



Lifting the Barriers: Disability in Britain

People with disabilities do not get a fair deal: the opportunities they want are not equally available and the very way our public services and benefits systems function works against them. Liberal Democrats will build a fair society where opportunities don't depend on luck, health or money, but are available for everyone. We will help people with disabilities to live independently wherever possible by providing more flexible access to the job market and greater control over their own health care. We will make sure disabled people can afford to heat their homes.

Winter Fuel Payments for disabled people. Over-60s get a Winter Fuel Payment of at least £200, no matter their income or health, while disabled people who may be stuck at home all day, get nothing to help them keep warm. We will reform this system and help up to 1 million people with severe disabilities, including the families of almost 21,000 young disabled children, with £200 help towards their fuel bills each year.

Practical help to get to work. People with disabilities or mental health problems often need detailed advice and support to find and sustain a job. We will use voluntary and private sector providers, as well as public sector advisers, to do just that. We will improve access to counselling for people with mental health problems. We will promote and reform the Access to Work scheme, allowing disabled jobseekers to apply for the grant while they are looking for work and making smaller business aware of the scheme. We will also champion employment support programmes that work in partnership with employers and ensure that government departments lead by example and have strategies to increase the number of disabled people they employ.

Better education for children with disabilities. We will invest an extra £2.5bn in schools to cut class sizes and provide one-to-one tuition which will make it far easier for teachers to support children with disabilities. Our plans to massively scale back the bureaucracy imposed on teachers will free them up to spend more time with all their pupils, rather than filling in the latest form from the Government. The Liberal Democrats will also reform teacher training so that all new teachers get better quality training in identifying and responding to children with special educational needs.