

Becoming a Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Candidate

Guidance and Information

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as large print or on coloured paper, please contact the LDHQ Candidates team on candidates@libdems.org.uk.



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Introduction

Welcome to the Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate approvals process!

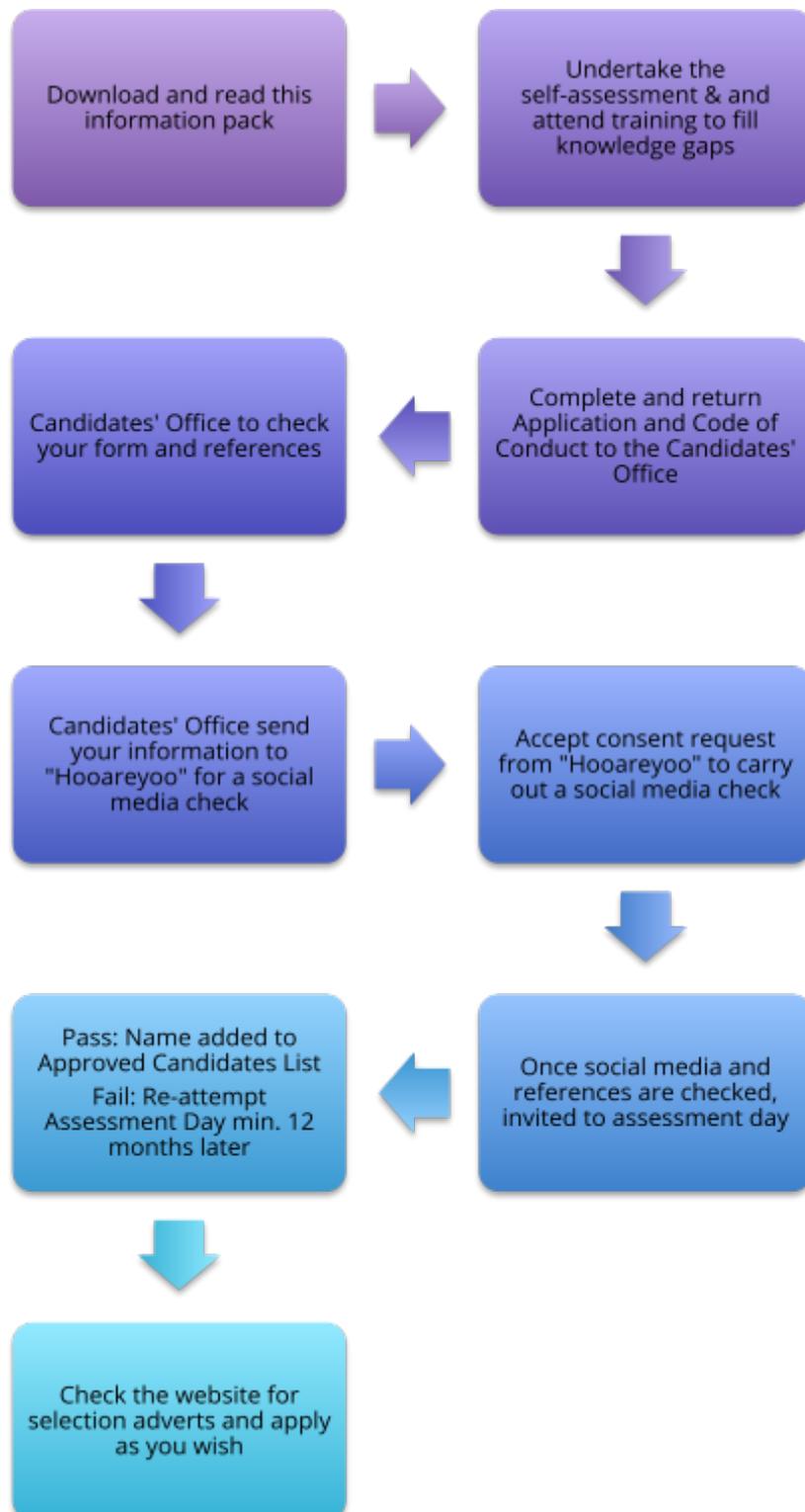
As a party, we are always delighted to welcome new candidates.

Becoming a parliamentary candidate and fighting an election as a representative of the Party can be a fantastic and often life-changing experience. As a candidate, you will have the chance to make a real difference to your local area and to stand up for local people. The role is one of variety - one day you may be dealing with a local resident's problem, the next giving your opinion on national Party policy.

We hope that this document will provide you with a helpful overview of how the approvals process works.

If you have any questions or if we can be of any assistance at all, please do not hesitate to contact us by emailing candidates@libdems.org.uk.

Parliamentary candidate journey



The Approval Process

The Party's approvals process is designed to ensure clarity and transparency. The process is based upon a Competency Framework which you will find at the end of this pack. This clearly expresses the Party's view as to the abilities and qualities that a parliamentary candidate should possess. The six competencies that have been identified are:

- Communication Skills
- Leadership
- Strategic Thinking and Judgement
- Representing People
- Resilience
- Values in Action

The competency framework provides examples of the behaviour through which a person can show whether or not they have the necessary skills.

The rest of this document outlines, in more detail, the steps involved in the process, as well as providing a glossary of key terms and useful contact information.

Please note: We are absolutely committed to making the approvals process accessible to all applicants. Please let us know of any access requirements as soon as possible so we can make reasonable adjustments.

1. Self-Assessment, training and gaining experience

We would strongly recommend that you complete the self-assessment questionnaire included at the end of this document. This will allow you to judge how ready you are to go through the approvals process.

If there are any areas in which you feel you would benefit from further training, or gaining practical experience before proceeding, contact the Candidates' Office for recommendations on how to gain this. [Some useful resources can also be found on the party's online training portal here.](#)

2. Application

Once you feel satisfied with your answers to the self-assessment questionnaire, you should complete an [Application Form and Code of Conduct](#).

The application forms are very straightforward. They are used to ensure that you are who you say you are and that you are eligible to stand for Parliament. The application form **does not** form part of the assessment and is not seen by the assessors.

Each candidate is charged a £75 Administration Fee to cover the cost of the assessment day, administration and to conduct a Digital Risk Assessment. If the cost would present you with any difficulties in proceeding with an application, please contact the Candidates' Office.

When applying, you will be asked to provide the following information:

- Contact details
- Some basic background information
- The contact details of three referees, one of which must be an office holder of a local, regional or state party within the Liberal Democrats
- A signed declaration and code of conduct form

The completed application form should be sent to the Candidates' Office who will pass your details onto your Regional (or State) Candidates' Chair (RCC/SCC).

We will also order a Digital Risk Assessment (DRA) via a company called SocialMediaCheck.com. The DRA will audit your online and social media history. Upon applying to be a candidate, you will be sent a consent request from SocialMediaCheck.com directly.

Social media is a huge area of opportunity in a campaign but inappropriate comments can also derail a campaign and bring the Party into disrepute. If any issues arise from your DRA, your RCC will contact you to discuss and will then make a decision as to whether your application can proceed or should be rejected.

3. Assessment

Once you have returned the completed application form you will be added to the list of people waiting for an assessment day. As long as there are no problems with your application, we will invite you to attend an assessment day as soon as there is a space available.

Assessment days take place across the country on a regular basis. Our target is that all eligible applicants will be offered a place at an assessment day within six months of handing in their forms.

The assessment day is based on the competency framework. This sets out the things we would expect a parliamentary candidate to do, and those things that a good candidate would probably not do. **The assessment team does not see the information on your application form; they will base their assessment purely upon your performance during the assessment day.**

At the assessment day, you will take part in a variety of exercises designed to allow you to show the assessors how you would perform as a parliamentary candidate. Information about these exercises will be sent to you once you have returned your application forms to give you time to prepare.

Key points to note:

- The exercises are designed so that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to complete them.

- Several different assessors will mark you over the course the assessment day. Assessors will be required to show evidence of your performance to support the grade they award you.
- You will be tested on relevant Party Policy questions, the contents of which will depend on whether you are being assessed in England, Scotland or Wales.
- If you pass the assessment you will be approved immediately as a candidate. If you are not successful on the assessment day you will receive helpful feedback and be eligible to reapply in either 1 or 5 years, depending on your final mark.

The Selection Process

Once you are an approved candidate and your name has been added to the Approved List, you are then free to put yourself forward for selection in any seat that advertises for a parliamentary candidate.

These adverts are published on a Friday on the [Members' section](#) of the Federal website and are accompanied with an email notifying all approved candidates that the selection process for the seat has now begun.

To apply for a seat, you will follow these steps:

1. Application

Contact the Returning Officer (RO) who will send you an application form. Complete the application form and return it by the given deadline.

2. Short-listing

The Local Party Selection Committee will shortlist the applicants for the next stage. Sometimes this will require you to attend a short-listing interview.

3. Campaign and Hustings

If you are successfully short-listed, there is typically a period of three weeks during which you can campaign among local party members to persuade them to select you. At the end of the campaign, there will be a hustings meeting at which point the Local Party members will vote for their preferred candidate.

If the Local Party selects you, then you will fight the next General Election for that seat. If you are not short-listed, or not selected, it is important not to be discouraged but to ensure you request feedback that you can learn from for the future.

Candidates for the Scottish Parliament

There are 129 seats in the Scottish Parliament which are split between two types:

- 73 constituency-based seats elected by 'first past the post'
- 57 regional seats based on the boundaries of multiple constituency seats, elected using the d'Hondt, or closed party list, method.

To stand in Scotland, candidates must have completed an assessment day and a Scottish policy assessment.

Candidates for Senedd Cymru

The 60 seats in Senedd Cymru are split between two types:

- 40 constituency-based seats elected by 'first past the post'
- 20 regional seats (4 in each of 5 regions) that are elected using the d'Hondt, or closed party list, method.

To be a candidate in Wales at either Assembly or Westminster elections, candidates must have completed an assessment day and the Welsh policy assessment. The selection for constituency seats takes place on a per constituency basis. The selection for regional list seats is done by a one-member, one-vote system across each region.

Who's who in approval and selection?

1. State Parties and Candidate Committees

The approval and selection of Parliamentary Candidates is the constitutional responsibility of each of the three Federal State Parties of England, Scotland and Wales. Each State has an elected Candidates Committee, which takes the decisions and sets the policies that govern the processes of the approval, selection and review of their Parliamentary Candidates. In England, this is undertaken by the English Candidates Committee (ECC); in Scotland, the Scottish Campaigns and Candidates Committee (SC&C); and in Wales, the Welsh Candidates & Campaigns Committee (WCC).

2. State and Regional Candidates' Chairs

Each of these State Candidate Committees has an elected Chair who represents the Committee on a variety of bodies including the Joint States Candidates Committee (JSCC).

In England, each region has a Regional Candidates' Chair (RCC), who is responsible for organising assessment days, appointing Returning Officers (RO), and providing advice and support to members going through the approvals and selection processes.

3. The Candidates' Office

The staff in the Candidates' Office, based at the Lib Dem headquarters in Westminster, are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the approvals process for the English, Scottish and Welsh Parties. They act as the first port of call for any general enquiry about standing as a Parliamentary Candidate, and can provide advice on the best person to speak with at a regional or state level if you have a more specific query.

Mentoring & support for Prospective Candidates

Very few people are likely to have all the relevant skills at the outset of the journey to become a candidate, or a full understanding of the steps involved in the process. We want to support you on your journey and are here to offer advice, mentorship and training at various stages in the process.

For information about training that might be able to help you with key competencies, contact the candidates' office or your RCC.

The Liberal Democrats are particularly committed to increasing diversity throughout the party and encouraging those from a diverse range of backgrounds to represent the Liberal Democrats at all levels. The Diversity team can facilitate access to additional mentoring and support to potential Parliamentary candidates from under-represented groups. If you are interested in receiving additional support to prepare for your assessment day, please get in touch at diversity@libdems.org.uk.

Other organisations that may be able to offer help, advice or training are:

PCA – Parliamentary Candidates' Association www.parliamentary.org.uk
LDW – Liberal Democrat Women www.libdemwomen.org.uk/
CGB - Campaign for Gender Balance, contact: diversity@libdems.org.uk
LDDA – Liberal Democrat Disability Association www.disabilitylibdems.org.uk
LDCRE – Liberal Democrat Campaign for Race Equality ldcre.org.uk/en/
RDC – Racial Diversity Campaign www.libdemrdc.org
LGBT+ - Liberal Democrats for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality http://lgbt.libdems.org.uk/en

Glossary of Terms

Here are some common acronyms that you may hear people using about approval and selection:

PPC - Prospective Parliamentary Candidate - the person who will fight the seat for the Party at the next General Election

PSPC – Prospective Scottish Parliamentary Candidate

PAC – Prospective Assembly Candidate (Welsh Assembly)

RO – Returning Officer - the person appointed by the region or state to make sure a selection is run fairly and according to the rules

ECC - English Candidates' Committee - oversees the approval and selection of Candidates in England

SCC or C&C – Scottish Campaigns and Candidates' Committee - oversees the approval and selection of Candidates in Scotland

WCC or CCC – Welsh Candidates' and Campaigns Committee - oversees the approval and selection of Candidates in Wales

JSCC – Joint States' Candidates' Committee - co-ordinates the maintenance of standards in the approval and selection across all 3 States

RCC - Regional Candidates' Chair - a member of the Regional Executive who has responsibility for approval and selection in that region. They also provide support and help to candidates throughout the approval and selection processes

Contacts (2020)

Candidates Office

candidates@libdems.org.uk

Head of Party Services:

Amy Westcott

Candidates' Officer:

Lauren Winters

State Chairs

Name	State	Email
Margaret Joachim	England	revdrmou@ntlworld.com
Alan Reid	Scotland	reidalan95@gmail.com
Julian Tandy	Wales	carju1@yahoo.com

English Regional Candidates Chairs

Name	Region	Email
Dave Raval	London	daveraval@gmail.com
Iain MacDonald	Devon and Cornwall	info@wildword.co.uk
Guy Adams	Western Counties	Guy.adams@virgin.net
Val Jay	North West	jayvalerie68@gmail.com
Ian Jones	North East	igljones@live.co.uk
Penny Robinson	Yorkshire and Humber	penny.rcc@gmail.com
Dawn Davidson	South East	dawn.davidson7@ntlworld.com
Alasdair Keay	South Central	ackeay@gmail.com
Jo Hayes	East of England	jo.hayes@eastlibdems.org.uk
Jennifer Gray	West Midlands	jennifer.gray@hotmail.com
Robert Charlesworth	East Midlands	bob_charlesworth@icloud.com

Self-assessment questionnaire

This short questionnaire is designed to help you decide whether you are ready to submit an application for assessment.

Read this questionnaire to help you decide whether you would benefit from further training or development before attending the assessment day.

There are lots of resources available online, please have a look at the webinars and other content here:

<https://www.libdems.org.uk/webinars-for-candidates>

https://www.libdems.org.uk/candidate_curriculum

<https://www.libdems.org.uk/ge-candidate-resources>

Policy and Values

1. Do you feel you are in broad agreement with current party policy?
2. Can you communicate Lib Dem policy clearly and persuasively?
3. Can you show how your Lib Dem values and beliefs affect the way you live your life?

Building skills in this area

The [Policy area of the Party website](#) contains briefings covering key policy areas.

The [Conference area of the website](#) allows you to read past conference motions which will also help in this area. We would also highly recommend attending Federal and Regional Conferences.

Communication skills

1. Are you able to use different styles of communication for different audiences and occasions?
2. Do you enjoy talking to people and addressing their concerns?
3. Do you look for opportunities to tell people about what the Lib

Dems are doing for them?

Building skills in this area

There is Party training available in this area which is offered at regional and federal conferences. A Powerpoint presentation with some tips is also available [here](#). Many people are nervous about things like public speaking, and training can be of great benefit in building skills and confidence.

Media

1. Do you feel able to communicate appropriately with journalists? Are you able to think on your feet and respond quickly and appropriately to questions on topical matters?
2. Do you make the most of media opportunities in order to maximise Party profile?

Building skills in this area

There is Party training available in this area via the links above. In addition, watching or listening to politicians being interviewed can be very helpful – both to pick up tips and to see what to avoid!

Campaigning

1. Do you have recent experience of participating in an election campaign?
2. Can you see how national issues can be linked with areas of local concern?
3. Can you show that you are organised and able to plan ahead?

Building skills in this area

Council by-elections are also a great way to get some campaigning experience all year round – you can find out what's happening near you on the [events page](#) of the website. There is also plenty of training on campaigning, find it [here](#).

Interpersonal skills

1. Do you take the time to understand other people's views and needs?
2. Are you able to deal effectively with conflict?
3. Do you make an effort to be friendly and approachable when meeting new people?

Building skills in this area

There is plenty of free training online and there is also Party-specific training available in this area, notably one course called "Dealing with Difficult People", you can find the slides [here](#).

Leadership

1. Do you have experience of leading a group of people?
2. Are you able to inspire and motivate people to keep going, even when things are getting difficult?
3. Are you able to listen to and take account of a diverse range of views and opinions?

Building skills in this area

Look out for areas where you can gain experience of leading a group of people both in your professional and personal life. There is also leadership training everywhere online, available at Lib Dem Conferences, and some slides on our website [here](#).

This questionnaire is designed as an aid to deciding when to apply for approval, and there is no recommended number of questions to which you should answer, "Yes". If, however, you find that you have answered "No" to more than one question in any category, we would strongly advise you to undertake further development in that area before coming to assessment.

You can contact your Candidates' Chair for details of help available in your region or state, and the Candidates' Office, on candidates@libdems.org.uk, for details of training at conference and across the country.

Competency Framework

Communication Skills: Communicates clearly and persuasively to a variety of audiences and in a variety of contexts, generates opportunities for communication for self and others

Positive Indicators

- Communicates clearly, passionately and with conviction when using different forms of media.
- Confident and persuasive when speaking in public.
- Listens & demonstrates understanding of others' views.
- Seeks out opportunities to publicise Lib Dem policies using different methods and outlets.

Negative Indicators

- Lacks confidence (e.g. hesitant or unsure) when communicating.
- Doesn't listen; perceived as arrogant or disengaged.
- Presents unclear messages with jargon or inappropriate language.
- Fails to listen to, or adapt their communication style for, people from different backgrounds or groups.

Leadership: Motivates self and others; delegates and provides support as appropriate; demonstrates flexibility; accepts responsibility for outcomes, has integrity.

Positive Indicators

- Articulates a clear vision of success and demonstrates Lib Dem values consistently in their actions and message.
 - Inspires and motivates others to work towards common goals.
- Builds trust, confidence and enthusiasm among supporters.
- Acts as a role model by listening to and working on behalf of others.

Negative Indicators

- Expects others to do their work for them and avoids responsibility when things go wrong.
- Fails to understand or act on their personal responsibility.
- Lacks integrity, changes message to fit what others want to hear.
- Inflexible, selective and dogmatic (e.g. follows own views and ignores others).

Resilience: Copes effectively with pressure; remains positive and pro-active in the face of challenge, setbacks and criticism.

Positive Indicators

- Seeks out opportunities to publicise and defend beliefs.
- Has the courage to make and defend unpopular decisions.
- Deals well with conflict and remains positive in the face of setbacks.
- Demonstrates stamina and deals effectively with pressure and media intrusion.

Negative Indicators

- Takes failure or criticism personally.
- Backs down or gives up when challenged, criticised or confronted.
- Looks for easy options and avoids difficult challenges.
- Slow to 'think on their feet' or adapt to changing circumstances.

Representing People: Relates well to people from all backgrounds; is aware of their effects on others; demonstrates tolerance, is approachable and inspires trust.

Positive Indicators

Negative Indicators

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presents as approachable, professional and competent. ▪ Empathises and shows a commitment to understanding others' needs. ▪ Demonstrates tolerance in actively representing people across the full spectrum of diversity. ▪ Actively seeks to attract, engage and build trust with new supporters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses selectively on the needs or preferences of certain groups. ▪ Prefers information, detail and ideas to people. ▪ Fails to deliver on promises. ▪ Seeks to win for self rather than Party or constituents.
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Strategic Thinking & Judgement: Understands and prioritises complex information; looks at the bigger picture, identifies and promotes the overall objectives of the team and campaign.

<p>Positive Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analyses complex information quickly and accurately. ▪ Identifies key arguments and solutions to problems. ▪ Understands the strategic relevance of information and makes links between national and local level issues. ▪ Translates policy into creative and tangible real world outcomes. 	<p>Negative Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gets lost in detail or overwhelmed by complex information. ▪ Lacks understanding of Liberal Democrat policy. ▪ Slow to spot links, generate ideas or see the big picture. ▪ Too focused at a local level (ignoring national issues) or at a strategic level (failing to consider local needs).
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Values in Action: Understands how to find out what matters to people, works hard to develop a campaign team, secure appropriate resources, promote Liberal Democrat values and maximise Party profile.

<p>Positive Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develops a campaign team dedicated to maximising Party profile. ▪ Talks to people to identify concerns, build support and secure resources. ▪ Promotes beliefs and key messages through their own actions. ▪ Looks to win for all by supporting other campaigns when required. 	<p>Negative Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fails to keep up to date with matters of local or national concern. ▪ Disorganised or unreliable, fails to devote sufficient effort to their campaign or supporters. ▪ Acts in a way that risks bringing the Party into disrepute. ▪ Reluctant to engage in less high profile aspects of campaign work.
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