



Liberal Democrat **policies for students and young people**



change that works **for you**

BUILDING A FAIRER BRITAIN



Liberal Democrats will make young people a top priority. We'll act quickly to support those out of work learn new skills and find a new job. And we'll make going to university affordable for all.

Liberal Democrats will make young people a top priority. We'll act quickly to support those out of work learn new skills and find a new job. We'll fund more college courses and apprenticeships to create opportunities and help young people get ahead. And we'll make going to university affordable for all.

Labour's recession has hit a lot of people hard. But young people have been dealt a particularly huge blow. Hundreds of thousands of 18–24 year-olds are out of work, and many graduates are leaving university only to find they can't get a job and are facing years of paying back enormous debts.

It isn't fair. Young people, just starting out in life, should be excited about the future ahead. But instead, many are worried about their prospects and struggling to get by. It isn't fair that their futures have been mortgaged by a reckless government, and that they are paying the price for mistakes they didn't make.

We are the only party that is committed to scrapping tuition fees. There is a review of tuition fees due to be published after the election and neither of the other parties have made any commitment not to raise them – so debts could get even higher. Only the Liberal Democrats will cut debt by phasing out fees throughout the next Parliament.

Our key policies are:

- Scrapping university tuition fees
- A fair National Bursary scheme
- Better access to vocational qualifications
- Helping young people now
- Fair tax and pay
- Fair votes

We understand how frustrated and betrayed young people feel. Only Liberal Democrats will deliver the change that works for them.

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

scrapping university tuition fees

University is getting more and more expensive. To get a degree, young people are saddled with thousands of pounds of debt when it is already tough enough to get a job, get on the housing ladder and make ends meet. The grant and bursary system is incredibly complex and money is unfairly distributed.

That is why Liberal Democrats are committed to scrapping tuition fees and have a financially responsible plan to phase them out over six years. We are the only party which believes university education should be free and admissions based on ability not bank balance. We will therefore also abolish fees for part-time students studying for a first undergraduate level degree. This does not mean that universities will lose funding, as the income they currently receive as a result of fees will continue to be paid by the government.

In our first year in Government, no student in their final year would have to pay fees, meaning future graduates will have their fee debt slashed by over £3k. By the end of a Parliament, only first years would have to pay fees – and these would be scrapped in the sixth year of a Liberal Democrat Government. We are also opposed to raising the cap on tuition fees

a fair national bursary scheme

Paying rent, food bills and other living costs is really hard for many students, particularly now that they are building up thousands of pounds of debt because of tuition fees. We will create a National Bursary scheme to give more financial help to those students from less well-off backgrounds and to give a greater incentive to young people to study so-called shortage subjects like physics.

We will reform the existing bursary scheme so that instead of being assessed on the basis of each university separately, the funding is allocated to each university on a per-student basis. This will mean bursary money will be distributed fairly. We will also use the bursary scheme to attract students into shortage subjects. The list of strategic subjects would be determined on the basis of independent advice from bodies such as the Royal Society and the British Academy. We will consult on how the bursary money can best be split between students studying shortage subjects and those from less well-off backgrounds.

better access to vocational qualifications

An academic university education isn't suitable for everyone, but it is vital that all young people have the opportunity to improve their skills and get higher-level qualifications. That is why Liberal Democrats will fund 15,000 additional Foundation Degrees in our first year in government. These practical courses combine study with work-place learning, giving students a real opportunity to learn the skills to help them get a job future.

This proposal will put local Further Education colleges at the forefront in providing Higher Education opportunities. Examples of such courses include computing, civil engineering, ports and logistics.

Employers, already struggling under the pressures of the recession are expected to pay the off-the-job training costs of their apprentices if they are over 18. We will fully fund these courses so that employers aren't left out of pocket and more young people can be trained on the job.

helping young people now

Young people are being hit the hardest by the shrinking jobs market; more than 700,000 18–24 year olds are now unemployed.

Liberal Democrats will help young people who are unemployed gain the skills and experience to move back in to work. We will make a promise to young people that they will not spend more than 90 days on Jobseekers' Allowance before they get more training, education, an internship or a place on a work programme.

Work programmes, like the Flexible New Deal, can include anything from debt and housing advice, to support with job searching and CV writing, or to work placements and training with extra support.

Young people will also be able to get valuable work experience because we will create a paid internship scheme. Interns will be paid a 'training allowance' of £55 a week – £5 more than Jobseekers' Allowance. This will help employers who want to offer young people work experience but cannot afford to pay them. Young people will be able to take part for up to 3 months and receipt will be dependent on attendance.

We will also increase the Adult Learning Grant which is a means-tested benefit for 18–24 year-olds studying their first level 2 or 3 qualifications – GCSE or A Level equivalents. We will increase the payments by £15 a week to £45 to provide young people who are eligible with a real choice between improving their skills and claiming Jobseekers' Allowance.

fair tax and pay

We will raise the threshold at which people start paying income tax from current levels to £10,000. This will make a real difference to young people starting work and mean that they won't pay any income tax on the first £10k they earn. This will save them up to £700 a year.

Young people earning the National Minimum Wage are paid less than others doing the same job. We believe that wages should reflect the role of the job and the skills required by the individual, not their age. We will therefore equalise the National Minimum Wage across all ages.

fair votes

It is unfair that people can be going to work and paying income tax but have no say in how those taxes are spent. We will give young adults the right to vote at 16. At the moment, levels of political participation by young people are extremely low. We believe that allowing people to vote at an earlier age will encourage them to participate in elections throughout their lives and develop a civic awareness. Under the present system, some people do not have the opportunity to vote in a General Election until they are 23.



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.

Published & promoted by Chris Fox on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, both at 4 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NB
www.libdems.org.uk Design and printed by APDA, www.apda-london.com