



Liberal Democrat **policies for families**



change that works **for you**

BUILDING A FAIRER BRITAIN



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Families are still feeling the effects of Labour's recession. Many parents have lost their jobs, and trying to balance the demands of daily life while caring for young children can be a real struggle. Getting time off work is difficult, and finding decent, affordable childcare can be impossible.

It isn't fair, and the Liberal Democrats understand it's time for a change. We want to give mothers and fathers the support and flexibility to spend time with their children.

Following the birth of a child, we will allow parents to share leave between them. We will cut taxes for families on low and middle incomes. And, to make life easier, we will change the way tax credits are paid so you can rely on them and you don't face the nightmare of having to pay back thousands of pounds when the government messes up your payments.

That's change that works for you. Here we outline five of our key policies to build a fairer Britain for families:

- Fair taxes for families
- Flexibility for working families
- High quality childcare
- Care for older people
- Homes affordable for all

Only the Liberal Democrats will make life easier for families and build a fairer Britain.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Clegg". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nick Clegg
Leader of the Liberal Democrats

fair taxes for families

Millions of families are struggling to make ends meet and are worried about how they will pay their bills. Liberal Democrats will make our tax and benefits system fairer, so that all families can afford to get by. We have plans for the most radical, far-reaching tax reforms in a generation.

There will be no income tax on the first £10,000 you earn – this will put £700 back into the pockets of millions of people on low and middle incomes, and free 3.6 million more people from having to pay any income tax at all. Most pensioners will get around £100 extra, on top of better pensions with the earnings link restored. The tax change will be paid for by introducing a mansion tax on properties worth over £2m, closing loopholes that benefit the wealthy and making sure airlines pay for the damage they cause.

Families should be able to sleep easy knowing that they can spend the money they receive without worrying it will be clawed back by the Treasury. We will fix the payments of tax credits for 6 months at a time so payments are stable and predictable for families – though of course there will be cases where exceptions are made on an emergency basis, for example if someone loses their job or has a new baby.

flexibility for working families

It's simply not fair that families have to structure their lives around rigid rules instead of having more flexibility to arrange their working lives around the need of their families.

When a baby is born, the mother gets a year's leave and the father currently gets just two weeks. That's unfair: it means the mother has to take the lion's share of leave, even if she and her partner would rather share things equally. We will allow parents to share leave between them in whatever way suits them best.

Families support each other in different ways, whether it's with babysitting or picking the kids up from school – grandparents often play a particularly important role. We want to make it easier for everyone, not just parents to change their working arrangements to fit in with the demands of family life. We will therefore extend the right to request flexible working to all employees.

high quality childcare

Finding affordable and high quality childcare for young children can be a real battle for parents already struggling to make ends meet. Liberal Democrats believe we need to help parents get back to work by providing high quality childcare. We will protect existing childcare support arrangements until the nation's finances can support a longer-term solution.

It is our ambition to introduce free and universal childcare provision for children aged 18mths – 5 years for 20 hours per week, when resources allow. This would build on the current entitlement of 12.5 hours per week for 3-5 year olds. Currently, around 1 in 4 childcare workers are not qualified to A-Level standard. We are committed to having every nursery led by a graduate and childcare workers having an NVQ level 3 or higher qualification so they have the skills and training to provide quality care and early education.

care for older people

Many families worry about how they'll manage to take care of their loved ones as they grow older. Some people get superb support from carers but many families don't get the help they need.

Liberal Democrats will support the million family carers in Britain who provide 50 hours of care for a loved one with a guarantee of a respite. This is affordable because we will cancel Labour's plans for 'free care at home' which are so badly funded they will lead to cuts in social care support for many vulnerable people or an increase in Council Tax.

We will convene an independent commission to agree a fair long-term solution to the problem of providing quality care to those who need it in their old age. The quality of care for older people is not up to scratch and many people can't afford the care they need. Liberal Democrats believe that older people deserve better and will seek agreement based on the principles of fairness, sustainability and affordability.

homes affordable for all

Britain's housing crisis is hurting everyone, putting thousands of families into negative equity or facing repossession. And for poorer families, the struggle for somewhere decent to live has got much harder. 1.8 million are now on the housing waiting list – up from a million in 1997.

To address Labour's housing crisis, we will bring a quarter of a million empty homes back into use. Empty properties are not only a wasted resource but a blight on the local community, attracting crime and antisocial behaviour.

People who own these homes will get a grant or a cheap loan to renovate them so they can be used: grants if the home is for social housing, loans for private use. This is cheaper than building new homes, is greener and helps to regenerate streets where empty homes stand derelict.



Liberal Democrats have championed the devolution of powers to Scotland and Wales, and many decisions made in Westminster now apply to England only. That means that policies in those nations are increasingly different from those in England – reflecting different choices, priorities and circumstances. Our Scottish and Welsh Parties make their own policy on those issues. This document sets out our priorities for a Liberal Democrat Government in Westminster.

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