

**1. What will you do to make buses, trams and local trains in Birmingham cheaper, more reliable and safer for students?**

In the current climate, where energy and fossil fuel companies are raking in extortionate profits due to the crisis in Iran (as they did with the second Russian invasion of Ukraine) Liberal Democrats are calling for the windfall to national government to be used to reduce the £3 bus fare cap to be reduced to just £1. We'd also cut fuel duty because some people in more rural areas, those who have further to travel, or have mobility needs still require the use of cars. Rail fares would be cut by 10% and EV charging would have its VAT cut.

In the longer term, more locally in Birmingham, safety has to be a key priority. Lib Dems would enhance the working relationship between the Council, local and regional Police teams, and Better Streets for Birmingham, using information and feedback directly from students to understand where further opportunities can be taken. This includes ensuring that conductors remain on board the trams – as they were touted for removal previously. This allows for both more safety whilst travelling on the tram as well as assistance for people with mobility or other needs that need assistance getting on or off the tram.

An integrated network that includes well-lit cycle and walking paths and canal side routes is vital for both safety, easy travel, and health and wellbeing. In terms of services, such as ticketing and accessing stops, we need to ensure people with visible or hidden disabilities are catered for, and that provisions to support neurodiverse people (such as awareness of quieter times, appropriate lighting levels, and training for station staff) is part of any service provision, not an afterthought.

Reliability of services requires additional funding for physical rail and tram improvements, but also the integration of advanced software and developments in A.I. which will control the networks more efficiently – this is linked to job opportunities for young people in the rail sector.

**2. How will you work with students to create local employment opportunities during studies and post-graduation?**

As noted above, whilst security is a vital component of the developing world of A.I. and large language models, it's also part of the next revolution of industry and young people are poised to make the most of it. We need to ensure that schools and colleges are in partnership with businesses, so that educational outcomes are tied to the needs of the students and the working world, providing the best opportunities for young people to work in productive, fulfilling jobs with development and learning of new skills as people progress in their careers. Liberal Democrats believe that funding should be available to young people and adults alike to allow them to upskill or retrain as their careers develop or their interests change – education has it's only value, and whilst getting a job or another course are amazing side-effects, we need to encourage a love of learning and let young people put their interests at the heart of their development.

Lib Dems are keen on revitalising the links between Business Improvement Districts in the City, and between the BIDs and the Council, to develop better opportunities and better working

conditions, such as promoting the Real Living Wage, reducing the gender pay gap (and other gaps such as for disabled people, LGBT+, and diverse ethnic groups).

Along with good access to high-quality, low-cost housing, young people need well-paying jobs to ensure that generational poverty is not an inevitability.

- 3. Our students have reported feeling unsafe due to what they perceive as heightened discriminatory discourses. How will you address discrimination and racism in the local area, as well as across the city?**

Politicians, despite the distrust towards them, have a key place in society to set examples on behavioural expectations of young people. In recent years we've seen the extremes of left and right set either too high an expectation, or none at all. Liberalism is the belief that an individual should have the best opportunities in life, from health and educational opportunities, to being exposed to and taking a delight in diverse people and communities. Whilst the individual needs to be supported to live the life they wish to lead; we also believe that this is done in a social context. Whilst asking questions of other people and cultures is welcome, it should neither be too confined in terms of language, nor left to language and behaviours that have no accountability.

As young people develop, they have many pressures on them, including the development of their knowledge and experiences around sexuality, gender, , racial diversity, and the online world. These conversations should be encouraged, to ensure that, whilst initially challenging for some, open, respectful (if sometimes difficult) conversations, and compassion can be sought by not ignoring difficult or challenging questions. Lib Dems believe that material in schools should include reflection on the additional challenges faced by young black people as well as the many and varied within and from the Asian continent. We believe in a secular state, which includes freedom of religion. We also believe that the online world is as open to amazing new ideas, linking of people and communities, and learning, as it is to dangerous and hateful rhetoric. Banning things does not work, so "banning" social media is not the answer. Education, learning, and connection between different people and communities should include the online world, allowing people to discuss and learn together matters such as consent and respect, if not agreement, for differences.

Previous Conservative governments have been joined by this current Labour government in "cracking down" on freedoms such as the right to protest, which can cause intimidation in our various communities, including from some Police actions. Heightened tensions due to conflicts in the middle east are also unfairly causing abuse or harassment for people who are from, or who's family heritage is from those countries, or those that follow the same religions. The more open dialogue we have amongst young people allows for better understanding between communities in our own City and local areas. As well as better, more informed visible policing. The calls from organisations like Brummies Against Racism against racism and online hate are vital to support our diverse communities.