



Able!



The newsletter for Liberal Democrat Disability Association members and supporters.

Meet our new President, Stephen Lloyd

Stephen is the former MP for Eastbourne and a lifelong Disability Campaigner

First off: may I welcome you to this year's Lib Dem Annual Conference in Brighton and our LDDA conference newsletter. Brighton is a great town (not as good as Eastbourne of course, but I guess I would say that) and I'm sure it will be a positive and optimistic conference for all of us. Mind you if we as a party weren't positive and optimistic we wouldn't be liberals!

I've come to the conclusion it's part of our DNA despite adversity, and we've had plenty of that over the last few years.



Anyway - on the LDDA front - I'd like to thank the group for inviting me to become your President. I have been involved either personally, professionally or politically in the disability cause for many years. Being hard of hearing myself, since measles as a child, it's a daily reality I've had to manage as so many of you have. As a disability campaigner I go way back to the battle to secure the original DDA, and as a politician it's always been one of my priorities.

We have made giant strides over the last twenty five years, no question, but it would be wrong for me to shy away from the growing challenges we are now facing. Particularly from this Tory government. Their absolutely disgraceful attempt to slash the WRAG element of the ESA is a case in point.

1 in 6 people in the UK are disabled (10.6 million)

Only about 28% claim disability related benefits

25% have experienced hate crime or harassment

Only 6% use wheelchairs

The average constituency has 15000 disabled voters ... & their families and friends who are voters.

As the MP I was an active Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Deafness and Vice Chair of the Disability, MS & Mental Health APPG's respectively, constantly lobbying ministers around access to work, changes to ESA, communication improvements and employment opportunities. In Westminster I was also a ferocious advocate of disability equality. Never stopped pushing, cajoling and working to get what we know is right and fair, equal opportunities for all, to have a decent independent life irrespective of the additional challenges presented by disability.

That's a good goal and it's a good liberal goal. It was (and remains) one of the core reasons why I came into politics.

More thoughts from Stephen ...



And from a 'personal' political perspective, there are numerous areas affected around disability when losing a general election. Whilst the MP I made sure my office supported disabled constituents going through the whole ESA process. I was one of the only MP offices in the country which formally acted as a disabled persons advocate at Disability Appeal Tribunals, sending one of my team on over 150 occasions and our success rate at over-turning the DWP rulings was 85%. Under the current MP this has dropped to zero as the service is no longer offered. Votes have consequences!

A particular passion of mine was supporting people with disabilities into work both locally and nationally. In Eastbourne, working closely with my local Job Centre Plus on numerous initiatives around Apprenticeships, training and work experience we got some tremendous, game changing results.

A lot of the heft which allowed me to make these things happen disappear when you lose your seat. It's not that MP's have a lot of power but - importantly - they have 'access' to power. And that's what counts.

Since the last election locally these sorts of well targeted, work-focused disability initiatives have dropped off a cliff. Nationally, it's even worse. We are back with the Tories solus and their dubious interest to actually improve people lives in this area.

An interesting rider is I and my office helped, literally, thousands of people locally of which many had a disability. I had an utterly committed team who worked all the hours for little money. Trying to make that difference for good in Eastbourne. And after the election which I lost by only a few hundred votes, I discovered that a lot of these folk didn't actually vote - "we thought you'd be a shoo-in to win Stephen or nah, I never vote, there's no point."

Well, with respect, they were wrong.

And that's kind of the main thrust of my piece to you in this LDDA Conference issue. **We are in politics because we want to make a positive difference - across a range of different areas - not just disability. But to do so we need to win and to do that we need the public out there to believe we care enough about them so they'll support us.** That takes graft and it takes a explanation of who we are and why we are worth supporting. If we do this the Liberal Democrats will start winning again. Of that I am sure.

I would urge all of you in the LDDA to be ready for the next general election, whenever it is called. To stand up for disabled people and for liberalism.

Have a good conference folks. Come up and say hello if you see me around.

Regards, *Stephen*

Stephen Lloyd

President LDDA

PPC - Eastbourne

**A challenging & inspiring message
From Stephen Lloyd, our new President**

A personal message from our Chair, Phil Stevens

I have been fortunate enough to have had four wonderful years as Chair of the LDDA and been privileged to work with some amazing people but now is the time for me to hand on the responsibility of moving the LDDA forward, I would like to thank each and every one of you that has helped and supported and take the opportunity to wish the new Chair the very best of luck and offer my support to them in any way I can.

Thank you, Phil,

Phil and the rest of your Executive Committee have faced some frustrating and time-consuming challenges over the last four years but now we can move on.

So, where do we go?

Who will lead us?

Who will provide fresh energy and impetus?

You may be the answer!

Read the job adverts and go for it! The nomination form is on our exhibition

As our Conference opens the Paralympics will hold it's closing ceremony, the world will have been inspired by achievements, bravery and challenges overcome.

Now it is our turn, in our everyday lives, to ensure that people with disabilities get a fair chance, that obstacles are removed, that employers don't discriminate, that hate crime is eradicated, that opportunities for education, training and fulfilling jobs are available.

In politics, within the Lib Dems, we must hold meetings in fully accessible venues, not have to search for a ramp or a back entrance past the dustbins. We must ensure that we get more candidates with disabilities. **We must stick to our principles.**



[Robert Adamson is Editor of this Newsletter & our secretary]

MP backs housing benefit campaign for people with mental illnesses



Lib Dem MP Greg Mulholland has backed the '*A Place To Call Home*' campaign, launched by the Rethink Mental Illness charity. The campaign urges ministers not to cap housing benefit for people living in supported housing.

Around 1 in 5 people diagnosed with a severe mental illness live in supported housing. The Government is yet

to announce the findings of its Supported Housing Review. But as it stands, a cap to Housing Benefit will apply from 1 April 2018

More openness needed to get the best deal for patients and carers through the NHS "Sustainability Plan"

County Councillor Jerry Roodhouse, Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group, has written about the NHS "Sustainability Plan" and the need for greater transparency to get the best deal for patients and health professionals.



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Are you happy to receive the Newsletter and other key LDDA items by email? Yes / No

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Do you wish to join the lddatalk egroup? Yes / No

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Vision

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

Mission

- 1) To work towards the election of Liberal Democrats to all levels of Local, regional, devolved and national governments in the UK and to the European Parliament.
- 2) To promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities within the Liberal Democrats.
- 3) To scrutinise Liberal Democrat policies to ensure they reflect the rights and needs of people with disabilities, their carers and their families and make appropriate recommendations for future policies and seek amendments to current policy.
- 4) To promote the Liberal Democrat message to disabled people who are not currently members.

Do you share our vision?

Do you agree with our mission?
...If so, then please join us!
www.disabilitylibdems.org.uk

Please fill in the form and send it to:
Mrs G Roulston, 98 Colesmead Road
REDHILL RH1 2EQ

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