



# Young People Manifesto

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Policies to create opportunity for all  
young people.  
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## Foreword

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Like many young people across the country, the Liberal Democrats are instinctively open and tolerant in our outlook and optimistic about the future. We are passionate about creating a thriving, modern, fairer country in which every young person has the opportunity to succeed.

We have lived and breathed these liberal values in Coalition Government – introducing equal marriage; leading the fight against climate change; challenging the stigma around mental health issues; creating new, high-tech jobs, and defending Britain’s place in the world.

The Liberal Democrats are and always will be the party of young people because at the heart of our mission in politics is a desire to spread opportunity and to break down the barriers that stop people from being able to fulfil their potential.

I’m proud that the Liberal Democrats in Government have taken important steps to improve the lives of young people across the UK.

Under the Liberal Democrats, record numbers are going to university, and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are 70% more likely to attend university than a decade ago.

We've lifted the cap on the number of students, so that in the future even more young people can go to university.

We have created over two million apprenticeships and doubled the number of apprentices since 2010.

And we've raised the school leaving age to 18 to combat youth unemployment and ensure our young people develop the skills they need for a successful career.

In Government again, we will go even further to remove the barriers that unfairly hold back young people.

We will protect education budgets from cradle to college, and open up universities even further, with more places than ever going to those from the poorest backgrounds.

We will double the number of employers who take on apprentices, creating opportunity in every sector and every part of the country.

We will work to ensure the cost of travel is no longer a barrier to getting on in life, giving every young person aged 16 to 21 a two-thirds discount on their bus travel.

And we will give more young people a voice, extending the right to vote to 16 and 17 year-olds.

Liberal Democrats know that if we want a fairer society with opportunity for everyone, it must be built on the foundations of a strong, sustainable and green economy.

Labour will borrow too much, risking the economy and racking up debts for the next generation to pay off. The Conservatives 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 finances.

Liberal Democrats are on the side of the next generation. As the economy recovers, we will make sure that every single young person has the opportunity to make the best possible start to their lives.



Nick Clegg  
**Leader of the  
Liberal Democrats**

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## Economy & Tax

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To give every single young person the opportunity to get on in life we need a strong economy and a fair society. That means a balanced approach to the economy. It is simply not right to borrow too much and expect future generations to pay it back. So we are determined to restore the nation's finances but also to do it in a fair way, making sure the richest pay their fair share and corporations cannot avoid tax.

We do not think young people in their first jobs, or trying to pay their way through education, should bear the burden of tax rises. Our plans won't require any increase in the headline rates of Income Tax, National Insurance or VAT. In fact, our plans mean we can continue to cut taxes for people on low and middle incomes by raising the tax free Personal Allowance. We will:

- ◆ Balance the structural current budget by 2017/18, then increase public spending in line with the economy once the budget is balanced, borrowing only to invest in those things, like transport and housing, that help our economy grow and create jobs.
- ◆ Raise the Personal Allowance to at least £12,500, cutting your taxes by around £400 more.
- ◆ Ensure those with the highest incomes and wealth are making a fair contribution to deficit reduction, including through closing loopholes and excess tax reliefs, and introducing a UK-wide High Value Property Levy on residential properties worth over £2 million.
- ◆ Take tough action against corporate tax evasion and avoidance.

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## Education

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Liberal Democrats have put education at the heart of our agenda for a generation. We believe every young person deserves a great start in life, and are determined to make sure that the education system finds and nurtures the best in everyone. We have a record of delivery – the Pupil Premium, which is investing in children who might otherwise fall behind, was on the front page of our last manifesto and we delivered it. We have protected spending on schools throughout this Parliament. We would now go further, protecting the entire education budget from nursery to 19 and increasing the money invested in each pupil every year with inflation.

Our plan for education stretches from cradle to college. To achieve it we will:

- ◆ Protect the education budget in real terms from the early years to age 19. This will particularly benefit FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges.



- ◆ Ensure that all state school teachers are qualified or working towards Qualified Teacher Status.
- ◆ Introduce a minimum curriculum entitlement – a slimmed-down core national curriculum – which will be taught in all state-funded schools, to include Personal, Social and Health Education: a ‘curriculum for life’ including financial literacy, first aid and emergency lifesaving skills, citizenship, and age-appropriate sex and relationship education.
- ◆ Improve careers advice in schools and colleges and improve links between employers and schools, encouraging all schools to participate in mentoring schemes and programmes that seek to raise aspiration like Speakers for Schools and Inspiring the Future. In particular, we will seek to inspire more children and young people to follow technical and scientific careers through partnership with relevant businesses.

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### Apprenticeships, skills and university

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Liberal Democrats want young people to face the future with optimism and the confidence that they live in a society that provides opportunity for all. This has been at the heart of everything we have done in government from creating over two million apprenticeships to providing the first ever income-contingent loans for graduate degrees.

We acknowledge that we couldn’t achieve our aim of ending tuition

fees, but Liberal Democrats fought hard in government to ensure that no undergraduate student in England has to pay a penny up front. Students in England do not have to pay anything until they are earning over £21,000 per year, so only high-earning graduates pay their tuition fees back in full. We are proud that now we have the highest university application rates ever, including from disadvantaged students.

There is more we want to do to help young people achieve their goals in life. We want to build on the success of our apprenticeship programme and do more to help students with the cost of living at university, so that even more disadvantaged students can make it to university.

We will:

- ◆ Work to introduce a new Young Person's Discount Card, for young people aged 16–21, giving a two-thirds discount on bus travel.
- ◆ Provide support to help young people get a first foot on the career ladder such as work experience placements. These placements should be tailored for those with disabilities, mental health problems and those with parental responsibilities and we will work to expand the availability of placements into new sectors including manufacturing, science and technology.
- ◆ Double the number of employers taking apprentices and widen the industries in which apprenticeships are offered (for example, into the creative and design industries).
- ◆ Develop National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, like renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.
- ◆ Extend the Apprenticeships Grants for Employers and improve the quality of apprenticeships offered.
- ◆ Work with the Apprenticeship Advisory Group to increase the number of apprentices from BAME backgrounds, ensure gender balance across industry sectors, and encourage underrepresented groups to apply.
- ◆ Develop an NHS 'student guarantee', making it easier for students to get care and support while at university, particularly those with long-term health conditions or caring responsibilities.
- ◆ Ensure that all universities work to widen participation across the sector, prioritising early intervention in schools and colleges. This will include running summer schools and setting up mentoring programmes between students or alumni and school pupils.
- ◆ Establish a review of higher education finance within the next Parliament to consider any necessary reforms, in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation (including of low-income groups) and quality. The review will cover undergraduate and postgraduate courses, with

an emphasis on support for living costs for students, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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## Environment

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It is not right for one generation to ruin our natural environment for future generations. Liberal Democrats are the only major party that takes seriously the responsibility of protecting our natural environment. In the last five years we have encouraged growth in green industries, established the world's first Green Investment Bank, and almost trebled the percentage of UK energy produced from renewable sources.

We've also protected the natural world – with stronger protections on National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We have fought to protect the Green Belt, and we have increased public access to our coastal paths.

We have planted a million trees in the most ambitious planting programme since the 1970s and introduced a 5p charge on plastic bags that cause so much environmental harm.

And we understand that Britain can't fight climate change alone. Thanks to Liberal Democrat leadership the UK has played a key role in agreeing an ambitious target to cut EU carbon emissions by at least 40% by 2030.

In government again, we will go even further. Liberal Democrats want to ensure young people have access to as much of nature as possible. We'd significantly increase the amount of accessible green space, complete the coastal path, introduce a fuller Right to Roam and create a new designation of National Nature Parks to protect up to a million acres of green space.

But more importantly we would establish a groundbreaking permanent, legal framework for a sustainable economy by passing five green laws.

They are:

- ♦ A Nature Act which will set the natural capital targets, including on biodiversity, clean air and water.
- ♦ A Zero Carbon Britain Act which will set a new legally binding target to bring net greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050.
- ♦ A Resource Efficiency and Zero Waste Act which will bring in measures to help us to identify where resources are being used unsustainably and set goals for reducing their consumption.
- ♦ A Green Buildings Act which will include a long-term ambition for every home to meet a high energy efficiency standard.
- ♦ A Green Transport Act which will set out a a National Plan to improve dramatically Britain's air quality by 2020.

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## Housing

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For decades under Labour and Conservative governments, not enough homes were built. For too long this has damaged young people's ambitions to have a decent home. Too many young people can't afford a home of their own. This lack of building has left us with a crippling undersupply and an industry that is only producing half of the houses we need. The lack of homes forces prices and rents ever higher and leaves thousands of young people with no hope of buying their first property.

Liberal Democrats are determined to break this cycle, easing the transitions young people face in moving out into their own rented accommodation, getting a fair deal from their landlords, and then making their first moves into owner occupation. That's why we have set a bold and ambitious target to increase the number of homes we build in the UK to 300,000 every year, more than any other mainstream party.

We will:

- ◆ Introduce a Help to Rent tenancy deposit loan to help young people get into their first place.
- ◆ Improve protections against rogue landlords and encourage new multi-year family-friendly tenancies.
- ◆ Ban letting agent fees to tenants if the transparency requirements we have introduced are not successful in bringing fees down to an affordable level by the end of 2016.
- ◆ Introduce a new Rent to Own scheme where monthly payments steadily buy you a stake in your property until you own the property outright after 30 years, just like a normal mortgage.
- ◆ Increase the number of homes we build in the UK to 300,000 every year. These homes will be greener than the current housing stock because they will be built to a Zero Carbon Standard meaning they will be better insulated and heated.

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## Culture

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We know that the arts, creative industries and culture are crucial to Britain's success and essential for personal fulfilment and quality of life. Young people are at the heart of creativity in Britain, we want their new ideas to continue to enhance our culture and economy.

We are proud of the arts in Britain and will support them to deliver access for all young people, regardless of income, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or disability. The arts have an essential role in our education system and will work to encourage creativity in our schools and universities.

We will:

- ◆ Maintain free access to national museums and galleries, while giving these institutions greater autonomy.
- ◆ Protect the independence of the BBC while ensuring the Licence Fee does not rise faster than inflation.
- ◆ Support growth in the creative industries, including video gaming, by continuing to support the Creative Industries Council, promoting creative skills, supporting modern and flexible patent, copyright and licensing rules, and addressing the barriers to finance faced by small creative businesses.

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## Equal care for mental health

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One in four of us will experience a mental health problem in our lifetimes, but for decades mental health has been the last in the queue for funding and attention.

In 2012, we called a halt to this and wrote equality for mental health into law. We have introduced the first ever waiting time standards in mental health, invested £400m in increasing access to talking therapies and £150m in help for people with eating disorders.

For children and young people in particular the issues can be stark. Three children in every classroom have a diagnosable mental health condition and research shows that left untreated it can blight their adult lives. But until now, provision of appropriate care has been insufficient to meet their needs. To help to address this Liberal Democrats in government recently announced £1.25 billion of new funding over the next five years to treat 110,000 more children with mental health issues, and provide rapid access to treatment for new mothers.

We will:

- ◆ Deliver genuine equality between mental and physical health in the NHS, improve wellbeing and make the UK more mental health friendly.
- ◆ Increase mental health spending in England's NHS by £500m a year by 2016/17 – half of which we delivered in this year's Budget – and provide the cash for similar investments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- ◆ Continue to roll out access and waiting time standards for children, young people and adults, including no more than six weeks waiting time from referral to therapy for depression or anxiety, and a two-week wait standard for all young people experiencing a first episode of psychosis.
- ◆ Build better links with schools, ensuring all children develop mental resilience, and getting support and care quickly to those who are

struggling. Our investment will help ensure children can access high-quality care closer to home.

- ◆ Ensure all frontline public service professionals, including in schools and universities, get better training in mental health – helping them to develop their own mental resilience as well as learning to identify people with mental health problems.
- ◆ Tackle stigma against mental health, continuing to support the Time to Change campaign.

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## Protecting our freedoms

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Liberal Democrats believe that civil liberties are the foundation of a free society where every young person has the opportunity to reach their potential. A fair society should treat its citizens equally, and with dignity.

Thanks to Liberal Democrats in government, our society is freer and fairer. Same sex couples can now marry and age discrimination is no longer legal. We stopped Conservative plans to introduce a so called ‘Snooper’s Charter’ that would force internet service providers to keep records of all your texts, emails and every website you visit. We’ve closed the gap between men and women’s pay, and now every executive board in the FTSE 100 has a woman on it.

And we will go further in protecting freedom and championing equality.

We will:

- ◆ Protect your privacy and give you more control over your data online with a Digital Bill of Rights.
- ◆ Introduce a new Freedoms Act to embed citizens’ rights to freedom of speech, stop heavy-handed policing and ban ‘Mosquito’ devices that discriminate against young people.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Combat homophobic bullying and discrimination, including in schools.
- ◆ Ensure the Human Rights Act remains, with children’s rights protected in law too.
- ◆ Work to end the gender pay gap, including with new rules on gender pay transparency.
- ◆ Set an ambitious goal to see a million more women in work by 2020 and continue the drive for diversity in business leadership, maintaining momentum towards at least 30% of board members being women.



- ◆ Improve the safeguards on police stop and search powers with tighter guidance and require police who use them to wear body cameras.
- ◆ Fight discrimination in the criminal justice system and recruit more Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic police officers.

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## Tackling violence against women and girls

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A fair society cannot continue to tolerate the unacceptable level of violence against women and girls in Britain today. We have made progress since 2010 but we will not rest until women feel safe and protected.

We will:

- ◆ Protect funding for tackling violence against women and girls and maintain the post of International Champion for preventing this violence.
- ◆ End Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) within a generation, ensuring that teachers, social workers, police officers and health workers in areas where there is high prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation are trained to help those girls at risk of being cut.
- ◆ Require the teaching of sexual consent in schools as part of age-appropriate sex and relationships education.
- ◆ Improve the provision of rape crisis centres and refuges for victims of domestic violence with a national network and national sources of funding.

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## A proportionate approach to drugs

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Drugs continue to cause immense harm, including to many young people, while the trade in drugs lines the pockets of organised criminal gangs. In the UK we have made good progress on treatment of drug users, but we continue to give 80,000 people a year a criminal record for drug possession, blighting their employment chances, and we still imprison 1,000 people a year for personal possession when they are not charged with dealing or any other offence.

For too long the debate about effective ways to reduce the harm caused by drugs has been distorted by political prejudice. Around the world, countries are trialling new approaches that are reducing drug harm, improving lives, reducing addiction and saving taxpayers' money. Liberal Democrats want to learn from these approaches and do what works to protect young people from drug harm. We don't believe locking up those in need of treatment is the best way to tackle the damage caused by drugs in our society.

We will:

- ◆ End imprisonment for possession for personal use, turning instead to education, treatment or civil penalties rather than a criminal record.
- ◆ Put the Department of Health rather than the Home Office in charge of drug policy and allow cannabis to be prescribed for medicinal use.
- ◆ Establish a review to assess the effectiveness of the cannabis legalisation experiments in the United States and Uruguay in relation to public health and criminal activity.
- ◆ Continue to apply severe penalties to those who manufacture, import or deal in illegal drugs, and clamp down on those who produce and sell unregulated chemical highs.

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## Britain in the world

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Liberal Democrats are internationalists, we want to embrace our rich web of global relationships and give our country the potential to wield greater influence than our economic or military power alone would permit. We know that young people in Britain want a country that is open and generous-hearted when it looks at the world, and one that will stand up to prejudice or injustice wherever they occur.

We will:

- ◆ Protect migrants from scapegoating and put in place robust measures that give confidence to both the community and those who come here that their concerns are being heard and their

interests are being safeguarded.

- ◆ Ensure Britain plays a constructive part in the European Union and work to reform the EU to make it more efficient.
- ◆ Maintain our commitment to spend 0.7% of UK Gross National Income on overseas development to help protect the poorest in the world, investing to eliminate within a generation preventable diseases like TB, HIV and malaria.
- ◆ Lead international action to ensure global companies pay fair taxes in the developing countries in which they operate.

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## Giving young people a voice

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Liberal Democrats want the power to sit with the people, not corporate interests, unelected peers or Whitehall bureaucrats. And we want young people to have their say in politics. Liberal Democrats have made a good start on modernising and decentralising the state, giving more power to the people. But we were thwarted in some of our attempts to reform politics. When it came to reforming the House of Lords and giving citizens a stronger voice with fair votes, our proposals were blocked. We still believe these are essential changes and will continue our work to deliver them.

As we work for political reform we won't leave young people out. We're concerned that levels of political participation by young people are still extremely low. So we want to do much more to engage them in the political process.

We will:

- ◆ Introduce votes for 16 and 17 year-olds at elections and referendums across the UK, and make it easier to register to vote in schools and colleges.
- ◆ Reform the House of Lords with a proper democratic mandate, starting from the proposals in the 2012 Bill.
- ◆ Reform our voting systems for elections to local government and Westminster to ensure more proportional representation.
- ◆ Work with the broadcasters to formalise the process for Leaders' Debates in General Elections, helping ensure they happen and setting a clear threshold for those eligible to participate.
- ◆ Take big money out of politics by capping donations to political parties at £10,000 per person each year.



**Young People Manifesto**

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