

# Pride Month: fighting for equality across the United Kingdom

This month is Pride month. This year, June is also 50 years on from the pivotal Stonewall riots. **We've come a long way, yet still couples in Northern Ireland are still denied the right to marry the person that they love.**

Internationally, huge progress has been made when it comes to the rights and freedoms of LGBT+ people. Just this summer, Taiwan became the first place in Asia to legalise same-sex marriage while Botswana decriminalised homosexuality in a landmark ruling. But we still have so far to go. **In the UK many LGBT+ people still face a grim reality in which discrimination, both socially and in the eyes of the law, blights their everyday reality.** The shocking image of a young lesbian couple covered in blood having been subjected to violence on a bus in London this month was a stark reminder that bigotry and prejudice persist.

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That image made me sick to my stomach. **It also strengthened my resolve to fight for equality for all. We cannot let hate win.** It will not win. Liberal Democrats have always been clear that LGBT+ rights are human rights and that these rights are at the core of who we are as a party. It is why we pushed forward the amendment to repeal Section 28, it is why we legislated for same-sex marriage, and it is why we are now continuing to campaign for same-sex marriage to be expanded to Northern Ireland.

**The murder of journalist Lyra McKee was heart-breaking and deplorable.** This heinous act not only put the tensions in Northern Ireland into stark relief but also served as a painful reminder of this government's failure to roll out same-sex marriage to the whole of our country. After Lyra's murder, her partner spoke out, urging the Conservatives to ensure that couples in Northern Ireland can marry the person they love at home and have that marriage legally recognised, regardless of gender.

It is clear that Westminster must act to help give couples in Northern Ireland the rights and freedoms those in the rest of the UK have.

Frustratingly her calls, along with those by countless other campaigners, have so far fallen on deaf ears. **Earlier this year, I co-sponsored a Bill in Parliament that would bring same-sex marriage laws in Northern Ireland in line with those in England, Wales, and Scotland.** While I would prefer that local politicians in Belfast take this decision, with the collapse of the

Assembly it is clear that Westminster must act to help give couples in Northern Ireland the rights and freedoms those in the rest of the UK have.

Earlier this month Liberal Democrat Leader Vince Cable did a video for Pink News where he reiterated the Liberal Democrats' clear support for same-sex marriage in Northern Ireland. **I am proud to be in a party that has been unequivocal in our support for equality** and I know that whoever takes over from Vince as our party's next Leader will ensure that the fight for equality remains at the top of our agenda. **This Pride month, let's celebrate how far we've come, celebrate our sexual and gender diversity, but let's also recommit to tackling discrimination and prejudice wherever it exists.**

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## **Demand better for unpaid carers**

**In the UK currently seven million people are carers.** That is one in ten people and the figure is only rising as demographics change and people live longer with more disabilities and illnesses.

**Three in five of us will be carers at one point or another in our lives.**

That is why it is so important this week, Carers Week, that we understand and recognise the contribution carers make to society.

Carers are more likely to suffer with mental health and physical health problems. Young carers miss days of school. And carers are more likely to struggle financially and have lower rates of employment.

Yet in the UK one in three carers have missed out on benefits they are entitled to because they did not realise they could claim them.

**That is why I am using Carers Week to challenge the Conservative Government.** This week in the House of Lords I asked the Government what steps they are taking to ensure unpaid carers receive the support to which they are entitled.

**We need to be doing much more for unpaid carers across the UK.**

The Liberal Democrats have also repeatedly called for the Carer's Allowance to be raised and for the number of hours required to qualify to be reduced. We would also make it a legal duty for the NHS to identify carers to ensure unpaid carers have access to support and flexible visiting hours. We would develop a Carer's Passport to ensure carers are informed of their NHS rights.

Liberal Democrats demand better for unpaid carers. We all need to be doing

much more to support some of the most hardworking and undervalued people in our society.

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## [Chuka Umunna joins the Liberal Democrats](#)

Leaving a political party is never an easy decision – nor one that one makes lightly. I know that from my own experience nearly 40 years ago!

**Tonight, Chuka Umunna announced that he has joined the Liberal Democrats.**

And I am delighted to welcome him to our party, as the Liberal Democrat MP for Streatham.

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## [Join one of our new working groups!](#)

We are currently looking for members for three new policy working groups on the future of work, the natural environment and utilities.

The working groups will take evidence and prepare policy proposals to submit to Autumn Conference 2020.

Working group members are expected to attend meetings (in person or by dialling in), input their ideas for policy, and play a role in drafting the policy paper. The position is voluntary.

**The deadline for applications is 1pm on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July.**

You can find out more about the working groups, and apply here:

[Find out more](#)

[Apply now](#)

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## [We're looking for volunteers for our new disciplinary process](#)

As a Party we depend on our volunteers – members like you – to run things. We are introducing the new Liberal Democrat Disciplinary Procedure this Summer and need members to volunteer to make it work.

As part of the new disciplinary procedures we need teams of members to volunteer for the four roles that need filling. These are Adjudicator, Investigator, Independent Person (Mediator), and Party Mentor.

### **Adjudicator**

An Adjudicator is an individual trained to assess the severity of a complaint and will sit on panels. Each complaints panel is made up of three adjudicators and they may impose sanctions on individuals who are deemed to have brought the Party into disrepute.

### **Investigator**

Investigators are trained to investigate complaints referred to them and are tasked with presenting the complaints they have investigated to a Complaints Panel. Investigators determine whether the complaints are serious enough to warrant such action.

### **Independent Person (Mediator)**

Independent Persons or Mediators are Party members with no personal connection to the event of conduct giving rise to a complaint to any of the individuals involved. They are appointed to provide independent advice to either the complainants, or to the person subject to a complaint. They are trained in mediating disputes in the circumstances where the parties can reach an informal solution.

### **Party Mentor**

A Party Mentor is an individual identified by the Party to provide personal support to the person subject to a complaint, in a similar manner to the support provided by the Pastoral Care Officer to complainants.

Can you help with these roles? The workload may be intense for short periods but should not be high across the year. You may be asked to help with cases anywhere in the UK. We will make intensive use of digital communication methods to reduce unnecessary travel. We will also provide training to

refresh or increase your skills.

If you would like to find out more or to volunteer for any of these roles further please click here:

[I'll volunteer](#)

It is important that everyone in the Party, and in wider society, has confidence in the way we deal with problems in the Party, so please help us to run a robust system.

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