCO (government-owned, contractor-operated) model may alleviate some of these issues but notes that the model is as yet untested. Conference therefore calls for:

- I. A full review of the legal framework surrounding defence procurement, including conflicts-of-interest and other civil service rules and the UK's application of EU defence procurement directives.
- II. Longer periods between resigning from the civil service and working in the industry, in line with rules applied to politicians leaving office.

Conference welcomes the signing of the Arms Trade Treaty in April 2013, and recent tightening of the UK Arms Export regime by the Coalition Government, but also calls for the Government to:

- A. Conduct a cross-Departmental and public consultation on arms export policy.
- B. Implement a policy of 'presumption of denial' for export licences to countries listed in the Foreign Office's annual human rights report.
- C. Implement end-user certification on all future arms export licences and report annually to Parliament on this certification.
- D. Enact legislation to control the re-export of British arms sales.

Conference remains wholly unconvinced that Britain needs to renew its submarine-based nuclear weapons system on the same Cold War scale as the system designed in 1980, nor do we believe that the nation can afford to do so. The proposed full-scale replacement, Successor, might in time account for as much as 10% of the UK's defence budget.

Conference therefore resolves that Britain should end Continuous-at-Sea-Deterrence and instead adopt a realistic, credible 'Contingency Posture', which would involve:

- i) Construction and maintenance of fewer Successor submarines, and a reduction in crewing levels accordingly.
- ii) A declaratory policy of going to sea only with unarmed missiles and storing a reduced stockpile of warheads for redeployment within a specified timeframe.
- iii) Surging to more constant, armed patrols only during limited periods when a deteriorating security picture demands this.
- iv) Exercise of the submarine capability regularly to maintain relevant skills, including weapons handling and nuclear command and control.
- v) Periodic practice of redeployment of an armed submarine within a specified timeframe.
- vi) Amended submarine design to enable alternative or dual use for conventional purposes.
- vii) In the long term, construction of a single class of multi-purpose submarines to succeed the Astute and Successor classes, to perform all submarine roles we may need, including the capability to re-role from conventional to nuclear missions within a specified timeframe.

Conference believes that such a policy would represent the greatest single act of de-escalation ever undertaken by one of the established nuclear powers, would send a powerful signal of Britain's commitment to multilateral disarmament and would be a significant step towards our ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Conference recognises the vital role Britain's armed forces play in the defence of the nation and believes that it is the role of Government to safeguard the interests of service personnel and veterans. Conference strongly supports the Military Covenant, now enshrined in law as the Armed Forces Act and proposes a set of more specific measures to support serving servicemen and women and veterans, including:

- a) Transferring the Office of the Veterans' Minister to the Cabinet Office, so that the services of all departments can be marshalled in support of veterans, and creating a post of Veterans' Commissioner.
- b) Strengthening local military covenants by defining more exacting guidelines and ensuring best practice is rolled out across all local authorities.
- c) Offering the Armed Forces the opportunity to organise representation along the lines of the Police Federation but without the right to strike.
- d) Seeking an affordable way to rectify the situation whereby Gurkha veterans in the UK have a pensions entitlement for pre-1997 service of only one quarter that of veterans from the UK and Commonwealth.
- e) Ensuring that care for veterans injured in service is fully budgeted and funded.

Conference acknowledges the different pressures that reserves face and proposes that:

1. Employers be required to offer two weeks' unpaid leave annually to assist reserves attending training camps.
2. The services explore ways of granting all reserves access to the medical provisions of their service.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing: This motion and the accompanying policy paper 112, Defending the Future – UK Defence in the 21st Century, significantly update party policy on Trident and the nuclear deterrent, disarmament and the armed services. It calls for the end of Continuous-at-Sea-Deterrence, greater integration of EU and NATO Europe military capabilities, a review of the legal framework surrounding defence procurement and reiterates support for the Military Covenant.

Previous party policy on Trident and nuclear deterrence is set out in conference motion Trident (2010), the 2010 General Election Manifesto Change That Works for You and conference motion The Future of Britain's Nuclear Deterrent (2007).

Conference rejected an amendment which would have deleted the words from "Conference therefore resolves" to "a world free of nuclear weapons." and inserted:

Conference remains wholly unconvinced that Britain needs to renew its submarine-based nuclear weapons system on the same Cold War scale as the system designed in 1980, nor do we believe that the nation can afford to do so. The proposed full-scale replacement, Successor, might in time account for as much as 10% of the UK's defence budget.

Conference is further unconvinced that the contemplated reduction in the capabilities of Successor would deliver significant financial savings or provide a sufficiently continuous deterrence effect to justify its adoption.

Conference therefore resolves that Britain should cancel the Successor programme and eliminate entirely the UK's nuclear deterrent as soon as practicable, involving:

- i) *The de-commissioning or re-purposing of all nuclear weaponry facilities and capabilities, including the existing Vanguard class submarines.*

- ii) *A declaratory policy of voluntary nuclear disarmament which reserves the right to revive a nuclear deterrent should national security require it in the event that international nuclear disarmament is not be achieved.*
- iii) *A renewed effort internationally to achieve nuclear disarmament, particularly within Europe, including aiming to play a positive role at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2015 and to work to agree, sign and ultimately ratify a Nuclear Weapons Convention.*
- iv) *Consideration of long term re-direction of funds ear marked for Successor to conventional military and conflict prevention capabilities.*
- v) *In the long term, construction of a single class of multi-purpose submarines to succeed the Astute and Successor classes, to perform all conventional submarine roles we may need.*

Conference further urges the UK Government to play a positive role at the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2015 in working to agree, sign and ultimately ratify a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Conference believes that such a policy would represent the greatest single act of de-escalation ever undertaken by one of the established nuclear powers, would send a powerful signal of Britain's commitment to global nuclear disarmament and would be the most significant step to date towards our ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Dignity at Home: Transforming Home Care

Conference notes the importance of providing high quality home care for the elderly, disabled and vulnerable and believes the key to this is ensuring properly trained staff with adequate time and resources to carry out their duties.

Conference further notes that while the Government has recognised the importance of raising the status and qualifications for those working in child care, the same is not the case for those working in home care and a largely female workforce remains low-paid, low-status and often exploited.

Conference is concerned that poor employment practices, unrealistic targets, unequal distribution of funds, lack of training, lack of consultation and proper support for care staff, has led to abuse, bullying and harassment of both staff and clients.

Conference believes that home care could be vastly improved and vulnerable people better protected through a range of measures and calls on the Government to:

1. Ensure staff are allowed enough time to deal with service users' needs and to travel between calls.
2. Empower the Care Quality Commission with stronger regulation of the care home sector, with more effective sanctions for the CQC where standards are not met.
3. Hold the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to account for properly monitoring care and follow up when care companies fail to meet standards.
4. Ensure the CQC website is user friendly, in particular making it clear how whistleblowers can make anonymous complaints.
5. Ensure that local authorities commission care on the basis of outcomes – better care, improving people's mobility, improving their health and well being – rather than the current 'race to the bottom' in which standards of care are inevitably compromised.
6. Ensure staff training, includes equality and diversity, interpersonal skills, dealing with dementia and customer care.

7. Raise the status of care workers through better training, career progression and commensurate reward.
8. Improve employment practices to bring the care sector more into line with normal employment standards, for example ensuring that the use of zero hours contracts is the exception rather than the rule and used only when absolutely necessary and ensuring staff are properly reimbursed for things like training and travel.

Applicability: England.

Background briefing: This motion builds on policy on adult social care by calling for a stronger Care Quality Commission, and proposes a range of measures to improve its accountability and communication channels, such as ensuring a better, more user-friendly website and improved whistleblowing procedures. It also calls for the status of care workers to be raised through better staff training, career progression, commensurate reward and improved employment practice by bringing the care sector more in line with normal employment standards.

Previous party policy on the social care system and standards of care is set out in conference motions Adult Social Care (2011) and Updating the NHS: Personal and Local (2011) and in the 2010 General Election Manifesto Change That Works for You.

Conference voted in support of an amendment which inserted 2.

Fairer Taxes (Tax Policy Paper)

Conference believes that in a fair society, government has a duty to help the least well off to get on and to ensure that everyone pays their fair share.

Conference believes that taxation policy has a crucial role to play in building a fairer society, promoting prosperity and protecting the environment, and that the tax system itself should be simpler, and endorses policy paper 111, *Fairer Taxes*, as a statement of Liberal Democrat tax policy to help achieve this.

Conference believes:

1. Government should cut tax for those earning low and middle incomes, through:
 - a) Raising the income tax threshold to £10,000, taking 2.7 million people out of paying income tax altogether, and giving a tax cut of £700 to many million others, now delivered by Liberal Democrats in government.
 - b) Further raising the income tax threshold to the level equivalent to a full time job on the National Minimum Wage (NMW), and index-linking it to further rises in the NMW, ensuring that no-one earning the minimum wage pays income tax on a standard full-time salary, and giving a tax cut of up to £460 to millions of other workers.
2. The wealthiest should pay their fair share, through:
 - a) A Mansion Tax, applicable at 1% on the excess value of a residential property over £2 million.
 - b) Lifetime tax relief for pensions being limited to a pension pot of £1 million.
 - c) Non-dom tax status being more tightly restricted, and prevented from becoming hereditary.
3. Wealthy individuals and companies should no longer be able to see paying tax as optional, through:

- a) Liberal Democrat-led efforts within government to crack down on tax avoidance, including both international efforts and the introduction of a General Anti-Abuse Rule in the UK.
 - b) The introduction of a stronger General Anti-Avoidance Rule, supported by a straightforward pre-clearance system, which would outlaw any move taken purely to avoid tax in ways not intended by Parliament.
 - c) Continuing to invest in HMRC's ability to tackle avoidance, which has demonstrated a good return on investment, and in international efforts to co-ordinate anti-avoidance.
 - d) Tackling tax avoidance by multinational companies, especially in developing countries, by requiring greater transparency of their tax arrangements, including country by country reporting.
4. The tax system should be simplified by:
- a) Making personal tax returns simpler by HMRC pre-populating them based on information they hold, and make contacting HMRC much more straightforward.
 - b) Continuing to simplify tax rules by limiting specific reliefs, and ensuring that they have 'sunset clauses'.
 - c) Renewing the mandate of the Office of Tax Simplification.
5. Taxation should focus more on wealth rather than income, through:
- a) Supporting the introduction of a system of land value taxation.
 - b) Moving back to a system in which capital gains are taxed at the same level as income, rather than at a lower rate.
 - c) Maintaining the existing rates of income tax, including the additional rate of 45% for income over £150,000 per year.
6. Businesses and especially small businesses should be supported, through:
- a) The reduction of corporation tax by the Government to a historically low level, which has helped to stimulate business and is attractive to international investors.
 - b) Introducing a range of financial and non-financial measures to help small businesses, including simplifying tax administration.
7. Control of taxation should be devolved further to nations, through:
- a) Devolving power over a range of taxes to the Welsh Assembly, in line with the recommendations made by the Silk Commission.
 - b) Supporting a move towards Fiscal Federalism for Scotland, including further transfer of tax powers as set out in the Scottish Liberal Democrats policy paper 'Federalism: the best future for Scotland'.
8. The tax system should promote environmental sustainability, by:
- a) Continuing to push for reform of the EU emissions trading scheme (EUETS) so that it drives improved energy efficiency.
 - b) Further promoting more energy efficient homes by lowering the rate of VAT for home renovations which increase the energy efficiency rating.
 - c) Linking Vehicle Exercise Duty bandings to EU emissions targets to improve energy efficiency.
 - d) Continuing to push for reform of taxation of international aviation to change Air Passenger Duty to a Per-Plane Duty.
 - e) Providing ISA allowances for investments into enterprises with environmental and/or technological benefits.

Conference believes that the proposed marriage tax allowance, that would give certain types of married couples a tax break, is discriminatory, unnecessary and expensive. Conference

therefore resolves to oppose the proposed marriage tax allowance, and if it is implemented to repeal it at the earliest opportunity.

Applicability: Federal, although 2 a) and 5a) would become England only under proposals in 7.

Background briefing: This motion and accompanying policy paper 111, Fairer Taxes, builds on existing tax policy by calling for a simpler tax system that focuses on wealth rather than income, promotes environmental sustainability and further measures to help small businesses. Proposals include raising the personal allowance further to the level equivalent to a full-time job on National Minimum Wage, continued efforts to crack down on tax avoidance by wealthy individuals and companies through the introduction of a stronger General Anti-Avoidance Rule and the implementation of the Mansion Tax.

Previous party policy on the tax system is set out in conference motions Corporate Tax Avoidance (2013) and Making Tax Fairer (2012), policy paper 94, A Fresh Start for Britain (2009), the General Election Manifesto Change that Works for You (2010), policy paper 81, Reducing the Burden (2007), and policy paper 76, Fairer, Simpler, Greener (2006).

Federal Conference Committee accepted a drafting amendment to the motion which in 5. after "focus" inserted "more".

Conference voted against hearing reference back.

Conference voted to retain 2. a).

Conference voted to retain 5. a).

Conference rejected an amendment which would have inserted after 2 c):

- d) *Higher rates of stamp duty on the purchase and sale of residential properties in the UK, other than as the purchaser's principal home, by or on behalf of individuals not UK domiciled or resident, as well as by or on behalf of all companies which are not UK registered.*

Conference voted for an amendment which added after 8. e):

Conference believes that the proposed marriage tax allowance, that would give certain types of married couples a tax break, is discriminatory, unnecessary and expensive. Conference therefore resolves to oppose the proposed marriage tax allowance, and if it is implemented to repeal it at the earliest opportunity.

Conference voted for 5 c) instead of an option which read:

Maintaining the existing rates of income tax, apart from the additional rate for income over £150,000, which should rise to 50%, subject to an independent review concluding that the additional income from this change would be likely (on balance of probabilities) to exceed the costs of introducing it.

Green Growth and Green Jobs (Transition to a Zero Carbon Britain Policy Paper)

Conference endorses the Liberal Democrat vision for a zero carbon Britain, which will help to create green jobs, revive the economy, lay the foundations for new technologies, new industries and new, sustainable sources of prosperity, free the country from its dependence on fossil fuels and help tackle the grave threat of climate change.

Conference endorses Policy Paper 109, *Green Growth and Green Jobs – Transition to a Zero Carbon Britain*, which sets out the framework for a long-term strategy to set the UK on the path to a carbon-neutral future.

Conference in particular welcomes the paper's specific proposals to:

1. Strengthen the UK policy framework for green growth by:
 - a) Providing greater policy stability and promoting investor confidence.
 - b) Facilitating investment in low-carbon technologies and infrastructure, including:
 - i) Expanding the Green Investment Bank's borrowing powers.
 - ii) Encouraging the creation of green financial products.
 - c) Developing and retaining a skilled and flexible UK workforce.
 - d) Promoting low-carbon innovation.
 - e) Ensuring that local government plays a full role in the transition to a zero carbon Britain.
 - f) Reviewing the contribution of the planning framework.
 - g) Ensuring that government takes a stronger lead in procuring low-carbon goods and services.
2. Press for a strengthened EU policy framework for green growth, including:
 - a) Binding EU and member state emissions targets, as part of a 2030 energy and climate package, reducing emissions by 50 per cent from 1990 levels.
 - b) Swift and ambitious reform of the EU Emissions Trading System.
 - c) Better use of EU funds to steer investment into low-carbon solutions.
3. Halve total energy demand by 2030 by:
 - a) Improving domestic energy efficiency, including:
 - i) Transforming the Green Deal into a comprehensive one-off programme to bring all homes up to the EnerPHit standard by 2050, focusing initially on households suffering from fuel poverty and homes in off-gas-grid areas.
 - ii) Offering differential final stamp duty rates on home transactions.
 - iii) Providing incentives to local authorities to reduce council tax rates for those who can demonstrate significant improvements in a home's EPC ratings.
 - b) Targeting energy efficiency improvements in commercial, services and public sector buildings.
 - c) Encouraging and empowering domestic consumers to reduce energy use.
4. Decarbonise the power sector by:
 - a) Enacting as soon as possible a legally binding target for decarbonising the power sector by 2030, in the range of 50–100 g of CO₂ per kWh of electricity.
 - b) Developing a more diverse and competitive generation and supply market.
 - c) Providing support for new technologies and business models through the Green Investment Bank.
 - d) Reducing planning barriers to renewable energy developments.
 - e) Helping onshore wind developers to engage with local communities.
 - f) Encouraging investment in offshore wind.
 - g) Promoting marine renewables.
 - h) Continuing the government's cap on new dedicated biomass plants, and ending support for all new biomass for electricity generation after 2020.
 - i) Allowing existing nuclear power stations to run to the end of their operating lives and accepting that new, nuclear power stations could play a limited role in electricity supply, provided concerns about safety, disposal of radioactive waste

and cost (including decommissioning) are adequately addressed and without allowing any public subsidy for new build.

- j) Prioritising construction of international interconnectors.
 - k) Investigating the development of a larger UK energy storage market.
 - l) Not allowing new gas-fired generation in the absence of a clear plan to recover heat for supply to industrial or commercial consumers or via a heat network.
 - m) Limiting shale gas exploration until it has been shown that:
 - i) Regulations controlling pollution of water, methane gas emissions, sustainable use of water, monitoring of seismic activity and protecting local environmental quality are adequate and are strictly enforced.
 - ii) Methane emissions are properly monitored and accounted for in the UK's carbon register so that the legal limits on greenhouse gas emissions in the UK's carbon budgets are kept to.
 - n) Further conditions on shale gas exploration including:
 - i) Planning decisions concerning shale gas extraction remaining with local authorities and local communities being fully consulted over extraction and compensated for any damage to the local landscape.
 - ii) Establishing community benefit arrangements from both shale gas exploration and production, including a 'right to buy in' to shale gas projects in the local area.
 - iii) A low carbon transition fund using at least half of the total tax take from shale gas exploration and production to fund strong regulation of shale gas exploration, low carbon innovation, initiatives to tackle fuel poverty and encourage the commercialisation of carbon capture and storage technology.
 - o) Supporting the development of carbon capture and storage (CCS) technology.
 - p) Promoting community energy projects.
5. Decarbonise the UK heat supply by 2050 by:
- a) Reducing heat wastage.
 - b) Promoting district heating.
 - c) Ensuring that biomass is used for heating fuel rather than electricity generation alone.
 - d) Expanding the use of low-carbon gas.
6. Decarbonise the transport sector by:
- a) Promoting walking and cycling.
 - b) Taking action to reduce private vehicle emissions, including:
 - i) Supporting ambitious EU emissions targets for cars, of around 70g CO₂/km, to take effect in 2025.
 - ii) Supporting tighter EU emissions targets for vans.
 - iii) Developing a Vehicle Emissions Duty (VED) escalator linked to the EU targets with a subsidy for the cleanest vehicles, paid for by higher VED on the highest emission vehicles.
 - iv) Preparing for the introduction of a revenue-neutral system of road pricing and supporting local authorities introducing road pricing in congested areas.
 - v) Specifying that, by 2040, only ultra-low carbon vehicles will be permitted on UK roads for non-freight purposes.
 - c) Extending electrification of the rail network where there are clear economic and environmental benefits.
 - d) Reducing bus emissions and promoting bus use.
 - e) Reducing aviation emissions by replacing air passenger duty with a per-plane duty, charged in proportion to the carbon emissions created by that journey.

- f) Promoting international action to reduce shipping emissions.
 - g) Including international aviation and shipping emissions in the UK's statutory targets to reduce emissions and the carbon budget framework.
 - h) Pressing for reform of EU policies in order to reduce support for unsustainable transport biofuels and end all support for food-crop-based biofuels after 2020.
7. Address emissions from industry by:
- a) Encouraging greater efficiency in industrial processes.
 - b) Assisting energy-intensive industries to adopt low-carbon production methods and invest in energy-efficiency measures.
 - c) Ensuring that UK Trade and Investment and UK Export Finance withdraw fully from supporting all fossil fuel-related sectors, and instead increase support to exports of low-carbon technologies and services.
8. Take action to reduce carbon emissions from agriculture and land use, including:
- a) Working with the European Commission to plan for a mid-term review of the CAP in 2017 to build on the current reforms.
 - b) Adopting a National Food Strategy to secure the production and consumption of sustainable and healthy food.
 - c) Expanding forestry.
9. Ensure that consumers gain from the transition to a zero carbon Britain by:
- a) Ensuring that decarbonisation policies achieve their objectives cost-effectively and affordably.
 - b) Creating market-wide incentives for energy saving, or 'negawatts'.
 - c) Promoting collective switching initiatives.
 - d) Assisting households suffering from fuel poverty.
10. Working for a globally coordinated international response to climate change including:
- a) Playing a leading political role in the EU and international forums to secure an effective new climate treaty, containing emission reduction commitments from all countries, with the richer countries taking the lead, supported by a well-financed Green Climate Fund to provide assistance to poor countries.
 - b) Pursuing EU and international action to reduce hydrofluorcarbons (HFCs) and other 'short-lived climate forcers'.
 - c) Promoting international action to end net global deforestation by 2020.

Applicability: Federal, except 1 e) and f), 3, 4 d) and e), 4 h), 4 n) and o), 5 b) and c), 6 a), 6 b) iv), 6 c) and d) and 8 b) and c), which are England only.

Background briefing: This motion and the accompanying policy paper 109, Green Growth and Green Jobs (Transition to a Zero Carbon Britain), call for the strengthening of the UK's policy framework for green growth, promotes policies for a carbon-neutral future and significantly develops policy on the decarbonisation of the power, transport, agriculture and industry sectors. It creates new policy on fracking.

Previous party policy on green growth and climate change is set out in policy paper 105, Sustainable Prosperity and Jobs (September 2012), conference motions The Greenest Government Ever (March 2012) and A Green Stimulus for Economic Recovery (2011), the 2010 General Election Manifesto Change That Works For You and policy paper 82, Zero Carbon Britain – Taking a Global Lead (2007).

Conference voted against hearing reference back.

Conference voted for 4 i) instead of an option which read:

- i) *Allowing existing nuclear power stations to run to the end of their operating lives but rejecting the construction of a new generation of nuclear plant.*

Conference voted in support of an amendment which replaced the original 4. m) that read:

- m) *permitting limited shale gas extraction, ensuring that regulations controlling pollution and protecting local environmental quality are strictly enforced, planning decision remain with local authorities and local communities are fully consulted over extraction and fully compensated for all damage to the local landscape*

And inserted 4. n).

High Street Gambling

Conference notes:

- a) The increase in the number of betting shops in deprived areas since the last Labour Government passed the Gambling Act 2005 which included the removal of the need for operators to prove unmet demand.
- b) That betting shops are currently in the same use class as banks and building societies, allowing them to be opened with no planning consent required for change of use in some cases.
- c) That the majority of the revenue generated from betting shops is now from high reward gambling machines rather than from traditional betting on sporting events.
- d) The Portas Review into the future of High Streets describes gaming outlets as a “blight on the high street”, and that their proliferation is creating unsightly gambling ‘clusters’ on struggling retail hotspots.
- e) That Newham Council’s recent refusal to allow a further betting shop application in a street with an existing proliferation, which was seen as a test case, was overturned on appeal.
- f) That in many areas, crime and anti-social disorder has been associated with a proliferation of betting shops.

Conference welcomes the DCMS-initiated review of fixed odds betting terminals, including stakes, prizes and numbers of machines and recognises that the holding of the review is a success of Liberal Democrats in Government.

Conference believes that local councillors should be empowered to decide whether or not to give approval to additional gambling venues in their community.

Conference therefore calls on Liberal Democrats in government to push for:

1. Betting shops to be put in a new separate planning use class, allowing local authority planning committees to control their number within town centre or high street areas, and reinforce local authorities’ capacity to do so by way of appropriate amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. The Gambling Act to be amended to allow council licensing committees to take into account the cumulative impact of a proliferation of gambling activities when considering applications.

Applicability: England.

Background briefing: This motion creates new policy on the specific issue of the planning use class of betting shops and reinforces our general approach to local regeneration and economic development.

Previous party policy on local economic and social regeneration, and decentralisation of the planning system, is set out in policy paper 77, Green and Prosperous Communities – Local Regeneration for the 21st Century (2007).

Conference voted in support of an amendment which in 1. deleted “them” and inserted:

“...their number within town centre or high street areas, and reinforce local authorities’ capacity to do so by way of appropriate amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework.”

Human Rights

Conference believes:

- A. That Britain has a proud history of international leadership on human rights, using our political leadership and legal expertise to drive the creation of the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950.
- B. British leadership on human rights is as important now as it has ever been with worrying cases such as the imprisonment of Pussy Riot in Russia, the segregation of Roma Gypsy children in parts of Europe, the rise in human trafficking and the continued trampling of basic freedoms of individuals across the globe.
- C. Human rights are fundamental to a fair, free and open society.
- D. In the current century, protecting human rights in digital space is as important to freedom and democracy as protecting human rights in physical space.
- E. All governments should be bound by rights legislation and rights legislation should be entrenched in a written constitution.
- F. Both social, economic and cultural rights and civil and political rights are indivisible aspects of human rights, noting that the UK is signatory to the international covenant on social, economic and cultural rights (ICESCR) which includes rights to family life, health, food, shelter, work, social security and an adequate standard of living, and that Liberal Democrats should work to secure these rights in policy-making and legislation.

Conference welcomes:

- I. Nick Clegg’s statement that “the Human Rights Act is here to stay” while Liberal Democrats are in Government.
- II. The Coalition’s commitment to “be strong in the defence of freedom” and “implement a full programme of measures to reverse the substantial erosion of civil liberties and roll back state intrusion”.
- III. The UK-led Brighton Declaration, which will help to reduce the backlog of cases at the Strasbourg court and to allow the court to operate more effectively.
- IV. That members of the Government’s ‘Commission on a Bill of Rights’ did agree that any new human rights legislation must provide at least the same level of protection for our freedoms and rights as the existing Human Rights Act and European Convention on Human Rights.
- V. That the Human Rights Act is a vital lifeline for citizens who have been unfairly treated and was responsible for:

1. Ensuring that Gary McKinnon was not unjustly extradited to the United States.
 2. Stopping blanket DNA retention.
 3. Preventing councils from snooping on citizens.
 4. Stopping the degrading treatment of vulnerable people in the NHS.
 5. Securing accommodation for domestic violence victims.
 6. Ensuring that fostered children can visit their mentally disabled parents.
 7. Defending the right of couples to be accommodated together in residential care homes.
 8. Protecting transport services for disabled people.
- VI. The introduction by the Foreign Office of a new presumption that known human rights abusers should not be granted permission to enter the UK.

Conference however regrets:

- i) That the Government's 'Commission on a Bill of Rights' failed to reach a unanimous agreement.
- ii) The ongoing political debate surrounding rights legislation, which reflects widespread misunderstanding about the origins, aims and effects of the Human Rights Act.
- iii) That politicians from both the Labour and Conservative parties continually portray human rights legislation as a "villains' charter" which has done "way more damage than good".
- iv) That the existing process for taking an appeal from the UK courts to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is cumbersome and has led to long delays, contributing to a view that human rights themselves are to blame.
- v) That the public image of the Human Rights Act as nothing but a tool for terrorists, criminals and trouble-makers has been left unchallenged by some politicians and media outlets.

Conference therefore calls for:

1. The Human Rights Act to be retained.
2. The British Government to continue to work with European partners to reform the process through which the European Convention on Human Rights is administered, to ensure that frustrating delays, like in the case of Abu Qatada, are prevented in future.
3. The UK to remain a prominent signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights so that rights legislation is entrenched throughout Europe.
4. Liberal Democrats in Government to stand firm against the Conservative Party in defence of the Human Rights Act and European Convention on Human Rights.
5. Liberal Democrats in Government to continue to protect the Rights of Privacy, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Association in digital space by standing against illiberal legislation, such as the 'Snoopers' Charter' promoted by both Labour and the Conservatives.
6. A constitutional convention to draw up a UK Bill of Rights as part of a wider written constitution, which will include:
 - a) Full involvement of the devolved administrations.
 - b) Cross-party negotiations.
 - c) The incorporation of the Human Rights Act and every protection contained therein.
 - d) Continued support for the European Convention on Human Rights.

Applicability: Federal

Background briefing: This motion develops party policy on human rights, and reaffirms the party's commitment to human rights as fundamental to a fair, free and open society. In particular, this motion calls on Liberal Democrats in Government to oppose any attempt to repeal the Human Rights Act and urges the British Government to continue to work with Europe to positively reform the process through which the European Convention on Human Rights is administered.

Previous party policy on human rights and the Human Rights Act is set out in conference motion Civil Liberties (2012), the 2010 General Election Manifesto Change That Works for You and conference motion Human Rights (2003).

Federal Conference Committee accepted a drafting amendment to insert F.

Conference voted in support of an amendment which inserted D and 5.

Impact of the Private Finance Initiative on the National Health Service

Conference believes that among the many economic problems left by the last Labour Government, the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in the NHS, is the most toxic; the total capital costs to the Department of Health of £11.6 billion will cost individual trusts and hospitals £80 billion in repayments.

Conference believes that Labour's eagerness to keep vast amounts of debt 'off the government books' led to a failure rigorously to negotiate contracts and get value for money – this has resulted in finance companies pocketing enormous profits whilst 27 hospital trusts locked into unaffordable contracts are on the brink of bankruptcy.

Conference believes that many of the PFI deals entered into for the NHS by the previous Government gave unacceptable levels of protection to the investors; resulted in insufficient openness and transparency as to which companies are involved and little regard to the longer term affordability and flexibility required for future health care needs.

Conference notes that, since these PFI contracts were created, the country has entered a period of economic austerity, in which it is necessary to reconsider the affordability of all government contracts and for them to be reduced or renegotiated.

Conference notes that many more Trusts would be in deficit had the Department of Health not spent £1 billion to help bail them out; however, this piecemeal approach is not sustainable and the quality of care and equality of access to hospitals is threatened and Trusts need support and guidance in working out viable rescue plans with their PFI providers.

Conference notes that the Government's desire to maintain expenditure on health care will be undermined if closures and cuts in treatment are made in order to fund the increasing annual payments to the PFI providers; these payments have grown from £459 million per year to £628 million per year over the last three years and are set to grow exponentially in future years.

Conference calls for:

1. The identification and publication of the names of all private contractors who initially entered into PFI Contracts with the NHS, the duration of these contracts and the profit margins; where debts have been passed on, identification of the organisations concerned and any additional contracts they have entered into with any part of the NHS.
2. Government support to trusts to assist them in robust renegotiations of the debts, naming and shaming banks and lenders who refuse to respond to the changed financial environment.

3. New regulatory controls on existing PFI providers that ban the transfer of ownership of contracts and assets to offshore tax havens.

Applicability: England.

Background briefing: This motion condemns many of the Private Finance Initiative deals entered into by the last Labour Government and develops party policy in a range of areas such as long term affordability and flexibility of government contracts for future health care needs as well as the funding of healthcare and calls for the identification and publication of all contractors who initially entered into PFI deals with the NHS.

Previous party policy on the NHS and in particular on Trust deficits, the health budget and local control of services is set out in conference motion Updating the NHS: Personal and Local (2011), the 2010 General Election Manifesto Change That Works for You, policy paper 85, Empowerment, Fairness and Quality (2008) and conference motion NHS Trust Deficits and Threats to Local Services (2006).

Learning for Life (Education and Skills from Upper Secondary to Lifelong Learning Policy Paper)

Conference believes that Liberal Democrats are working for a stronger economy in a fairer society, enabling every person to get on in life.

Conference recognises that education and skills are vital both to individual opportunity and the overall economic performance of the country.

Conference endorses policy paper 110, *Learning for Life – Education and Skills from Upper Secondary to Lifelong Learning*, which aims to build a world class education and skills sector, celebrating vocational and academic education pathways from age 14 onwards.

Conference believes that:

- A. Lifelong access to independent careers information, advice and guidance is critical for all.
- B. With the extension of compulsory education to 18 it is important that young people continue to study subjects associated with literacy and numeracy up until they are 18.
- C. As the end of compulsory education will be 18 by 2015, there should be a clear 14–18 phase of education and training.
- D. Government should do all in its power to eradicate unemployment amongst 18–24 year olds.
- E. We should build on the good work of the Coalition Government in increasing the number of apprenticeships, particularly by focusing on increasing the number of apprenticeships in small businesses.
- F. The numbers of qualified young people attending university and other institutions of higher education should increase over time.
- G. The Higher Education system should be more flexible for students, including transferring between universities and using online methods of learning.
- H. In the principle that education should be free at the point of use.
- I. Access to education should always be based on academic ability and never on an individual's ability to afford it.

- J. That the method of repayment should find a balance between the sum that graduates contribute and the burden under which they are placed in doing so
- K. The current system of Higher Education funding is preferable to the funding system of the last Labour government.
- L. More should be done to encourage UK students to take up post graduate courses and provide support including income contingent loans.

Conference calls for:

1. A world-class independent Careers Information, Advice and Guidance Service, which should be available to all, with:
 - a) Governing bodies monitoring careers education and Ofsted being required to comment on the careers provision and the quality of work experience provision when inspecting schools and colleges.
 - b) A legal requirement for young people to gain work experience for not less than three weeks between 14 and 16 and of a minimum quality specified by the appropriate national bodies.
 - c) Reviewing careers, information, advice and guidance for SEN students and adults.
 - d) Expanding the National Careers Service to provide face-to-face guidance online for every school student at the best age for them after they have become 13.
 - e) A streamlined and professional Careers body throughout education, which accredits advisers.

2. A world class 14–18 system in which:
 - a) Every young person studies Literacy and Numeracy until they are 18, and ICT up to Level 2 subject to a fundamental review of ICT level 2 course content to ensure students have access to a range of skills and opportunities, such as programming knowledge.
 - b) Free school meals to be extended to pupils and students from poorer backgrounds in colleges.
 - c) A student premium providing extra money for institutions for each student they enrol who meets free school meals criteria.
 - d) Equality between vocational and academic routes of learning with greater freedom to move between courses, tailoring learning to the individual's needs.
 - e) Subsidised or free travel is available for 16–18 year olds in receipt of the student premium.
 - f) Pre-apprenticeship training for 14–16 year olds and the introduction of a financial incentive to encourage employers to take on 16–17 year olds.
 - g) Schools and students, including home (and distance) learners, have access to virtual classrooms, virtual resources and interactive specialist teaching through the creation of virtual schools, which provide support to existing schools.

3. Policies to support 18–24 year olds at risk of unemployment including:
 - a) Raising student numbers at universities and lifting the cap on numbers of Higher Education places over time.
 - b) Expanding the number of full-time two-year Foundation Degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.
 - c) Maintenance loans for full-time 18-24 further education students on Level 3 STEM courses.
 - d) Expanding higher level and professional apprenticeships for 18-24 year olds.
 - e) Explaining the part-time fee loan system to students, and to employers.
 - f) Small maintenance loans for part-time study for 18-24 year olds in employment.
 - g) Wages support for employers taking on low qualified young adults, under the Youth Contract.

- h) Mandatory skills training under the new Universal Credit regime of sufficient duration to allow unemployed younger adults to achieve qualifications up to full Level 3 qualifications.
 - i) The introduction of six month traineeships which combine structured job search, continuing English, Maths, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) support for those who particularly need it.
 - j) Bringing together the government funding streams for 18-24 year olds into an agency that can provide joined-up intensive support.
4. A step change in 18+ Apprenticeships by:
- a) Increasing public spending on 18-24 apprenticeships.
 - b) Placing the public contribution to 18-24 apprenticeships into the hands of each employer with funding redistributed through the NI/PAYE system.
 - c) Continuing to treat expenditure on apprenticeships, including apprentice wages, as an expense deductible against corporation tax liabilities.
 - d) Ensuring that full cost funding of adult apprenticeships is specified in large scale public contracts.
 - e) Considering offering a time-limited employer NI rebate from 13.8% to zero for all age adult apprenticeships when public spending is exhausted to help make the jobs sustainable in the longer term.
 - f) The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) developing a central admissions system.
5. A cross-party Commission to look at Adult Further Education during the next Parliament, including:
- a) Addressing funding by the individual, employer and the state.
 - b) New methods of learning (including on-line and distance learning, and massive open online courses.
 - c) 'Credit cloud' frameworks that bring together an individual's wide range of learning and qualifications, based on the Scottish system of Credit Qualification Framework.
6. Policies to create a Higher Education system fit for the 21st Century including:
- a) Creating a single Higher Education (HE) Council, incorporating the current Higher Education Funding Council, the Quality Assurance Agency and the Office of Fair Access – the HE Council will conduct an annual review of the impact of the funding and maintenance regime for both full and part time students and report to Parliament and the Social Mobility Tsar.
 - b) Ensuring that institutions are transparent about their financial viability, working with the HE Council to produce an annual report.
 - c) Raising student numbers at universities with 20,000 STEM Foundation Degrees and lifting the cap on numbers of higher education places over time.
 - d) A commitment to a review within the next Parliament on the current system of higher education finance, which will examine its impact on access, participation and quality and consider both the pressure on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement from unpaid loans and progress made on widening and increasing participation, with a view to reforming the system to address these challenges if possible or if necessary for fees to be eliminated in a feasible and cost-effective way, and there should be no increase in the fee cap level pending the outcome of the review.
 - e) Further increasing and enhancing the National Scholarship Programme by transforming it into a National Bursary Scheme to support poorer students.
 - f) Institutions to agree a single Social Mobility Charter with the HE Council, with input from their students – this will include running summer schools, sponsoring/establishing schools, setting-up mentoring programmes between students/alumni and schools' pupils.

- g) Recognising the excellence in teaching in universities, by making teaching as important as research excellence in the quality assessment of universities; universities should also break down how much of their teaching is delivered by staff on permanent or temporary contracts, or by teaching assistants on hourly rates.
- h) Introducing a central admissions system for part time students.
- i) Making UK students wanting to undertake a taught post graduate course eligible for an income contingent loan of up to £10,000.
- j) Removing international students from the immigration figures, with fast tracked visa routes for those offered places at accredited universities.
- k) Allowing international students to remain in the UK for up to three years following their course providing they are in graduate-level employment.

Conference opposes any change to the terms of interest rates for graduates with existing student loans prior to 2012.

Applicability: England, except 6 j) and k), which are Federal.

Background briefing: This motion and accompanying policy paper 110, Learning for Life – Education and Skills from Upper Secondary to Lifelong Learning, reiterates the need to improve higher as well as further education and includes policies to combat youth unemployment. In particular, this motion calls for the introduction of a cross-party commission on adult FE in the next Parliament and for further measures to strengthen apprenticeships. It also develops existing party policy on further education funding, the need for transparency in university selection criteria and proposes the removal of international students from immigration figures.

Previous party policy on further education, vocational education and skills is set out in conference motions Getting the Most Out of Schools (2012), policy paper 103, Giving Young People a Future: Policies on Combating Youth Unemployment (2012) and policy paper 90, Investing in Talent, Building the Economy (2009). Previous party policy on student finance in higher education is set out in policy paper 90, Investing in Talent, Building the Economy (2009).

Federal Conference Committee accepted drafting amendments to the motion which:

In F. after “university” inserted: “and other institutions of higher education”.

In 2. a) deleted “to study”, and after “Level 2” inserted “, subject to a fundamental review of ICT level 2 course content to ensure students have access to a range of skills and opportunities, such as programming knowledge”.

Inserted 2. g).

Added after 6. k) “Conference opposes any change to the terms of interest rates for graduates with existing student loans prior to 2012.”

Conference voted in support of an amendment which replaced the original H that read:

H. The current system of Higher Education funding represents the best deal for students and taxpayers currently available. Further, that alternatives such as the Graduate Tax have a number of obvious failings, which would place an additional burden on low and middle income students and graduates, as well as a substantial extra cost to the state

Inserted I - K;

And replaced the original 6. d) that read:

d) Retaining the current system of higher education finance, and committing to a review

within the next Parliament, which will examine its impact on access, participation and quality - this review should consider both the pressure on the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement from unpaid loans and progress made on widening and increasing participation.

Conference voted in support of a second amendment which:

In 1. a) after "careers provision" inserted: "and the quality of work experience provision".

In 1. b) after "14 and 16" inserted: "and of a minimum quality specified by the appropriate national bodies".

In 1. d) after "online" inserted: "for every school student at the best age for them after they have become 13".

Conference voted in support of a third amendment which:

In 6. d) after "finance" deleted "and committing to" and inserted "without any increase in the fee cap pending".

Legal Aid

Conference notes:

- A. The Party's current policy on Legal Aid, adopted overwhelmingly at the Sheffield Party Conference in 2011.
- B. The pressures upon public spending faced by the government, which is substantially the result of serious failings in economic policy by the previous Labour Government.
- C. The widespread criticism of proposals in the MoJ's consultation paper on Legal Aid including an unsustainable model for Price Competitive Tendering of criminal defence services, and substantial reduction in the number of suppliers, and that whilst big changes have been made to the proposals the proposals on tendering to deal with objections to lowest bidder 'cut price' justice, fundamental concerns remain about the sustainability of the supplier base in light of proposed fee cuts of 17 per cent.
- D. Scrutiny by the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) of proposed changes to civil legal aid, including the proposed introduction of a residence test for civil legal aid claimants, restrictions on the scope of legal aid available to prisoners and on payment for preparation work in judicial review cases, and the JCHR request for the Secretary of State for Justice delay the proposals until the Committee completed its work and reported back to parliament.
- E. That the Ministry of Justice is proposing to create significant new demands on expenditure in prisons policy, at the same time as making cuts to legal aid.

Conference believes that:

- i) The provision of a high quality justice system and proper access to justice are fundamental obligations for a modern democratic state.
- ii) The human rights implications of the changes to legal aid being investigated by the JCHR are of fundamental significance for the right of access to justice and the rule of law.
- iii) No further cuts in the provision of Legal Aid and the availability of local justice should take place without ensuring that any such proposals are first properly trialled and assessed to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effect upon access to justice and the quality of legal services provided to those who require assistance by means of Legal Aid.
- iv) New areas of Ministry of Justice expenditure cannot be justified while legal aid is being cut so drastically.

Conference calls for:

1. Proposed changes to criminal or civil legal to be stayed pending thorough consultation and scrutiny to ensure there will be no adverse effect upon:
 - a) Access to justice and the availability of local justice.
 - b) The quality of legal services provided to those who cannot afford to pay privately.
 - c) The public purse through unintended consequences such as prisoners being detained for longer than necessary or defendants suffering miscarriages of justice.
 - d) Public confidence through the removal of the means to ensure public accountability, fairness and equality before the law regardless of means.
 - e) Human rights issues as identified by JCHR, and that the Committee's concerns be acted upon in full.
2. Liberal Democrats to question the proposed model for Price Competitive Tendering, especially in light previous reports on the economy of criminal defence services by the National Audit Office.
3. A review of the whole system of spending allocation in the Ministry of Justice budget so that so that the demands of legal aid, the courts and the penal system are kept in balance.

Applicability: England and Wales

Background briefing: This motion further develops previous party policy on the provision of legal aid, the reform of the legal aid system and access to justice as set out in conference motions Access to Justice (2011) and Legal Aid (2008).

Making Housing Benefit Work for Tenants in Social Housing

Conference accepts there is under-occupancy of social housing, and all tenants, including pensioners, should be encouraged to live in homes that meet their housing needs.

Conference is concerned that the Government's extension of Labour's policy of reducing housing benefit entitlements for private rented sector tenants considered to have spare bedrooms to the social housing sector is discriminating against the most vulnerable in society.

Conference also believes that:

- I. The majority of rural and urban areas outside large cities such as London have insufficiently large, diverse and dynamic social housing markets to make moving into a smaller property locally a viable option
- II. There is lack of appreciation of the housing requirements of children and adults with disabilities and care needs
- III. Insufficient funds are allocated to Discretionary Housing Payment Funds of Local Authorities to meet demand and there is insufficient support for tenants to apply and to challenge decisions
- IV. In many areas it is more important to free up family homes with three or more bedrooms than two bedroom homes.
- V. The implementation of policy paper 104, *Decent Homes for All* (2012), should be a priority for Government.

Conference welcomes:

- i) Scottish Liberal Democrats passing a motion against the policy.

- ii) Actions taken by councils to mitigate the harmful effects of this policy on the most vulnerable, including reducing the dangers of eviction caused by arrears.
- iii) The work of many, including voluntary organisations, in supporting those applying for discretionary payments and highlighting the injustices caused by this policy.
- iv) The changes successfully demanded by Liberal Democrats in Government to protect some of the most vulnerable, including exempting foster carers and families of members of the Armed Forces.
- v) The increase in the Discretionary Housing Payment fund from £60m in 2012/13 to £155m in 2013/14 achieved by Liberal Democrats in Government.
- vi) Welcomes the success of the Liberal Democrats in Government in securing an additional £35m fund to help claimants affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy who need extra support – this funding consists of £5m for rural areas with very isolated communities, £10m for all local authorities and £20m as a bidding fund for local authorities who can demonstrate that they have or are developing a robust policy to distribute discretionary housing payments and who have an additional need for funding.

Conference calls for further action by Government, including:

1. An immediate evaluation of the impact of the policy, establishing the extent to which larger homes are freed up, money saved, costs of implementation, the impact on vulnerable tenants, and the impact on the private rented sector.
2. A redrafting of clear housing needs guidelines in association with those representing vulnerable groups including the disabled, elderly and children that are responsive to local circumstances.
3. Acceptance that some Councils and Housing Associations have calculated rent by reference to bed spaces (not bedrooms) as some rooms can and should only house one person: this should be reflected in the DWP calculation of housing benefit.
4. A review of the amount allocated to Local Authorities for the Discretionary Housing Payment Fund and guidelines on the use of these funds and appeal processes.
5. The development of practical strategies to encourage pensioners to downsize where a single person or couple lives in a three or more bedroom home.
6. In the context of new guidelines an assessment of the current and future demand for social housing and the use of this at local level to facilitate planning to get the right homes in the right place.
7. Until any new guidelines are in place:
 - a) No withdrawal of housing benefit to those who are on the waiting list for social housing which fits the current guidelines within their local area.
 - b) No reduction in housing benefit from their projected housing need for those who, for a period of less than six months, temporarily have a smaller housing need due to a change in their circumstances, but whose need will predictably return to a higher level (e.g. whose children will pass the age limits for separate rooms within that period).

Applicability: Federal, except 2, 3, 4 and 5, which are England only.

Background briefing: This motion creates new policy on entitlement to housing benefit.

Previous policy on housing benefit is set out in policy paper 104, Decent Homes for All (2012).

Federal Conference Committee accepted a drafting amendment to the motion which inserted vi).

Conference voted in support of an amendment which replaced the original wording of ii) that read:

ii) Reports that some councils will not evict those in arrears or will not adopt the policy in full.

And inserted 3.

A New Liberal Democrat Approach to Race Equality

Conference notes the report *Towards Race Equality: A Liberal Democrat Approach*, produced by the Liberal Democrat Race Equality Task Force.

Conference notes with concern:

- A. That racial inequality and racism continues to be a major problem faced by black and minority ethnic people from early years and throughout education and employment, in that:
 - i) While BAME educational attainment has improved, Black Caribbean and Pakistani pupils remain below average, with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children a long way behind.
 - ii) Disproportionate numbers of Black Caribbean boys are excluded from schools and they are more likely to be excluded the smaller the minority they are in a school.
 - iii) BAME students continue to be under-represented in Russell Group universities.
 - iv) There is continued under-representation of BAME teachers especially in senior roles.
 - v) The BAME workforce continues to face discrimination particularly in the private sector, where studies have shown that BAME applicants for advertised jobs have a 35% chance of suffering discrimination on the basis of their name compared with a 4% chance from public sector employers.
 - vi) BAME pupils and the workforce remain subject to stereotypical assumptions about their abilities.
- B. The collapse in services such as provision of teachers of English for Speakers of Other languages since the incorporation of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant into the General Schools Grant.

Conference believes that:

- a) Liberal Democrats seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community and champion the freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals, acknowledging and respecting their right to develop their talents to the full.
- b) Liberal Democrats reject all prejudice and discrimination and oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality; recognising that the quest for freedom and justice can never end, we promote human rights and open government.
- c) Bringing this about is the responsibility of each citizen and the duty of the state.
- d) While the 'holistic' or human rights-based approach to equality is the right one, substantial numbers within society continue to discriminate against individuals and groups on the basis of race, and therefore it is vital that the government undertakes urgent action against race discrimination.
- e) If we fail to tap into the full potential of ethnic minority communities, we will lose the benefits that they would bring to society as a whole.

Accordingly conference calls upon Liberal Democrats in Government to:

1. Reassert the importance of addressing race discrimination and inequality and of each equality strand having its own programme of action.
2. Ensure monitoring and accountability of schools' expenditure of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant and reinstate the requirement for the Ofsted inspection framework to judge schools on their promotion of equality of opportunity and community cohesion.
3. Ensure that the school curriculum reflects the diversity of the country.
4. Implement the Children's Commissioner's report into the prevention of and positive alternatives to exclusion, and reinstate the right of appeals panels to order the return of unjustly expelled children to school.
5. Require all universities to be fully transparent about all their selection criteria.
6. Take action to improve race equality in the private sector, in accordance with the Coalition commitment to transparency and accountability, by requiring private sector and third sector organisations in receipt of public money, licences or other benefits to undertake meaningful equality monitoring and forward it to the relevant public authority, which shall in turn publish this data for each organisation by name, annually (whilst respecting the confidentiality of individuals).
7. Implement the Equality Act in the form that Liberal Democrat Parliamentarians voted it into law, including implementation of the Codes of Practice.

Applicability: 1, 6 and 7 are Federal, the remainder are England only.

Background briefing: This motion develops policy on race equality, in particular with regard to implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and improving educational outcomes for BAME pupils.

Previous party policy on the Equality Act 2010 is set out in policy paper 107, Tackling Inequality at its Roots (2012), conference motion Human Rights (2003) and policy paper 44, Protecting Civil Liberties (2001).

Preventing and Tackling Sexual and Domestic Violence

Conference notes with concern:

- I. Last year in the UK, around 1.2 million women and 800,000 men suffered domestic abuse and over 400,000 women were sexually assaulted.
- II. There is still significant lack of understanding over what counts as domestic violence, especially amongst young people.
- III. Domestic and sexual violence has estimated annual costs of £40.1 billion per year and CAADV (Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence) states it currently costs UK businesses over £1.9 billion a year.

Conference asserts the Liberal Democrat beliefs that:

- A. Domestic and sexual violence are a violation of basic human rights and need collective action by government, including Education and Health.
- B. Violence against women and girls and stigmatisation of male victims is inextricably linked to continued gender inequality.
- C. The huge financial cost to society of domestic violence warrants investment in prevention and services to support victims.

Conference commends the Coalition Government's launch of the cross-departmental action plan *Call to End Violence Against Women and Girls* as a crucial part of delivering a fairer society and note existing progress, especially:

- i) Changing the definition of domestic violence to include 'coercive control' and incidents concerning 16 and 17 year olds.
- ii) The This is ABUSE campaign to raise awareness amongst young people.
- iii) The development of multi-agency guidelines for practitioners to assist in preventing further incidents of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and ensure that victims and potential victims receive appropriate support.
- iv) The work by Lynne Featherstone in highlighting the issue of FGM in the UK and the £35mn the Coalition Government has agreed to spend on helped communities to eliminate the practice.
- v) UK government's signature in June 2012 to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against women and girls and domestic violence - Istanbul Convention 2011 (CETS No 210).

Conference calls for:

1. Stronger focus on prevention of domestic and sexual violence, by:
 - a) Renewed commitment to relationships and consent becoming a compulsory part of sex education in schools, with assurance that schools are provided with support to deliver this through properly trained staff and a system that doesn't infringe on the existing rights of parents.
 - b) Domestic and sexual abuse, harassment, keeping safe online and gender inequality becoming integral topics to be covered by all students across the curriculum.
 - c) Updated information and training on identifying and supporting abuse victims for all healthcare professionals, including those working with dental patients, pregnant women and victims of substance abuse.
 - d) Training and new procedures for GPs to deal with domestic abuse perpetrators.
 - e) Working with Communities in the UK where FGM is seen as an acceptable cultural practice and prosecuting those responsible for cases where girls are sent abroad to have FGM carried out or where it is carried out in the UK.
2. Further improvement to support for victims of domestic and sexual violence by:
 - a) Establishing lead departments in local authorities to co-ordinate continued training for and improved data collection by all professions dealing with abuse victims.
 - b) Running 'Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes' in place of anger management for all types of court cases involving domestic violence (DVPPs are community based behaviour-change programmes and the most appropriate type of help for those who are abusive or violent to their partners).
 - c) Making 'progress made on preventing and prosecuting domestic violence' one of the key performance indicators for Police and Crime Commissioners and covering this area in PCC annual reporting.
3. Minimising any adverse impacts of government spending restraints by:
 - a) Promoting the business case for ending violence against women to companies and employers by launching a government campaign for women's safety and the workplace.
 - b) Working with local authorities to identify and deliver strategically improved allocation of ring-fenced funds, ensuring the ability to provide high quality services for victims by properly trained professionals is maintained.

Applicability: England, except 3 a), which is Federal.

Background briefing: This motion updates party policy on a range of issues including gender inequality, harassment, keeping safe online, the protection of victims, and renews calls for raising awareness of these issues through the education of children in relationships and consent as part of sex education teaching in schools. It also includes proposals to run community based Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes in place of anger management for all types of court cases involving domestic violence.

Previous party policy on gender equality, preventing sexual and domestic violence and helping victims is set out in conference motion Tackling Violence Against Women (2011) and policy paper 91, Real Women (2009).

Conference voted to retain 2. b).

Conference voted in support of an amendment which inserted iii), iv), v) and 1. e).

Prosperous, Sustainable and Secure (Europe Policy Paper)

Conference affirms that the European Union has been a hugely positive force for the promotion of peace, prosperity and democratic values in Europe, and that membership of the EU is in the vital national interest of the United Kingdom, playing a vital role in delivering a stronger economy in a fairer society, because:

- I. Our place in Europe ensures British influence over the rules and development of the largest single market in the world; millions of British jobs – and the prospects for many more – are linked to this marketplace of 500 million citizens with its combined GDP of £11 trillion.
- II. The EU helps Britain to tackle challenges like climate change, cross-border crime and food and energy security and provides an opportunity for the UK to lead on challenges that no European state can tackle alone.
- III. In an increasingly multipolar, globalised world, membership of the EU provides Britain with collective strength to promote our values and advance our interests around the world.

Conference recognises that:

- A. Sovereign debt crises in several EU countries have prompted important changes to economic governance, and further action is needed to secure the future of the euro and stabilise the financial system across Europe.
- B. Deeper integration within the euro area raises questions about Britain's position within the EU.
- C. The EU must be subject to a continuous process of renewal and reform to ensure that it can better address the challenges of the 21st Century.

Conference therefore endorses policy paper 113, Prosperous, Sustainable and Secure, and its emphasis on the UK working with like-minded partners to push for renewal and reform of the EU so that all its members can compete globally, create a more sustainable future and tackle cross-border threats to our security. In particular, Conference welcomes its proposals to:

1. Deliver a more prosperous Europe through deepening the single market, supporting innovation and competitiveness and promoting international trade, including by:
 - a) Leading a drive to complete the single market, particularly for the digital economy and services sector.
 - b) Continuing the pursuit of global and bilateral trade agreements.

- c) Encouraging greater use of EU apprenticeship schemes, building on Liberal Democrat achievements in the promotion of apprenticeships in the UK.
 - d) Taking a lead on the EU innovation agenda and development of a European knowledge market.
 - e) Promoting green growth and sustainability throughout all EU programmes with more 'green jobs' created.
 - f) Developing European project bonds for vital infrastructure development, which would also benefit Britain's financial services industry.
 - g) Seeking greater flexibility in applying the Working Time Directive and retaining the individual right to opt-out.
 - h) Welcoming the positive contribution of free movement of labour, while taking measures to ensure that its provisions are not abused.
2. Work together to tackle environmental degradation and climate change, and ensure greater sustainability, including by:
- a) Adopting an EU emissions reduction target of 50% by 2030 on 1990 levels.
 - b) Reforming the EU Emissions Trading System to incentivise cost-effective investments into low-carbon technology.
 - c) Making EU funds more effective in steering investment into low-carbon solutions, in particular to help poorer Member States.
 - d) Supporting greater devolution within the Common Agricultural Policy, alongside the switch from production subsidies to area based farm payments, and seeking a mid-term review of the CAP in 2017.
 - e) Supporting farming and rural communities, particularly in disadvantaged and upland areas of Europe, in order to protect and enhance biodiversity, landscape, heritage and the rural economy.
 - f) Switching funding from the CAP into research on sustainable food production, climate change and water management.
 - g) Safeguarding within the Common Fisheries Policy a 100% ban on the discard of edible and usable fish, and developing European marine conservation areas.
 - h) Ensuring tougher enforcement of EU fishing rules by all Member States, and a UK review to assess the distribution of fishing opportunities between large and small-scale operators.
3. Improve the safety and security of EU citizens in the face of rapid globalisation and technological change, cross-border crime and regional instability, including by:
- a) Strengthening the EU's efforts to tackle cybercrime, particularly through support for the new European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) within Europol.
 - b) Supporting EU-wide action to stop VAT fraud, and procedures to clamp down on money laundering and movement of criminal assets.
 - c) Applying a proportionality test to the European Arrest Warrant, and supporting implementation of the European Supervision order.
 - d) Promoting improved policy and strategy formulation and coordination within the European External Action Service.
 - e) Promoting greater pooling and sharing of European defence capabilities without infringing the sovereign right of individual countries to decide when to deploy military force.
 - f) Supporting further enlargement of the EU, subject to stringent compliance by candidates with standards of democracy and civil rights.
 - g) Developing a robust common EU policy towards Russia, and a stronger common EU energy policy.
 - h) Encouraging other EU states to match UK spending on development, and improving EU development policy coordination.
4. Tackle concerns about the accountability and efficiency of European cooperation and continue to ensure that when the EU does act it does so democratically and proportionately, always respecting the principle of subsidiarity, including by:

- a) Guaranteeing full voice in the regulation and application of the four freedoms – of goods, capital, labour and services – of the single market for both euro and non-euro states in the next EU treaty.
- b) Adopting measures to enable national parliaments to contribute more directly to the development of EU policy and legislation.
- c) Working with like-minded countries to make the EU budget more relevant to 21st century challenges.
- d) Pressing for improved efficiency in the EU institutions and agencies.
- e) Seeking treaty change to provide for a single seat for the European Parliament.
- f) Opposing the use of secret ballots in the European Parliament on legislative and budgetary matters, and calling on all Liberal Democrat MEPs not to support any proposal to hold such a secret ballot.

And with regard to the UK Parliament and Government:

- g) Improving scrutiny of EU affairs at Westminster.
 - h) Encouraging more actively and training potential UK candidates for the EU institutions.
5. Address the prospect of further revision of the Treaties by:
- a) Requiring that when the EU Act triggers a referendum for the first time, there should be an 'In or Out' referendum in which citizens across the UK can have their say on the new Treaty settlement and our relationship with the EU as a whole.
 - b) Committing the Liberal Democrats to campaign strongly for the UK to remain in the EU.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing: This motion and accompanying policy paper 113, Prosperous, Sustainable and Secure, reiterates the party's support for the European Union and maintains that membership of the European Union is in the vital interest of the United Kingdom. It develops party policy on the single market, international action on climate change and cross-border crime as well as proposing measures to tackle concerns about the accountability and efficiency of European cooperation.

Previous party policy on the European Union is set out in the conference motion Europe (2012), the 2010 General Election Manifesto Change That Works for You and policy paper 87, Shaping Our World Through a Strong Europe (2008).

Conference voted in support of an amendment which inserted 4. f).

Protecting Children from Child Pornography

Conference voted to refer the motion back to the Federal Policy Committee.

Recognising a Legal Status for British Sign Language

Conference notes:

- A. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by the UK in 2009.
- B. That British Sign Language (BSL) is used by some 125,000 deaf adults in the UK and an estimated 20,000 deaf children.

- C. That in 1997 the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) recognised that deaf people view themselves as a cultural and linguistic minority.
- D. That deaf people still do not have full access to information and services in the UK as hearing people do, particularly in the areas of education, health and employment.
- E. That BSL was recognised as a language on 18th March 2003 by the UK government but has not been given any legal protection in the UK.
- F. That deaf people who use BSL currently rely on the Equality Act to secure access to information and services in their own language and that 'reasonable adjustments' do not allow for an automatic right to direct access or to information provision in their own language.

Conference reaffirms the Liberal Democrat commitment to the principle that deaf children, young people and adults are entitled to:

- I. The right positively to identify with their own language(s), and to have this respected; regardless of minority or majority language status.
- II. The right to sign language; to learn it and to have it developed in formal schooling as a language of instruction by qualified educators.
- III. The right to learn one of the languages of the UK and to have sign language recognised as an official language of the UK.
- IV. The right to maintain, and have respectfully treated, their identity and culture as deaf individuals.

Conference further expresses Liberal Democrat belief in the principle that deaf people as a collective community have the general rights to:

- a) Exist as a linguistic minority community.
- b) Celebrate, promote, develop and teach sign language; and to create educational settings where the deaf community can influence the curricula.
- c) Be represented in political contexts as a group.
- d) Be able to independently and autonomously handle and decide on community matters with regard to culture, education, social affairs and religion.
- e) Have financial resources to achieve such aims, noting the government's responsibility to support deaf people and minority groups.

Conference therefore calls for Liberal Democrat Ministers to press within government for:

- 1. The recognition of BSL as one of the UK's official languages, commanding equal respect and protection as with Welsh and Gaelic.
- 2. The achievement of better awareness of information needs and of services for BSL users, particularly within the fields of health, education and employment.
- 3. The protection of the linguistic integrity of the language.
- 4. A requirement that Communication Support Workers and Teachers of the Deaf should all achieve NVQ Level 3 standard of language proficiency.
- 5. The promotion of the cultural aspects of BSL and the deaf community as part of the UK's national heritage.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing: This motion develops policy on the recognition of sign language as an official language of the UK. It calls for the achievement of better awareness of the information needs and services for BSL users, and builds on existing party policy for those who come into contact with members of the public in a social and caring capacity, specifically Communication Support Workers and Teachers of the Deaf to achieve NVQ Level 3 standard of BSL proficiency.

Previous party policy on BSL is set out in policy paper 34, Breaking Down Barriers (1999).

Federal Conference Committee accepted a drafting amendment which deleted "interpreters" in 4..

Conference voted against hearing a reference back.

Schedule 7 of Terrorism Act 2000

Conference affirms its strong support for effective counter-terrorism powers and its appreciation of the crucial work of the police, border force and intelligence services in responding to terrorist threats and protecting the public.

However, conference firmly believes:

1. That these powers must be framed and applied in strict compliance with the principles of necessity and proportionality, with appropriate respect for civil liberties and the rule of law and subject to robust parliamentary as well as legal accountability, so as to ensure continued public confidence;
2. That national security must not be invoked unjustifiably to undertake blanket surveillance, stifle investigative journalism, practice abusive stop and search or discourage public debate.

Conference deplores the over-broad powers contained in Schedule 7 of Labour's Terrorism Act 2000 and welcomes the reforms secured by the Liberal Democrats and contained in the current Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill.

Conference is however disturbed by the extensive use of Schedule 7 in general, as well as its application to David Miranda on 18th August 2013, and thus urges the government to heed the advice of the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism David Anderson QC and to introduce further possible safeguards in Schedule 7, including:

- a) A requirement that a person may not be detained without reasonable grounds for suspecting his involvement in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism;
- b) Abolishing the criminal offence of refusal to answer questions;
- c) The mandatory recording of all questioning;
- d) A right to independent legal advice prior to questioning;
- e) Restrictions on the copying and retention of data from electronic devices;
- f) Monitoring of application to avoid prejudicial racial or religious bias.

Applicability: Federal

Background briefing: This motion creates new party policy.

Strengthening the UK Economy

Conference believes we should pursue a bold and imaginative economic strategy to stimulate jobs, growth and investment within a strong framework for fiscal consolidation.

Conference welcomes recent improvements in the UK economy, specifically that:

- I. Faced with the highest budget deficit in post-war history in 2010 as a consequence of the banking crisis and Labour's mismanagement, the Government has managed to reduce the structural deficit by a third since it came to power.
- II. Growth is returning to the UK economy; in the first half of 2013 growth was above forecast and forecasts from the Bank of England and the OECD see the UK growing steadily for the rest of 2013, at a faster pace than France, Germany and the Eurozone.
- III. Employment levels are close to their highest ever with over a million net new private sector jobs, helped by a strong package of government programmes to keep people in work.
- IV. Inflation has now fallen to around half its post-recession peak, easing the squeeze on household budgets.
- V. Interest rates have been kept under control, in stark contrast to various troubled continental economies.
- VI. Business confidence has been improving steadily in recent business surveys, and with record levels of company start-ups.

Conference notes the UK's difficult financial position and recognises the dangers of failing to bring the public finances under control as the Government has set out. Conference welcomes the flexibility the Government has already shown to promote growth within the fiscal mandate, including:

- A. Allowing the automatic stabilizers to operate.
- B. Helping businesses and households through monetary policy characterised by the IMF as "vigorous and appropriate with substantial easing and policy innovations" including:
 - i) The use of quantitative easing.
 - ii) The introduction of the Funding for Lending Scheme, recently adapted to encourage more business lending.
 - iii) A new more expansionary remit for the Monetary Policy Committee announced in the 2013 Budget.
- C. Getting companies to invest and builders to build through the introduction of £40bn worth of government guarantees for infrastructure projects and a further £10bn worth of government guarantees for new house building.
- D. Getting credit to good businesses including through the Business Secretary's introduction of a Business Bank.
- E. Supporting private sector growth and jobs through:
 - i) A £2.4bn Regional Growth Fund, that leverages in over £13bn of private sector investment and supports 500,000 private sector jobs.
 - ii) The Green Investment Bank which has committed £700m of its £3bn investment.
 - iii) A £500m Growing Places Fund to help local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships in less prosperous areas to build and improve infrastructure.
 - iv) Funding over a million new apprenticeship starts.
- F. Taking a vigorous approach to industrial strategy by promoting manufacturing, expanding science and innovation spending, boosting capital investment in key future technologies, boosting apprenticeships and building on the success of industries such as civil aerospace, wind and automotives through the creation of sector strategies to strengthen key growth industries in the UK.

Conference however notes that the UK's economic recovery remains fragile, particularly:

- a) Despite significant progress since 2010, the UK budget deficit is still forecast be amongst the largest in the EU in 2013.
- b) Youth unemployment remains stubbornly high, with close to 1 million young people classified as unemployed.
- c) House building remains well below historical averages with less than 30,000 house building starts in the first quarter of 2013.
- d) Businesses continue to report severe difficulties in accessing finance from the banks.

Conference reaffirms its support for the Government's fiscal mandate as expressed in the conference motion *Generating Jobs and Growth in a time of Austerity* (September 2012). However within the fiscal envelope, conference calls on the Coalition Government to:

1. Take radical action to tackle stubbornly high youth unemployment by developing a comprehensive strategy for 16 – 24 year olds ensuring that all young people have access to the skills, advice and opportunities necessary to find sustainable employment.
2. Dramatically increase the number of houses being built by pooling council borrowing limits, so that councils who want to build more houses but are at their borrowing limits are able to do so; and further to examine urgently whether Public Sector Net Debt (PSND) could be brought into line with definitions of other EU countries so that the liabilities of trading corporations (such as council housing operations) are off balance-sheet, thereby enabling councils with a sustainable business model to borrow to invest in building more homes for rent.
3. Boost lending to good British businesses by expanding the Business Bank so that it can directly support the establishment of new challenger banks, creating more competition and a banking system that is more regionally diverse.
4. Continue to implement the calls affirmed by conference in the motion *Tougher Action on Banks and Bonuses* (Spring 2011) and support a more effective banking system; and use continued public ownership of the Royal Bank of Scotland to keep its leadership focussed on increasing business lending, and support structural changes and branch sales that increase banking competition.
5. Invest further in the UK Green Investment Bank and act now to make it a fully independent institution that can borrow to invest in its own right without impacting on government fiscal totals.
6. Continue to invest in the UK infrastructure by prioritising investment spending in areas such as housing, science and innovation, transport and renewable energy.
7. Monitor closely the progress of the Bank of England against its refocused mandate in order to ensure that monetary policy is focussed on aiding growth.
8. Increase trading opportunities by working in the EU to ensure that the success of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, doing everything possible to revive the World Trade Organisation led Doha Development Round and further integrating the EU services market.

Conference recognises that the electorate will expect all major political parties to present their own distinctive economic policies during the 2015 General Election campaign. Given the need for healthy government finances in a balanced, sustainable economy, Conference therefore believes that the principles behind the Liberal Democrats' economic policy beyond 2015 should be guided by:

- I. Increased capital investment in people, business and infrastructure.
- II. Rebalancing the economy away from dependence on unsustainable debt and house prices, towards robust regional economies that raise living standards through sustainable growth.
- III. Improving the provision for the most vulnerable in society.
- IV. A recognition that beyond 2015, the burden of fiscal consolidation should be shifted further towards fairer taxes, especially on wealth and land.

Applicability: Federal.

Background briefing: This motion updates and develops policy on tackling youth unemployment, pooling council borrowing limits to increase housebuilding, expanding the Business Bank, increasing lending to businesses and prioritising investment in UK infrastructure including science, public transport and renewable energy.

*Previous party policy is set out in conference motions *Generating Jobs and Growth in a Time of Austerity* (September 2012) and *Creating a Strong Manufacturing Sector in a Stronger Economy* (September 2012), policy paper 105, *Sustainable Prosperity and Jobs* (September 2012), and policy paper 103, *Giving Young People a Future* (March 2012).*

Federal Conference Committee accepted drafting amendments to the motion which:

In 4. deleted "use" and inserted:

*"Continue to implement the calls affirmed by conference in the motion *Tougher Action on Banks and Bonuses* (Spring 2011) and support a more effective banking system; and use".*

Added 8.

Conference voted to reject part of an amendment one which would have deleted:

*"Government reaffirms its support for the Government's fiscal mandate as expressed in the conference motion *Generating Jobs and Growth in a time of Austerity* (September 2012). However within the fiscal envelope, conference calls on the Coalition Government to:"*

And inserted:

"Conference affirms its support for a fiscal mandate under the terms of the Coalition Agreement, but believes it must be rebalanced to give greater support for measures that raise employment and growth. Conference therefore calls on the Coalition Government to:"

Conference voted in support of part of an amendment which inserted from "Conference recognises that the electorate will expect" to "especially on wealth and land."

Conference rejected an amendment which would have deleted:

*"Conference reaffirms its support for the Government's fiscal mandate as expressed in the conference motion *Generating Jobs and Growth in a time of Austerity* (September 2012). However within the fiscal envelope, conference calls on the Coalition Government to:"*

And inserted:

"Conference affirms its support for a fiscal mandate under the terms of the Coalition Agreement, but believes it must be rebalanced to give greater support for measures that raise employment and growth. Conference therefore calls on the Coalition Government to:"

Deleted 2. and inserted:

Dramatically increase the number of houses being built to at least 300,000 a year as agreed to in Policy Paper 104, Decent Homes for All, at September 2012 Conference. Further, to use untapped sources of finance and giving more freedom to social landlords, local authorities and local communities, including by:

- a) *Removing council borrowing limits, thereby enabling councils with a sustainable business model to borrow to invest in building at least 50,000 homes per year for social rent; and further to examine urgently whether Public Sector Net Debt (PSND) could be brought into line with definitions of other EU countries so that the liabilities of trading corporations (such as council housing operations) are off balance-sheet.*
- b) *Ensuring an environment supportive of approaches through which the long-term investment needs of pension funds and insurers can be met through housing.*
- c) *Taking radical steps to improve land supply, including through releasing public land with 'build now, pay later' deals.*

Deleted 7. and inserted:

Monitor closely the progress of the Bank of England, ensuring it has a refocused mandate that allows monetary policy to aid growth, reduce the unemployment rate to below 6% creating at least a million jobs, and to address weak income growth, targeting a higher level of national/median income.

A Stronger Economy in a Fairer Society (Manifesto Themes Paper)

Conference affirms that the task of the Liberal Democrats is to work for a stronger economy in a fairer society, enabling every person to get on in life.

Conference reaffirms the principles set out in the preamble to the Liberal Democrat constitution, including our commitment to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity and resolves that any future manifesto adheres to these principles.

Conference recognises the many achievements of the Liberal Democrats in the Coalition Government, including delivering a £700 tax cut for millions of low-to-middle earners and lifting over two million people out of tax altogether, a £2.5 billion Pupil Premium to target extra help at disadvantaged schoolchildren, creating a million apprenticeships, and setting up the Green Investment Bank.

Conference, however, acknowledges that much more needs to be done to meet our ambitions for Britain and the world and that Liberal Democrats should fight the next election on an independent and ambitious programme for the 2015–2020 Parliament.

Conference reiterates that despite the current Coalition Agreement the Liberal Democrats remain an independent political party with its own policy making process.

Conference endorses the manifesto themes paper, A Stronger Economy in a Fairer Society – Enabling Every Person to Get on in Life, as an analysis of the challenges Britain and the world will face in the next Parliament, a statement of the party's 2020 vision for the UK, and the basis for developing the next Liberal Democrat General Election Manifesto.

Conference in particular welcomes:

1. The commitment to a stronger economy, including:

- a) Building solid foundations for growth: investing in infrastructure, particularly in transport and renewable energy; improving resource efficiency in industry; rebuilding a healthy and diverse banking system; using the tax system to encourage work and investment and penalise pollution and tax avoidance; bringing the budget back into balance; and playing a positive and influential role within the EU.
 - b) Modernising the economy: promoting green industries and jobs, decarbonising the economy and expanding the Green Investment Bank; investing in housing; supporting technology and science; and raising standards in education and skills and expanding higher education.
 - c) Enabling everyone to participate: further raising the personal income tax allowance and introducing a Mansion Tax; expanding the Regional Growth Fund; improving access to child care; encouraging the redistribution of work and reward, including higher pay for low earners; and creating a fair and welcoming immigration system which commands public confidence.
2. The commitment to a fairer society at home and abroad, including:
- a) Realising everyone's potential: Ensuring our children have the best start in life through secure and safe housing, a good education, freedom from fear and exploitation; removing barriers to success through tackling health, wealth, housing, employment and educational inequalities which impact disproportionately on BME communities, those living in poverty and those living with disabilities.
 - b) Creating a country fit to live in: guaranteeing open, accessible and high-quality public services providing a welfare system that adequately supports and empowers disadvantaged people; ensuring a fair pensions system; reforming prisons and extending restorative and community justice and tackling hate crime; and protecting cultural heritage, landscape and wildlife.
 - c) Enlarging freedom at home and abroad: reforming the electoral system and the House of Lords; dispersing power to the nations, regions and communities of Britain, and to workplaces; securing civil liberties and human rights through a written constitution; and working through the EU and UN to tackle climate change, improve global financial regulation and promote sustainable development.

Applicability: Federal, except some aspects of 1 b) and 1 c), 2 a) and 2 b), which are England only.

Background briefing: This motion and accompanying manifesto themes paper, A Stronger Economy in a Fairer Society, outline the challenges Britain and the world will face during the next Parliament. It is a statement of the Liberal Democrat party's vision for 2020 and develops themes for the manifesto for the General Election in 2015.

Conference voted in support of an amendment which:

After "conformity", inserted: "and resolves that any future manifesto adheres to these principles"; and

Replaced the original 2.a) which read:

- a) *Realising everyone's potential: supporting children and parents; improving education, particularly in the early years and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds; improving access to further and life-long education; and removing barriers faced by communities such as ethnic minorities.*

Conference voted in support of a second amendment which, in 1. c) before "higher pay for low earners", inserted: "the redistribution of work and reward, including".

Conference voted in support of a third amendment which, in 2. b) after "public services", inserted: 'providing a welfare system that adequately supports and empowers disadvantaged people'.

Party Business

Membership Subscription and Federal Levy

Conference notes that:

- a) The Federal Executive is proposing that there be no change to the Minimum, Concessionary, or Liberal Youth subscription rates, and no change to the Federal Levy.
- b) The Federal Executive is proposing that the recommended rate should rise from £65 to £67.
- c) The proposed minimum rate, together with our concessionary rate of £6 for those receiving or entitled to receive state benefits, maintains our position of offering access to the widest possible proportion of society.
- d) The Federal Executive is working with the State Parties to provide local parties who succeed in increasing their membership a larger proportion of membership income, and to simplify the way in which membership income is managed by the Party as a whole.

Conference resolves that for the year 2014:

1. The recommended subscription rate shall be £67.
2. The minimum subscription rate shall be £12.
3. The concessionary subscription rate for those in receipt of, or entitled to, state benefits other than child benefit or state pension shall be £6.
4. Those paying their subscription through Liberal Youth shall pay a minimum of £6 or, where a new member joins, a special introductory rate of £1.
5. Nothing in this motion prevents a State Party from setting a recommended rate or rates of subscription by its internal procedures which is higher than that agreed by the Federal Conference, or from introducing additional concessionary rates.

Conference further resolves that for the year 2014, the Federal Levy on membership subscriptions shall be 44%.

Background briefing:

Conference voted in support of an amendment which:

Inserted d);

Deleted lines 18-19 which read:

Conference further resolves that for the year of 2014 the Federal Levy on new members shall be 0% of the subscription paid and the Federal Levy on renewal subscriptions shall be 44%.

And inserted:

Conference further resolves that for the year 2014, the Federal Levy on membership subscriptions shall be 44%.

Constitutional Amendments

Responsibilities of Members

Re-number existing Clause 3.1 as 3.1(a) and insert:

- 3.1(b) As a Member of the Liberal Democrats, you must treat others with respect and must not bully, harass or intimidate any Party member, member of Party staff, member of Parliamentary staff, Party volunteer or member of the public. Such behaviour will be considered to be bringing the Party into disrepute.

Standing Order Amendments

Emergency Motions

In standing order 4.5:

After 'Following the counting of any ballots the Committee', *delete:* 'shall decide how many motions shall be debated in the time available', *and insert:* 'shall organise the debates on the motions in the order chosen by conference in the ballots'.

Questions on Reports to Conference

Federal Conference Committee

Q1. Submitted by Andrew Hudson

Why was it difficult to find the standard form for motions on the party website up to the closing date for submissions?

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

The website is currently being looked at with a view to it undergoing a complete overhaul. In relation to this particular section, we are going to feed in the conference committee's views on the ways the website could change that would work for us and our particular users. The form referred to was on the autumn conference section of the website in the forms section. As with all websites sometimes it is easy to find things sometimes it's not. We'll certainly have a look at it and see whether there is anything we can do as part of the whole redesign of the website to make things easier for you and for others.

Reply by Andrew Hudson

I didn't exactly have difficulties. When I looked at the conference papers section it wasn't there. The only way I got hold of the form was to email someone to send me the form through the post. If you're asking people to submit motions you should make it a little easier for them

to find the form.

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

When I checked it was there. It may be that it was late going up or something of that nature, which is something we'll have to look into to ensure that they are put up on a timely basis.

Q2. Submitted by Mark Pack

Following Andrew Wiseman's 2012 commitment that FCC will publish reports after each of its full meetings, when and where have the 2013 ones been published?

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

Mark is correct that I did say I would do this and I have apologised to Mark that there haven't been these formal published reports. As Mark pointed out, he also apologised to me because he forgot to remind me to do it, but I can assure him that updates will be provided in the future. I have reported in terms of particular decisions FCC has taken throughout the year on Libdem Voice, whether it's in relation to accreditation and the change in accreditation for this party conference, the change in venue for next autumn, and also the outcomes of FCC meetings in relation to setting the agenda and which amendments have been taken or not taken. But I will ensure in future that there is a formal report posted on Libdem Voice in the way that Mark has requested.

Q3. Submitted by Callum Leslie

My local party recently collapsed due to infighting, and many other local parties in Scotland exist where there are less than 30 members under constitutional amendments passed in 2009. These members, and members like me who have no local party, are completely disenfranchised from being able to vote at conference. What will you do to address this?

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

I appreciate Callum's concerns. This is the position under the constitution, as Callum notes in his question, that there was an amendment in 2009 which means that local parties with less than 30 members aren't able to send voting reps, obviously anyone from that local party can still attend conference but they are not able to send voting reps. There is nothing that the Federal Conference Committee can do directly about that without a constitutional amendment. I would also add that as a general piece of work conference committee is looking at ways to try and engage more members and get more members to come to conference, but I appreciate from Callum's point of view that that is very separate from the local party issue which is something that would require a constitutional amendment.

Supplementary Question 1

The issue with my local party is that it no longer exists because nobody wanted to be chair or fell out with each other, so we can't send voting reps. As such, everyone who lives in my area who is a member has no chance to be a voting representative at conference - this is maybe something the party should look at?

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

In terms of your local party not even existing, I note what you say. It is however a constitutional issue. There is nothing conference committee can do about that directly but it is certainly something that I am more than happy to speak to Tim Farron, as President, about and look with him as to whether there is anything in particular that can be done that FE would be willing to look at.

Supplementary Question 2

I also wanted to ask in terms of increasing the number of people who can vote, have you looked at 1 member 1 vote and has the conference committee looked at the experiences of the Scottish party who introduced 1 member 1 vote for their conference since 2009 as all the fears of it being dominated by one geographical area haven't been realised?

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

It is something conference committee has looked at. We will and we are keeping it under review, and certainly we are looking at what the Scottish experience is. There are a number of concerns with 1 member 1 vote, not least if everyone does turn up there is nowhere near room in an auditorium to fit everybody, but there are ways round and there are things that can be done. I think the important thing is and it is something conference committee is very keen on doing is looking at how to get more members to conference and whether that it is through voting or through or not voting. I think the important thing is to encourage as many people as possible to come to conference.

Q4. Submitted by Alisdair Calder McGregor

Can the Federal Conference Committee explain how a number of newspapers and other media outlets were running stories on the contents of the agenda of this conference two weeks before conference representatives were provided with the agenda, and on the appropriateness of a member of FCC posting excerpts from the agenda to a blog site a similar length of time prior to conference?

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

I think the slightly flippant answer is I don't have that kind of control over individual members of FCC - as much as I'd like to on occasions! The important thing is that members know what they are going to discuss, members understand the issues, and members have an accurate view of what is actually on the agenda. Word does get out, with posts on Twitter, blogs, Face book and other social media – often very quickly. We have quite a detailed process after our meetings because often there needs to be redrafting of motions or redrafting of amendments so they can't be published immediately. We publish them and they go online as soon as they can. The fact that others will brief people and talk to others is something that is outside our control in many respects. I would say in relation to briefing media outlets of what's going to be on the agenda, I think there is a balance, it is important that we get a good message out and we explain to the media what's on the agenda and why conference is important. So I have no problem with the press people briefing the media about what is on the conference agenda, and as far as FCC members are concerned they are going to post what they feel is appropriate - I would hope the main thing is that it is accurate.

Reply by Alisdair Calder McGregor

I appreciate the limits to which you have control over member of FCC, but I do want to pick up on the point that you raised about the way in which matters are actually reported, because a lot of what was reported early before the rest of conference representatives had seen it, was done in a way which suggested forging a particular narrative for this conference which wasn't accurate as to the entire content of the agenda and didn't help anybody, particularly not voting representatives taking an initial opinion.

Reply by Andrew Wiseman (Chair, Federal Conference Committee)

I would certainly hope and urge anybody briefing what's going on at conference - we all my have our personal views on particular debates - to do so accurately and hope that people take note of what you have said.

Federal Policy Committee

Q1. Submitted by Callum Leslie

Given that we already have seven papers coming from the policy committee at this conference, does the committee not think that having six further papers at the shorter Spring conference is excessive and greatly reduces the opportunities for policy motions from outside the party committees?

Reply by Duncan Hames (Chair, Federal Policy Committee)

I think there is a bit of a misunderstanding. I did say that we are working on six policy papers for next year's conferences. However, only two of those are to come to spring conference - not all six. There will be four plus the pre manifesto coming to the autumn conference next year. So we're not placing all of that burden on a short conference in the spring.

Reply by Callum Leslie

I think the issue with there being too many policy papers is just one part of the problem with having so many of these policy papers coming to conference. They're long, inaccessible and jumble together a number of subjects without being able to focus a debate on any one real topic. We have policy papers discussing every aspect of this country's education system and we're supposed to debate that in one motion. It just feels like it's taking out the responsibility of members to make those individual policies and trying to apply a broad brush approach with a very top-down messaging structure from the Federal party and it's just not giving members enough chance to have a say in policy.

Reply by Duncan Hames (Chair, Federal Policy Committee)

The work programme that the FPC has been working to, and therefore our ambition to be able to deliver policy papers on all of these subjects was not decided by the committee itself but by conference in the facing the future exercise earlier on in this parliament, so we are very much responding to the demands of conference in that respect. The policy papers are wide

ranging and policy working groups do find it very difficult to stick to the word limits that we do set them with a view to trying to make sure that the policy papers can be digested by conference representatives before conference, but your feedback on what a challenge that represents is feedback that I will share with the rest of the committee.

Q2. Submitted by Alisdair Calder McGregor

The availability of previous policy papers and the organization thereof on the Federal Party website is extremely haphazard and disorganized. Many links are dead, and there is no clear indication of which papers and motions are still current, and which have been superseded. In addition the webpages for previous conferences follow no set structure, which makes locating items difficult.

Can the Federal Policy Committee undertake to review the availability, organization and clarity of the previous conference materials, including which motions were passed and how amended (where applicable), explicit notation of which Policy Papers are still current and which have been superseded, and the implications of this for the institutional memory of the party?

Reply by Duncan Hames (Chair, Federal Policy Committee)

I think that it is a fair critique that you mount of the information currently available on the website. As Andrew alluded earlier, I understand there is a programme of work underway to revamp the information that is available online and we will certainly make sure that the current deficiencies and the availability of policy information will be on the agenda for that work to get right on the new website.

Reply by Alisdair Calder McGregor

I would like to have an assurance that FPC will report back on the status of the website in future. Some of the problem with the website is that no individual party body seems to have ownership of any particular part and in terms of the policy committee it seems like policy is created and then there doesn't seem to be much of a follow up in terms of disseminated what policy is from the website.

Reply by Duncan Hames (Chair, Federal Policy Committee)

I'm happy to commit to report on the progress on this in our next report and I hope that there will be progress that we can report next spring conference. Be assured that in the work the manifesto working group is doing we are drawing heavily on our existing body of policy as our starting point for that work and that is obviously well documented in the policy unit and you'll see plenty of opportunities for members to discuss the merits and relevance of those when we start the next consultation for the manifesto.

Q3. Submitted by Jonathan Walls

How will the FPC and Manifesto Working Group make use of the professional expertise in our SAOs to ensure policies are based on reliable evidence?

Reply by Duncan Hames (Chair, Federal Policy Committee)

We embarked on an internal party consultation before producing the manifest themes paper. This involved requesting submissions not just from the parliamentary policy committees but also from all of our party SAOs - some of which did send us submissions. All of them will be consulted afresh seeking their input as we work towards developing the pre-manifesto paper, which will come to conference a year from now - so what has happened already is not the limit of their involvement by any means.

Federal Finance and Administration Committee

Q1. Submitted by Jeremy Sanders

What has been the total cost of the Connect election software to date, the projected cost over the life of the existing contract, and how much irrecoverable VAT has been incurred?

Reply by Peter Dunphy (Chair, Federal Finance and Administration Committee)

The cost of the Connect system has been as follows:

The capital cost (till the end of august this year) has been just over £60,000.

The monthly licence costs (till the end of august) have been £380,000

The estimated further costs are capital expenditure (£33,000) and monthly licence fees to take us to the end of august 2015 - that's another 2 years - of £456,000.

Those sums are inclusive of VAT but unfortunately because of our status none of that VAT is reclaimable. We have thus far received in terms of subscriptions to Connect £154,000, so it could be argued that the running costs of us having Connect could be something like £150,000 per year out of a budget of £6 million

Parliamentary Parties of the Liberal Democrats

Q1. Submitted by Linda Jack

Last year conference endorsed policy paper 103, *Giving Young People a Future*. What progress has been made in furthering the aims of that policy, in particular reviewing the effectiveness of JCP and improving access to careers advice?

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

We have just published figures this week showing that the number of people aged 16-24 who are unemployed and not in full-time education has dropped by 48,000 since we met in Brighton last year. Now it is still too high, but I hope that you will accept that that is progress in the right direction. We have continued to implement the youth contract guaranteeing opportunities for nearly half a million young people both through training, apprenticeships, work experience placements and wage subsidies. On the two specific areas that you have identified, we announced this week our £35 million of new support for the new enterprise allowance which has been operated by Job Centre Plus. Obviously that has wider application, there are also, to move onto the question on careers advice, face-to-face interviews now

being guaranteed for every young person between 18-24 claiming job seekers allowance. Beyond that, there is also a lot of work being done in relation to internships, traineeships, apprenticeships and particular effort is being made in relation to young people from ethnic minority communities.

Supplementary Question

The issue for me is looking for example, we said job centre plus, a lot of young people report being treated very badly by job centre plus and I think the idea was that there would be a review and part of that would also be looking at actually recording how many young people from BME communities are included, because if you look at the figures they are staggering for how many young people from BME communities are without a job and then looking at what could be done to improve that. I know we are talking about things like training for job centre plus staff, also I think and I'm glad about the guarantee about the careers advice but it needs to come in earlier - the decimation of the Connexions service has not helped with this and I know that particularly in poor areas schools are just not using their funding to bring in careers advice - so what I'd ask you is, is it possible to do more on this?

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

I'd be astonished if it wasn't possible to do more. The message that I wouldn't want you to go away with however is to think that this was somehow disregarded in government or that it wasn't taken seriously. It seems to me that the points you're making there are all sensible suggestions. I have major sympathy with Job Centre Plus staff, I hear both sides of that argument through my own constituency surgeries, but I think it is essential that everybody who comes into contact with any government agency, especially when you're as raw as you will be when you're interacting with Job Centre Plus, is treated properly, with respect and given every dignity. So I would say to you that there are within the House of Commons both the team working with Steve Webb in DWP who is responsible for these matters and also the Parliamentary Party Committee on DWP which is headed up from the Commons end by Greg Mulholland. It seems to me like you've got a lot of views and experience that it would be useful to feed into Greg and I'm sure he'd be grateful to hear them.

Q2. Submitted by Callum Leslie

A number of MPs made deeply homophobic and prejudiced statements regarding the equal marriage bill. Will these individuals be allowed to continue as Liberal Democrats in the current parliament and beyond, given their clear material disagreement with the aim of equality for all that our party is founded on?

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

Callum said that 'a number of MPs made deeply homophobic and prejudiced statements regarding the equal marriage bill' but I'm afraid Callum that I just don't accept that. We can have different views on the Equal Marriage Bill. There are people who come to this issue from different backgrounds. Believe me, if I thought for a second that anybody in the Parliamentary Party for whom I have responsibility had been deeply homophobic or prejudiced then I would have taken the view that that brought the party into disrepute. As has already been established in other cases involving the use of language in recent months, I am prepared to act when that happens. I don't necessarily agree with the people that made the statements

you are talking about - I think we're both on the same side of the argument – but I respect their views not withstanding my difference with them.

Reply by Callum Leslie

I accept what you're saying but for me we have one view in this party and that is equality for all. For any member of our party or our parliamentary party to openly come out against equal rights for people based on their sexuality means that they have discriminatory views and I don't think that you can escape that no matter what the justification for it, whether it is belief in a sky being or whatever else - being against equal rights for all based on their sexuality is discriminatory and it is prejudiced and I don't think we can get away from that.

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

I accept the point that it was discriminatory, that's why I supported the Equal Marriage Bill and that was why I was very proud of the fact that the overwhelming majority of my colleagues and in fact in the House of Lords supported this Bill without any whipping from either end of the building. That was a free and open assertion of their views. I'm not prepared however to stand here and say that those who take a different view, who don't see it as an issue of equality, are therefore homophobic. I think that as a liberal party I would really worry if we could not accommodate a plurality of views on an issue of this sort. You sometimes have to balance competing rights and yes there may be equality rights for people of different sexual orientations but on the otherhand there are people who will say what they were doing was exercising their right of freedom of expression, in particular of religious expression. I think that their religious expression needs a bit more respect than being referred to as a 'sky being'. Sometimes we have to balance these competing claims and as long as everyone does behave in a way that is respectful and which does take account of the plurality of views then they will get absolutely no quibble from me.

Q3. Submitted by Callum Leslie

Why is that David Ward was not suspended for his clumsy comments about "the Jews" when referring to Israel, but he was only suspended when he made statements specifically questioning the state of Israel with no racial intent?

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

Callum's questions includes a few preconceptions that I do not accept. But I would point out that the penalty that was ultimately imposed in July was one which dealt with the actions in the totality, going from the initial comments in January through to the latter stages in July. Let me say this, I am very keen that we should draw a line under this unfortunate incident and that I am delighted that David is back in the parliamentary party - the suspension having now been concluded.

Reply by Callum Leslie

I understand that you say that the suspension was for the totality and the ongoing comments, however I worry that the suspension, coming after specifically questioning the Government and state of Israel, could potentially send the wrong message that this was something that was politically inconvenient and that was the reason for his suspension, which I don't believe

it was but I just worry that that was the message that was sent.

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

Now that you have my explanation of the question you can be assured that that is not the case.

Q4 Submitted by Simon McGrath

What is the policy of the party in respect of secret votes in the European Parliament? On how many occasions have Lib Dem MEPs supported requests for a secret ballot in the last 12 months?

Reply by Fiona Hall (Leader)

Secret ballots are rare in the European Parliament. There were rumours in February this year that some MEPs from other political groups would come forward with a request for a ballot on the budget. Lib Dem MEPs opposed this and nothing further came of it. Secret ballots are used automatically in the European Parliament, as I believe they are in the House of Commons, when it comes to voting on appointments and it's right that that should be the case. There has only been one secret ballot in the last twelve months and that was for the appointment of the European Ombudsman. We elected her by secret ballot earlier this year. But Liberal Democrat MEPs agree that secret ballots shouldn't be used for budgetary and legislative votes and are happy to support the amendment to the European policy paper to this effect.

Additional Question submitted by Zoe O'Connell

Royal assent for the Equal Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act earlier this year is a welcome step towards equal marriage, however it became clear during the passage of the Bill that Liberal Democrat Ministers had little input into the drafting of the Bill and government amendments. Several key areas were not as progressive as they could have been hoped for. The Parliamentary Party assured conference that despite the departure of Lynne Featherstone, as Minister for Equalities, we would retain influence on equalities, but this appears not to have happened. What steps, if any, are being taken to rectify this situation?

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

Jo Swinson has done a tremendous amount in this brief. I don't accept that we had no influence on the drafting, but when you're trying to take forward a broad coalition then you just have to move at the speed that you can get everybody to move at. There is a LGBT action plan which the government is reviewing this autumn which I think will deal with a number of the issues Zoe is concerned about and Jo is leading on that and she is also working with DfE specifically on the issue of homophobic bullying.

Supplementary Question

When campaigning on issues such as this, what we find is that the Bill as published misses important points because the civil servants have not necessarily grasped things correctly.

This leaves those of us campaigning on the issue on the backfoot - we're having to respond to what is in the Bill and propose amendments. What consideration has been given to better coordination between Liberal Democrat Ministers and, in all areas, SAOs and AOs who might have expertise in particular areas where legislation is being passed?

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

In my view the coordination is very good already. It varies of course from subject area to subject area. We have the Parliamentary Policy Committees which are co-chaired by an MP and a Peer which in most cases do bring in SAOs and other party influence groups from the outside, but they face the same challenges as the rest of us. If you just take for example, the question of the extension of civil partnerships to mixed sex couples which was a live issue in this Bill, the fact was in order to maintain the coalition we had behind the broad thrust of the Bill we weren't able to deliver that this time. It doesn't mean to say that I have stopped thinking that it is a good idea it just means that it'll come to that next time and I just can't stress this point too highly, what we have got here is an enormous achievement and everytime you take these issues on it gets a little easier than the last time.

Additional Question submitted by Andrew Hudson

Will the Parliamentary party amend the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill to ensure that community groups are able to lobby parliament effectively?

Reply by Alistair Carmichael (Chief Whip)

Yes - on Hansard you will see the comments of Tom Brake and Andrew Lansley in reply to amendments brought by John Thurso to do exactly what you are asking. The community groups, charities etc. were never the intended target of this Bill and if the law of unintended consequences has operated in such a way that they feel they are then I think that it is necessary that it be put beyond doubt. The amendment John Thurso brought was not technically perfect, there are a few small issues that are required to be taken care of, there is however a commitment on the record now in Hansard that the Government will bring back its own amendments at report stage and at that stage the concerns should be fully addressed.

Federal Executive

The Federal Executive provided the following written answers to Question 1.

Q1. Submitted by Naomi Smith

What is the total value of the expenditure incurred by the Party for the Leadership Programme since its inception?

To the end of 2013 we anticipate the cost of the programme will be approximately £40,000. The programme is a donor-specific project with funds ring-fenced for this purpose.

What is the total value of the projected costs to be incurred by the Party for the Leadership Programme up to and including 2015?

Expenditure for 2014 and 2015 will be decided through ongoing discussion and planning, and will be dependent on candidate needs. As with all Federal funding, costs will be approved by FE on a budgetary basis.

How many Leadership Programme candidates have been formally selected for marginal held Liberal Democrat seats?

We do not measure Local Party candidates in 'marginal seats'. Instead, we have a class of 'strategic seat' which covers held and target seats for 2015. A total of nine Leadership Programme candidates have been selected so far in strategic seats.

How many Leadership Programme candidates have been selected for non-target seats?

Four Leadership Programme candidates have been selected in non-strategic seats.

How many Leadership Programme candidates have applied for selections that have now closed but have not yet been successfully selected?

Seven Leadership Programme candidates have applied for selections that are now closed and have not yet been selected in any other seat (this includes the Hampstead & Kilbur first selection). Three Leadership Programme candidates are currently involved in ongoing seat selections that are not yet concluded.

Of the Leadership Programme candidates that have been selected, how many represent each diversity strand?

Selected Leadership Programme candidates break down as follows – please note that some candidates are included in more than one strand: ten women, two LGBT+, three BAME, no disabled.

How many Leadership Programme candidates have withdrawn from the Programme since its inception?

One

How many candidates have been added to the Leadership Programme since the initial 40 candidates were successfully selected in 2011?

Five

Supplementary Question

Of the nine candidates who have been selected in strategic seats, how many of them are constituted by the five who were added to the leadership programme since the initial 40 candidates were selected in 2011?

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

Don't know, but I will get back to you with the answer.

Q2. Submitted by Mark Pack

Following Tim Farron's 2012 commitment that FE will publish reports after each of its full meetings, when and where have the 2013 ones been published?

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

The reports up till the end of 2012 can be found the members' area of Liberal Democrat Voice. Now in 2013, earlier this year when the new Federal Executive came into being in January we set up a working group to look into our communications and how we could best not only get in touch with party members but also how they could get in touch us. We have therefore taken a break in our usual reporting to see what our weaknesses are and Caron Lyndsay is leading for us on this, reporting back to FE on how we will be proceeding in the next couple of months and I expect this to include a suggestion that we will have a full communications plan for everything FE decides, to keep members in touch with committee decisions. If you have any suggestions please get in touch with Caron or myself. The default from now on, is that we'll have a sanitised version of the minutes available publicly, but we do want to do more than that in the coming months.

Q3. Submitted by Callum Leslie

Does the executive think it is right for the party to have, in the main, ignored the existing interim peers panel with respect to appointments to the House of Lords, and instead appoint former party staffers and major donors?

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

I understand there has been some disagreement about the latest appointments list, I don't in my 27 years recall there being an uncontroversial appointment to the House of Lords! The interim peers panel has not been ignored. It was laid down or not refreshed because we hoped the House of Lords would have been democratised. Having not succeeded there, we are now in the process of putting together a new recommendation as to how we go forward with a better panel. 50% of the peers to be appointed were from the interim peers panel, which is a higher percentage than at any other time since the first list. And those that weren't on the list included a former council leader in Somerset, and someone with a stellar public service background but had been disbarred from being a party member or activist due to their employment - the bottom line is the motion passed by conference required that the Leader make use of the list and he has. The FE is working with Sue Doughty, the Chair of our group on this, to put together proposals for a new interim peers panel going forward and if you have any thoughts please send them through to Sue or myself.

Supplementary Question

I welcome what you say but I thought we were above elevating party donors to the House of Lords?

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

The Leader has complied with the requirements party conference had put upon him. We have to acknowledge that donors have contributed more than just financial support. Our donors have put in a great deal of time and support as well as money – helping us to run the Leadership Programme, using their business and organisational expertise to improve the way we manage our Headquarters and the Party as a whole. Everyone on that list has supported us in their own ways – from running councils, to being a Party President and long-term MP, to representing us in state legislatures. I think Nick has made good use of the talent available to him and indeed the interim peers panel list that he has chosen from.

Q4. Submitted by Paula Keaveney

There've been a few occasions recently when ministers or key people have been on holiday and a Lib Dem line has not been clear in the media (the illegal immigration ad vans are an example of this). While it's good that individuals make statements, we clearly need to have a party line on these issues. What arrangements have been made to make sure there is adequate 'senior spokesperson cover' when key people are likely to be not available?

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

The Press Office keeps a list of party spokespeople who are able to clarify lines during recess and they try to maintain full cover as much as possible. But situations are a bit more difficult when we're in government and clearly there's a reference to the specific Home Office ad vans issue. Obviously, I'm not a minister but I was wheeled out in my village green in front of Channel 4 and others to basically attack the practice of the vans. So we did manage to have a response to it. I guess my observation in one sense was that this was a hugely unfortunate incident and something we need to learn from. It's a little bit of a reminder of what everyday would be like if we weren't in coalition stopping it.

Reply by Paula Keaveney

There have been other times - it's great that individuals do respond and get wheeled out, but it's not always explicit that it's a Libdem response. On these issues it's a party response we're looking for and my concern is that the coverage I have seen where we've slipped up is that people did say things and they were great things but I didn't hear the word Liberal Democrat very often, so I think we need a more robust system of speaking quickly and badging it as party very explicitly.

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

The Press Office do maintain a list - there are sometimes gaps - but your points are powerful and we need to act upon them.

Q5. Submitted by Simon McGrath

What discussions have taken place with SAOs over their employment of unpaid interns?

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

Last year the FE made the decision to pay all federal party interns and this was to ensure that everybody has an equal opportunity to work for us as an intern and to take advantage of the opportunities those internships offer. Your chance to get involved in politics should not depend on where you live or whether your parents can afford for you to spend 2/3 months in London pretty much unpaid. Now the decision only applies to federal party interns and no further discussions have taken place with regard to other party bodies, but I have made it clear generally that the party should not be tolerating the use of unpaid interns.

Supplementary Question

Is the case that no SAO will be allowed to have an unpaid SAO intern in Libdem HQ?

Reply by Tim Farron (President of the Liberal Democrats)

We respect the autonomy of AOs and SAOs however I have had clear conversations about what our expectations are in the future and we expect there to not be people who are working within HQ in a long-term role which is unpaid.