

# Individual and Group Rights

The Liberal Party has always been and remains committed to advancing the rights and opportunities for all individuals and to setting the foundations of one's freedom first.

It is a fundamental Liberal belief that no one should be discriminated against or disadvantaged due to their gender, culture, religion, race, age, disability, sexual orientation or identity.

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## Civil Liberties

Liberals call for the establishment of a Constitutional Convention, with an extensive brief, to draft a Bill of Rights and a Written Constitution.

These should incorporate the individual's right of access to private personal records, freedom of association, lawful demonstration, dissent picketing, privacy, and the Freedom of speech.

Together, these measures would provide a base for building the positive conditions of liberty.

We condemn the continuing erosion of civil liberties, We believe that the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) must be immediately amended to reflect this.

We support an Introduction of effective legal remedies for groups and individuals, who have suffered as a consequence of State inflicted injustice and that victims are adequately compensated.

## Constitutional Bill of Speech:

Freedom of speech is to be considered one of the pillars of a Free and Liberal society and as such must be protected by those who support and uphold these views.

A Constitutional Bill of speech should be pushed forward to remove and rewrite laws that have been introduced by the government over decades to erode this fundamental right and encourage the Government's ever-increasing encroachment upon an individual's privacy.

The bill must include freedom of speech (Verbal, Written and Electronic) to all within the United Kingdom and it's territories with exclusions to the following:

- Defamation
- Credible Threats of Violence and/or Terrorism
- Creating Panic to Risk or Cause Physical harm to others within a public arena

Impinging the right of free speech has never been effective in silencing dangerous language, and instead risks driving such discourse underground where, away from the public eye, it grows and spreads unchallenged.

## Euthanasia

The Liberal Party believes that the freedom of an individual should extend to the right to die with dignity at a time of one's own choosing.

Accordingly, Liberals seek a comprehensive study of voluntary euthanasia, drawing on experience in the Netherlands, where this practice already operates on a limited basis and the attending physician is in accordance with the criteria of due care. **Practitioner conscious clause must be included into guidelines, so that no practitioner can be forced into performing the procedure that they don't want to do**

## Identity Cards

The Liberal Party opposes the introduction of any form of National Identity documentation, whether it be by Card or Electronic device, whether it be voluntary or compulsory.

With the increasing use of sophisticated technology that bring undoubted benefits to society, it also poses new threats to individual liberty and raises concerns over one's right to privacy.

## Surveillance Cameras

The Liberal Party are concerned at the increased use of surveillance cameras in public places. We are particularly concerned at the serious implications for individuals' privacy, the risk of the illegitimate use of surveillance cameras, The use of Facial recognition and of commercial exploitation of tapes.

We believe that over reliance on such surveillance deals with the results of social breakdown rather than its causes.

The Liberal Party calls for the appointment of an independent committee to safeguard the public interest and to regulate the use of cameras, both on private and public property and those who use them.

## Privacy

The Liberal Party is perturbed by the apparent lack of respect for individual rights shown by the press and media.

However, we are also very concerned at the misuse of existing libel laws by those who have used use the law to protect themselves from legitimate investigation in the public interest. The Liberal Party believe that the libel laws need amending to:

1. limit the liability to those with editorial control of offending published material - instead of the present situation where the printers and distributors of such material are also quite unfairly liable to be sued. The object of such legal action should not be to receive excessive financial settlements but rather establish facts and get corrections printed - financial compensation should be given a much lower priority;
2. introduce legal aid in cases of libel to allow ordinary citizens to use and participate in the legal system fairly.

## Justice

The Liberal Party support easier access to legal services and simplified court procedures are essential. Furthermore, the Legal Aid system does not correct the present inequalities before the law as only the poorest fifth of the population are now eligible for full civil legal aid.

Extensive legal reforms are urgently needed to correct the imbalance between those who can afford to hire teams of lawyers and sustain the losses, and those who cannot.

Liberals believe that there is a simple, radical solution to this problem: the creation of a National Justice Service (NJS).

Under the NJS, anyone seeking to bring a legal action would need to show reasonable cause, at which point the NJS would determine what legal services are required and at what cost on a "case by case" basis. Both sides would be constrained by a budget imposed by the NJS and hence prevented from driving up the costs unjustifiably. Liberals believe that equal access, rather than choice, must be the overriding consideration.

Omsbudman powers - policy

## Women's Right

Liberals support a wide range of measures which would enable young girls and women to develop their full potential in a society.

The Land Value Tax policies and revisions on VAT, in which The Liberal Party advocate and support would remove discrimination based on Sex/Gender pushing for a tax system based on land ownership and the taxation of luxury items

The Liberal Party support the right of a woman to have an abortion. Practitioner conscious clause must be included into guidelines, so that no practitioner can be forced into performing the procedure that they don't want to do. The Liberal Party would also like to ensure that Health Services provide full availabilities of options prior to a final decision made on having an abortion.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is against the law. The law was passed over 30 years ago but it has been a neglected law on the statute book. FGM has been ignored by the police and doctors on the grounds it is an ethnic custom. Liberals believe the act should be implemented – it is a criminal offence not a civil offence

With regard to health, we favour the introduction of 'Well Women' clinics to provide primary health care, support and education, as well as immediate aftercare for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. Education and the dissemination of information about personal health needs would be instituted, together with limited assistance for support and self-help groups.

Young Girls and Women are particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment, both physical and mental. Liberals would commission studies on all aspects of intimidation with a view to introducing countermeasures to protect their privacy, such as caller ID to counteract harassment at home.

The Liberal Party recognise that sexual discrimination, sexual harassment and domestic violence are not women only issues.

## Carers

A "Carer's Credit" would be introduced for all those at home who care for the young, the old, the disabled or frail. We further believe that all lone parents with one or more children that are under the age of 16 should have the right to choose to remain at home as a 'carer' and that doing so should not incur any penalty under the benefit system.

Legislation is needed to ensure equal pay for work of equal value by means of non-discriminatory job evaluation.

## People with disabilities

Liberals supported the Disabled Persons Act of 1986 and The Equality Act 2010 and call for sufficient resources to be made available to ensure its full implementation. Other legislation aimed at improving quality of life is urgently needed.

Care in the communities need to be fully supported, as should voluntary organisations and public information campaigns to increase understanding of disability and combat prejudice and stigma.

Liberals are also concerned that not enough provision is made in public and other buildings to ensure adequate unaided access to facilities for people with disabilities. We therefore call for:

1. the provision of equal access to all buildings and facilities to which the public has access excluding historic or scientific interests where such measures would be impractical;
2. improved health and safety regulations to ensure full protection for disabled people;

3. all new public and private housing developments exceeding ten dwellings be required to include a percentage of dwellings adapted for use by disabled people.
4. improvements in which measures are made to help increase access and accommodate people with disabilities using public transport.
5. Use of disabled community groups to be invited to meetings as a consultation team to provide input and highlight issues or concerns

## Young people

Liberals recognize that, from an early age, many children are reliant on the education, welfare, recreation and community services to make up for severe deficiencies at home.

This is why we set great store on these services and the concept of community. A feeling of belonging, of well-being and security is a human instinct of particular importance to children.

Action is needed to ensure that nursery provision, both in the community and in the workplace are adequate to enable all who choose to work to do so, confidence in the knowledge that good and safe provision is available for their children.

The abuse and exploitation of children must be stopped and investigate the causation of why it is happened at the root cause and challenge those issues raised. Further to this, The Liberal Party support the introduction of Young Person Centres to work with Child Welfare services and provide a confidential service for young people to able to come forward to report abuse issues in a safe environment that is easy to access.

Young adults should be introduced to responsibility and decision making at sixteen, incorporating economic independence with a choice between work, further education, community service or a combination of all three.

Liberals call for the voting age and the common age of consent to be lowered to sixteen.

The Liberal Party believes that reasonable student grants should be re-established and extended to cover all types of training. We also call for the restoration of the rights of 16-17 year olds to claim Housing Benefits and Income Support, pending the introduction of a tax credit system.

Liberals recognise that whilst some young people are committing serious and deeply antisocial offences, an approach which concentrates on incarcerating the most delinquent and damaged adolescents in large institutions is inhumane.

We believe that there must be an end to the use of prison custody for all young people under 18 and that the millions of pounds currently spent on such imprisonment be redirected to non-custodial alternatives such as re-habitation and key skills training.

## Senior Citizens

Liberals do not believe in inflexible age limits. We seek a more flexible retirement age and greater use of part-time work and job sharing which is ideal for the passing on of skills before complete retirement.

Those on a retirement pension would benefit under our proposed tax credit scheme. Under such a scheme, all would be entitled to a “pension” credit, a “housing” credit and a “personal” credit, to provide a non-means tested monetary income giving an adequate standard of living and the freedom of choice as to how to spend their money.

Until our tax credit scheme is in place, Liberals would use the existing system to deliver a basic state pension which must be set to at least what the Family Budget Unit describes as “Low Cost but Acceptable” (LCA) standard of living. We also believe that additional non-means tested benefits will need to be paid to take account of housing costs, disability and additional needs of older pensioners.

Liberals believe that private pensions schemes can enhance but can never replace a basic state pension. We also believe that individuals should be able to save for additional benefits in a national scheme, where the individual pension is related to contributions and investment returns.

Because these benefits would be financed directly and genuinely from contributions, those who have saved for their retirement would no longer be penalised because of those savings.

To ensure that these monies are no longer “raided” by government, a separate National Pension and Investment Trust should be established. Such a trust would allow the expectation of flexible retirement ages and would cater for the substantial number of employees who regularly change employment or are in self-employed or part-time work.

As a society we should avoid institutionalising the frail elderly if at all possible - care in the community, properly resourced, is our preferred solution. Sheltered housing schemes and the benefits of new communications systems have given retired people a new independence which Liberals support. The home help and ‘meals on wheels’ services must be maintained and improved.

In order to safeguard people’s financial planning for their retirement, trust law needs to be extended to ensure that pensioners’ entitlements are protected from fraud. Private pension funds should mandatorily include an independent trustee together with adequate training being provided. The powers of the Pensioners Ombudsman should be increased.

# The gypsy and travelling communities

Liberals deplore the present haphazard provision and discrimination suffered by the gypsy and travelling communities. When proper planning for local authority and private sites is made, these communities are able to contribute and, more importantly, their children are assured an education.

As things stand some districts provide sites, others do not, and communities are harassed from one makeshift pitch to another, often trespassing in places where there are no sanitary arrangements, causing distress to themselves and their neighbours.

While Gypsies and travellers must realise that it is no longer possible to do as one pleases on a small and densely populated island, we recognize that a nationwide plan for permanent and transit sites is vital. Such a policy would bring travelling people within the ambit of an acceptable legal framework which should ensure attitudes of responsible citizenship from the travellers themselves.

## LGBT+ Communities

Liberals welcome the many gains to the cultural and social life of society that come from the diverse and varied experience and perceptions of the LGBT+ Community.

The Liberal Party continues to support the National Charter of Good Practice for Policing to be applied for LGBT+ Communities.

People convicted of importuning should be pardoned from registers that hold them back from employment as the offence has been repealed.

## Diverse Cultures and Languages

Britain has always been a diverse and multi-cultural society which owes much to the peoples of many different origins who choose to live here. Liberals believe in cultural pluralism, whereby all groups can maintain their traditions within the law, thereby achieving a greater understanding between different peoples. Unfortunately, racial discrimination and disadvantages still operate in this country at every level, especially in employment and housing.

Liberals call for the setting up of a "Human Rights Commission" to oversee the introduction of tougher legislation to combat discrimination and introduce contract compliance and monitoring.

Steps must be taken to protect and promote the Welsh, Gaelic and Cornish languages and encouragement given to teaching through the medium of these languages at all levels of education.

All government publications should be made available in the majorative languages within the United Kingdom.

## Freedom of movement

The Liberal Party believes in controlled immigration as the only way to ensure the adequate planning of public services, a balanced employment market, use of resources and national security.

To this end we welcome the UK having control of our borders post Brexit. We were one of the first political parties to immediately call for protection for EU citizens working and living in the UK to remain here.

We would urge the UK government to broaden the access for EU citizens living and working in the UK registering for the right to continued residency.

We urge the government to clarify the rules on what qualifies as a serious crime to debar anyone staying for the avoidance of ambiguity and inconsistent policy application.

We urge the UK government to develop immigration policies with a clear skills gap analysis rather than look purely at earning levels and wealth. We re-iterate our belief that a free movement with other commonwealth countries with a shared language, history and cultural ties.

We also believe that in any immigration policy we should see an obvious mutual advantage to give preference to Commonwealth countries who share English as a significant language and have established communities here.