



A FAIR DEAL ON CARE

**The Liberal Democrat plan
for care and carers**





I've been a carer for much of my life. First as a teenager, nursing my mum during her long battle against bone cancer. Later for my Nanna, organising her care and trying to make her last few years as comfortable as we could. And now as a father, as Emily and I care for our disabled son John.

So I know that looking after someone you love – whether as a parent of a disabled child, a teenager of a terminally ill parent or a close relative of an elderly family member – can be rewarding and full of love. But it's far from glamorous: and it can be relentless and exhausting. And I know how much of a difference just a little extra support can make.

There are millions of family carers across the UK looking after loved ones. We are a nation of carers. But for far too long, caring has been in the shadows. I am proud that the Liberal Democrats have brought it into the light.

We have put health and care at the heart of our campaign for a fair deal. Because we understand that unless we properly value care and support carers, we will never be able to fix the crisis in our NHS or get our economy back on track.

That's why we are putting forward a bold and ambitious plan to make sure everyone can get the support they need: people who need care; the amazing care workers who provide it; and the unpaid family carers who provide it too.

So every vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote to elect a strong local champion who will fight every day for care and carers.

Ed Davey
Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Introduction

Everyone deserves high-quality care when they need it. Liberal Democrats want everyone to be able to live independently and with dignity, and receive any care they need in their own home wherever possible.

Carers – paid and unpaid, young and old – do a remarkable and important job. They deserve far more support, but are too often forgotten and ignored.

But social care services in this country are in crisis. Hundreds of thousands of people are waiting for care. Many are stranded in hospital beds because the care isn't in place for them to leave, putting even more strain on the NHS.

The Conservatives promised to “fix” the crisis in our social care system, that no one would have to sell their house to pay for personal care costs, and that they would not raise taxes to do it. They have broken all these promises.

We will empower care users, and support care workers and the millions of unpaid carers looking after loved ones. We will forge a new consensus on funding to ensure that no one has to sell their home to pay for their personal care. We will invest to save, recognising that providing care reduces demand on more expensive NHS services.

Free personal care

We need a system where society comes together to protect any individual or their family from facing catastrophic costs, just because they need care.

That's why we will introduce free personal care in England, based on the model introduced by the Liberal Democrats in government in Scotland in 2002, so that provision is based on need, not ability to pay.

We will also provide care that is truly personalised and empowers individuals, by:

- Establishing an Independent Living Taskforce to help people live independently in their own homes, with more choice and control over their lives.
- Trialling personal health and social care budgets so that individuals are in control of what care they receive.



- Developing a digital strategy for tech-enabled lives.
- Rolling out digital platforms for care users to develop networks and opportunities, connecting with care workers, friends and family, voluntary groups and more.
- Improving communication standards so carers can support care users to co-produce and monitor care plans.

Valuing care workers

Care workers do a tough and important job looking after our loved ones, but they aren't paid enough – many are paid less than even the lowest-paid jobs in most supermarkets.

As a result, we have a shortage of more than 150,000 care workers. We need to start valuing care workers properly to fill those vacancies and ensure everyone can get the high-quality care they need, when they need it.

We will make careers in social care more attractive and value experienced staff to improve retention by:

- Introducing a new Care Worker's Minimum Wage, boosting the minimum wage for care workers by £2 an hour, as a starting point for improved pay across the sector.
- Establishing a Royal College of Care Workers to represent this skilled workforce and improve recognition and career progression.
- Creating a social care workforce plan to recruit more staff to the sector.
- Offering clear career pathways, linked to recommended pay scales, which put an end to the undervaluing of skills in the sector.
- Creating a career ladder to allow flexibility to work across the NHS and social care, allowing staff to gain experience in both.
- Expanding the NHS Digital Staff Passport to include the care sector.





Standing up for unpaid carers

Millions of unpaid carers across the UK do a remarkable and important job looking after loved ones. They face big challenges every single day, and they deserve far more support. But carers are far too often forgotten and ignored by people in power.

Liberal Democrats understand that we can only save the NHS and fix care if we properly support unpaid carers.

We will increase Carer's Allowance by £20 a week, and expand eligibility for it by:

- Raising the amount carers can earn and introducing an earnings taper to end the unfair cliff-edge.
- Reducing the number of hours' care per week required.
- Extending it to carers in full-time education.

We will also:

- Stop the DWP from unfairly pursuing carers for old overpayments of Carer's Allowance.
- Introduce a statutory guarantee of regular respite breaks for unpaid carers.
- Introduce paid carer's leave, building on the new entitlement to unpaid leave secured by the Liberal Democrats.



- Make caring a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and require employers to make reasonable adjustments to enable employees with caring responsibilities to provide that care.
- Introduce a Young Carers Pupil Premium as part of an 'Education Guarantee' for young carers.

A long-term solution for social care

Ultimately, we can only fix care for the long-term by forging an agreement that all parties sign up to, so that it stands the test of time. That's why we will establish a cross-party commission to forge a long-term agreement on sustainable funding for social care in England.

We believe that agreement needs to meet three key tests:

- Filling the black hole in local authority social care funding, so councils can properly assess and meet people's care needs, provide carers' needs assessments, invest in prevention and improve the quality of care for people.
- Addressing the growing need for care among working-age adults with a disability or long-term illness.
- Raising funding for social care in a fair and sustainable way.

Ending the postcode lottery

We will end the postcode lottery of service provision and provide national, high-quality care for everyone who needs it by:

- Providing predictable, consistent funding for free personal care.
- Increasing transparency and accountability as to how money is spent through local authorities.
- Creating a National Care Agency to set national minimum standards of care.
- Enabling individuals to transfer their care package so they don't feel stuck in their current locality due to their care needs.



Helping people to age well

We will support people to age well by:

- Establishing a Commissioner for Older People and Ageing in England.
- Rolling out active ageing programmes and trips and falls assessments for everyone over the age of 75 to prevent falls, avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and promote healthy ageing.
- Opening fracture liaison services so that osteoporosis patients can get the treatment they need and prevent long-term issues and costs.

Promoted by Liberal Democrats, 1 Vincent Square, SW1P 2PN.



www.libdems.org.uk/care

