



Liberal Democrat
**policies for lesbian, gay,
bisexual and transgender
communities**



change that works **for you**

BUILDING A FAIRER BRITAIN



Liberal Democrats believe it is an individual's right to live their lives as they see fit, without discrimination, with personal privacy, and with equal rights in front of the law. This applies to a person's sexuality and gender identity in the same way it does to their race, religion or beliefs.

Growing up, I was very lucky to be raised by parents and taught by teachers who treated everybody equally. Whether someone was gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or straight wasn't an issue.

It wasn't until my teens that I realised for some people it was an issue. And today, for many people, it still is. Despite the repeal of Section 28, the equalisation on the age of consent and same sex adoption, prejudice is still capable of rearing its ugly head in playgrounds, workplaces and even in the home. Labour has failed to stem prejudice and discrimination against LGBT communities.

Liberal Democrats believe it is an individual's right to live their lives as they see fit, without discrimination, with personal privacy, with equal rights in front of the law. No one should be shackled by conformity, ignorance or intolerance. This applies to a person's sexuality and gender identity in the same way it does to their race, religion or beliefs.

Below we outline our vision for a fairer Britain for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people by:

- Tackling bullying in schools
- Getting tough on hate crime
- Ending deportations of LGBT refugees to countries where they face persecution
- Pressing other countries to recognise civil partnerships
- Broadening the transgender definition
- Increasing LGBT representation in Parliament

Only the Liberal Democrats will bring the change that works for you – irrespective of your gender identity or sexual orientation.

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

tackling bullying in schools

Until we deal with bullying schools, we're never going to stamp out discrimination against people who are gay, bisexual or transgender. A recent survey showed that 90 per cent of secondary school teachers say that children and young people, regardless of their sexual orientation, currently experience some form of homophobic bullying in their schools.

It is appalling that today just 6% of schools have specific policies to tackle homophobic bullying. We will require every local authority and school, including faith schools, to have specific policies on homophobic and transphobic bullying and have been pushing the Government to ensure that the Equality Bill addresses this problem.

Schools will also be required to ensure that at least one teacher undergoes training with guidance on tackling this sort of bullying. At present as many as 28 per cent of teachers say they would not feel confident in supporting a pupil who decided to come out to them as lesbian, gay or bisexual. Our policy will ensure that they are equipped to do so.

getting tough on hate crime

In our last election manifesto, we committed to introducing legislation on homophobic hatred. We therefore welcomed the provisions in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 which made incitement to hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation an offence.

However, even with this development, violence against homosexuals and transgender people is on the rise. Despite up to three in four hate crimes or incidents going unreported, homophobic attacks were up between 20 and 63 percent in our major cities over the last year.

Liberal Democrats will put 3,000 more policemen on the streets, ensure that robust action is taken when a hate crime is reported and make sure that victims are given the correct advice and support. We will also use disciplinary action to stop homophobic language among a minority of police officers.

ending deportations of gay and lesbian refugees to countries where they face persecution

It is inhumane for the Government to deport gay people back to the countries where they will be persecuted because of their sexuality. We believe that everyone should be treated equally under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification.

We have long rejected the argument that it would be acceptable for a lesbian or gay person to be deported to a homophobic state, as long as that individual behaved in a 'discreet' manner.

Liberal Democrats will not deport any refugees genuinely fleeing a country because sexual orientation or gender identification may mean that they are at risk of imprisonment, torture or even execution.

civil partnerships without borders

It is unfair that UK civil partnerships are not currently recognised in many foreign countries and no international framework is in place for recognition of registered partnerships between countries.

We will push for civil partnerships without borders – available in the UK to people regardless of gender; and for same-sex partnerships to be recognised throughout Europe and internationally.

broadening the transgender definition

Labour continues to display complete ignorance of the complexities of the spectrum of gender identity. During the passage of the Equality Bill, it showed relentless and ill-informed determination to keep as one of the protected characteristics ‘gender reassignment’ rather than ‘gender identity’.

Throughout this process, Liberal Democrats consistently pushed for a broader definition of what it means to be transgender, based on how someone considers themselves rather than an expectation that they are seeking medical help. We will therefore change equality law to encompass this broader definition.

increase LGBT representation in Parliament

Even today, standing for elected office as an out lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender person can be challenging. This is reflected in the fact that just 2% of MPs in the current House of Commons are openly gay.

Since 2008 DELGA, the Liberal Democrats’ internal organisation, has been committed to promoting the policies of the party through its ‘Out to Win’ peer networking organisation for LGBT Liberal Democrat candidates at every level – from Parish Council to the European Parliament.

Liberal Democrats will continue to encourage more openly gay and transgender people to stand for Parliament. We will also introduce the Single Transferable Vote electoral system which allows voters to choose between candidates of the same party as well as between parties, and delivers results proportionate to votes cast. The use of this system internationally has been proven to increase representation of minorities such as women, ethnic minorities and LGBT communities.



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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