



The newsletter for Liberal Democrat Disability Association members and supporters.

A view from the Chair[s]

It's been a bit quiet since the last newsletter.



We have been approached by Isabelle Parasram, Vice President of the party and are trying to arrange a face to face meeting, but that hasn't happened yet. One of the things that I have managed to do for Isabelle, is forward some names of people who may be able to stand for us in any quick election, as representatives from a diversity group.



We have been also approached by Tahir Maher, chair of the English Party and are hoping to meet up with him at Bournemouth during the conference, even if it's just to make that initial contact.

Our membership has stayed more or less the same. We hope to gain more members at the forthcoming conference.

Gemma Roulston and Phil Stevens, LDDA Co-Chairs

Questions and Answers from the Leadership candidates

During the 2019 leadership election the LDDA executive posed 3 questions to both prospective candidates.

Here are the responses from our new Party Leader Jo Swinson and Ed Davey who has become Deputy Leader of the Party.

1. How will you encourage local parties to be more disability-inclusive in their activities, particularly with regards venue and literature accessibility?

Jo –

There really is no excuse for venues being used that aren't accessible, as Leader I would make it clear that local parties should only use venues for events and meetings that are accessible and encourage those who have had experiences that fall short of that to make complaints into HQ. However, it is not all about using a stick. I believe much more needs to be done to raise awareness about disabilities – visible and otherwise. The Liberal Democrats I know want to be as inclusive as possible but sometimes don't know how. That is why it is vital that the party takes the lead in arranging training sessions for local party leaders to develop their understanding about how to create more inclusive environments. Knowledge would then be cascaded at a local party level to ensure it is not just the responsibility of one person.

Ed –

I would ask the national party to issue guidelines and advice and work with LDDA, to drive this important agenda forward.

We have invested significantly in my own constituency office and try hard to ensure our meetings are in accessible places.

We sometimes – but regrettably not always – have produced FOCUS on tape for distribution via the local groups representing the visually impaired, but again we need to do more on this. Using technology to make our literature more accessible is something we should look to do as a party on a national and local level.

Ensuring disability inclusivity across the parties communications, policies and events must be prioritised - and that includes working to change culture and attitudes so that it is at the heart of our decision making.

2. How will you encourage disabled people to stand for election at all levels within the party and ensure they receive the support they need to carry out their work effectively?

Jo –

I am proud that we have a Conference Access Fund to help those with disabilities engage in the party's decision-making processes, but I want to ensure that those activists in the party are supported and encouraged to stand for election at all levels. This can be done by ensuring that we are vocal in our desire to see individuals from under-represented groups stand and as Leader I would be full-throated in my desire to see this. I have also campaigned with More United for the reinstatement of the Access to Elected Office Fund, which supports deaf and disabled candidates across all parties with the additional costs of standing for election. I do not believe it would be appropriate or effective to have a one-size-fits all model of support for individuals who decide they might be interested in standing. Each individual would have different needs which the party will need to be responsive to. Therefore, I would suggest that a one-on-one session is held between the individual and a member of the candidates team to create a tailor made plan that responds to the needs of the individual and ensure they have the best chance of success when they stand. I also appreciate that this support cannot and should not end at election and would fully support a formalised channel of communication where the elected representative is able to request support from the central party in order for them to fulfil their duties.

Ed –

Significantly improving the number of disabled people among our candidates and elected representatives must become a much more significant goal, with more reporting via the diversity team in HQ, and with more of a focus.

In Kingston Council, when we have elected councillors with disabilities, their impact on the local authority's policies and approach to disability has been marked – and as a father of a severely disabled son, I am extremely aware of the many challenges.

We may need to provide special training – both for candidates as well as other party members, including staff. I am a Trustee of a charity called Tourism for All, which tries both to help disabled people go on holiday and tries to provide training and best practice to businesses and employers in the tourist industry, so they can provide better facilities and service to people with disabilities –

Able! – The newsletter for Liberal Democrat Disability Association members and supporters

and we do that increasingly with online training modules: we should do something similar within our party.

3. What steps will you take to ensure that the specific experience and expertise contained in AOs and SAOs is utilised in policy development at parliamentary level?

Jo –

The Liberal Democrats are fortunate to have a wealth of talent and expertise in our AOs and SAOs. Whilst policy development sits within the party's policy working groups and is ultimately for Conference to decide on, parliamentarians inevitably have to respond quickly and confidently to Government policies or issues that arise this is where I believe the expertise of the AOs and SAOs is invaluable. As Leader I would ensure all our spokespeople make use of these groups by instituting a system whereby each AO and SAO appoint a parliamentary liaison officer whose contact details can be shared with the relevant spokesperson to ensure an agile and responsive communication channel is opened. It is undoubtedly true in areas such as disability policy, lived experience is crucial to making the right decisions and therefore parliamentarians should be able to access this information and perspective with speed and ease in order to ensure the Liberal Democrats remain relevant, credible and influential.

Ed –

I would be very keen to meet with all AOs and SAOs over time, to see if and how their goals can be represented within party policy. When it comes to disability, this would be an early priority. I am a Patron of the Disability Law Service and have been helping them with their campaign about the need for reasonable adjustments for carers of disabled people, and I would like to discuss this and other issues with LDDA, for example, the campaign for policy and progress on Changing Places toilets.

[Biography of a LDDA Exec Member](#)

Following on from on the Spring Newsletter

Poppy Hasted – Ordinary Executive Member, London Region

My name is Poppy Hasted and I live in South East London. I have a degree in Librarianship and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Law. I have two adult children.

Printed by NYPS Ltd. Published and Promoted by Liberal Democrats at Unit 12a Victoria Farm Estate, Water Lane, York, England, YO30 6PQ

Able! – The newsletter for Liberal Democrat Disability Association members and supporters

When I was able to work, I was an Information Officer with several different NGO Disability Groups and I now spend my time online, helping to people through Social Media as much. I have Secondary Progressive MS. I am now largely restricted to my bed but that doesn't stop me getting involved in Local life and Politics as much as I can. I'm not prepared to just lie here passively and have other people do all the work, I want to fight for what I believe in too. I don't have a specific role on the Exec but my particular interest is in sharing valuable information, in an accessible format, with as many people as possible through both websites and Information Leaflets. My aim is to de-mystify Lib Dem disability policy so that as many people as possible can understand what's happening, what we're about and what we want to do to help other Disabled People. I have already written and helped publish the Lib Dem leaflet on writing about and speaking to Disabled people and I want to help write and produce more leaflets. I like to chat and make friends so, if you want to talk, you can find me by searching on both Facebook and Twitter. Drop me a line and say hello – I'm quite friendly and I'd love to meet you

Your LDDA, Needs You!

Anyone willing to donate any of their valuable time, please let us know what sort of assistance you would be able to provide.

Small things such as spreading the word about the association and encouraging members in your local party and region to join – you don't have to be disabled to be a member.

Assisting with the stall at conferences, even for an hour or so, chatting to attendees about who we are and what we do. Writing content for newsletters, website and other publications. If there are any issues you feel we should research and campaign as a group – please let us know about them also.

Many hands make light work!

Our Vision:

A world where everyone affected by disability can live life to their full potential and secure the care, and support, they need.

<https://disabilitylibdems.org.uk/en/>