



Older People

Life isn't fair for older people in Britain. 2.5m pensioners are living below the bread line. Because the link with earnings was broken back in the 1980s, the basic pension isn't enough to live on, but to get more money pensioners have to fill out complex, demeaning forms. Millions struggle to pay their fuel bills, and tens of thousands have to sell their home to pay for care every year. Liberal Democrats will change things for older people. We believe everyone deserves a pension that's enough to live on and fair treatment from government, public services and business alike. We believe older people should not be forced out of work by an arbitrary deadline, but should choose when they want to retire. We will restore the earnings link for pensions; stop unfair energy bills for older people; cut taxes, with up to £100 extra for all pensioners; and keep open the Post Offices retired people so often depend on.

Restore the earnings link immediately. It is unfair that as each year goes by, pensioners slip further behind. It is only fair that, at times when the country is getting richer, retired people share the benefit. We will restore the link between the basic state pension and earnings. We will use increases in average earnings, prices or 2.5%, whichever is higher, to determine the increase in the state pension so pensioners' living standards finally improve.

Fair energy prices. Nearly 37,000 people died from the cold last winter, most of them elderly. Energy bills are too expensive for too many people, especially pensioners who often spend all day at home. We will force energy companies to introduce "social tariffs", lower than their other prices, for everyone struggling to make ends meet.

Scrap the default retirement age. It is unfair to assume that just because someone has reached a particular age, they are not fit to do a particular job. People should be judged on their ability to do their work not their age. We would remove compulsory retirement ages.

No-one to pay tax on the first £10,000 they earn. We will make sure no-one pays tax on the first £10,000 of their income. Pensioners will get up to £100 extra in their pockets. The change will be paid for by a new mansion tax, closing loopholes that benefit the wealthy and ensuring polluters pay for the damage they cause.

Keep Post Offices open. Pensioners and older people often rely on the Post Office, but Labour and the Conservatives before them have closed down more than 10,000. It simply isn't fair. We will stop Labour's closure programme and create new sources of revenue for Post Offices like a Post Bank so we can afford to keep them open for good.

A review of social care. The long-term funding system for adult social care in England is not fit for purpose and funding for services is likely to become more difficult in the future. We want a cross-party commission set up to reach a consensus on social care and sort this problem out once for all. Our preference is for a partnership model, where the state and the individual both contribute, with a guaranteed contribution to the costs of care. Liberal Democrats will also cancel Labour's plans for "free care at home" as they are so badly funded they will lead to cuts in social care support for many vulnerable people or an increase in council tax. We will instead spend the money instead providing a weeks respite to 1 million carers who work more than 50 hours a week.