



Manifesto for disabled people

.....
Policies to tackle discrimination against disabled people
.....

Foreword

Liberal Democrats believe that no matter who you are, where you come from and what your circumstances, you should not be denied the opportunity to fulfil your potential.

It is essential to break down the unfair divisions in our society, yet disabled people in Britain today still face significant barriers to getting on and living happy, independent lives.

Providing opportunity for everyone is the test of a liberal society.

In Coalition Government, I am proud of the important progress Liberal Democrats have made in driving improvements.

From fighting to protect schools and teaching budgets, to investing £400m in carers' breaks, or launching the *No voice unheard, no right ignored* programme to ensure people with disability, autism and mental health conditions get the best care possible.

But we can and must go further.

In Government again, we will ensure that disabled people get the support and help they need to find work, whether it is supporting those who want to work, or ensuring fairer assessment and support of those who can't.

We will work to improve the benefits system for disabled people, ensuring assessments are truly fair, with quick access to financial help for those who cannot work.

We will move towards an integrated health service with more joined up care, more personal budgets so people have more control over the care they need, and delivering equality of care for mental health patients.

Only the Liberal Democrats will create opportunity for everyone by building a stronger economy and a fairer society. Labour will borrow too much, risking the economy. The Tories will cut too much, threatening public services and sacrificing the least well off.

We are determined to stick with the approach we set out in 2010 – a fair way of restoring the nation's finance. The fruits of Britain's recovery must be felt by all – providing disabled people with real opportunities to achieve their potential, and the support they need to live happier, more fulfilling lives.

Nick Clegg



Equality and Human Rights

For Liberal Democrats, disability is not so much a matter of medical diagnosis and treatment as it is of justice and human rights. We must organise our society so that disabled people are not unnecessarily held back from achieving their full potential. This means action in specific areas, like education, work, welfare and transport. But it also means entrenching individual rights and having an overarching approach that cuts across individual government departments. It means engaging disabled people in the political process itself, which is why we have extended the Access to Elected Office for Disabled People Fund to cover candidates standing in this General Election.

We will:

- ◆ Protect the Human Rights Act and enshrine the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in UK law. We will take appropriate action to comply with decisions of UK courts and the European Court of Human Rights.
- ◆ Formally recognise British Sign Language as an official language of the United Kingdom.
- ◆ Tackle disability hate crime by ensuring proper monitoring of incidents by police forces and other public authorities.
- ◆ Internationally, Liberal Democrats in government will build on the Disability Framework for international development we published in Government to incorporate disability further into DFID's humanitarian response work particularly around sanitation and hygiene programmes, so no one is left behind.

To ensure the highest standards of equality and fairness in public services we will:

- ◆ Maintain the Public Sector Equality Duty and encourage external providers to the public sector to follow best practice in terms of diversity.
- ◆ Replicate the civil service accelerated programme for underrepresented groups across the public sector.
- ◆ Work to ensure the shift to Digital by Default for public services does not leave people behind, by upholding the highest standards of accessibility in digital services and maintaining government programmes on digital inclusion.



Supporting people, creating jobs and helping people find work

Our aim is to get everyone the help they need, both financially and in terms of advice and support.

Liberal Democrats protected disability benefits from cuts, excluding them from the benefit cap and ensuring they were uprated with inflation. We made improvements to the work capability assessment system introduced by the last government accepting the recommended changes of independent annual reviews.

We ended the contract with Atos early as it became clear that many people had lost faith in the delivery of Work Capability Assessments and the Personal Independence Payments process.

The 2014 Children and Families Act sets out new Education Health and Care (EHC) plans obliging local authorities to make support available, and allows all the information on the support needed for a child to be in one place. We provided local councils with £180 million last year in discretionary housing payments to help disabled people with changes to housing benefits. Our new tax-free childcare scheme will mean for every 80p eligible families with disabled children pay in, the Government will contribute 20p, up to a maximum of £10,000.

We want to aim even higher. Whether it's providing support for those who can work, or supporting those who can't, we will:

- ◆ Work to improve the benefits system for disabled people, based on the principle of one assessment, one budget. This will bring together support like the Personal Independence Payment, Employment Support Allowance, a replacement for the Independent Living Fund and health and social care entitlements.
- ◆ Conduct a review of the Work Capability Assessment and Personal Independence Payment assessments to ensure they are fair, accurate and timely and evaluate the merits of a public sector provider.
- ◆ Invest to clear any backlog in assessments for Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.
- ◆ Simplify and streamline back-to-work support for people with disabilities, mental or physical health problems.
- ◆ Review sanctions procedures in Jobcentres to ensure there are no league tables or targets for sanctions issued by Jobcentres, and introduce a 'yellow card' warning so people are only sanctioned if they deliberately and repeatedly break the rules.
- ◆ Exempt disability benefits from the 1% cap to be temporarily introduced in working-age benefits until the budget is balanced in 2017/18.
- ◆ Not reduce housing benefit for existing social tenants until they have been offered reasonable alternative accommodation. We will ensure tenants who need an extra bedroom for genuine medical reasons are entitled to one in any assessment of their Housing Benefit needs, and those whose homes are substantially adapted do not have their Housing Benefit reduced.
- ◆ Continue the Disability Confident campaign, getting more employers on board will help remove barriers to employment for disabled people and the understanding of disabilities in the workplace.
- ◆ Continue to support Jobcentres in ensuring people get access to the support they need such as those with Autism or mental health issues.
- ◆ Deliver a reformed and improved Work Programme in partnership with English local government, and the national governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, ensuring help and training are more tailored to local employment markets and better integrated with other services.
- ◆ Provide support that has been proven to work, like work experience placements that help young people get their foot on the career ladder, tailoring placements for those with disabilities and mental health problems.
- ◆ Raise awareness of and seek to expand Access to Work to support people with disabilities in work.

- ◆ Encouraging employers to shortlist any qualified disabled candidate and providing advice about workplace adaptation.
- ◆ Increase the number of apprenticeships – offering vocational education on a par with academic qualifications and working to increase the number of underrepresented groups applying.

Education

Liberal Democrats are ambitious for all children, whatever their background and whatever their ability.

Yet disabled people are around three times as likely not to hold any qualifications as non-disabled people, and around half as likely to hold a degree-level qualification. If we want a more equal society, we must get help to all those who might fall behind, and their parents, right from the start.

In Government, Liberal Democrats legislated to deliver improvements for children which made sure all state-funded nurseries, schools and colleges had the capacity to deal with children with SEND. Our Pupil Premium policy has improved the education and prospects of children from disadvantaged backgrounds through an extra £2.5bn funding for schools. And we have ensured that by 2016 schools will be judged on the overall progress of pupils not just the number attaining five grade A-Cs at GCSE, ending the incentive for schools to ignore students at the top and bottom of the ability range.

We want to go further and our plan stretches from cradle to college.

We will:

- ◆ Improve the early identification of Special Educational Needs and disability, so targeted support can be provided and primary schools are better prepared for their intake of pupils.
- ◆ Continue to promote the local integration of health, care and educational support for children with Special Educational Needs and health problems.
- ◆ Continue to take action in schools to ensure that every child with autism is taught by an appropriately trained teacher, building on our SEN Code of Practice
- ◆ Maintain Disabled Students' Allowance to ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate support in their university studies, and review the impact of any changes to consider additional protections for the most vulnerable students with disabilities.



Carers

Carers are unsung heroes and we will do more to help them. Many carers want to work but their caring responsibilities often take up so much of their time that this is a struggle. Our work in Government to make workplaces more flexible for everyone, and our proposals to raise the amount you can earn before losing Carers Allowance, will mean more carers will get the chance to work.

We will:

- ◆ Introduce an annual Carer's Bonus of £250 for carers looking after someone for 35 hours or more each week.
- ◆ Work to raise the amount you can earn before losing Carer's Allowance from £110 to £150 a week.
- ◆ Consult on introducing five days' paid additional 'care leave' a year for carers who qualify for the Carer's Allowance.
- ◆ Give the NHS a legal duty to identify carers and develop a Carer's Passport scheme to inform carers of their rights in the NHS, like more flexible visiting hours, assert their role as expert partners in care and gain access to support.
- ◆ Encourage employers to provide more flexible working.

Health

With more than one in three people in Great Britain living with a long-standing illness or disability, and four out of five disabled people acquiring a disability during their lives, safeguarding health services is

one of our biggest priorities.

Liberal Democrats are committed to the founding principles of the NHS as a taxpayer-funded system, free at the point of use.

We are the only party with a credible plan to deliver the £8 billion extra that NHS leaders know our health service in England needs by 2020, with the appropriate boost to funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland too.

It is time to move away from a fragmented system to an integrated service with more joined up care. Personal budgets will mean people can design services for their own individual needs, starting from the bottom up, in local communities.

We will:

- ◆ Reduce health inequalities by improving support for groups that often face lower standards of care, such as older people and or those with learning disabilities. This focus on excluded groups, for example on improving the physical health care of people with mental health problems will help prevent people from dying early.
- ◆ Establish a £2.5 billion fund to help people access 'Care Closer to Home' to stay healthier for longer and avoid hospital admission. We want to safeguard the NHS by providing care for people in their homes, GP surgeries, care homes and community centres.
- ◆ We will end 'care cramming', which turns care workers into clockwatchers rushing between jobs. We are clamping down on care workers being paid less than the National Minimum Wage and will work with local government and providers to promote paying a Living Wage.
- ◆ Encourage health services to link up with Local Authority social care teams and voluntary services to join up care.
- ◆ Secure local agreement on full pooling of budgets between the NHS and care services with a target date of 2018, consulting on a legal duty for this. The details of how services are commissioned will remain a matter for local areas. In this way we will build on the radical proposals to integrate health and care funding in Greater Manchester.
- ◆ Ensure easier access to GPs, expanding evening and weekend opening and supporting services joining up like GPs providing scans and blood tests closer to home.
- ◆ Review the rules for exemption from prescription charges to ensure they are fair to those with long-term conditions and disabilities.
- ◆ Implement the proposals set out in the 2015 Green Paper on Learning Disabilities, autism, and mental health conditions.

- ◆ Introduce care navigators so people get help finding their way around the system.



Mental Health

For decades mental health has been last in the queue for funding and attention. Disabled people report lower rates of personal well-being and happiness and higher levels of anxiety than those without a disability, demonstrating why overlooking mental health and wellbeing is not acceptable. In 2012, we wrote equality for mental health into law and now making real progress.

We will:

- ◆ Spend £3.5bn more on mental health care in England over the next Parliament.
- ◆ Radically transform mental health services, extending the use of personal budgets, integrating care more fully with the rest of the NHS, introducing rigorous inspection and high quality standards, comprehensive collection of data to monitor outcomes and waiting times and changing the way services are funded so they do not lose out in funding decisions in future.
- ◆ Revolutionise children's mental health services. We will continue to roll out access and waiting time standards for children, young people and adults. This will include a waiting time standard from referral of no more than six weeks for therapy for depression or anxiety and a two-week wait standard for all young people experiencing a first episode of psychosis.

- ◆ Ensure no one in crisis is turned away, with new waiting time standards and better crisis care in Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments, in the community and via phone lines. This will enable us to end the use of police cells for people facing a mental health crisis.
- ◆ Set stretching standards to improve the physical health of people with mental health problems.

Accessible Transport

Affordable, accessible transport is vital for people with disabilities, not just get around, but to live full lives and achieve their potential. Liberal Democrats are leading the renewal of Britain's ageing infrastructure but we still have decades of under-investment to catch up on.

We will:

- ◆ Make more stations wheelchair accessible and give wheelchair-users priority over children's buggies when space is limited on trains and buses.
- ◆ Bring into effect the provisions of the 2010 Equality Act on discrimination by private hire vehicles and taxis.
- ◆ Improve the legislative framework governing Blue Badges.
- ◆ Build on our successes in improving wheelchair access to improve accessibility of public transport for people with other disabilities, including visual and auditory impairment
- ◆ Set up a benchmarking standard for accessible cities.



**Manifesto for disabled
people 2015**

Published and promoted by Tim Gordon on
behalf of the Liberal Democrats, both at 8-10
Great George Street, London SW1P 3AE

.....