

Ed Davey's speech to Spring Conference

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Author:

Our plan for social care

I've been a carer most of my life, for my mother, my grandmother and now, along with my wife Emily, for our son John. My family, like so many, relies on professional carers every day. It's heartbreaking that for many people, that essential care is not available.

In May last year it was reported that half a million people in England were waiting for care. Vulnerable people are being left stranded in hospital due to the lack of space in care homes. Or unable to go home after finishing hospital treatment, simply because the follow-up care they need doesn't exist. This takes an enormous toll on them and their families, while putting even more pressure on our strained NHS.

This isn't caused by NHS inefficiency, or bad management, as the Conservatives might want us to believe. It's a symptom of a failing social care system that no one has had the bravery to try and fix properly.

Time and again, the Conservatives have promised to "fix" the crisis in social care. They pledged that no one would have to sell their house to pay for care – and that they wouldn't raise taxes to do it, either.

But they have broken all these promises.

The Conservatives' so-called plans come nowhere near to fixing the crisis.

Proper reform of social care is one of the biggest challenges facing our country. It cannot wait any longer.

That's why Liberal Democrats are bringing forward a proper solution. Working with experts, industry leaders and care staff themselves, we have developed a plan to fix the crisis in social care, once and for all.

Our plan, passed by Liberal Democrat members today, would:

- Ensure no one has to sell their home to pay for care by introducing free personal care, based on the model introduced by the Scottish Liberal Democrat-Labour government in 2002.
- Introduce a more generous means test and assistance for those unable to pay for their accommodation costs.

- Move towards a preventative approach to social care, so people can stay in their own homes for longer.
- Introduce a real living wage for care workers and invest in skills, professionalisation and accreditation of the workforce.
- Provide a package to support unpaid carers.

This means no one would have to sell their home to pay for care. That carers will be properly paid and valued for the essential, skilled work they do. And that everyone with care needs will be empowered to live independently and with dignity.

Our plan for free personal care covers nursing care, help with personal hygiene, immobility problems and medication.

Those needing care would still have to pay for their accommodation, but we are also bringing in more generous means testing which means those unable to pay those costs would still be supported. For those living at home, they would continue to pay their mortgages, rent, bills, food costs and taxes as they did before receiving care.

And after years of being ignored by the Conservatives, we want to finally make sure that unpaid carers are given the support and recognition they deserve.

The fact that people who are ready to be discharged are stuck in hospital due to a lack of caring capacity is hitting our NHS too. This is about making the system more efficient and supporting people with their care needs.

It's clear the Conservatives are completely failing at the task at hand. They cannot be trusted to provide everyone with the high-quality social care they need. So it's time for change.

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A Better Alternative on Small Boats

We all want to see an end to dangerous crossings on small boats across the Channel, but this legislation will do nothing of the sort.

Instead, Conservative plans would see those fleeing war and persecution detained and deported.

It would cost the taxpayer huge sums of money and, far from cracking down on illegal trafficking gangs, punish those seeking safety in the UK.

It runs roughshod over international law, which confirms that asylum seekers should not be punished for how they arrive in a country.

Liberal Democrats know that the best way to stop these dangerous crossings is to provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for those that need it.

Our new policy, passed by members today at Conference, shows how we can do just that. It calls on the Government to:

- Immediately scrap the Illegal Migration Bill.
- Fix the broken asylum system by taking powers from the Home Office and establishing a new, dedicated unit to make decisions quicker and more fairly.
- Provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees from all countries, including:
 - An expanded, properly funded resettlement scheme.
 - A new scheme for unaccompanied child refugees.
 - Reuniting unaccompanied children in Europe with family in the UK.
 - Humanitarian visas to allow asylum seekers to travel the UK to proceed with their claims.

[Read the motion here](#)

The UK has a proud and long-standing tradition of opening its arms and providing sanctuary to those in need of protection. The Conservative government is trying to trash that legacy. Now, more than ever, we cannot turn our backs on those who need us.

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