



# Liberal Democrat **policies for women**



change that works **for you**

BUILDING A FAIRER BRITAIN



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It's a scandal that women still get paid less than men in Britain today; that despite the fact women are still far more likely to take responsibility for childcare and looking after elderly relatives, we don't have flexible arrangements to help them balance work and home; that women still feel under threat from crime on their streets; and that the pressure women feel over how to look and how to behave - compounded by the media - has got worse instead of better.

We will make Britain fair for women. We'll make parental leave interchangeable between mothers and fathers. We'll crack down on sex discrimination at work with name-blind job application forms. We'll stop advertisers secretly airbrushing pictures to convince everyone their products can work miracles. And we'll introduce common sense changes to help protect women from violence, like making sure night buses let you off between stops if it's closer to home.

**Here we outline our key policies to build a fairer Britain for women:**

- Shared parental leave
- More flexible working
- Cutting income tax
- Mandatory fair pay audits for every company
- Name-blind job application forms to end sex discrimination
- Honesty in advertising – regulation of airbrushing
- More police and safer journeys home

Only the Liberal Democrats are committed to change that works for women.

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

## shared parental leave

This country lags behind other countries when it comes to supporting parents to spend meaningful time with their newborn baby. When a baby is born, the mother gets a year's leave and the father gets just two weeks. That's unfair: it means the mother has to take the lion's share of responsibility, even if she and her partner want to share things equally.

Liberal Democrats will reform the existing 12 months statutory maternity leave to allow mums and dads to share the time between them so they can arrange family life in the way that suits them best.

## more flexible working

The right to request flexible working cannot currently be made for any other reason than certain parental or caring responsibilities. However, there are many valid reasons why someone may wish to work flexibly, for example to undertake voluntary work.

As we move away from the nine-to-five routine, many employers believe that flexible working makes good business sense. That is why Liberal Democrats will give all employees the right to request flexible working. Like now, employers' rights to turn down a request will remain unchanged if the nature of the work or the needs of the business do not make flexible working possible.

## cutting income tax

Millions of women work part-time or on low wages, and don't get a fair deal on tax. The poorest families pay a higher proportion of their income in tax than the richest. Liberal Democrats will ensure that you do not pay 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 on low incomes from having to pay any income tax at all.

The change will be paid for by introducing a mansion tax, closing loopholes that benefit the wealthy and making sure airlines pay for the pollution they cause.

## mandatory fair pay audits for every company

It is simply unfair that nearly 40 years after the Equal Pay Act, we still live in a society where for every pound earned by men, women will take home less than 85 pence for the same work. So while the pay gap has narrowed, more progress is needed.

To stamp out discrimination, Liberal Democrats will ensure that every company that employs more than 100 people will have its pay arrangements examined with an Equal Pay Audit.

Under these proposals, companies will be required to compare the pay of men and women doing equal work. If any pay gaps are identified that cannot be satisfactorily explained on grounds other than gender, the company will be required to produce plans to eliminate them, giving everyone a fair deal.

## name-blind job application forms

It's too easy for women – as well as men, or people from ethnic minorities – to be cut out of the job application process right at the start because their gender or background is clear from the name on their CV or application form.

Liberal Democrats will ensure that name-blind applications will apply to all written job applications in firms that employ more than 100 people. Application forms and CVs will use a simple means of identification such as a national insurance number.

Employers will not be able to include questions intended to reveal the gender, age or race of an applicant. This policy already works in organisations which use standardised application forms and remove personal details.

## honesty in advertising – regulation of airbrushing

Some adverts are ridiculous. The models have been airbrushed so much it gives a completely unfair representation of what the product can do. More worryingly, the constant bombardment of these unrealistic images has been shown to lead to body image problems for women and girls.

Liberal Democrats want to inject some realism into the media's portrayal of men and women, challenging the idea that nothing less than perfection will do. We believe that advertisers should have to state clearly whether they've used airbrushing, rather than wait for objections from an Advertising Standards Authority complaints procedure that is not fit for purpose.

We also want to work with industry regulators and professionals to ensure that advertising aimed at under-16s does not use altered and enhanced images.

## more police and safer journeys home

Walking home late at night can be intimidating and dangerous. But with bus stops often very far apart, that long walk home gets even longer.

Liberal Democrats believe that at night, you should be able to ask the driver to let you off between stops, so you're as close to home as possible. This would be developed through local partnerships involving the local authority, passenger groups, passenger transport executives/agencies, the police and local operators. It's a small change but it could make a real difference.

Labour wants to throw away more than half a billion pounds on wasteful and ineffective ID cards. For the same amount of money we can afford to employ 3,000 extra police, which will do far more to reduce crime and the fear of crime.



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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