

# Fixing the Government's Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Liberal Democrats are urging the government to fix its response to Covid-19.

The Liberal Democrats have watched in horror and disbelief as **the government made mistake after mistake** tackling the Covid-19 crisis.

We mourn the suffering and loss of life caused by the Conservatives' ineptitude. **We demand the Government reassess its approach** and address the long term ramifications of the pandemic.

While we are relieved by the success of the NHS's vaccination programme, nothing can bring back those lost to the virus, numbering over 126,000. **Behind every statistic is life – a parent, a sibling, a friend.**

That's why Liberal Democrat members have voted to back a motion **urging the government to fix its response to Covid-19.**

**Our motion set out how we would address the most pressing problems caused by the Government's mishandling of the pandemic:**

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## **We need a Public Inquiry**

It's long past time for the government to launch an independent public inquiry as promised by Boris Johnson.

From China to Italy, last Spring we saw other nations battling the virus before numbers started to climb in the UK.

The government had a chance to limit the number of infections but **they failed to take action.**

Why? **Bereaved families who have lost loved ones to Covid-19 deserve answers.**

We need a full, independent, public inquiry.

**In the words of Ed Davey,**

*"This is the biggest catastrophe, the biggest trauma the British nation has suffered since the second world war.*

*It has to be the toughest, most independent inquiry that British law allows, and anything short of that would be totally unacceptable."*

It's time our frontline heroes' work was recognised by more than payment in

claps.

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## **Support for NHS and Social Care workers**

NHS, social care workers and emergency service personnel need proper support with **a proper pay reward**.

They have borne the brunt of the physical and psychological scars caused by Covid-19 and **it's time their work was recognised by more than payment in claps**.

We are also calling for **increased funding for mental health support services** to help key healthcare workers cope with the trauma of Covid-19.

In addition, we urge the government to grant foreign nationals working in healthcare indefinite leave to remain.

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## **Support for Disabled People**

Disabled people and their carers have been **disproportionately affected by the pandemic**.

Disabled workers have been disproportionately impacted by furlough, reduced hours and redundancies and many have been in self-isolation since last March.

The Government must **increase their support for disabled people** through the social care, housing, education and mental health systems.

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## **A Strategy for Understanding and Treating Long Covid**

Last December, the ONS estimated that **one in ten people in the UK are suffering with the effects of long Covid**.

Liberal Democrat MP Layla Moran has led the way raising awareness of this condition in Parliament.

Together with the All-Party Group on Coronavirus, Layla is calling on the government to **recognise Long Covid as an occupational disease**.

Our motion backs research into the long-term effects of COVID-19 to **help clinicians treat the condition**.

The Covid-19 mortality rate is up to 4.3 times higher for Black and South Asian people.

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## A Plan for Supporting Ethnic Minorities

The disproportionate toll of Covid-19 on people from black and ethnic minority groups is extremely alarming.

**The Covid-19 mortality rate is up to 4.3 times higher for Black and South Asian people** according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS)

Furthermore, people from BAME groups **make up a significant percentage of those on the frontline**, increasing their exposure to the virus and their subsequent risk of falling ill.

We need **more research** into why ethnic minorities are so severely impacted by Covid-19.

That's why we are calling for a **cross-government Race Equality Strategy** to ensure an effective response to the coronavirus crisis.

As liberals we must be wary of creating a two-tier system of rights here at home.

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## Saying No to Vaccine Passports

Introducing so-called 'vaccine passports' for domestic use would establish a **two-tier system**.

Vaccine passports will **discriminate against those who cannot have the vaccine**, either for health reasons or because they are not old enough.

And no vaccine has yet been authorised for use in children and adolescents.

Whilst they may be inevitable for international travel, **as liberals we must be wary of creating a two-tier system of rights here at home**.

What's more, countries like Australia, Taiwan and New Zealand have shown it's possible to lift the restrictions on our liberties with robust public health interventions to keep the virus under control.

The fairest way to lift restrictions and to make lockdowns a thing of the past is to **keep cases low and get as many people vaccinated as possible**.

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## Learning from our Neighbours

Countries like New Zealand, Australia and South Korea have effectively managed outbreaks of the virus.

**We must learn from their success and build a Coronavirus strategy** that draws on the successes we've seen overseas.

All of these have used strict border controls and this **undoubtedly helped stop the spread of the virus.**

**We must introduce robust quarantine measures** to reduce the transmission of the virus and its new variants in the UK.

We must ensure no-one slips through the net as the scale of the mental health impact of this crisis emerges.

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## **Mental Health Support**

The coronavirus crisis has exacerbated mental health issues for many people across the UK.

As we address the physical effects of Covid-19, **we cannot ignore the impacts of successive lockdowns, isolation, bereavement and financial pressure on people's mental wellbeing.**

Our motion highlights the importance of signposting available mental health support, while increasing the level of funding for mental health charities on top of providing additional investment in mental health services.

**We must ensure no-one slips through the net** as the scale of the mental health impact of this crisis emerges.

It is vital that everyone in the UK is protected from the scourge Covid-19, no matter where they came from and that migrants have access to all the same services.

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## **Ending Immigration Checks in the NHS**

The coronavirus does not respect international borders, nationality or ethnicity.

**It is a moral and healthcare imperative that migrants are not prevented from accessing vaccines, healthcare or financial support.**

We are demanding the government suspend the 'no recourse to public funds' rule, end immigration checks and upfront charging in the NHS and establish a firewall to prevent public agencies from sharing personal information with the Home Office for the purposes of immigration enforcement.

**It is vital that everyone in the UK is protected from the scourge Covid-19, no matter where they came from and that migrants have access to all the same services, respecting their right to equality.**

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**Read the full motion here:** <https://www.libdems.org.uk/f14-covid19-pandemic>

The Liberal Democrats are dismayed that the government did not learn from their mistakes last spring, leading to **a further 84,000 deaths since our Autumn Conference.**

**The government should take on our policy recommendations and put the UK's recovery first.**

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## **[Here's how we help young people](#)**

Young people's lives have been severely disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Lockdowns have taken a toll on young people's education, mental health and future prospects – hitting those with fewer resources especially hard.

**The Liberal Democrats believe significant policy changes are needed now to safeguard young people's futures. We want to make up for the opportunities missed in lockdown, giving young people the chance to flourish.**

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## **[My Vision for Britain](#)**

At our Liberal Democrat Spring Conference today, I outlined my vision for building a Fairer, Greener and More Caring country by putting recovery first. Take a look at my commitments here:

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## [It didn't have to be this way](#)

Students at schools and universities across the country have experienced massive disruption to their education throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

**So many young people have not had access to an adequate computer or internet connection at home**, and for those who depend on accessible educational materials, such as large print, audio and Braille – these resources have been severely lacking.

Students have experienced a massive disruption to their education.

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## [A new face for fundraising](#)

It's a bittersweet moment for the party as we thank [Mike German](#) for his **outstanding years as Party Treasurer and see him pass on the mantle.**

Responsible for fundraising initiatives for the Federal Liberal Democrats and our major political and general election campaigns, the role of Treasurer has been, and is, critical to our survival and success.

That in mind, it is with great enthusiasm that we welcome [Tilly McAuliffe](#) to the role of Treasurer.

You may recognise Tilly from her 2018 Autumn Conference win of the **Harriet Smith Distinguished Service Award**, her success as Chair of the **Lib Dem Business & Entrepreneurs Network** (2015-21), her efforts while on the **London Region Executive**, her work with the **Lib Dem Creative Network**, or fundraising campaigns old and new. At ground level, she is especially well-known among our **Brent** team, and she has run for the party twice. Whenever I've crossed her path in the party, she's always been a bundle of passion, ideas and expertise.

Just as important as her credentials in the party, Tilly brings an outstanding entrepreneurial career and huge amounts of energy.

As the co-founder of Think Publishing and Think Travel, Tilly has, over 21 years, built two thriving businesses, with 70 employees, and offices in

London and Glasgow.

At Board level, Tilly sits as a **non-executive director** of Welbeck Publishing Group, and the Professional Publishers Association. Outside industry, she is a **trustee** of the think tank Demos and sits on the development board of the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain.

Tilly is, notably, **the first woman, to hold the post of Party Treasurer**: a fact for celebration and a reminder that we must all keep working to make the party truly equal from top to bottom.

Tilly was elected by the Federal Board and more information about her role can be found in article 20.4 of the Federal Constitution.

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