

# A Child Maintenance Service That Works For Children

Every child has a legal right to be supported financially by both their parents. Child maintenance payments are vital for the well-being of children from separated families, particularly single parent families.

Yet still, around half of children in separated families, 1.8 million children, receive no support from their non-resident parent.

Child maintenance payments are primarily an agreement between the parents but in some cases the Child Maintenance Service will become involved to ensure payments are being made. But **the service is not working as it should**.

A National Audit Office review into the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) in March 2022 stated that the work of the CMS has “not, so far, increased the number of effective child maintenance arrangements across society”. And the Department for Work and Pensions **upholds more complaints** for every 1,000 customers on child maintenance than any other area.

**Service charges for Collect and Pay**, the service operated by CMS, are grossly unfair, penalising the parent receiving funds for the unwillingness of the other parent to pay.

Withholding or artificially reducing child maintenance payments is being used as a form of **economic abuse**. Some survivors find it especially difficult to obtain the evidence necessary to get the CMS to increase the amount their abuser has to pay.

The formula used to determine maintenance payments does not accurately reflect the **true cost of raising a child**.

For many people, including survivors of domestic abuse, using the statutory child maintenance system is **not a matter of choice – it is a matter of safety**. Yet still, the Government has no strategy to improve the CMS and seems incapable of retrieving payments from parents that refuse to pay.

That’s why, today, Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy for a Child Maintenance Service that works for children:

- A full **review and reform of the Child Maintenance Service** to ensure it works for all children and parents.
- The **removal of the 4% charge for receiving parents** using the Collect and Pay service as well as the initial £20 charge to be enrolled onto Collect and Pay.
- **Review the formula used to determine maintenance payments** to better reflect parents’ circumstances, such as the age of their children and their differing needs.
- **Guidance on child maintenance payments to survivors of domestic abuse** to be written into law, including direction on extracting payment from

those using payments as a form of ongoing coercive control.

Read the motion in full

All children deserve to be properly supported by their parents. Child maintenance payments are vital for the well-being of children. Liberal Democrats will keep campaigning to reform the Child Maintenance Service so it works for children.

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## Protecting Human Rights

The European Convention on Human Rights protects British people's rights and freedoms.

The convention has strong British roots, counting Winston Churchill as a key architect and the UK as the first country to formally ratify it.

Yet the **Conservatives are putting these protections and our global reputation on the line.**

The only country to have left the convention is Russia. But Conservatives like Suella Braverman are pushing for us to join the rogue state. Their failed ideological approach risks undermining the Good Friday agreement and further undermining our relationship with our European neighbours.

**Liberal Democrats have always led the way in working to protect human rights laws from Conservative attacks,** and we're not backing down this time.

Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed a new policy calling on the Government to unequivocally commit to staying in the European Convention on Human Rights, and to ensure that all UK legislation is compliant with the Convention.

We will continue to protect the rights of vulnerable people in the UK and around the world against these deplorable Conservative attacks.

Read our policy in full

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## [Wendy Chamberlain Keynote Speech](#)

In her speech, Wendy called for taxpayer-funded handouts for disgraced former ministers to be scrapped, as analysis reveals £530,000 was paid out in ministerial severance payments over the past year.

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## [Standing Strong with Ukraine](#)

Liberal Democrats continue to stand behind President Zelensky and the whole of Ukraine. This Conference, we have been honoured to have Kira Rudik – Ukrainian MP and leader of our sister party, Holos – with us. Her immense courage and leadership has been an inspiration to us all. We must support her, and the Ukrainian people.

**So just as when Russia first invaded Ukraine, Britain must continue to support the Ukrainian people as they face down aggression and fight back.**

We welcome the decision of the UK Government to supply Ukraine with Challenger 2 tanks, and train F16 fighter pilots, which Liberal Democrats had called for. We call on the Government to **continue to help arm Ukraine**, including by providing longer-range precision weapons.

It is vital that we continue to **encourage our allies** to do all they can to support Ukraine. To this end, the UK should establish formal cooperation mechanisms on foreign and security issues with the EU and NATO.

We must also **seek to isolate Russia like the rogue state it is**. After over a year of Liberal Democrat pressure, the Government has finally acted to

proscribe the Wagner Group, making anyone engaging with them, anywhere in the world, in violation of UK law. The Government must now work to make the case with our allies that they should follow suit.

The UK Government must not rest on its laurels while Putin's cronies continue to evade accountability. It's time for an **economic retaliation package** – starting by closing down the lucrative loopholes that funnel Putin's illegal wealth to his dwindling front line.

The UK Government is still yet to publish the review of golden visas – which was commissioned over four years ago. **Putin's cronies have treated this country as their playground for too long** – it's beyond time to kick them out.

The Liberal Democrats are steadfast in our commitment to supporting Ukraine, isolating Russia, and upholding the values of justice and accountability. **We stand with President Zelensky and the Ukrainian people.**

Ukraine can win. Ukraine must win.

Read the motion in full

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## [Tackling the Housing Crisis](#)

England's housing market is profoundly unfair, with a secure home becoming increasingly impossible for millions of people, especially the young, less well off and ethnic minorities.

Successive governments have pursued policies to benefit homeowners, without considering the impact on those without property.

**A fair deal is needed for housing, which provides for the needs of everyone,** not just homeowners, and meets the aspirations of millions of younger people and the less well off to have the security that older generations and the wealthy enjoy.

**Liberal Democrats believe in taking action to tackle the housing crisis.** We're calling for significantly more homes to be built every year, including significantly more social homes. The UK simply hasn't built enough social

housing for years, while what we do have has been sold off without replacement.

Liberal Democrats already have a history of sustainably delivering homes, working in partnership with the local community. In Portsmouth, Cumbria and Kingston, Liberal Democrat councils are building thousands of new council and housing association homes. York City Council, when under Liberal Democrat leadership, set in place a programme to deliver hundreds of new zero carbon council houses.

Local authorities need greater powers to **tackle the excesses of big developers**, including ending land banking, as well as being able to build more homes themselves.

**Renters need a fair deal** including finally ending no-fault evictions, extending the length of tenancies and ensuring rent can only increase by a fair amount each year.

And if we believe we need to tackle the climate crisis, **we need a long-term programme to insulate our homes**, to end fuel poverty, cut energy bills and slash emissions. New homes must also be built to zero-carbon standards, ensuring they are good for the pocket as well as the climate.

Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy to tackle the housing crisis. Liberal Democrats are calling for:

- A **national target for building social homes**, aiming for 150,000 a year by the end of the next parliament. With new powers for local authorities to build their own social and affordable housing.
- A ten year emergency programme to **insulate Britain's homes** as well as new standards to **ensure new homes are warm, cheap to heat and produce minimal emissions**.
- **Ensuring developers build appropriate infrastructure** needed for new housing developments.
- **Abolishing leaseholds for residential properties** and effectively ending ground rents by cutting them to a nominal fee.
- **Introducing a fair deal for renters**, including longer default tenancies, rent smoothing over the course of a tenancy and banning no fault evictions.
- New powers for local authorities to **control and manage second homes** and holiday lets.
- **Expansion of Neighbourhood Planning**, more democratic engagement in Local Plans, reforming the Land Compensation Act to ensure land can be bought at a fair price and extending the Liberal Democrat proposed Commercial Landowner Levy to land with planning permission, but not yet built on.
- Building **10 new garden cities** to help tackle the housing crisis.

Read the motion in full

The Liberal Democrats will create a fair deal for housing. Taking on the big developers, delivering new homes, improving renters' rights and protecting our environment – together we can tackle the housing crisis.

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