

A Liberal Vision for Digital Rights

The internet is one of the most powerful tools for freedom in human history. It connects communities, spreads knowledge, and gives people a voice. But it also carries risks – from the spread of child sexual abuse material to harassment, deepfakes, and the promotion of suicide and self-harm.

The Online Safety Act was meant to tackle these harms. Its aim, protecting children and vulnerable people, is one we all share. But the way the law is being implemented has been disproportionate and ineffective.

Already, political content, educational resources, and wellbeing forums have been caught up in inappropriate age-gating. Age-assurance systems pose real risks to privacy and data protection. And the Act threatens end-to-end encryption, a cornerstone of secure communication, especially for vulnerable groups like LGBT+ communities who depend on online networks for support.

Protecting young people and vulnerable groups online is vital. But it must be done in a way that is effective, proportionate, and rooted in liberal values.

That's why Liberal Democrats have today passed a new policy, put forward by the Young Liberals, calling for a new approach – one that puts people, rights, and safety first:

- **A full Parliamentary review within six months** to examine whether the Online Safety Act is meeting its stated aims, whether it is fit for purpose, and what reforms including further legislation are needed.
- **Stronger scrutiny of Ofcom's implementation** to ensure regulations focus on tackling real online harms, not blocking access to politics, education, or wellbeing resources.

A new Digital Bill of Rights to safeguard privacy, free expression, and protection against online harms – ensuring online regulation works for people, not against them.

Read our new policy in full

Liberal Democrats believe safety and freedom must go hand in hand.

We will hold the Government to account, push for smarter regulation, and fight for a digital future where children are safe, communities are free to thrive, and privacy and rights are protected.

Certainty for Ukrainian Children Living in the UK

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, the Liberal Democrats have been steadfast in our support for Ukraine and its people. This policy, brought forward by the Young Liberals, reflects our shared commitment to ensuring that being a true friend to Ukraine means more than just standing up for it on the world stage – it means standing up for Ukrainians living here in the UK, especially the thousands of children who have been forced to flee their homes.

Many Ukrainian children in the UK have experienced profound trauma and disruption. Displaced across Europe, they face challenges adjusting to new environments, languages, and education systems. They deserve safety, stability, and certainty – the chance to build a future in communities that welcome and support them.

Today Liberal Democrat members have set out a clear, practical plan to make life easier for Ukrainian children and their families in the UK:

- **Automatically extending visas** for Ukrainians already granted status and residing in the UK, removing the uncertainty that hangs over families and children.
- **Establishing a pathway to indefinite leave to remain** for Ukrainians who have integrated into British life and wish to stay long-term, ensuring security and stability for those making the UK their home.
- **Ensuring Ukrainian pupils and other children with experiences of forced displacement do not face delays** in school enrolment and receive trauma-informed support tailored to their needs.
- **Re-establishing GCSEs and A-levels in the Ukrainian language**, so that young people can maintain ties to their culture and language while progressing academically.
- **Ensuring that Ukrainian-language books and educational materials are widely available** in schools and libraries, supporting language retention and cultural identity.
- **Supporting Ukrainian cultural, educational, and linguistic initiatives** within the UK to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment.

- **Providing guidance and support to Ukrainians accessing further education, higher education, and apprenticeships, helping them to build successful futures.**
- **Offering support to displaced Ukrainians in the UK who wish to voluntarily resettle in safe areas of Ukraine, helping families reconnect with their homeland when it is safe to do so.**

Read our new policy in full

This policy demonstrates our commitment to giving Ukrainian children the certainty they need – a sense of belonging, security, and opportunity. But this is not about policy; it is a promise to stand with those who have suffered so much and to help them build a brighter future here in the UK.

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Author:

Never Again: Justice for Contaminated Blood Victims

The contaminated blood scandal remains one of the gravest injustices in NHS history.

More than 30,000 people were infected with HIV and hepatitis C through NHS blood products during the 1970s and 1980s, leading to the deaths of over 3,000 people so far. For decades, victims and their families have been let down by governments that delayed, denied or deflected responsibility.

The Infected Blood Inquiry, published in May 2024, made it clear: This disaster could largely have been avoided had health authorities made different decisions.

Yet despite repeated promises, the Government continues to drag its feet.

Just 460 people have so far received compensation under the scheme, while campaigners estimate that more than 100 victims have died in the last year alone while waiting. This is not justice – it is another betrayal.

The Liberal Democrats believe victims deserve recognition, dignity, and

timely compensation. Justice delayed is justice denied.

That's why today, our members have passed new policy which would turn promises into action and make sure no scandal on this scale ever happens again:

- **Deliver justice for victims** by fully implementing the Infected Blood Inquiry's recommendations and ensuring all claims under the compensation scheme are processed quickly and fairly.
- **Provide ongoing support** for all victims of medical scandals, including access to healthcare, psychological services, and social support.
- **Prevent future scandals** by introducing a statutory duty of candour on all public officials, and embedding patient voices at board level across the NHS so that patients' experiences shape decision-making.

Reinvest in the NHS by committing any savings from reducing compensation payouts – which currently cost the NHS nearly £3 billion a year – into frontline care.

Read our new policy in full

Victims have already waited decades for answers and many are still waiting for compensation they were promised. Families have been left without loved ones and without support. Every delay deepens the injustice of this scandal.

We must ensure that the NHS is safer, fairer and more transparent in the future. A statutory duty of candour for public officials, promised under the 'Hillsborough Law', remains undelivered despite Government commitments to introduce it by April 2025.

Without such safeguards, the risk of future cover-ups and scandals remains.

By delivering justice and putting in place lasting safeguards, Liberal Democrats would honour the victims of the contaminated blood scandal and protect future patients from enduring such injustice ever again.

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Improving Access To Justice

Justice is a fundamental right, but under years of Conservative cuts and mismanagement, access to legal aid was eroded, leaving millions unable to get the help they need.

Legal aid deserts have emerged across the country, shutting people out of timely legal advice and forcing costly court battles that could have been avoided.

This isn't just unfair – it's a false economy. Early access to legal support prevents disputes escalating and saves public money in the long run.

Liberal Democrats are committed to rebuilding a legal aid system that is simpler, fairer and truly accessible for everyone, regardless of where they live or how much they earn.

Today, our members passed new policy to improve access to justice for all:

- **Rolling out 'Law Start Centres' in every community**, in libraries, banking hubs, and community centres, with trained legal specialists, funded by local authorities and the Legal Aid Agency.
- **Establishing a new legal right to affordable, reasonable legal aid**, overseen by an independent Justice Commission.
- **Making the legal aid system simpler** and more generous, including reforming funding for exceptional cases to ensure no one is left behind.
- Using data from providers and the Legal Aid Agency to **streamline processes and improve efficiency**.
- Taking proactive steps to **resolve legal problems before they escalate**, saving public money and reducing court burdens.
- Increasing access to **community court buildings** so justice is closer to people's homes.

Read our new policy in full

The damage done by Conservative cuts since 2015 has been severe, and fixing this will require investment. We propose a £150 million funding boost to restore legal aid to 2015 levels in real terms.

But this is not just spending – it's saving. Evidence shows early legal advice stops problems spiralling and saves the Treasury over £1 billion a

year in avoidable costs.

Legal aid is a vital safety net that protects people from eviction, abuse, and wrongful conviction. It guarantees everyone the right to a fair trial – a cornerstone of British justice.

Our proposal will make access to justice a legal duty for Ministers, with regular reporting to Parliament, ensuring no future government can ignore this vital public service.

Everyone deserves the right to fair, affordable legal help. It's time to end legal aid deserts and build a justice system that works for all.

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Author:

Ending Fleecehold and the Great Property Rip-Off

For over a century, Liberal Democrats have fought to reform leasehold – a system that still leaves millions of people trapped, overcharged, and powerless in their own homes. Today, 1 in 5 homes in England are leasehold.

The cladding scandal laid bare the true cost of leasehold's failures. Leaseholders have paid excessive fees, lived in unsafe buildings and faced mounting frustration as developers and managers evade responsibility. Nearly a decade after Grenfell, building safety remains a crisis, and rogue developers continue to exploit loopholes while residents foot the bill.

The average new build now has 157 defects – nearly doubling since 2005. And complaints about building insurance claims have hit record highs.

We need to get tough on building standards, clamp down on unregulated property management and finally end the great property rip off for leaseholders.

Today, Liberal Democrat members passed new policy with a plan for bold reforms to protect homeowners and hold the industry to account:

- Establish a new **property regulator** to license and enforce standards for property managers and agents.
- **Strengthen accountability** in the construction industry with clear rights for homebuyers and tougher oversight of building inspectors.
- Cap unreasonable service and estate management charges and **abolish**

ground rents on all existing leases.

- Give leaseholders the **power to take collective ownership** of management companies and common areas.
- **Empower local authorities** to adopt shared roads and public spaces, sanction developers who fail to deliver, and enforce repairs.

Read our new policy in full

The time for empty promises is over. Leasehold leaves people vulnerable, trapped by unfair charges, and unsafe in their homes.

The Liberal Democrats are committed to abolishing leasehold entirely, capping ground rents and ensuring dangerous cladding is removed without cost to residents.

We will hold developers and property managers accountable.

We will give residents control and end the rip off.

Leaseholders deserve fairness, safety, and dignity in their homes – and these reforms are a vital step towards that goal.

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