

# Fixing Fast Fashion: A Sustainable Path Forward

The allure of fast fashion has led to a pervasive cycle of consumption that not only affects our wallets but also the planet. With the fashion industry accounting for a staggering 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, the need for a radical transformation is undeniable.

As we indulge in the latest trends, our planet pays the price – from water pollution caused by dyeing to the proliferation of microplastics from synthetic fabrics.

In the UK alone, the wastefulness of the fashion industry is evident, with over 800,000 tonnes of fabric waste produced in 2016. Astonishingly, only 1% of this waste is recycled, leaving a detrimental footprint on our environment.

And the fast fashion industry has been linked to unethical labour practices and modern slavery, tarnishing the appeal of the garments we wear.

**Liberal Democrats are leading the charge for change. We recognise the urgency to reduce pollution, curtail environmental damage, and transform the way fashion operates.**

This new policy, passed by our members today, sets out a strategy for a more sustainable fashion industry:

**Reduce:** Extending the virgin plastics tax to textile products, to incentivise the recycling of synthetic fibres. And increasing research and development investment in designs that minimise synthetic fibre emissions.

**Reuse:** Introducing tax incentives to encourage the reuse of clothing, nurturing a culture of thrift and sustainability.

**Recycle:** Banning on incineration and landfilling of textiles that could be used or recycled and introducing a new 1p levy on garments to fund local recycling facilities

We would also **make clothing more affordable:** including clothing costs in benefit rate calculations, acknowledging the essential role of clothing in daily life. And ensuring school uniforms remain affordable, relieving parents of undue financial burden.

Read the motion in full

## Putting Sustainability at the Heart of Fashion

We cannot ignore the environmental crisis exacerbated by the fashion industry. It's time to break free from the grip of fast fashion and embrace a sustainable path forward.

Liberal Democrats champion not only a greener future but a more equitable one, where the fashion industry takes responsibility for its impact on both the planet and people. Together, we can weave a fabric of sustainability that reflects our values and safeguards the planet for generations to come.

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## [Making Climate Change Action Inclusive](#)

Climate change stands as one of the defining challenges of our era, demanding a united effort across all fronts, including individual action. Yet, in our pursuit of a sustainable future, we must ensure that no one is left behind.

While there have been many progressive steps in reducing climate change in recent years, efforts to consider the specific needs of disabled and older people have often been missed.

**This inaccessibility not only hampers disabled individuals' ability to contribute to the fight against climate change, but also perpetuates their feelings of exclusion from society.** Striving for equality and addressing the climate crisis are interwoven objectives that must be pursued hand in hand.

Single-use plastics used in Health and Social Care contexts create millions of tonnes of plastic waste a year, much of which will go to landfill or be incinerated.

While there are some alternatives to single-use plastics in equipment used for medical, social care and accessibility equipment, many are unavailable, unaffordable or impractical for some people.

Many older and disabled people have experienced difficulties with different climate change or pollution prevention strategies such as the banning of plastic straws, pedestrianisation, cycle lanes and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, which often fail to take their needs into account.

Many transport alternatives to private cars remain inaccessible or unaffordable for disabled and older people, especially where they require adaptive or alternate provision.

Liberal Democrats have passed new policy today to make the fight against

climate change accessible to all:

- Allocating 3% of government **research and development funding on environmental and anti-climate change** projects centred around bringing benefits and changes to the health and social care sectors.
- And a further 2% to projects that will support disabled people to live more **environmentally friendly lives**.
- Requirements on NHS trusts, care agencies, residential facilities and local authorities to develop strategies to **reduce plastic use**.
- Introducing schemes to support **accessible environmentally friendly transport** options such as tricycles or handcycles.
- Ensuring all **public transport** and infrastructure companies make their provision completely accessible by 2027.
- Requiring the government to **work with disabled people** to mitigate any negative impact on them from reducing emissions, improving public transport and improving public spaces.

Read the motion in full

The imperative for inclusive climate action arises from the disproportionate impact of climate change on disabled individuals. Regrettably, they are often excluded from discussions shaping our response to this crisis, leading to policies that inadvertently perpetuate inequalities. From urban planning that neglects disabled accessibility to the removal of parking spaces for cycle lanes, these oversights hinder their day-to-day lives.

This inequitable approach has ripple effects, hampering our quest for climate neutrality. With over 10 million disabled individuals in the UK, excluding them from active climate change engagement poses a significant obstacle to achieving our net-zero goals.

By championing inclusive climate change policies, **we stand not only for a more equitable society but also for a sustainable future** that embraces and uplifts every individual, leaving no one behind.

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## [Restoring Trust in Politics](#)

Ever woken up and had an odd feeling of deja vu?

Surely there can't be yet another Conservative scandal dominating the headlines?

From Suella Braverman to BBC Chair Richard Sharp; from Nadhim Zahawi to Nadine Dorries, **it feels like the sleaze and standards scandals never stop.**

The promises of "integrity, accountability, and professionalism" made by Rishi Sunak lie in tatters. He refused to stand up for Parliament when Boris Johnson lied to the Commons and the public. He refused to sack his pals Dominic Raab, Nadhim Zahawi and Gavin Williamson until he had no other choice.

The Conservative Party has torn up the standards that should underpin public life in the UK. **The very values of integrity and accountability that are fundamental to the functioning of our democracy are being discarded by those in power.**

Today, Liberal Democrat members have passed new policy to restore standards in public life and uphold the principles of transparency, accountability, and integrity.

**Ethics Adviser:** The Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests should be truly independent. This means they should have the authority to initiate investigations without requiring the Prime Minister's permission. And Parliament should be granted the power to appoint the adviser if the government fails to do so.

**Ministerial Code:** Enshrining the code in law to strengthen its provisions and hold Prime Ministers accountable for changes they want to make.

**Ex-Prime Ministers:** Only allowing former Prime Ministers the £115,000-a-year allowance if they have served in the role for more than a year.

**Anti-Sleaze Training:** Ensure that Ministers receive annual training to prevent further standards scandals.

**Public Appointments:** Establish a rigorous and independent process for public appointments like the BBC Chair – involving a Select Committee hearing and vote.

**Register of Interests:** To enhance transparency, the Ministerial Register of Interests should be brought in line with the House of Commons equivalent register, with more frequent publication.

**Rishi Sunak:** The Prime Minister should issue a public apology for the Conservative sleaze scandals that have eroded public trust and deliver on his promise of integrity, accountability and professionalism.

Read the motion in full

**All too often with these Conservatives, it feels like one rule for us, no rules for them.** It's time to show them the door and get on with the work of restoring standards in our public life.

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## **Ending Period Poverty**

Periods are not just a monthly inconvenience, but they can be painful, unpleasant and expensive.

And it is the cost, perhaps the most straightforward of things to address, which is putting millions of families under unnecessary strain in the midst of a cost of living crisis.

For those already grappling with economic barriers like the gender pay gap and 'motherhood penalty', the estimated lifetime costs of £5000 can be overwhelming.

There are an estimated 2.8 million women and girls coping with period poverty across the UK. A number that has only grown thanks to the cost of living crisis.

That is not acceptable. We can fix it – and we must.

**Period products are not a luxury but a basic necessity.** Nobody should find themselves unable to access the products they need simply because of their financial circumstances.

But the Conservative Government's current provisions for free period products in England fall woefully short of the mark. These products are currently available only in schools, leaving countless others without support.

Liberal Democrats are committed to taking action, standing up against period poverty, and working towards a more equitable future.

Our new policy, endorsed by Liberal Democrat members today, outlines a **comprehensive plan to improve access to free period products** across England, eradicating period poverty and fostering a more inclusive society.

- **Right to Access:** Introducing a right in England to access a choice of free period products, ensuring that no one is left behind.
- **Wider Availability:** Expanding the reach of free menstrual products to vital institutions such as homeless shelters, women's refuges, foodbanks, NHS GP surgeries, and universities.
- **Broader access:** Placing a duty on local authorities and education

providers to make period products freely available in their buildings, and ensuring they have the necessary government funding to do so.

- **Inclusivity:** Improving access for marginalised groups, including people with disabilities, asylum seekers, homeless individuals, and those in remote areas, to ensure they have improved access to free period products.

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All of this will be made possible by reinstating the public health grant. The grant has been steadily reduced by the Conservatives year on year. Liberal Democrats would reinstate the grant to a minimum of its 2015 per capita level, in real terms.

We will also emphasise the importance of education around menstruation to change attitudes and dismantle stigma. By addressing this issue at its core, we can create a society that is not only period-poverty-free but also informed and understanding.

Whether on combating violence against women and girls, expanding childcare and parental leave, ending the gender price gap, or tackling period poverty, I'm proud that Liberal Democrats are continuing to lead the way on issues affecting women.

**So please, join us in the fight to end period poverty** – and together, we can pave the way for a more just and inclusive future.

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## **A Better Start in Life for Every Child**

A child's first few months are crucial for their development. Studies show that children from poorer backgrounds are already months behind their classmates on their first day of school.

**So early years education is the best possible investment we can make in the future.**

It matters for parents too. Well-paid parental leave helps parents to spend more time with their kids. Affordable and flexible childcare gives parents choice over their lives. It helps them to return to work if and when they

want to, and it fights against the huge gender pay gap.

**Liberal Democrats have long been fighting for a fair deal for families.** We increased the number of free hours when we were in government and proposed a substantial, well-funded expansion of high-quality childcare in our 2019 manifesto.

Rishi Sunak doesn't understand what families want. He wants to do childcare on the cheap, cutting ratios and underfunding nurseries by billions. Parents won't thank him for more free childcare if their local nursery can't afford to stay open.

So Liberal Democrats will fix the mess he's created. We will pay childcare providers properly and ensure the most disadvantaged families benefit.

Plus, we'll revolutionise parental leave, by doubling pay and helping more families, particularly dads, to take more time off to be with their children.

## **Our Vision: Transforming Parental Leave and Early Years Education**

Today, Liberal Democrat members have backed a new policy developed by our expert working group to transform parental leave and early years education:

### **Childcare and Early Years Education**

- Re-affirming our long-term commitment to delivering free, full-time childcare for all children from age two and those with working parents from nine months.
- Reviewing payment rates for childcare providers to ensure they genuinely reflect the costs of delivering high-quality childcare and early years education.
- Investing to close the attainment gap by:
  - Giving disadvantaged children aged two to four with an additional five free hours a week.
  - Tripling the Early Years Pupil Premium to £1,000 per year.
- Boosting the number of childminders by simplifying regulation whilst retaining high standards.
- Developing a career strategy for childcare staff, including a comprehensive training program so that most childcare staff working with children aged two to four have a relevant Early Years qualification.

### **Parental Leave & Support**

- Giving all workers, including self-employed parents, a day-one right to parental leave and pay.
- Giving all families up to a year of paid parental leave. Each parent will get six weeks of use-it-or-lose-it leave, with 46 weeks of parental leave to share between themselves as they choose.
- Doubling parental pay (after the initial six weeks) to £350 per week.
- Increasing paternity pay to 90% of earnings, with a cap for high-earners.

## **Toddler Top-up**

- Introducing a new “toddler top-up”: an enhanced rate of Child Benefit for one-year-olds to give all parents extra support, no matter whether they decide to go back to work straight away or not.

## **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

- Providing extra funding for local councils to halve the amount that schools pay towards supporting the costs of a child with additional needs, from £6,000 to £3,000.
- Introducing a new National Body for SEND to fund support for children with very high needs, helping to end the postcode lottery in SEND provision.
- Emphasising identifying and supporting children with SEND in the new training programme for early years staff.

Liberal Democrats will provide families with childcare that is flexible, affordable and fair, transform childcare and boost SEND support, to give every child the best possible start in life.

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