

# Free To Be Who You Are

The freedom to live your life as the person that you are, secure in the knowledge that their fundamental rights will be protected is not a lot to ask.

But in our country there are still too many people for whom that is an aspiration.

Our LGBTQ+ community face prejudice, discrimination and hostility simply because of who they are.

Their health care, their housing, even their education can all be affected.

But today I believe we have taken an important step forward in protecting vital rights and setting out how our government should deliver a positive future for everyone in the LGBTQ+ community.

Our policy paper: 'Free To Be Who You Are' sets out how we will continue to pursue that Liberal Democrat goal of a society where nobody's life chances are limited or constrained because of who they are.

Liberal Democrats have been at the forefront of each of the great strides the UK has made towards LGBTQ+ equality. It was Ed Davey in 2003 who proposed the clause which finally repealed "Section 28", the Conservatives' law which prohibited the "promotion of homosexuality" by local authorities.

Lynne Featherstone – the first ever Liberal Democrat Equalities Minister – was the driving force behind the legislation that made Same Sex marriage happen.

And it was the former Liberal Democrat MP John Leech who spearheaded the campaign to pardon Alan Turing and Lib Dem peer Lord Sharkey, tabled the amendment to the Policing and Crime Act 2017 which posthumously pardoned thousands of gay men who had been criminalised for their sexuality.

Our party had been pushing to lift the ban on men who have sex with men's ability to donate blood for over 15 years by the time it finally happened in 2021.

That is the proud tradition of which we are the keepers.

We know there is still a lot to do but each step is important to progress in achieving that free and fair society.

The measures we voted through today will mean:

- **Ensuring LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic abuse and hate crime** get the support they deserve, including by delivering training for police and support services
- **Ending anti-LGBTQ+ abuse in social care**, by commissioning an urgent

investigation into anti-LGBTQ+ abuse in social care with recommendations on how to prevent it.

- **Banning medically unnecessary, non-consensual treatments** or surgeries for intersex infants and children.
- Pushing for all integrated care boards in England to **immediately remove the requirement for lesbian couples to pay for artificial insemination** before accessing NHS-funded IVF services.
- **Banning all forms of conversion “therapies” and practices.**
- **Implementing a new LGBTQ+ Action Plan** to coordinate cross-government work on delivering LGBTQ+ equality.

Read our new policy in full

As liberals, we believe that true equality is achieved when individuals are not only free from prejudice and discrimination, but also free to fulfil their potential. So fighting for LGBTQ+ rights is not a choice Liberals make. It is who we are.

This comprehensive new policy readies our party to continue that fight. There is much to do, let's get to it.

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## [Making Britain a science superpower](#)

British scientists and researchers already punch above their weight. This technological innovation is essential to tackling the major challenges of our time; climate breakdown, conflict, economic stagnation, crumbling public services, and social unrest.

The last Conservative government utterly failed UK science and innovation with a total lack of strategy and interest. From their hostile attitude towards international collaboration and ideological hostility to sensible regulation, to the shambolic adoption of technology in the public sector and chaotic management of the economy putting off investment.

Now the new Labour Government risks making the same mistakes. Already they have cancelled the exascale supercomputer in Edinburgh, a short-sighted cost-saving measure, symbolic of their lack of vision and understanding of how science and technology works.

Liberal Democrats take a different approach, one grounded in our values of internationalism, respect for individual rights, and challenging concentrations of power.

Today we're setting out the rescue plan that science and innovation in the UK needs:

- **A national and international science and technology strategy** that raises R&D spending to 3.5% of GDP.
- **Measures to invest in education**, including through a teacher workforce strategy to ensure every secondary school child is taught STEM subjects by a specialist.
- **A National People Strategy** alongside an industrial strategy to ensure the UK workforce has the necessary skills and people are protected from disruption.
- **Measures to strengthen UK universities as world leaders in research including by fully participating in Horizon Europe, and enacting a decade-long program of increasing and improving research funding with a package of measures to improve spin-outs.**
- **Sensible regulation of AI, including a National AI Strategy.**
- **A comprehensive public sector technology policy** and investment plan.
- **Tackling regional inequality** through a digital inclusion strategy, national investment in digital infrastructure and investing in local government.
- **Investing in green technologies** to help mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis.

Read our new policy in full

Technological advances must be for the benefit of all in society, not just for wealthy and powerful individuals and institutions.

For technology to benefit the whole of society and deliver the maximum benefit, government must play a comprehensive and active role, showing leadership with a national and international strategy.

The Liberal Democrats' bold plan to restore UK leadership in science and innovation will drive investment, boost global collaboration, and ensure technology benefits everyone, not just the privileged few.

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# A message from Christine Jardine on International Women's Day

Reflecting on the year's International Women's Day theme of "accelerate action", I am sadly reminded of how much more we still need to achieve.

The World Economic Forum has estimated that at the current rate of progress, it will take until 2158 to reach full gender parity. That's another 133 years from now – and it's just not good enough.

Liberal Democrats have long fought for gender equality, and we've secured some great successes. From introducing shared parental leave to improving workplace protections from sexual harassment, I'm incredibly proud of what we have achieved so far.

But it's clear there is more to do – and I'm determined our party continues to lead that charge.

That means pushing our revolutionary parental leave and childcare policies – helping more mothers return to the workplace should they want to, and fighting against the gender pay gap. Or our plans to end period poverty and ensure that survivors of violence against women and girls are properly supported in the criminal justice system.

Women deserve an ambitious vision from political parties of how their lives can be improved. So it's disappointing that the government seems to have missed opportunities to make this a reality. They removed the target for women's health hubs in the latest NHS mandate, while their Crime & Policing Bill fails to mention domestic abuse once.

The fight for equality continues. Liberal Democrats will keep pushing on these issues and others, to deliver the positive future that all women deserve.

Of course, accelerating action also means supporting the tireless campaigners who are already doing fantastic work. I am especially grateful to the groups within our own party who are pushing for change. Lib Dem Women and the Campaign for Gender for Balance are just some examples, who lead the fight to get more women involved in politics.

We as a party – and a country – have come so far. If we keep working together, we can go even further.

Happy International Women's Day.

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## **Britain must lead on defence and aid**

Today, the Prime Minister did what we've been urging him to do for years: commit to increasing Britain's defence spending to 2.5% of GDP.

That is essential. With Vladimir Putin waging war on our continent, and Donald Trump in the White House cosyng up to him, this is the most perilous moment for Europe in my lifetime.

Trump is threatening not only to betray the brave Ukrainian people, who have heroically resisted Putin's war machine for the past three years, but also to undermine peace and security across Europe – including here in the UK.

**In the face of that threat, the UK must step up and lead in Europe – and that has to include a big boost to defence spending.** Today I urged the Prime Minister to go even further and bring all parties together to get to 3% of GDP as soon as possible.

But while we agree with the Government on the urgent need to spend more on defence, we have a clear difference of opinion on how to fund it. [We have set out a clear plan to raise that money by increasing the Digital Services Tax on the profits of social media firms and other tech giants.](#)



But Labour – along with the Conservatives and Reform – say it should instead be paid for by cutting international development spending. **That is a big mistake.**

The Conservatives already cut back on international aid when they were in power, and that did enormous damage to the UK's soft power around the world. Deeper cuts now – at the same time as Donald Trump and Elon Musk are gutting America's aid programmes – will only leave a vacuum for Russia and China to fill, strengthening the hand of authoritarian regimes and further undermining our security.

**I am immensely proud that the Liberal Democrats have led the way on both defence and international development.** It was we who enshrined the 0.7% of national income target in law. And that aid has been transformative for millions of people in poverty and hunger. It has helped to tackle the spread of disease, and counter the harmful impacts of climate change.

At this time of great conflict and instability, the UK needs to strengthen both our Armed Forces and our soft power, including international aid. With your support, that is what the Liberal Democrats will keep fighting for.

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# Ed Davey marks Holocaust Memorial Day 2025

As we commemorate 80 years since Britain and her allies defeated the Nazis and ended the Holocaust, we must never forget those appalling atrocities. We must never forget how six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis – how so much inhumanity was inflicted on humans by humans.

We must remember so that we try harder to stop it happening again – as it has so tragically in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and elsewhere.

To do this, we must be vigilant in our opposition to hatred, discrimination and oppression, and vigilant in defence of peace, human rights and compassion.

That includes combating antisemitism in all its forms – which has sadly been on the rise across our country since the horrific terror attacks on October 7th 2023.

Liberal Democrats stand with the British Jewish community and will always fight to ensure that everyone can feel safe in their communities.

Liberal Democrats stand with the British Jewish community and will always fight to ensure that everyone can feel safe in their communities. Whether that's calling on the government to support cross-community work, or pushing for the funding needed to secure the right protective security measures.

A few months ago, we marked with great sorrow the passing of Lily Ebert, who was deported to Auschwitz when she was 20. She was truly inspirational – giving hope to so many after enduring such unspeakable horror.

Lily wrote about a banknote, given to her by an American soldier after the liberation. He'd written on it "A start to a new life. Good luck and happiness".

She wrote "This was something I knew I'd keep forever, a reminder, after all the cruelty we'd endured, that people could be compassionate. There was some hope and humanity left in the world."

We must remember that too, and live up to the positive vision Lily could see, even after so much darkness.

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