

# Boosting Cancer Survival

One in two of us will get cancer in our lifetime and nearly every family has a cancer story: dealing with diagnosis, struggling through treatment, supporting loved ones, losing a loved one, fearing that cancer may come back. And cancer isn't just physical – it's impacts can reach into every part of our lives.

At our 2023 Autumn Conference, Ed Davey shared his story.

There is good news: **Twice as many people survive cancer** today compared to the 1970s. More than a million lives have been saved from cancer across the UK since the 1980s thanks to progress made in prevention, diagnosis and treatment. However, there is still huge room for improvement.

**Targets for starting cancer treatment have not been met since 2015.** The current Conservative Government broke its promise to produce a 10 year cancer plan that would have made a real difference to patients. Cancer should be a top priority for any Government but far too many patients have been let down and forgotten.

Last year, **nearly 100,000 patients in England waited longer than the NHS target of 62 days to start cancer treatment.** These failures have an impact – every four-week delay to starting cancer treatment is associated with a 10% decrease in survival. And now the UK ranks one of the lowest globally for five-year survival for the less survivable cancers.

We can and must do better. Cancer **should** be a top priority for any Government. All cancer patients in the UK **should** be confident that they will receive the best treatment for them quickly. The UK **should** be a global leader in cancer research and outcomes

That's why, today, Liberal Democrats have passed new policy with a comprehensive plan aimed at boosting cancer survival rates and improving the quality of life for patients and their families:

- **Two-month cancer treatment guarantee.** A new target for 100% of patients to start treatment for cancer within 62 days from urgent referral, with this right written into law. Currently this is only a government pledge, and 40% of patients wait longer than 62 days.
- **Boost access to radiotherapy.** Replace ageing radiotherapy machines and increase their number, as well as widening access so that no one has to travel too far for treatment.
- **Halve the time for new treatments to reach patients.** It takes an average of 11 months for a new medicine or medical technology to be approved and available to patients in England, compared to just 4 months in Germany. We will expand the MHRA's capacity to speed up that process.

- **Pass a Cancer Survival Research Act.** New legislation modelled on the US law signed by President Obama in 2013. It would require the Government to coordinate and ensure funding for research into the cancers with the lowest survival rates, including lung, liver, brain and pancreatic cancer.
- **Save the National Cancer Research Institute.** The Government is presiding over the closure of the National Cancer Research Institute, which was established in 2001 and plays a vital role in coordinating cancer research, due to uncertainty over research funding. Its closure has been described by one oncology professor as like “turning off air traffic control and hoping the planes will be fine”.

**Improve support for patients and their families.** Recruit more cancer nurses so that every patient has a dedicated specialist supporting them throughout their treatment. Ensure patients and their families are given information about charities, patient support groups and financial support at every key stage: referral, diagnosis and starting treatment.

[Read our new policy](#)

Our plan is a commitment to patients and their families, ensuring they have the support and resources needed to navigate the complexities of cancer treatment. By investing in research, improving access to care, and prioritising patient well-being, we aim to transform the landscape of cancer care in the UK.

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## Back Our Cancer Care Plan

Ed Davey has announced a new five-year plan to boost cancer survival rates.

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## [Sport for the People](#)

The Lionesses winning Euro 2022. Sir Andy Murray winning Wimbledon. The London Olympics' Super Saturday.

Great sporting moments bring us together. Millions of people glued to their

TVs, gripping the edge of the sofa.

But increasingly, sport is shut off and hidden from view, only broadcast on pay-to-view channels.

While certain sporting events like the Men's and Women's FIFA World Cups, the Olympics and the Paralympics are protected for free-to-air broadcasting, too many iconic events like the Ashes and the Six Nations are not.

## **Women's sport**

In 2022, the average viewing time per person for women's sports more than doubled and the number of people watching domestic women's sports has grown to 33 million.

More than 17 million of us watched Chloe Kelly's winner in July 2022. And last year, we tuned in again to watch the Lionesses' journey to the final.

But the list of events protected for free-to-air broadcasting is skewed towards men's events. Expanding the list of protected events to include more women's sports increases exposure and breaks down gender barriers.

## **Football**

Football, in particular, holds a special place in the hearts of so many of us. And it remains the most popular sport in the UK.

This season, not a single English Premier League football game will be aired live on free-to-air channels. And it's the same for the lower leagues (though maybe it's for the best I don't get to watch Rovers grind out yet another draw) and the Scottish Premiership.

With matches split between multiple pay-to-view providers, fans are left to fork out £870 a year in subscriptions to Sky Sports, TNT Sports and Amazon Prime Video if they want to see premier league games. That's 50% more than the average season ticket.

## **Giving sport back to the people**

We need to tear down the paywall and give sports back to the country. Greedy broadcasters are ripping off fans and preventing young boys and girls from being inspired to take up the sport.

That's why today, Liberal Democrats have passed new policy to increase the availability of sport on free-to-air TV.

- Review the list of sporting fixtures which must have live coverage made available to free-to-air channels to include:
  - At least 10 Premier League matches and 10 Scottish Premiership matches every season
  - At least 20 games from the English Football League and 10 from the Scottish Championship

- The men's and women's Six Nations
- The Ryder Cup and the Solheim Cup
- The England men's Ashes Test at Lords, and the England women's Ashes fixture at Lords
- At least one cricket test match and one day international per summer
- The entirety of the Wimbledon Championships
- Ensure that the list of women's sporting fixtures made available to free-to-air channels mirrors men's.
- Maintain protections for key national sporting events, such as the Summer and Winter Olympics and Paralympic games.
- Ensure more disability sports are televised.
- Provide councils with support to enhance community sporting facilities.

Read our new policy here

The Government is missing an open goal by failing to protect more of the treasured sporting events which bring people together. Liberal Democrats will give sport back to the people.

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## [Ed Davey's International Women's Day Message 2024](#)

Today marks International Women's Day—a moment to honour women's achievements, acknowledge their invaluable contributions, and reflect on the journey towards gender equality that still lies ahead.

Over the years, the Liberal Democrats have been at the forefront of delivering that progress.

Of course, having women at the table is a key part in delivering that. I'm proud that for the first time ever heading into a general election, women constitute the majority of our party in the House of Commons. This landmark achievement is a testament to the unwavering efforts of our campaign for gender balance.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, we honour the extraordinary women

who have led us to this point, those who continue to fight for equality, and those who will drive us forward.

Reflecting this year's theme of Investing in Women, I'm particularly thrilled with the steps our party has taken this year to address the economic barriers that disproportionately affect women. From our campaign to end period poverty across the UK, to our revolutionary new parental leave policy.

I'd like to also recognise the crucial work of Wendy Chamberlain, Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife. Her Carer's Leave Bill, set to become law, grants 2.4 million unpaid carers, predominantly women, the right to five days of unpaid leave annually. It will profoundly impact carers' lives, allowing them more time to manage their caregiving responsibilities without the added stress of work commitments. These are the types of initiatives that we will always push for, changes that prioritise people and their needs in a way that truly makes a difference.

While we celebrate our achievements as a party, we recognise that the journey towards full equality continues, demanding our relentless dedication and continued efforts going forward.

Our commitment to gender equality is a key part of what makes us Liberal Democrats. Fundamentally, we are driven by the belief that a fairer society benefits everyone. We are passionate about shaping a future free from discrimination and inequality. It is this passion that will take us further in the years to come.

For more on our work to support women, [read remarks from Christine Jardine](#)

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## [Reflecting on International Women's Day 2024](#)

Although we have made great strides towards gender equality in the UK, women are too often an afterthought when it comes to economic empowerment.

Time and again, the extra barriers women face in the workplace are ignored while we are left without the support we deserve.

Just look at how menopause is treated. Fawcett Society research has shown that 1 in 10 women leave a job because of symptoms of the menopause. Yet still, the Conservative Government refuses to pilot a trial on menopause

leave. And they have missed an opportunity to make a splash with their Women's Health Strategy, where their work to support women in the workplace has frustratingly gone silent.

Not to mention the extra costs women shoulder simply because of the fact we are women.

From the pink tax, to the 'motherhood penalty' and gender pay gap, there is a laundry list of extra economic disadvantages that women face.

Heartbreakingly, the financial barriers become worse for survivors of domestic violence, many of whom have to make the impossible choice between remaining in an unsafe home or facing destitution.

These failings hurt everyone – women, our society, and our economy. Despite this, the Chancellor didn't mention women a single time in his Budget this week.

Women deserve an ambitious vision from political parties. I'm proud that Liberal Democrats have a credible plan to smash through these economic barriers disproportionately facing women.

We brought forward new policies to end period poverty across the UK just this year, responding to the cost of living crisis which meant that a further 1 million women couldn't afford the period products they need.

My colleague Munira Wilson MP, has spearheaded a revolutionary new parental leave and childcare policy – helping more mothers return to the workplace should they want to, and fighting against the gender pay gap.

These new policies are only the beginning. As Liberal Democrats, we will keep doing everything we can to fight for gender equality. Our country cannot afford to avoid investing in women any longer.

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## [My visit to Israel and Palestine](#)

We've all been appalled by the shocking and tragic events in the Middle East over the past few months.

There is a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, and it is only growing. Thousands of innocent Palestinians have been killed and around 1.5 million have been displaced to Rafah where they are fearing for their lives, as the prospect of an IDF offensive looms.

The appalling hostage situation continues – with more than 100 people still held by Hamas following the utterly deplorable terrorist attacks carried out by the group on 7 October.

**Liberal Democrats have been calling for an immediate bilateral ceasefire for months – to put an end to the humanitarian tragedy in Gaza, get the hostages home, and finally deliver a path to the two state solution.**

The impact of this conflict has been felt deeply not just across the region, but in the UK too, in particular the Jewish, Palestinian and Muslim communities.

Since 7 October, I, [Layla Moran](#) and [Christine Jardine](#) have met with many impacted groups – such as those working to combat soaring antisemitism and Islamophobia, NGOs working in Gaza, and families whose loved ones are being held hostage by Hamas.

But as the devastation from the conflict only continues to mount, I felt that it was necessary to visit the region myself – to meet people in Israel and Palestine whose lives have been turned upside down by the conflict, and speak to politicians and civil society about how to secure two states and a lasting peace.

I have just returned from my visit to Israel and Palestine. Here's what I saw, heard and learnt on the trip:



I saw the bullet hole-ridden, blown-out houses of the Kfar Aza kibbutz, one of the many places attacked by Hamas on 7 October, and a place where many peace activists had lived.



I also travelled to the site of the music festival at Re'im where over 300 people were tragically murdered, and where many are now paying their respects to friends and relatives.



At the Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem, I met six-month old triplets whose mother is stuck in Gaza and cannot get a permit to travel to Jerusalem to be with her children.

I spoke with hospital administrators who told me that the hospital is struggling financially after Israel withheld funding from the Palestinian Authority last year.



Itzik Horn's sons Eitan and Yair were taken hostage by Hamas on 7 October.

He described to me the anguish he is living with, not being able to know exactly where his sons are and in what condition they're in.

Meeting with Palestinian NGOs working on the ground in Gaza, they explained how what was already a humanitarian crisis in the Strip before October has now become catastrophic. They also spoke about how the West Bank now faces an unprecedented situation, with settler violence spiking.

At the Knesset – the Israeli Parliament – I held a constructive meeting with Yair Lapid, leader of our liberal sister party in Israel as well as Leader of the Opposition to Netanyahu's government, and discussed the importance of removing Netanyahu from power – both for Israelis and Palestinians.





Visiting Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial, I laid a wreath on behalf of our party in memory of the millions of Jews murdered during the Holocaust.



I learned about the impact of illegal settlement expansion on Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, which is making two-states ever harder to achieve.



The United Nations Humanitarian Agency, UNOCHA, explained to me their assessment of the dire crisis facing Palestinians if the IDF commences an offensive in Rafah.

It's very clear that both Israelis and Palestinians are suffering deep and ongoing trauma from the 7 October attacks and the humanitarian situation in Gaza. In an environment of such grief and loss, it would be easy to write off the prospects of a future peace. But my belief that we cannot go back to the way things were before – that a two-state solution is the only way to ensure nothing like this happens again – has only been strengthened.

It's also apparent that the illegal Israeli settler movement is having a very negative impact on the ground in the West Bank, actively working to prevent a future two state solution. Settler violence against Palestinians has spiked since October 7 and is having a destabilising effect right now in the West Bank – which is a tinderbox. The settlements are a breach of international law.

Since my return, I have called for the far-right Israeli ministers and extremist leaders of the illegal settlement movement, [Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, to be sanctioned by the UK.](#)





Our Foreign Affairs spokespersons Layla Moran and Lord Purvis also both recently visited the region. You can learn more about their visit [here](#) and [here](#).

**Liberal Democrats will continue to stand up for international law and for a lasting peace. It is the only way to secure the dignity and security that Israelis and Palestinians deserve, ensuring that the events we have seen these past few months never happen again.**

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