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The Newsletter for Liberal Democrat Disability Association Members & Supporters

Who's Doing What in LDDA



Our Membership Secretary and former chair, Gemma Roulston, has been selected as a candidate for the local elections in May. Gemma says: "I am standing for election to the new Unitary Authority of East Surrey. Elections will be on 7th May. The new local government will take full control of everything (schools, recycling, roads etc) on 1st April 2027. I want to improve social care, SEND and the environment."

If anyone is in the East Surrey area and would like to help Gemma with her campaign please get in touch. (info@disabilitylibdems.org.uk)

From someone seeking election to our secretary, Anne Marie Curry, whose long service as a councillor was recognised recently when her fellow councillors of all parties chose her as Civic Mayor for a year. As LDDA keep pointing out, having mobility problems isn't a bar to being an effective councillor. It's obvious that the residents of North Ward in Darlington agree because they keep on electing her.

Anne Marie says:

"I had a wonderful year as Mayor. As well as many events in Darlington I was invited to other Mayors' events in the region. I chose to have my annual Mayor's dinner with a look-alike Queen band. It was a wonderful night, and many Mayors complimented me for the evening."



Take A Step

If you're now thinking that being a councillor sounds interesting there are LDDA members who are councillors and would be happy to talk with you about the highs and lows of campaigning and representing your community. Why not email info@disabilitylibdems.org.uk and find out more?

LDDA has a fund for small grants to help with the costs that are can be higher than for other candidates. E.G. you might need to phone more than most because you can't knock on many doors; you might need to use the bus more because you can't walk far. Only you will know, but if a small grant would make the difference between being a target seat candidate and a 'paper' candidate please do get in touch.



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Spring Conference motion submissions: post-viral illnesses and psychoactive research *by Jonah Weisz*

With the help of the *LDDA* exec, its members, and other supportive AOs including the *Young Liberals*, the *Lib Dem Health and Care Association*, and the *Lib Dem Psychoactive Policy Group*, we have drafted and submitted two policies to go before conference. Whilst neither was selected for Spring 2026, the Federal Policy Committee has requested we resubmit both for Autumn 2026, noting the extremely constrained timetable due to the presentation of the mental health working group's policy motion. Our policies were:

'A Fair Deal for those living with ME, Long Covid and related conditions'

Our motion, drafted with support from the wonderful *#ThereForME* co-founder Karen Hargrave and with input from the wider advocacy community, called for greater research funding and NHS support for patients with Infection-Associated Chronic Conditions. This included a policy that with the help of Tessa Munt MP we were able to get central-party sign off for, investing £100 million over the next five years to ensure research funding and care that reflect the conditions' economic footprint and prevalence. Tessa, who has also tabled several parliamentary debates on Long Covid and ME and now chairs the APPG on ME, coordinated all 72 MPs signing a letter to Wes Streeting expressing concern about the viability of the Government's delivery plan for combatting ME/CFS.

'Building a Holistic Liberal Democrat Psychoactives Policy'

With the support of the *Lib Dem Psychoactive Policy Group* and the *Centre for Evidence-Based Drug Policy*, we

drafted a robust motion calling on the Government to accept and commence implementation of all of the recommendations in the *Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs' 2023* report, "Consideration of Barriers to Research Part 2: Schedule 1 Controlled Drugs" to ensure that research is no longer obstructed by unnecessary bureaucracy - and likewise the recommendations of the *Health and Social Care Committee's 2023 "Drugs" report*. Physically disabled people and those living with mental health conditions deserve research into treatment to be unhindered by government regulation that is not fit for purpose, as identified by these reports and those of the



Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology. Likewise, those with physical conditions also deserve uninhibited access to breakthrough therapies that may ameliorate the psychological burden of navigating chronic health conditions. Nonetheless, Labour like the Conservative governments before it is dragging its feet on implementation.

We are proud that as a result of our efforts, we have seen the party move towards a shift its policy on psychoactive research in the upcoming

mental health working group policy paper that the *LDDA's* very own Gemma Roulston contributed to.

Externally to the Lib Dems, I continue to volunteer with *Psilocybin Access Rights* and the *Amanda Fielding Commission*, and I currently am working with the *Cambridge University Psychedelic Research Group* (which incorporates local NHS trusts) and *Clerkenwell Health* to pursue serotonergic Long Covid research for those with neurological symptoms.

Timms Review of Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

From long-standing member and a former chair of LDDA, **Phil Stevens**

Delighted to share that I've been appointed to the Steering Group of the Government's Timms Review of Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

Being invited into this process is both a responsibility and an opportunity I take seriously. I feel privileged to be working alongside Co-Chairs Dr Clenton Farquharson CBE, Sharron Brennan, Sir Stephen Timms MP, and a committed group of people with lived and professional expertise.

For me, this role is rooted in a simple principle: policy that affects disabled people must be shaped through coproduction with disabled people. I will be taking that commitment into every part of the review, ensuring the voices, experiences and priorities of D/deaf & disabled people are heard, respected and acted upon.

What makes this moment particularly significant is the government's explicit commitment to large-scale co-production at a national level. That is a meaningful shift in how welfare policy can and should be made. There is a lot we can learn from local and devolved examples of collaborative working, and I'm hopeful this review can set a new standard.

If you want to read more about the review there's more detail here:

<https://pipguide.co.uk/news-and-updates/stephen-timms-pip-review-2025-2026>

Watch out for any invitations to contribute your thoughts over the coming months.

And don't forget,

If you're not already a member of LDDA you can join very easily by going to our website, <https://www.disabilitylibdems.org.uk/join-us>

or email info@disabilitylibdems.org.uk and ask for a membership form to be emailed to you.

If you have any problems with the website please let us know by emailing.



News from Parliament



Lib Dem members of both Houses of Parliament are kept very busy working to modify Government proposals for legislation but they also spend many hours questioning and scrutinising the Government. A few items (not an exhaustive list) of particular interest to LDDA members since Autumn Conference:

Jonah has already mentioned the work done in the Commons on Long Covid, which has largely disappeared from the headlines but is still devastating for sufferers.

Keeping in Touch

Our website, <https://www.disabilitylibdems.org.uk>, is kept up to date with news of campaigns, debates in Parliament and more. Please do check regularly to see what's going on.

Facebook: We have a facebook group for members (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/149700901745741> or search for LDDA) where things can be discussed and questions can be asked and answered. It's a private group just for members of LDDA so it's not prone to the problems sometimes seen on social media. Some recent discussions have been around how to manage tactile paving near pedestrian crossings so that it serves the needs of those with sight loss but doesn't cause extra difficulties for those with mobility

Tim Farron raised the problems faced by young people with ADHD or autism who face long waits for diagnosis and proper support. Lisa Smart highlighted the problems faced by autistic adults looking for employment.

Members of the exec collaborated on having a written question asked in the Lords on the Access to Work programme:

To ask His Majesty's Government whether any people with disabilities applying to the Access for Work scheme have been waiting nine months or more for their assessment; why the time needed for an assessment to the Access to Work scheme rose from an average of 56.9 days for the period April 2024–February 2025 to 84.6 days in February 2025; what plans they have to reduce the waiting time for such assessments; and what are the implications for challenging willingness to work.

problems and the ongoing problems caused by pavement parking. It's also a place for sharing useful tips and hints, sharing relevant campaigns and petitions, and occasionally someone feels they just have to let off steam about a government policy or decision. Why not try it - if you don't find it helpful it's easy to leave it.

Conference stall, twice a year - we're there in the exhibition just waiting to talk to people who're interested in any aspect of what we do.

The AGM, usually in November or early December each year. It's online so no travel involved, and a chance to raise questions, put forward suggestions and generally chat about what's happening.