

# Our five principles for SEND reform

**Liberal Democrat Leader Ed Davey and Education Spokesperson Munira Wilson have written to Keir Starmer setting out five principles for SEND reform, and offering to work on a cross-party basis with the government to ensure the reforms deliver for children with SEND and their families.**

The five principles include maintaining the right to SEND assessments for children, boosting special school capacity, improving early identification and cutting waiting lists. The Liberal Democrats are also calling for more support for local authorities to provide SEND services and better training for school staff.

**The full letter can be found below:**

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you regarding the recent reporting on your Government's forthcoming reform of the special education needs and disabilities (SEND) system.

Let us be clear: after years of Conservative neglect, the SEND system needs fundamental change. Your commitment to reform is welcome.

For too long, a broken system has forced children and families to fight long battles to get the support they need. Outcomes for those children haven't improved while council deficits have ballooned, leaving many on the brink.

Change is sorely needed. But this reform must be honest, ambitious, and must have children at its heart. It cannot see children's rights rolled back.

Many parents are deeply worried that the forthcoming reforms will leave their children worse

off, with an erosion of the rights that underpin the support they need. The lack of clarity from your Government is leading to worry and confusion, with constant conflicting reports on what exactly is being considered. SEND families are being deprived of the certainty they need to live their lives.

Those families have waited too long for a system that works. We need to get this right.

We are writing to outline five fundamental principles, which we believe should underpin the coming reform.

Our five principles and priorities for SEND reform are as follows:

- 1. Putting children and families first** Children's rights to SEND assessment and support must be maintained and the voices of children and young people with SEND and of their families and carers must be at the centre of the reform process.

2. **Boosting specialist capacity and improving mainstream provision** Capacity in state special provision must be increased, alongside improvements to inclusive mainstream provision, with investment in both new school buildings and staff training.
3. **Supporting local government** Local authorities must be supported better to fund SEND services, including through:
  1. The extension of the profit cap in children's social care to private SEND provision, where many of the same private equity backed companies are active, and
  2. National government funding to support any child whose assessed needs exceed a specific cost.
4. **Early identification and shorter waiting lists** Early identification and intervention must be improved, with waiting times for diagnosis, support and therapies cut.
5. **Fair funding** The SEND funding system must properly incentivise schools both to accept SEND pupils and to train their staff in best practice for integrated teaching and pastoral care.

We would welcome the chance to discuss these principles and priorities with you further. Together with our Liberal Democrat colleagues, we are eager to work with you on a cross-party basis, to make sure that the forthcoming reforms truly deliver for children with SEND and for their families.

Yours sincerely,

Ed Davey  
Munira Wilson

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## [Standing up for the most vulnerable in society](#)

This week, the Government held a vote on a welfare bill which threatened to **cause immense damage to some of the most vulnerable in our society**.

It would have made things harder for unpaid carers, harder for disabled people who rely on support to stay in work, and harder for those whose disabilities mean they may never be able to work.

**That's why we voted against the Bill on Tuesday.**

After pressure from Liberal Democrats and across the House, the Government finally caved in and scrapped parts of it. **But this is no way to run a country.**

Rushed legislation is poor legislation.

**It should not have taken a major rebellion for the Government to realise that these cuts would cause immense damage** to some of the most vulnerable and risk creating a false economy by actually forcing some people out of work.

To appease their own backbenches, the Government was willing to create a two-tier system, with new Personal Independent Payment (PIP) claimants unable to access the same support as those currently receiving it – only scrapping these plans at the final moment.

PIP allows people to do the simple activities we all take for granted and stay in work. Cutting it will push more people into poverty and out of employment.

**Liberal Democrats will continue to oppose any system where some disabled people are more equal than others.**

It's clear that the welfare bill is too high, but if the Government was serious about cutting welfare spending it would get serious about fixing health and social care, to tackle chronic ill-health at its root.

**Carers have been ignored by the Government throughout this whole debacle. Their voices must now be heard loud and clear.** Ministers must ensure that this review listens carefully to both carers' charities to understand the impact these changes will have, on family carers.

The scale of this week's rebellion shows that the Government is just not listening, and not delivering on the change that people are crying out for.

It is time for the Government to take their fingers out of their ears and realise it is time to change course. **They must scrap this flawed legislation,** go back to the drawing board, and work cross-party to fairly reduce the need for high welfare spending, by getting more people into work and fixing our broken health and care systems.

And when it comes to balancing the books, rather than cutting support for disabled people, ministers should be asking the social media giants, the big banks and the big online gambling companies to pay their fair share of tax.

*Image: ©House of Commons*

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## Windrush Day 2025

Today is Windrush Day.

77 years ago today, the HMT Empire Windrush docked in Essex – marking the beginning of the Windrush generation's arrival here in the UK.

Their hard work and determination helped rebuild Britain and brought so much to our country – from the economy to culture and cuisine.

And while today is a chance to celebrate, it is also a reminder of the appalling injustices of the Windrush Scandal.

People who have every right to live in the UK were wrongly denied access to NHS treatment, housing and other services simply because they didn't have the right documents to prove it. Innocent people were made homeless, detained and even deported simply because they didn't have the right documents.

But let's be clear – this scandal isn't over. So Liberal Democrats will keep pushing for the justice the Windrush generation deserves.

That includes pushing for a new Windrush commissioner to lead on righting these wrongs – and we're glad the Government has listened and appointed Rev Clive Foster to the role. Now, his work must include ensuring the Lessons Learned recommendations are properly implemented and that the compensation scheme is implemented swiftly and fairly.

At the same time, Liberal Democrats will keep campaigning to end the Conservatives' cruel and discriminatory Hostile Environment, and stop the disproportionate use of Stop and Search.

And we will keep fighting to combat racism, inequality and discrimination in all its forms. Because this is the best way to honour the Windrush generation's legacy.

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## Pride Month 2025

Today marks the beginning of Pride Month – an important opportunity to celebrate and stand in solidarity with LGBTQ+ communities in the UK and across the world.

I know that for many, Pride will feel different this year. It hasn't been an easy time for many LGBTQ+ people lately, to put it mildly. And I understand why it may feel like there is little to celebrate right now.

It's clear the fight for LGBTQ+ equality must go on – and I'm determined that Liberal Democrats remain at the forefront of that fight. That includes pushing the Government to ensure the recent Supreme Court ruling doesn't lead to a roll back of trans rights.



Of course, Liberal Democrats have long played an important role in pushing

for LGBTQ+ equality. Like being the first political party to openly oppose the abhorrent Section 28 legislation, back in the '80s. And our instrumental role in getting the Same Sex Marriage Act passed in 2013.

More recently, I'm proud of the incredible work our Equalities Spokesperson, Christine Jardine, has done alongside LGBT+ Liberal Democrats to [reaffirm our party's commitment to LGBTQ+ rights at our Spring Conference](#). Together, they set out a clear plan of how we can push for LGBTQ+ equality – from addressing discrimination wherever it occurs, to improving access to healthcare and protecting LGBTQ+ rights abroad.

But the work doesn't stop there. Now, we must put these policies into action and keep doing everything we can to push for the positive change that the LGBTQ+ community deserves.

Because for years, the Conservatives targeted vulnerable LGBTQ+ people – and the trans community in particular – with their divisive culture wars. And I know that many people feel deeply let down by the Labour Government's track record so far when it comes to standing up for LGBTQ+ rights.

Now more than ever, the Liberal Democrats must stand with the LGBTQ+ community. I want to make clear that our party will keep pushing to ensure that everyone's fundamental rights are protected, no matter your orientation or identity.

So we will keep fighting – until we can finally build a society where everyone is free to be who they are. And that will certainly be something to celebrate.

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## [Standing Up to Divisive Politics](#)

On Monday, Liberal Democrats forced a vote in the House of Commons on a policy that would scrap the ban on asylum seekers working if they had waited for a decision on their claim for 3 months. Sadly, it was blocked by an alliance of Conservative, Labour and Reform MPs – all voting against the national interest just so they could appear anti-immigration.

The UK has a long, proud history of welcoming newcomers – whether people seeking to build their lives here, or refugees fleeing war and persecution.

People from all over the world have greatly enriched our economy, our culture and our communities. For me, I'm immensely proud that our country took in my Nan aged 18 when she was fleeing the Nazis in 1939. I'm also really pleased



the surgeon who performed my Dad's kidney transplant brought his skills and talents to the UK having been born elsewhere.

We must do everything in our power to protect this legacy – not least after everything the Conservatives did to trash it.

They closed down safe and legal routes for refugees, putting more power in the hands of traffickers. They allowed the asylum backlog to balloon on their watch, trapping asylum seekers in limbo for months or even years. And they threatened the fundamental right to asylum with their cruel Illegal Migration Act and failed Rwanda scheme.

Now, the Labour government has a real opportunity to fix this mess and start building a more compassionate, effective system. But sadly, they have so far failed to bring forward the positive change that people deserve.

I'm deeply proud of our [party's history of standing up for people fleeing war and persecution](#) in particular. From getting new visas introduced for Hong Kongers coming to the UK, to ending the previous Labour Government's practice of detaining children for immigration purposes, Liberal Democrats have long been at the forefront of securing change.

I'm determined that we continue in this proud tradition – which is why I've been making these same arguments as the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill passed through Parliament.

First and foremost, that means pushing for more safe and legal routes for refugees. Whether that's establishing new humanitarian travel permits, or continuing Lib Dem peer Sally Hamwee's tireless efforts to extend family reunion rights. This will be crucial for taking power out of the hands of the criminal trafficking gangs responsible for dangerous crossings in the Channel.

At the same time, we need an asylum system that makes decisions fairly and swiftly – which is why we've been calling to tackle the backlog by establishing a dedicated unit to improve the speed and quality of asylum decision-making.

And we will keep pushing Labour to take the action that's needed. If they really cared about improving integration, they would have backed our amendment this week that would have scrapped the ban on asylum seekers working. But our party won't give up, and will now take this fight to the House of Lords.

In the face of divisive and destructive politics, it is more important than ever that the Liberal Democrats continue to offer a liberal alternative. One that is kind and compassionate – standing up for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers, and ensuring all migrants are treated with dignity and respect like they deserve.



I am determined to do everything in my power to ensure this is the case.

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