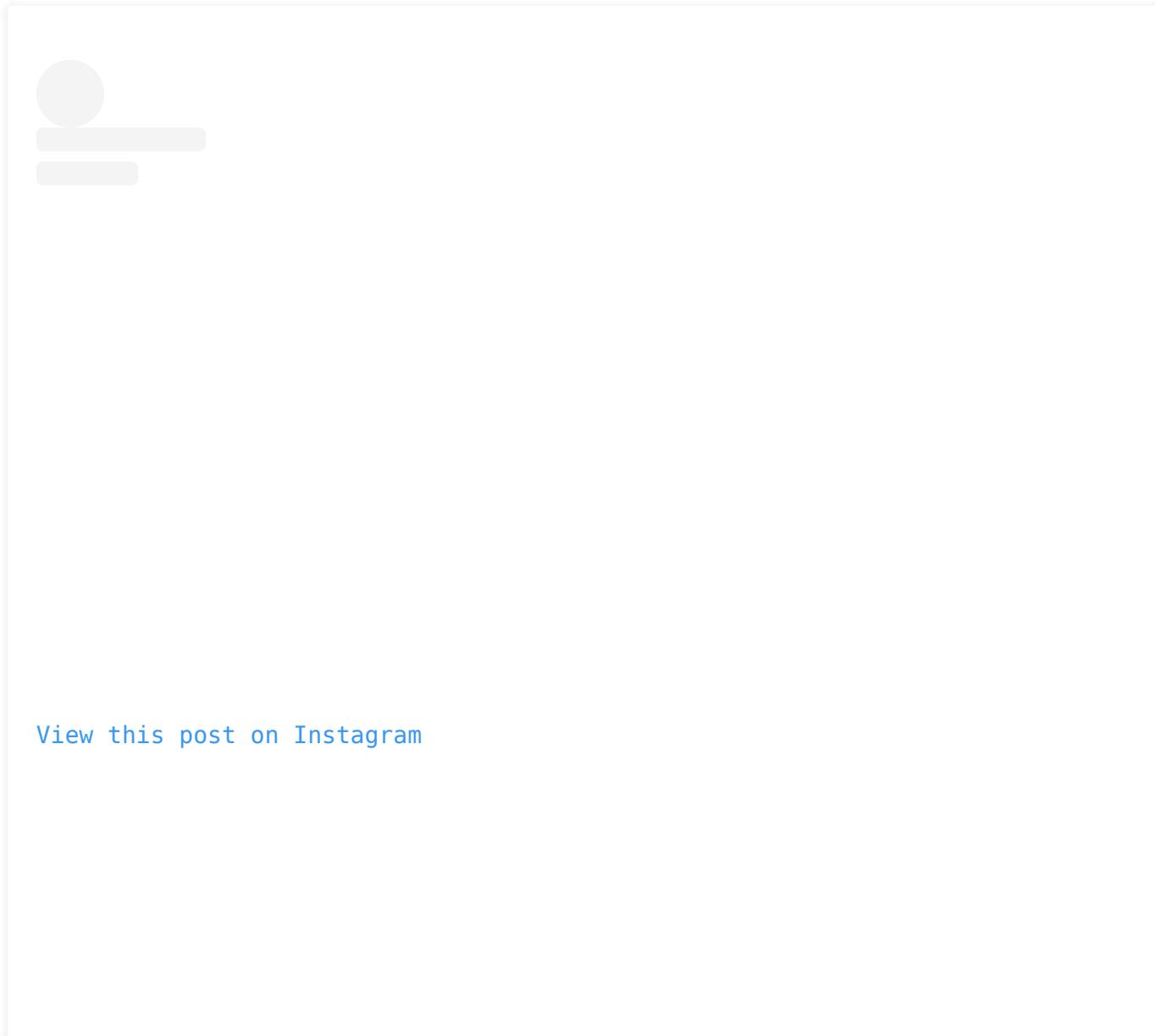


A Harms-Based Approach to Social Media

Tech companies have for far too long treated children as data to be mined rather than young people to be protected. They have let harmful content roam free on their sites from perpetuating negative body image to amplifying extreme and violent content. They have built addictive algorithms designed to keep children endlessly doom-scrolling at the expense of their mental health.

But we know that blanket bans cannot work in the digital age and we must instead look at a new standard of age-appropriate online safety online like the offline world.

That's why the Liberal Democrats are proposing a world-first film-style age-rating for online platforms, including social media. This is an approach supported by children's charities like the NSPCC.



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This would mean platforms would be required to age-gate content at an appropriate level according to a new Ofcom framework looking at the addictiveness of their platform design, the impact on children's mental health, and the harmfulness of the content they host.

The default age would be at 16 for social media, with the onus on big tech giants to make significant changes to their platform design before they can be rated lower. For those that host harmful content such as violence and pornography, this age could be set higher than 16.

Liberal Democrats believe that the responsibility for enforcement should be on the social media giants. We would give Ofcom the power to hit profits with "business disruption orders," making it more expensive for tech giants to break the rules while ensuring the regulator has the teeth to enforce the new age-ratings.

We think these new age-ratings will also empower parents and young people to be informed about the risks of harmful online content and features through clear guidance and an understandable framework that mirrors existing best practices.

Importantly, this model is future-proof and builds on the lessons from Australia's social media ban. This would end the whack-a-mole approach of online safeguarding by providing a clear framework of standards for platforms. As new dangers inevitably emerge – such as unsafe chatbots, online gaming, or AI-driven harms – they can be quickly categorised and rated against clear and understandable principles of harm.

Victoria Collins MP
Spokesperson for Science, Innovation and Technology

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Author:

Our plan to end the A&E corridor crisis



30,000. That's how many people wait for over 12 hours in A&E departments every *single* week.

It's a national scandal, and it's worse than ever.

Thousands of patients are lying on trolleys in corridors for hours on end. No privacy. No dignity.

There have even been tragic cases of people dying on those trolleys and left undiscovered for hours.

The A&E corridor crisis has to end. And today, we've set out a plan to end it.



We'd stop so many people being forced to go to A&E in the first place, with our GP Guarantee – so everyone can see a GP within seven days, or 24 hours if it's urgent.

And we'd stop so many people being stuck in hospital long after they're well enough to leave – by putting in place the care and support they need.

That means a combination of reserving places in care homes, funding more care packages for people after they leave hospital, and supporting family carers properly to look after their loved ones at home.

And we'd pay for it by [scrapping the government's plan](#) to hand an extra £3 billion a year to pharmaceutical giants, just to appease Donald Trump.

With our package, the government could **end the scandal of 12-hour A&E waits altogether by the end of this year**. And we'd put a legal duty on the Health Secretary to deliver it.

That is the kind of real change our country needs, and it's the kind of change the Liberal Democrats will keep fighting for.

We are the only party offering a real plan to fix our NHS. The Conservatives can't – they caused this crisis in the first place. Labour can't – things are getting worse on their watch. And Nigel Farage just wants to privatise the NHS and turn our United Kingdom into Trump's America.

As we head towards crucial local elections this May, only the Liberal Democrats are standing up for patients and fighting to save our NHS.

Because never again should a single person have to watch their loved one die on a trolley in a hospital corridor.

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Author:

Trump's pharma price hike

[View video on Facebook](#)

What the Government is doing, and why we're opposing it

The government has agreed to a major increase in the amount the NHS pays for

drugs and medicines after Donald Trump threatened them with tariffs.

Spending on drugs will increase from 9.5% of the NHS budget to at least 12%, and will double as a share of GDP. The cost is set to be between [£3-£6bn](#). This means that money which could go on frontline services will be diverted to pharmaceutical giants in an effort to appease the White House.

The decision has been made without any parliamentary scrutiny, and with little pretence of being part of any overall strategy for the NHS or UK drugs industry.

Why is the government doing this?

This is an act of surrender to Donald Trump which has taken place because the government is frightened of new tariffs. In the words of Trump's Health Secretary, RFK Jr, "[Donald Trump demanded these reforms... \[and it\] puts Americans first](#)". As experts [at the Nuffield Trust](#) have spelt out, defunding frontline services to spend more on drugs is damaging for patients, and there is scant evidence that this agreement will improve the level of research taking place in the UK.

The government failed to even publish what it estimated the impact of a price rise would be [on the economy](#) or the [NHS](#).

Why are the Liberal Democrats opposing this?

Decisions over how to spend money in our NHS should be set by the British people, not by a foreign regime. The government is doing nothing to strengthen our hand against Trump or to prevent him coming back for more.

It is outrageous that £3bn – the equivalent of the [entire](#) maternity budget, is being plundered, because our government refuses to stand up to the bully in the White House. It is particularly unacceptable that they are doing so while our NHS breaks apart at the seams – with [record GP waits](#), [overwhelmed A&Es](#) and [missed cancer treatment targets](#).

Hiking medicine costs is the wrong approach for patients – who badly need investment in frontline staff, hospitals and equipment. This has been confirmed by health experts, economic studies and by the experience of people working in our NHS.

We also know this kneejerk concession to Trump isn't the right approach for our life sciences sector. It has been confirmed by numerous [economic studies](#) that, in a globalised market place, the price the NHS pays for branded drugs has little bearing on where companies conduct research and develop medicines. Access to talent and regulatory hurdles make a far bigger difference, but the government is doing little to address these challenges.

What would we do instead

We would do three things:

1. Show Britain won't be bullied and **cancel this price hike**, freeing up billions of pounds. We would target this money where our health service really needs it, like ending the crisis in GP services so everyone has a right to see a GP in seven days, guaranteeing 100% of patients are treated for cancer within 62 days, fixing crumbling hospitals and ending unacceptable, degrading corridor care and 12 hour waits in A&E.
2. Urgently negotiate **a new customs union with the EU** – the world's largest trading bloc – so that we are less vulnerable to the threats of Trump and his tariffs, and to make it easier to conduct research here.
3. **Strengthen life sciences** properly with a comprehensive strategy that increases investment in research by billions of pounds, cuts the costs of hiring global talent and tears up Brexit red tape.

We have a real plan to strengthen the life sciences

- A new Customs Union with the EU which would scrap restrictive red tape and cut the costs of clinical trials (the cost of developing some cancer drugs have quadrupled since Brexit) due to the impact on supply chains and cross border cooperation. It would also protect us from the threat of Trump's tariffs.
- We'd reverse the costly National Insurance hike, which has made it more expensive to hire the researchers and other staff that are needed in the sector.
- We would remove barriers preventing global research talent from coming to the UK by replacing the Conservatives' failed arbitrary salary threshold with a flexible, merit-based system for work visas and reducing 'Global Talent' visa fees. Currently a global talent visa for a leading scientist costs £6,000 in the UK. The average of other leading science nations is just £350.
- We would commit to a decade-long programme of public investment in research and development, with a clear target to raise R&D spending to 3.5% of GDP by 2034.
- Liberal Democrats would also reform the UK Research and Innovation and the British Business Bank to deliver funding that supports the public good, particularly in areas like health and life sciences.

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Author:

A Liberal councillor who made LGBT+ history

Sam Green didn't set out to make history.

In 1972, he stood as the Liberal candidate for Crossgate ward in the City of

Durham for the same reason our candidates stand for their local communities across the country: because they want to get things done. As Sam put it, he wanted to “get things moving in the city”.

When he decided to put his membership of the Gay Liberation Front on his election manifesto – just five years after homosexuality had been legalised for over-21s – he told his local party.

He said “I’d better not stand in Crossgate”, assuming that the revelation would hurt the party’s chances. But he told how a retired schoolteacher – “a little old woman” as he put it – said “Well I think Sam should stand because he lives in the ward and people know him.” So he did.

And Sam won through the traditional community politics that was the hallmark of Liberal candidates – and still sets Liberal Democrat candidates apart today.

He went door to door, delivering thousands of leaflets. Canvassing tirelessly. He asked people what they thought about the local area and the local council. He listened to their concerns, and he acted on them.

But Sam did make history. In 1972, he became the first openly gay man to be elected as a councillor anywhere in the United Kingdom. Possibly even the first anywhere in the world.

And on Sunday, I was delighted to visit Sam’s former home and join City of Durham Parish Councillors and local residents to unveil a blue plaque commemorating Sam Green as the trailblazer he was.

It is a testament to his courage. Because it took a huge amount of courage to come out to his whole community, to face the hostility and homophobia so prevalent in those days, and to campaign openly as who he was.

And it’s also testament to the people of Durham, who – more than 50 years ago – were open-minded and accepting enough to see Sam for who he was: a dedicated local campaigner who would be a hardworking and principled councillor.

Thinking about what Sam faced then – and the fact that before 1972 no one anywhere had won election as an openly gay candidate – made me reflect on how far we’ve come as a society.

There are now 75 out LGBT+ MPs in the House of Commons. Just this week, our party elected one of them – Josh Babarinde – as our President. And perhaps the most remarkable thing was that no one found it remarkable that he’s gay.

But there is still far more work to do.

Because, more than half a century after Sam was elected, LGBT people still sadly face far too much hostility and discrimination, just for being who they are. Too many people still don’t feel they can be open about their identity. Too many candidates feel the need to hide it – despite the trail blazed first by Sam and followed by so many others.

So I hope that remembering the courage and dedication of Councillor Sam Green will also serve to spur us on to continue to champion equality, respect and the rights of all people – to be who they are, to serve their communities with pride, and to get things moving.

ITV News covered the unveiling of the blue plaque for Sam Green and interviewed Ed about it – you can watch the report [here](#).

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Author:

Trans Awareness Week

Many trans and non-binary people – in the UK and across the world – face unacceptable barriers to healthcare, employment, education, and public life. In the UK, an estimated 62% – 73% of trans people have experienced harassment and violence because they were identified as trans. Hate crimes have risen sharply, nearly doubling in the past five years and access to NHS gender-affirming care remains painfully slow at best. No one should have to fight this hard to be treated with basic dignity and respect.

The Liberal Democrats have a proud legacy of leading the fight for LGBTQ+ equality. From repealing Section 28 – the Conservatives’ law which prohibited the “promotion of homosexuality” by local authorities – thanks to a clause moved by Ed Davey, to Lynne Featherstone’s tireless efforts to legalise same-sex marriage, and the former Liberal Democrat MP John Leech securing pardons for those unjustly criminalised for their sexuality, our party has always stood on the right side of history. That same commitment drives us now as we work to ensure that trans and non-binary people enjoy the same rights, respect, and recognition as everyone else.

We recognise and thank our trans members past and present for their invaluable contributions – giving their time and energy to run for elected office and campaigning to make our party and country a more inclusive place.

As we set out in our policy paper *Free to Be Who You Are*, passed at this year’s Spring Conference, we believe that everyone should be free to live authentically, without fear or prejudice and have full and equal access to healthcare, education, workplaces, and the protections and freedoms every citizen enjoys.

That is why we remain steadfast in our commitment to:

- Reduce the unacceptable waiting times for gender-identity services and ensure access to timely, compassionate healthcare through an informed consent model.

- Reform the gender recognition process to remove the requirement for medical reports, recognise non-binary identities in law, and remove the spousal veto.
- Ban all forms of so-called “conversion therapy” and practices.
- Protect trans people from discrimination in law, workplaces, schools and public services so they can live safely and confidently as themselves.
- Implement a new LGBTQ+ Action Plan to coordinate cross-government work on delivering LGBTQ+ equality.

This Trans Awareness Week, we stand proudly alongside trans and non-binary people across the UK – celebrating their strength, creativity and courage, while recognising how far Britain still has to go. Our fight continues for a country where everyone, without exception, is free to be who they are.

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Author: