

your life. Liberal Democrats believe in investing in and improving the quality of our public services. They are the cornerstone of a fair society, opening up opportunities and providing support and help when needed.

a fair deal and the help you need from public services

Liberal Democrats believe in investing in and improving the quality of our public services. They are the cornerstone of a fair society, opening up opportunities and providing support and help when needed.

Despite increased investment, there are still problems. Too many children leave school without the knowledge and skills to be successful. The NHS often feels too remote and complex for patients to handle. Local services are often under threat of centralisation. And inequality is rife: in Britain today your chances in life are more determined by your parents' income than anywhere else in the developed world.

We want to provide **a fair start for all children** to give all children the best possible education. We will **scrap unfair university tuition fees** that still hit Scottish students who study in England so everyone has the chance to get a degree, regardless of their parents' income. We will help the NHS work better with the money it has and put **a priority on frontline services** instead of the costly bonuses given to the highest paid staff in health boards.

the best chance for every child

Liberal Democrats want every child to receive an excellent education, to unlock their potential and to ensure they can succeed in life.

Too many children are still leaving school without the knowledge and skills to be successful. And your family background still has a huge effect: a typical child from a poor family will fall behind a richer classmate by the age of 7 and never catch up. We will seek to ensure that all pupils leaving primary and secondary education have the skills they need.



Liberal Democrats want an education system where pupils are treated as individuals and given the opportunities to choose an education that inspires and engages them. We want schools and teachers to have greater flexibility and autonomy and for parents to support their children and their school as partners.

At the core of our plan is a Pupil Premium. We propose to increase the funding of Scottish schools to ensure that every child gets the individual attention they need at school. We want to start to move the school funding for the most disadvantaged children up to private school levels and improve schools for everyone. The extra money could be used by schools to recruit more teachers, pay for more one-to-one tuition or introduce catch up classes for children who are struggling. Our plans give the Scottish Parliament the money to make this happen.

opportunities at college and university

There should be a wide range of opportunities for everyone at the age of 16. Liberal Democrats believe education is important for all young people and adults wanting to return to education. Our work in the Scottish Parliament has secured funding for additional college places to address the extra demands placed on Scottish colleges during the recession.

We will scrap the unfair university tuition fees that still hit Scottish students taking their first degrees in England, including those studying part-time, saving them over £10,000 each. This will benefit more than 5,000 Scottish students. We have a financially responsible plan to phase those fees out over six years so that the change is affordable even in these difficult economic times, and without cutting university income. We will immediately scrap fees for final year students studying in England.

protecting and improving our NHS

We are proud of the NHS – it's built on the basic British principle of fairness. Liberal Democrats believe we can improve the NHS. In fact, we believe it's our duty to do so at a time like this when budgets are tight.

So our first priority is to help the NHS work better with the money it has. We have identified savings that can be made in management costs and the pay bill of the highest paid staff. We want that money reinvested back into the health care you need.

Because of rising costs of treatments and an ageing population, there will be particular pressure on services like cancer treatment, mental health care, maternity services, and dementia care. Only by going through this process of finding savings elsewhere can we defend these services in the coming years. The NHS is a huge system, and we will make changes to ensure it works as effectively as possible.

We will, through a UK-wide approach, and reform of health contracts:

- Give priority to preventing people getting ill by linking payments to GPs more directly to prevention measures.
- Give every patient the right to choose the GP they want and the right to access their GP through e mail.
- Ensure that local GPs provide out of hours care.
- Reform payments to GPs so that those who accept patients from areas with the worst health and deprivation scores receive an extra payment for each person they take.
- Make it illegal for a doctor to work in the UK for the first time without passing robust language and competence tests.

We will reduce the ill health and crime caused by excessive drinking. We support a ban on below-cost selling. Scottish alcohol laws have been comprehensively changed in the last few years and Liberal Democrats want these new laws strongly enforced. We will also review the complex, ill-thought-through system of taxation for alcohol to ensure it effectively tackles binge drinking without unfairly penalising responsible drinkers and important local industries.

We will save lives and reduce pressure on NHS budgets by cutting air pollution. We will restrict aviation growth and reduce pollution from vehicle exhausts through tighter regulation. We will aim to meet fully European air quality targets by 2012.

access to culture and sport

Liberal Democrats believe that the arts are a central part of civic and community life. They contribute to innovation, education, diversity, social inclusion, and the

creative industries are one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy. We will foster an environment in which all forms of creativity are able to flourish.

We are proud that Britain is hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 and Glasgow the Commonwealth Games in 2014 – but we believe that grassroots sport is just as important. We wish to give people from all backgrounds and generations the opportunity to participate in sports.

That is why Liberal Democrats will:

- Reform the National Lottery. We will change the way the National Lottery is taxed from a ticket tax to a gross profits tax, which is forecast to deliver more for more for good causes, prizes and the Exchequer.
- Use cash in dormant betting accounts to set up a capital fund for improving local sports facilities and supporting sports clubs.

Essential to a free and democratic society is a strong and diverse media, free from government interference and pressure. **We will:**

- Ensure that the BBC remains strong, free from interference and securely funded, not least to provide impartial news, independent of political and commercial pressures. We will also ensure that the BBC does not undermine the viability of other media providers through unfair competition based on its public funding and dominant position.
- Support diverse regional and local media, maintaining independent local sources of news and information by enabling partnerships between TV, radio and newspaper companies to reduce costs.
- Ensure that all licence payers benefit from digital switchover with access to the full range of broadcasting.