

# Hundreds of NHS ambulance staff waiting for driver training despite deadly delays

When there is a real shortage of ambulance drivers and patients suffering in pain and distress, it is staggering that the Government has not tackled the backlog of NHS paramedics waiting for vital training.

The Liberal Democrats submitted a Freedom of Information request to NHS ambulance Trusts across England, asking how many staff are currently waiting to complete C1 and Blue Light driving courses. The data show that more than 700 NHS staff across the country are currently waiting to complete a C1 driving course. 630 staff are on the waiting list to complete a Blue Light driving course.

Ambulance drivers are required to complete C1 training to drive a vehicle up to 7.5 tonnes – these courses can cost around £1,000 and paramedics are required to pay for it themselves in most cases. Paramedics also do a Blue Light training course which is considered the gold standard for emergency response drivers.

This is adding serious pressure on our frontline emergency workers.



The Liberal Democrats are calling for the Government to address the backlog by bringing forward a plan to recruit more specialist driving instructors and assessors, as well as covering the cost of ambulance driver training.

Earlier this year, the Lib Dems revealed that 43,000 people died before an ambulance reached them. Recent figures have also shown almost 500 NHS patients suffered permanent or long-term harm due to emergency response delays.

The Conservatives are asleep at the wheel, while patients struggle to access emergency treatment. **Ministers need to get a grip on the situation**, starting by bringing forward a plan to recruit more specialist driving instructors and assessors, as well as covering the cost of ambulance driver training so that paramedics can jump into action as soon as they graduate.

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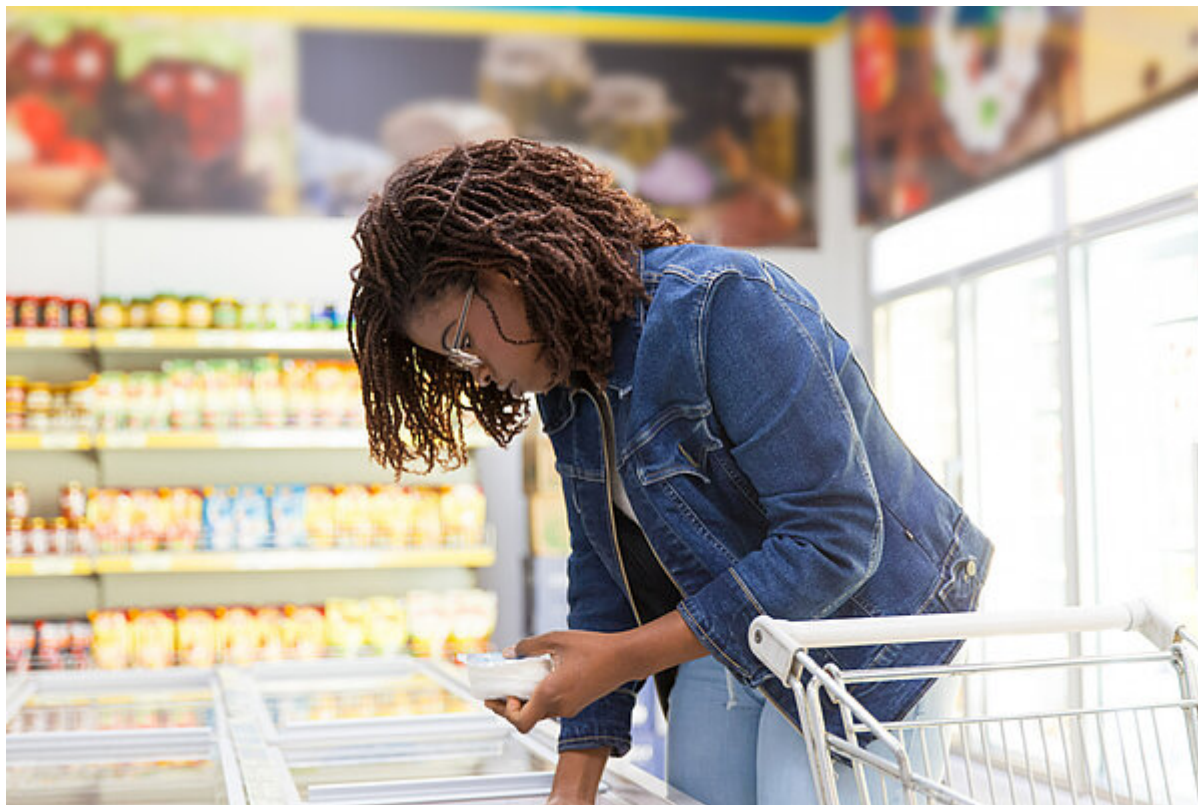
## **Food prices soar by a third**

Rishi Sunak has failed people on food inflation.

This Government should be standing up for struggling families and pensioners hammered by soaring food prices. Yet this out of touch Government seems happy to stand by as millions struggle just to pay for the weekly shop.

**Food prices have risen by 30% in the last two years, the biggest rise on record, according to Liberal Democrat analysis of new official statistics.**

The 30% two-year rise in the Office for National Statistics' index of food prices between July 2021 and last month dwarfs the previous record of 19.3% between February 2007 and February 2009, at the height of the financial crisis.



## **Cost of essentials shoots up**

The average price of a loaf of bread has gone up by 52p (27%) in the last two years.

A pint of milk is up 24p (57%),

*Source: ONS.*

Unless there is a clear urgent plan to tackle rising food prices, anything else Rishi Sunak says is just another empty promise.

Liberal Democrats want to see the government cracking down on anyone profiteering – from supermarkets to food multinationals – and helping farmers and traders hit by costly red tape, so people get the fair deal they deserve.

## **Our plan to protect shoppers**





## **1. Invest an extra billion pounds in British farms, to boost food production**

We should be supporting our farmers to boost the UK's environmentally-friendly and sustainable food supply.

Starting by targeting support at shortage areas, we can protect ourselves from import shocks, put more good-quality food on the shelves, and bring down prices for the long term.





## **2. Cut energy bills for farms and businesses**

In April, the Government cut energy support for businesses by 85%, forcing farmers and shops to raise their prices. We'd put that support back in place, cutting costs for producers and retailers.

And in the meantime, the Government should ensure that energy-intensive farms qualify for extra support.



### 3. Let our farmers and fishers recruit the staff they need

The Government's unfair visa rules have left our farmers and fishers producing less food because they can't recruit enough workers. Tonnes of fruit and veg has gone to waste as a result.

The Government must fix its broken visa system which is holding back our food supply, by scrapping arbitrary salary thresholds.



### 4. Free school meals for every child in poverty

Unfair rules put in place by the Conservatives in 2018 have excluded 800,000 children growing up in poverty from Free School Meals. And another 200,000 eligible children are missing out because they're not registered.

The Government must immediately end this injustice by scrapping the arbitrary household income threshold, and automatically enrolling every eligible child.

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# Lib Dem investigation reveals sewage cover up

Water firms are failing to disclose how much sewage is being discharged into rivers, lakes and coastlines.

Environmental Information Requests by the Liberal Democrats revealed that water firms could be guilty of a scandalous cover up.

We have no idea how many billions of litres of sewage is being pumped into our precious rivers and lakes. The true extent of environmental damage caused by this scandal is completely unknown.

*Tim Farron*

The staggering admission follows public outrage at water companies destroying the environment with sewage discharges. Currently, water firms only provide the length of sewage discharges, broken down by time. However, they refuse to publish the volume and litres of sewage discharged, essential information for understanding the environmental impacts.



Thames Water said they did not hold the volume data, however, the firm has previously made public that some of its monitors do measure volume. Last year it was reported Thames Water pumped over two billion litres of sewage into the Thames over a 48 hour period. This data was not given when Thames Water responded to the Environmental Information Request.

Meanwhile, Scottish Water does publish the volume of sewage discharged into waterways. Scottish Water's sewage monitors revealed that 174 million m<sup>3</sup> of sewage has been dumped into Scotland's rivers, lakes and coastal waters since 2018, with 47 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2022. Unlike England and Wales just a small proportion of Scotland's storm overflows have monitors installed.

The Liberal Democrats believe the industry is either not telling the truth on holding the data, or it has installed inadequate sewage monitors. Previous analysis by the party has found one in six sewage monitors were broken last year.



Ministers need to get tougher on these water firms by demanding they fit proper sewage monitors which are up to the job. The Government is letting water firms get away with faulty and flawed monitors.

*Tim Farron*

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### **Stop Sewage Dumping**

Tax water companies' huge profits and fix our sewage system.

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## [Liberal Democrats WIN Somerton and Frome](#)

The Liberal Democrats have delivered another shocking blow to the Conservative government by winning in Somerton and Frome.

Sarah Dyke overturned a Conservative majority of 19,213.

Sarah polled 21,187 votes, winning a majority of 11,008 with a swing of 29%.

*What a night. What a result. Somerton and Frome has spoken for the country and sent a message to this appalling government. Ringmaster Rishi is out of touch, out of ideas and out of excuses. Time for a General Election to end this Conservative circus and get these clowns out.*

– [Ed Davey \(@EdwardJDavey\) July 21, 2023](#)

The extraordinary efforts of Liberal Democrat members and volunteers delivered this historic result, securing the largest majority and swing on an explosive triple byelection night which saw the Conservatives lose 2 of the 3 seats they were fighting desperately to defend.

The people of Somerton and Frome have spoken for the country. Enough is Enough. It is time for a general election to end this Conservative circus.

## [You can watch the iconic byelection stunt back on our Twitter account here](#)

This victory is further proof that in vast swathes of the country, the best way to get rid of this Conservative government is to vote for the Liberal Democrats.

Four historic by-election results in two years shows clearly that the Liberal Democrats are a force to be reckoned with. We are going from strength to strength, as voters across the country are backing hard working Liberal Democrat candidates who fight hard for their area.



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## Happy 75th birthday to our NHS

On its 75th birthday the NHS remains as important as ever to all of us.

Our fantastic NHS staff treat more than a million people a day, dispense almost a billion prescriptions a year, and kept us safe throughout the Covid pandemic by administering more than 150 million vaccines.

**I count myself amongst the majority of people who say the NHS makes them proud to be British.**

But sadly, despite this, every area of the NHS is under strain and it is in such a state that many fear for its survival.



People are struggling to get an appointment with their GP, loved ones wait in pain for hours for an ambulance, and those that cannot afford it are now often forced to turn to DIY dentistry.

Let's be clear though, this isn't due to strikes or inefficiency as the Conservatives might want us to believe, or a fundamental issue with the NHS's founding principles, but the symptoms of years of mismanagement and

incompetence from this Conservative Government.

They have overseen the NHS almost with a lack of interest, and even when they do kick into gear, they bring forward short-term sticking plasters or schemes that are either too late or completely ineffectual.

High-quality healthcare, free at the point of use, is essential for individual freedom and good health gives people the freedom to live the lives they choose. And that's why as Liberals we have always championed the NHS.

**We were there at its founding, and helped forge this national institution on the proposals set out in the Beveridge report in 1942.**

And we're here now still fighting for those values across the country.

The next election will give us a real chance to show the country what the Conservative's dereliction of duty means for their health, and what our plans are to do something about it.

The Liberal Democrats are proud to be champions of the NHS and we will always fight to ensure that the care everyone receives is based on their need, not their ability to pay.

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