

Liberal Democrats Health Policy

This has been drafted using the Liberal Democrats health policy document – undated.

Liberal Democrats believe that patients must come first and that services would improve if local people had a say in how the NHS is run.

They scrap central targets and guarantee that treatment is received on time.

Liberal Democrats want a people-centred NHS, fit for the 21st century.

Items in bold are the most relevant to the Third Sector and/or public health.

1) Putting people in charge of their local health services

- Give local people democratic control over their local health services. This would give local people the opportunity to save hospital services currently under threat.
- Abolish strategic health authorities, which are remote and unaccountable.

2) Guaranteeing High Quality Patient Care

- Reduce the plethora NHS targets and guarantee high standards in health care to each citizen.
- Introduce a 'patient contract', which will specify the services and treatment an individual can expect to receive from the NHS and highlight the patient's rights to information about treatment and medical records.
- Support initiatives to assist vulnerable people in consuming their food whilst in hospital to ensure that no patient leaves hospital with malnutrition.

3) Empowering patients

- Build on the positive experience of direct payments in the provision of social services and give patients greater autonomy over how they manage their condition in specific areas within the NHS.
- Give individuals with long-term conditions an agreed Personal Care Plan, setting out their course of treatment, where and when they will be treated, and what other help, such as social care, they will receive.
- **High-street pharmacists and the voluntary sector should both take a role in supporting patients with long-term conditions and those with one-off medical queries or issues.**

4) Personal Care for Elderly People

- Make a 'universal care payment' based on an individual's need, not their ability to pay, for those aged over 65 who require personal care (such as help with dressing and bathing).

5) Fighting Super Bugs

- A Dutch approach would be used in the event of a super bug outbreak. Patients would be isolated, staff sent home and medical wards closed down.
- New technologies would be embraced to limit the spread of disease and changing facilities for staff would ensure that staff uniforms are not worn outside work.
- Bed occupancy rates would be reviewed and managed accordingly.
- There must be zero tolerance on low hygiene and failures in infection control standards. Screening in all hospitals, GP practices and care homes would be enforced.
- The executive would be responsible for serious failures and gross misconduct while empowered hospital matrons would promote a culture of strict hygiene standards and infection protection – staff at every level would be trained in infection awareness and prevention techniques.
- Compensation would be offered to patients and families who have suffered as a result of hospital negligence in relation to super bugs.
- Patients would be given the power to anonymously report failures in standards.

6) Access to Health Professionals

- Improve access to GPs around the clock by making it easier for people to switch GP if they are unhappy with the service they are getting.
- Allow patients to register at more than one practice, providing access both near their homes and workplaces.
- Support a drive to provide primary care services in high-street outlets such as pharmacies.
- Set clear standards of service for emergency out-of-hours care. Reform NHS dental contracts so that they encourage dentists back into the NHS, provide incentives for dentists to carry out preventive work and seek those patients in the greatest need, such as children.