

Freedom From Harm – Gambling as a Public Health Issue

It's marketed as harmless fun – a quick spin, a flutter, a chance to win big. As the MP for a town with a racecourse, I'm no stranger to gambling. As a liberal I view this as both a freedom-to and a freedom-from issue.

Because for too many people, gambling leads not to a jackpot, but to debt, broken relationships, and even tragedy.

Across the UK, millions are affected by gambling harms each year. It's estimated that one-person-a-day dies by gambling-related suicide. Children are growing up in households where gambling problems overshadow family life. And the rise of online slot machines available 24/7 on phones means that gambling is easier, faster, and riskier than ever before.

The gambling industry knows this. It profits from it. And for years, the absence of firm regulation has let them get away with it. Public safety has been put behind profits, with few wider economic benefits from the rise of online gambling.

In 2023, politicians from all parties agreed we needed a public health approach to gambling, and now the Labour Government must not quietly step back from that consensus.

As liberals, we believe adults should be free to gamble if they choose. But freedom also means freedom from harm.

Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy to put public health at the heart of gambling regulation:

- Creating a statutory, independent Gambling Ombudsman with real power.
- Curbing the impact of gambling advertising, marketing, and sponsorship.
- Enforcing affordability checks so no one can gamble beyond their means.
- Giving local councils the same powers over regulating gambling venues as they have over pubs.
- Regulating online 'loot boxes' as gambling.
- Making online gambling companies pay their fair share by increasing remote gaming duty from 21% to 42%.

Read our new policy in full

The scale of the problem is clear: 1 in 40 people experience problem gambling, including 1 in 66 11–17-year-olds; and more than three million adults are harmed by someone else’s gambling. The cost to society is as high as £1.77 billion a year – and the human cost is far greater.

These reforms would not only save lives, they’d raise hundreds of millions of pounds to help fund NHS treatment for gambling addiction and prevent future harm.

The gambling industry has had a free pass for too long. Liberal Democrats will hold them to account and put people before profits, so that gambling in the UK can be safe, fair, and free from harm.

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Author:

[Getting Emergency Care Back on Track](#)

Years of Conservative mismanagement pushed our NHS to breaking point and Labour’s promises won’t be enough without urgent reform.

Nowhere is that clearer than in our emergency care services. From patients dying in A&E waiting rooms, to families waiting hours for ambulances, the crisis has become intolerable.

Dangerous practices like ‘corridor care’ – where patients are left waiting on trolleys in hallways without dignity, safety, or proper attention – have been normalised. Ambulance hubs have been under threat, air ambulances rely on charity funding, and too many people are left without urgent care when they need it most.

Ambulance Crisis

Last month a Freedom of Information request by our team uncovered that 2.7 million people made their own way to A&E last year, rather than waiting for an ambulance – a 14% increase since 2019. Over 250,000 of those people required serious, urgent medical assistance.

These figures lay bare the reality of this crisis, where people do not think they can rely on ambulance services even in the most serious of circumstances. This could have deadly consequences if people have lost faith that ambulances will be there when they need them.

Nobody should have to take themselves to A&E in a life and death situation because they can't trust an ambulance to arrive in time.

We must end the Uber Ambulance Crisis – means reversing the closure of ambulance centres, and an urgent campaign to recruit, retain and train paramedics.

– [Liberal Democrats \(@libdemocrats.org.uk\)](https://libdemocrats.org.uk) 2025-08-18T16:41:10.772Z

Liberal Democrats are determined to turn this around.

Today our members have passed new policy to get emergency care back on track, calling on the Government to:

- **End corridor care by the end of this Parliament**, including through a new **Winter Taskforce** that builds resilience in hospitals, ambulance services, and patient discharging – making this year's winter crisis the last.
- **Fix the broken social care system**, which accounts for 1 in 7 NHS beds being blocked. We would restart cross-party talks, conclude the Casey Review within a year, and put in place urgent reforms. That includes better support for unpaid carers – with guaranteed respite care, an end to the Carer's Allowance cliff edge, and paid carers leave.
- **Tackle staff shortages in emergency care** with a dedicated A&E workforce plan and a strategy to ensure all departments meet or exceed "good" safety standards as judged by the Care Quality Commission.
- **Guarantee safer emergency care for patients** – including a qualified clinician in every A&E waiting room, a clinical manager on shift in every NHS 111 call centre, and a rapid rollout of mental health crisis centres to end the postcode lottery in mental health care.

Rescue and protect our ambulance services, designating every ambulance hub as critical infrastructure, integrating air ambulances into the NHS with guaranteed funding, and launching a new national drive to recruit rural Community First Responders.

Read our new policy in full

When people turn to the NHS in dire need, they deserve emergency care where lives are saved and patients can trust that help will come.

Instead, under the Conservatives, it became a symbol of neglect and crisis.

Labour has promised new investment, but without urgent reforms to social care and a systematic plan to build resilience, that investment will not be enough.

Our proposals would not only bring dignity back to patients in crisis but also protect the NHS workforce, restore public trust, and save lives.

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Author:

[Backing Youth Work to Build Communities](#)

The youth worker who helps a shy teenager find their voice in a drama group.
The community centre that gives kids a place to go after school.
The outdoor expedition that sparks a lifelong love of the environment.

Youth work changes lives and makes a real difference in communities across the UK.

It gives young people a place to belong, build skills, and believe in themselves. By providing safe spaces to connect, it lowers their chances of ending up involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, and improves their chances of being involved in education or employment.

But over the last decade, we've seen too many youth centres close their doors and youth workers leave the sector.

With the Government set to publish a National Youth Strategy later this year, it's time for a bold, long-term vision for youth work.

Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy to back youth work and put it at the heart of building stronger communities, calling on the Government to:

- Appoint a dedicated Cabinet Minister for Children and Young People.
- Commit to a fair, long-term funding settlement to support youth work, resources and infrastructure.
- Support charity-run youth services to access more funding and share best practice.
- Clarify and fund the statutory duty for local authorities to provide

“sufficient” youth services.

- Develop a comprehensive Workforce and Training Strategy to ensure a strong pipeline of skilled youth workers.
- Ensure youth voices shape all policy development by introducing a statutory duty for Local Authority Youth Councils
- Strengthen partnerships between youth services, schools, employers, mental health professionals, and outdoor education providers.
- Support schools and youth organisations to deliver outdoor education, aiming for every young person to have at least one such experience in primary and one in secondary school.

Read our new policy in full

Youth work isn't just one of the most effective ways we have to improve a young person's life chances, it is also a significantly important investment. Research shows that every £1 spent on youth work generates £6.40 in returns, by reducing pressure on public services and delivering lasting benefits for society

The Government has a golden opportunity with its forthcoming National Youth Strategy. But opportunity means nothing without action.

Liberal Democrats will keep fighting to make sure every young person, no matter their background, has access to the opportunities, support and safe spaces they deserve.

Because when we back youth work, we back stronger communities, brighter futures, and a fairer society.

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Author:

[Policing Fit for the Future](#)

The challenges facing policing in Britain have never been more complex, yet the system is stuck in the past and at crisis point.

Years of the Conservatives ineffective resourcing and mismanagement of our policing service have left communities feeling abandoned in the face of crime and anti-social behaviour.

That, coupled with huge court backlogs, denying victims justice, undermining public confidence and allowing too many criminals to get away with it, means **trust between the police and the public has been eroded.**

We believe Britain deserves better – a modern, joined-up policing system that prevents crime, delivers justice swiftly, and restores public confidence. That means smarter use of technology, proper investment in people, and targeted action to keep every community safe.

Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy to make policing fit for the future:

- Join up policing and the wider justice system with secure data sharing.
- Tackle court backlogs, reduce reoffending, and prioritise crime prevention.
- Improve responses to violence against women and girls with sustainable funding, better training, and high-quality perpetrator programmes.
- Embed rural crime teams or specialists in every police force, expand community police counters, and enforce tougher penalties for rural offences.
- Equip police forces with the technology they need to prevent and solve crime through better coordination, procurement, and recruitment.
- Introduce mandatory national vetting standards for officers and publish regular data on those under investigation to rebuild public trust.

Read our new policy in full

Strong, effective policing isn't just about more officers, it's about giving them the tools, training, and support they need to do the job. That means mental health support for officers, smarter use of technology with proper safeguards, and closer work with schools, youth services, and communities to stop crime before it starts.

Liberal Democrats will put public safety first, with a policing system that's fair and fit for the 21st century. Because everyone, no matter where they live, deserves to feel safe in their own home and walking down their own street.

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Author:

Clearing the asylum backlog is a national emergency

Right now, 90,000 men, women and children are stuck in the UK's asylum backlog. Most have been waiting over six months just for the Home Office to make an initial decision on their asylum application. 28,000 have been waiting more than a year.

People who came to the UK seeking safety – fleeing war, persecution and unimaginable trauma – now find themselves trapped in a cruel Home Office limbo, banned from working or renting a home, living in unsuitable accommodation, unable to move on with their lives.

Now, with protests outside asylum hotels over the summer reaching new heights, many are also living in fear of violence and intimidation.

The former Conservative government deliberately created this humanitarian crisis by telling the Home Office to stop processing claims, causing the backlog to grow and grow. They claimed it would act as a deterrent to stop people coming here – but of course it didn't.

Labour has so far failed to get a grip of the crisis. At the current rate of people claiming asylum and the Home Office deciding cases, it would take five years to clear this backlog.

The Liberal Democrats are not willing to stand by and let this continue. We urgently need to deal with this backlog, so people are not trapped in limbo and refugees can get on with their lives in the UK.

That's why we are calling on the government to declare the asylum backlog a national emergency and set up Nightingale processing centres – like the Nightingale hospitals we saw during the pandemic – to clear the asylum backlog within six months.

These centres should be independent from the Home Office – part of a dedicated new unit to take over processing asylum claims. The Home Office has shown, time and again, that it is not fit for this job. Decisions are wrong the first time far too often, leading to appeals and causing costly delays.

By creating a new unit and staffing it with double the number of caseworkers, we can clear the backlog in six months and restore some humanity to the system.

Until the Government treats this crisis with the urgency and seriousness it demands, nothing will change and the vulnerable people caught in the system will continue to suffer.

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