

We must support the self-employed

Last week, the Government set out a package of financial measures to support UK workers, **highlighting just how threatening coronavirus is to our economy and our society.**

As soon as these measures were announced, Liberal Democrats stated our concerns that far too little was being provided to help the self-employed through this crisis. **Days later, and no new support has been announced by the Government.**

Each day the govt fails to protect the self-employed, many get closer to irreparable damage to their livelihoods.

We, with cross-party support, have written to Rishi Sunak calling for urgent action to support the 5 million self-employed people in the UK. <https://t.co/nDU6VF8zMS>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 24, 2020](#)

There are five million self-employed people in the UK. These are our construction workers, our childminders and our delivery drivers.

Each day that we fail to take action to protect the self-employed, **millions of people remain worried and unsure of how they are going to support themselves or their families.** Leaving them with no reliable safety net is unacceptable.

Ministers cannot keep hiding from the insecurity these individuals have been put in by the coronavirus crisis. **It is not good enough to say it is “operationally difficult” to pay them.**



GOVERNMENT MUST PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT **FOR EVERYONE.**



The Liberal Democrats have put down amendments to the Government's coronavirus legislation to support the self-employed. They are:

- **increasing the weekly rate of Statutory Sick Pay from £94.25 to £220**
- **guaranteeing 80% of self-employed individuals' earnings, up to £35,000**

By subsidising salaries for workers, guaranteeing incomes for the self-employed and boosting sick pay we can ensure that we are not only protecting our economy, but our society. **That is why we are also urging the Chancellor to back a Citizen's Income, and quickly, to ensure those most in need have financial security.**

Leaving self-employed people with no reliable safety net is unacceptable.

While assisting the self-employed does create more challenges than with PAYE employees, **the Government must surely err on the side of caution and get help out to people, rather than find reasons and excuses for doing nothing, or too little.**

There are clear gaps in what the Chancellor has announced and the Liberal Democrats will continue to push for these measures to be taken forward so that no-one gets forgotten as this crisis continues.

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Author:

Short term prison sentences for women don't work

The Government's analysis shows that they lead to higher rates of reoffending than community sentences. The President of the Prison Governors Association has described them as "pointless". They need to end for both men and women.

But we also need to recognise that prison is especially damaging for women.

Most women in prison are vulnerable people. The majority experienced abuse as a child, and many are survivors of domestic abuse as adults.

Self-harm rates in women's prisons are almost five times the rate in men's prisons and rising

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Author:

I have high hopes for the next three years – let's get to work!

It's been just weeks since Brexit ended my brief term as an MEP, but today I'm very happy to announce that I've been elected as Chair of the Federal People Development Committee.

I wouldn't be where I am today without the outstanding training and support offered by the party.

Like many of you reading this, **I'm a relative newcomer to politics and to the Lib Dems**. I joined in 2016, so I think I bring a fresh perspective to this role as a newbie. I'm eager to help the party expand and improve on its strategy, structures and processes for recruiting, engaging and activating members.

Although it's been a short time, I'm no stranger to campaigns, at any level. In addition to winning election to European Parliament last May, I currently serve as a Hertfordshire County Councillor and stood for Parliament in 2017.

I think that I'm a good example of what is possible if you engage a new member and provide the right resources. I wouldn't be where I am today without the outstanding training and support offered by the party.

Just a few months after joining I was able to attend my first party conference. I spent nearly the entire time in training sessions. Clearly I got a taste for it, attending my first ALDC Kickstart weekend a few months later with other members of my local party. Since then I've been lucky enough to attend more conferences and more training events. Our face-to-face training opportunities are unparalleled – but the percentage of members who can access that face-to-face training is minuscule. We haven't been quite as strong at providing other forms of training and resources. That's something I'm keen to change.

The Liberal Democrats are already leading the way in modern campaigning, and I look forward to supporting this in my new role.

In the past four years, our party membership has boomed, meaning that newbies now outnumber long-time members. **We need, now more than ever, to quickly develop the knowledge and skills of a larger number of people than ever before.** Add to that the fast-changing landscape of UK politics and new and innovative ways to engage voters, and it's clear that we can't just do what has worked in the past. The Liberal Democrats are already leading the way in modern campaigning, and I look forward to supporting this in my new role.

Outside of the Liberal Democrats, I have spent 25 years in the corporate world, and 10 years training and lecturing, including developing learning content both for face-to-face and online learning. I have also led a large voluntary organisation. I can't wait to bring this experience to the role and to work closely with both staff and FPDC members to take our people development strategies, structures and resources to the next level. We have an outstanding committee, including a diverse mix of perspectives and experiences. **I have high hopes for the next three years – let's get to work!**

Members of the FPDC, serving a three-year term, are:

- Abi Bell
- Barbara Gibson
- Bess Mayhew
- Jon Ball
- Lisa Maria Bornemann
- Mary Regnier-Wilson

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Author:

International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – and this year, the importance of this day has been brought into stark focus more than ever before.

The Liberal Democrats will always fight for freedom, fairness and equality for people of all races and ethnicities in the UK.

With the world facing the **biggest public health crisis of the twenty-first century**, what the UK desperately needs are compassionate communities that look after one another, regardless of people's race and background.

While so many stories of kindness are emerging, very sadly this has not been the case for everyone. In recent weeks we have seen a **huge rise in racism against East Asian people** following the **coronavirus** outbreak. Tweets from so-called world leaders such as Donald Trump calling it 'The Chinese virus' adds fuel to the hatred and fear.

In Manchester, there have been reports of racist targeting of Chinese children. In Birmingham and Central London Chinese students were seriously assaulted. Up and down the country, East Asian people have reported being spat at or verbally abused with comments relating to the coronavirus – even East Asian health workers have not escaped this rising tide of hatred.

The media aren't helping. Last week I filed a complaint with the BBC over their use of images of Chinese people when reporting on the outbreak, regardless of where in the world they were covering. They aren't the only ones. Newspapers and other outlets have been full of pictures of Chinese and East Asian people in masks, adding to the **fear and prejudice** being shown towards our community.

BBC and Coronavirus reporting. Please do not use images of Chinese people in the backdrop to news reports as it fuels prejudice against the British Chinese community. <https://t.co/T0Dt5QYG31>

– ChineseLibDems (@ChineseLibDems) [March 11, 2020](#)

Unfortunately, this treatment isn't unusual for ethnic minorities in the UK.

Since the **EU referendum** in 2016, racism and race-related hate crimes have been on the rise. The Conservatives' hostile environment policy has made ethnic minority communities in our country fearful. The Windrush scandal and recent high-profile deportations have shown that this government is systematically trying to break apart our diverse communities and sow division.

In recent weeks we have seen a huge rise in racism against East Asian people following the coronavirus outbreak.

If this were to continue then I fear that there will be serious economic consequences with would-be investors and students from East Asia staying away as well as mass social unrest resulting from a recession due to the double whammy of Brexit and Coronavirus.

As a country, we need to do better. The Liberal Democrats will always fight for freedom, fairness and equality for people of all races and ethnicities in the UK. Just like I acted throughout my police career to tackle racism and my recent calling out of the BBC for discriminatory reporting, we each need to challenge discrimination wherever we see it. And as Lib Dems, the more of us who add our voices to this cause, the stronger we become.

Dr George Lee was the 2019 Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate for Westminster North and is a member of the Chinese Liberal Democrats.

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[The Weekly Whip](#)

Welcome to the Weekly Whip. Your one-stop shop for Lib Dem Parliamentary updates, covering the week that was and the week to come.

For up to date information from the Lib Dem Whips Office, follow us on Twitter: [@LibWhips](#)

Weekly Whip w/c 16th March

It has been a strange week in Parliament, as I am sure it has been in all workplaces. The week was broken up by the announcement that employees should be working from home unless they have an explicit reason not to. Most Parliamentary staff are now rightly working from home. Business in the House continues, and we expect it to continue into next week when both Houses will debate the emergency legislation.

Monday 16th March

The week started with a continuation of the Budget Debate which focused on Public Services. In any normal circumstances, the Budget Debate would have attracted a lot of media attention. However, that morning, Matt Hancock put in a request to make a ministerial statement on COVID-19 which asked people to begin social distancing and working from home.

“The more the government lets the Chief Medical Officer and the scientific experts deliver these [#covid19uk](#) messages to the public, the more I think the public’s confidence and trust will be held up.” – [@EdwardJDavey](#) [pic.twitter.com/U8DzrSUZen](#)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 16, 2020](#)

Tuesday 17th March

Tuesday continued the theme of huge announcements with the Foreign Secretary recommending against all but essential travel out of the UK. This was part of a wider statement on COVID-19.

Tuesday also saw the conclusion of the Budget Debate which unusually had no divisions and very little interest. The much bigger financial statement in the House was when the Chancellor announced the fiscal stimulus in response to the pandemic.

“People want to know that in the face of this extraordinary [#COVID2019](#) crisis – their livelihoods and businesses are secure. It’s in the government’s power to provide that certainty.” – [@EdwardJDavey](#)

The Liberal Democrats urge the Prime Minister to do so with immediate effect. [pic.twitter.com/3av5GFJfLq](#)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 17, 2020](#)

Wednesday 18th March

By Midday we had one of the most sparsely attended Prime Minister’s Questions ever. All-Party Whips advised against attending to avoid overcrowding and spreading Covid-19.

Following this, Layla Moran presented her Bill on decriminalising homelessness, through abolishing the Vagrancy Act. Please support her campaign by signing and sharing the petition below.

The homeless may be particularly vulnerable to coronavirus.

The government has a duty of care for rough sleepers, and it should start by scrapping the Vagrancy Act, which criminalises people simply for being homeless. Sign our petition today >

<https://t.co/CLNufUkpzb>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 14, 2020](#)

Labour had another of their allocated opposition days. These debates/motions were on statutory sick pay and the protection of workers.

This debate was interrupted by yet another huge announcement from the Government. In an emergency statement from the Education Secretary, it was announced that schools would close from this Friday.

Thursday 19th March

We began with an Urgent Question on the government's support for employers. Sarah challenged the Government to do more:

The current [#covid19UK](#) financial support measures aren't sufficient for the self-employed, those who are out of work & too many others.

Lib Dems are fighting to ensure the government provides the maximum level of support for those in the least protected positions in our society. pic.twitter.com/JMAKyM7zZz

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 19, 2020](#)

Priti Patel then made a statement to the House on the Windrush Report. Wendy spoke for us and demanded that there should be no information sharing between the NHS and the Home Office.

The backbench business motions debated on Thursday were on Loan Charges and the future governance of the Post Office. Sir Ed Davey, as the Chair of the All Parliamentary Party Group on the Loan Charge, spoke.

Looking ahead

As we look ahead to next week, we are expecting to go through all stages for the Coronavirus Bill on Monday. We expect Parliament to become increasingly empty as the week goes on.

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Author: