Liberal Democrats in Education

What we are thinking and doing . . .
This booklet is produced by the Liberal Democrat Education Association for the Liberal Democrat Spring Conference 2009 at Harrogate.

Information and opinions offered in the booklet are personal to the authors and are not necessarily either Liberal Democrat Party policy or the views of LDEA.

Promoting Liberal Democrat values in education

Linking Liberal Democrats involved in education

Developing Liberal Democrat perspectives on education
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Education and the Economic Downturn

David Laws MP

At this March’s Conference, we are debating three crucial papers on the Party’s education policies – so rather than rehearsing what is in these papers, I thought that I would look into my crystal ball. Specifically, I want to consider how education is likely to be affected by the economic downturn – what are the threats, and are there any opportunities?

The threats from the recession are pretty clear – and most of them come down to money. The Government’s budget is heading into a huge deficit, which may take years to repair. The Chancellor has already responded by cutting the rate of growth of public spending beyond 2011 to just 1% per year in real terms – that is even slower than the rate of growth under Mrs. Thatcher.

Remember David Cameron’s pledge to “share the proceeds of growth” between tax cuts and public spending? Well, on present Government plans, and even when the economy is back to trend growth, only 20% of the “proceeds of growth” will be going into public spending. 80% will be going to reduce public borrowing. That means that after a period of “feast”, public services are going to see the return of “famine”. Even though education and health may be considered as priorities, their settlements will be very tight compared with the period since 1999. Education spending may shrink again as a share of GDP, reversing the pledge made by Tony Blair.

What will this mean for the front line of education? It will mean tighter school budgets, tough control of staff pay, and little extra money to target disadvantage. A Tory or Labour Government would be likely to take a particularly tough line with higher education – increasing tuition fees, tightening student support, and dumping the pledge to have 50% of students going on to university. And given the credit crunch and the squeeze on investment spending after the recession is over, the ambitious plans to rebuild all secondary schools and many primary schools look doomed to delay or cancellation.
This, of course, means that education spending will be back on the political agenda, and here is an opportunity for the Liberal Democrats to once again establish ourselves as the only Party truly committed to back our support for education with the cash which is needed. But for this to be politically acceptable, we will have to pledge to make savings from other budgets to invest in education – including by axing the wasteful Child Trust Fund and making savings by restricting tax credits to those who really need them. We will also need to show that the extra money really can make a difference – by delivering smaller class sizes, and extra money for the children who need it most – through our Pupil Premium. In this new era of tough spending control, the public are going to expect to see results from extra investment – and they will not want to sign up to extra money going in without seeing these results.

But it’s not ALL bad news. The tighter jobs market, and collapse in City jobs, may make it easier to attract some of our best graduates into teaching. And there is likely to be more focus on vocational education, and on making education more relevant to the needs and interests of pupils.

Ultimately, education is crucial in delivering a free, fair and prosperous society – and there is always going to be a high demand for a service which plays such an essential role.

David Laws is MP for Yeovil and Liberal Democrat Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families
This annual event was held in February in Nottingham. Despite big snowfalls across the country over 50 party activists gathered to participate in serious debate. David Laws MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (abandoned car in snow the day before!), Annette Brooke MP (Shadow Children’s Minister) and Baronesses Garden and Walmsley provided a very strong parliamentary team for the debates. Cllr David Bellotti and Cllr Diane Packham offered a question and answer session as the representatives of all Councillors on the LGA Children and Young People Board.

The session on safeguarding children raised strong feelings about protecting children from abuse (Also see Carol Runciman’s and Andrew Bridgwater’s articles Editor). Councillors in Haringey explained how they had called for action at their Council a long time before the tragic story of ‘Baby P’ had hit the headlines. Haringey (like many other Councils) were given good ratings based on tick box exercises, rather than in depth scrutiny. The conference concluded that there needed to be more openness in practice, inspections should be in more depth, councillors should have better training and then look at case files. There was almost unanimous agreement that the Chairs of Safeguarding Boards should be independent of the local authority. There was considerable concern at how Ofsted was performing.

Annette Brooke MP led a discussion on Early Years policy. All were agreed we should give our children the best start. The conference welcomed proposals to replace maternity leave with parental leave and for this to be for 19 months and could be shared between parents. Providing 20 hours of free quality childcare from 18 months to the term after the child turns three would fill the gap until the present government child care help is available. It was recognised this would take five years to achieve and there was a need to build capacity, especially in regard to the workforce.

Ed Fordham led a session on school governance. It was agreed to work up party policy in this area (LDEA hopes to take a lead in this during 2009 Editor).
There was a special need to consider how local councillors could be governors and whether Chairs of governing bodies should be paid.

Cllr David Bellotti introduced a session on 16-19 funding and how Councils will commission services from Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges and schools with sixth forms from 2010. The conference noted this would change the relationship of the Council to providers dramatically and that sub regional groups of Councils were being set up to undertake the task of commissioning.

David Laws MP and Cllr James Kempton opened a debate on the new Party policy ‘Equity and Excellence: Polices for 5-19 education.’ There was a great deal of support for this report which would go to the Harrogate Conference. One matter causing concern was the proposed policy for faith schools. After considerable debate most agreed this would need changing back to the original proposals from the working party, which had been subsequently altered. It was felt that senior staff in faith schools should have commitment and that a proportion of places should be reserved for pupils on the basis of faith.

The conference was an overwhelming success largely because of the participation of many Councillors who were running services for children and young people locally and the great expertise from people attending, not least members of the Liberal Democrat Education Association.

_Cllr David Bellotti_ is _Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Children and Young People at the Local Government Association (LGA)_
Wanting children to be all things is a common problem when politicians and education mix. No political party has the monopoly of wanting the best for our children, but in their quest for higher standards, I hear neither of the other parties arguing for the value of a holistic education. And by this I don’t mean essential oils and or teaching children how to manage their chakra.

In the drive for three Rs, we are forgetting key aspects of what children need to understand to become rounded individuals. For me this was brought into sharp relief in case I was dealing with for a local resident in Hornsey & Wood Green. A Suzuki method music teacher contacted me to complain of the difficulty of getting schools to make time for children to do music lessons. Her view, which I share, was that the rigid structure of the National Curriculum left little time in the school day for children to take on music lessons – particularly young children who don’t have much time and energy left at the end of the school day. I raised this with Ed Balls, who rejected the concern, proudly extolling the virtues of the National Curriculum and the wonders it had done for school children.

Yes, it is important that a child should start secondary schooling being able to read, read and do arithmetic. But any teacher worth their salt will instinctively teach this. Focusing on the developing the professionalism of teachers with discreet checks here and there will make sure this happens.

Tory and Labour Governments have dogmatically pursued the mantra of national curriculum and what I call the three Ts – test, test and test again. But these pedagogic edicts issued from Whitehall have been the death knell for curricular activities that nurture the soul. If you can’t label it, level it and then test it – then it’s out.

For a brief moment I did think there was a glimmer of hope on the horizon. However, my joy at the ending of Key Stage 3 testing was quickly replaced with despair with what Labour intends to replace them with. A school in my constituency was unfortunate enough to take part in a pilot. This ‘radical’
new programme is supposed to free teachers from the shackles of SATS, but the name says it all – single level testing.

Education is about helping children to become better adults. As Lib Dems we must continue to be all the forefront of pressing for holistic schooling.

Lynne Featherstone is Liberal Democrat MP for Hornsey and Wood Green, Chair of the Technology Advisory Board, the party’s Youth and Equality spokesperson in the Commons and a member of the Youth Policy Working Group
It is the teachers than matter most

*John Howson*

During a recent visit to south east Asia, I visited a country where the government is seeking to make teacher training an all graduate affair, the rationale being that in the future an educated population will be a key to their economic success. The view that what makes for a successful education system is neither the buildings nor the organisational structure, important though each may be, but the quality of those who work in schools, has been gaining ground now for several years.

In England, and in Wales, most secondary teachers already train through the postgraduate route and, except for the Teach First Scheme, the training assumes that successful graduates will be committed to teaching as a long-term career, and not just see the training as an opportunity to find a way into the world of business and the city.

The preparation of primary teachers is another matter. A significant proportion is still trained through the undergraduate route. In Wales, the Furlong Report (on whose committee I served) recommended an end to undergraduate vocational training, although it did recommend a non-vocational degree for anyone thinking of working with children and young people, but only as a prelude to postgraduate vocational training.

There are strong allegiances and fond memories of the BEd training route in its many forms. But with one university currently advertising an ‘average’ entry score of 230 points for its teacher training degree – worth a ‘C’ and 2’Ds’ at ‘A’ level – is society recruiting the best available into teaching? The test must surely be whether those refused entry to postgraduate training are of a higher standard than those accepted onto BEd degrees. My contention is that this is currently the case, and with the rise in graduate unemployment may become even more so in the next few years. The situation will become even more bizarre when the government seeks to create an MTeach for all graduate entrants. Such a move will either devalue the master’s level qualification or risk creating first and second degree teachers.
Although the elimination of the undergraduate route would hit some universities hard, that is not reason enough to perpetuate a training route that has passed its ‘sell by date’. If universities want an undergraduate teaching programme it must have an entry points score that is amongst the most demanding, not one where the average is amongst the lowest and where many students are only recruited during the clearing process.

We should make a manifesto commitment to a quality teaching force that is fit for purpose. Only then can we start to raise standards in the primary sector to rival the best in the world. For, just like the country in south east Asia, we need the best educated society our education system can possibly produce. Oh, and as a side effect, it might also help the social mobility agenda if there was less difference in the quality of teachers.

Professor John Howson is president of the LDEA and director of an education research company. He writes here in a personal capacity.
A Cooperative Trust in Stockport

Cllr Mark Weldon

Stockport MBC is a large Metropolitan Authority of 287,000 people within Greater Manchester. The borough has now been in Lib Dem overall control since 1997 with previously many years as the largest party. Of the 3 and a half parliamentary constituencies making up the borough two are Lib Dem seats. Consistent service delivery and improvement, a longstanding liberal tradition, with integrated Parliamentary and Council campaigning have produced what is now a Lib Dem stronghold. It has led us to the position of four stars and Improving strongly in the last CPA assessment.

Historically, Stockport has always suffered from polarisation. It is where prosperous Cheshire meets industrial Lancashire. Leafy suburbs exist next to some of the most deprived wards in the country. Indeed, deep pockets of deprivation within wards are undetected by statistics collated at a ward level. This means we are consistently overlooked for Central Government regeneration funding, and our schools are amongst the lowest funded in the country.

As a council group we have had to be pragmatic and innovative. We are interested in what works to improve the lives of our residents. Therefore when Reddish Vale Comprehensive School first floated the idea of a Co-operative Trust we gave it serious consideration. Reddish Vale is a large 1320 pupil comprehensive serving two of Stockport’s most deprived wards. Moreover, its 1952 buildings are in serious need of replacement.

There was no appetite within the Lib Dem group to see another “bog standard” trust school in Stockport, but we realised this was different. This was to be a Co-operative Trust with the backing of the local community, with local residents as Trust members, not just another corporate sponsorship project. Although the Co-operative movement has more traditionally been associated with Labour it does fit in well with our own liberal traditions of local community politics and community action. So after detailed discussions, when the application went in to the DCSF it received the full support of the authority with the council as a trustee and the Children and Young People’s Executive Councillor as a Trust Board Member.
Of course, Labour and Tories have both tried to associate themselves with this new development. Both David Cameron and Ed Balls called for more such schools to be created. Both conveniently forgot to mention that this first one came about due to the Lib Dems’ commitment to community politics and engagement. National publicity failed to mention it was a Lib Dem council forging ahead with this. A recent TES article even failed to mention that SMBC was a founding member of the Trust. Other Trust board members include the Co-operative Group, Manchester Metropolitan University, a local business person, and an FE college.

The Lib Dem led SMBC has continued to support the Trust, has added capacity to the emerging Trust Board and guided the Board through the pitfalls of a number of bids for community funding based around the school. One such bid has been for £4 million for youth facilities from the Myplace programme from DCSF. The bidding criteria stipulate only one bid from each LA area, so the authority gave its full backing and designated the Trust bid as the authority’s preferred bid, and subsequently offered to act as the accounting body if successful.

The Lib Dem group has also further demonstrated its commitment to the Trust and to reducing the inequalities in the borough by placing Reddish Vale and the other schools serving the most deprived wards at the core of a new accelerated Building Schools for the Future (BSF) bid. If successful this will deliver a complete refurbishment of the school with an investment in the region of £20 million. It is far from certain that we will be successful but we are bringing our community based, community led politics into effect, enabling local communities to bring about social and educational regeneration. It’s this country’s first attempt at such a scheme and we fully intend to make it yet another Stockport Lib Dem success.

Cllr Mark Weldon is Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council’s Executive Member for Children and Young People.
How fair play for part-timers opens up opportunities all round

Baroness Margaret Sharp

Is a 20 year-old university student working 20 hours a week in a local supermarket a full-time or part-time student? The question is not irrelevant – in funding terms it is vitally important. A full-time student qualifies for a full (upfront) loan covering all tuition fees and a variety of means-tested further loans and grants towards ‘maintenance’ costs, namely rent, food, travel and books. For most students the latter falls way short of actual costs and some sort of job is essential to make ends meet. But if, in order to accommodate the job, the student opts to study part-time, s/he would immediately forfeit the right to more or less all the grants and loans and be asked instead to pay tuition fees upfront.

In other words there is absolutely no incentive to be a part-time student in England, even though many students when asked say they would like the opportunity to go part-time and ‘earn and learn’ their way through college. And it is precisely those who are on the margin – not sure whether they really want to sacrifice earning in order to go on with further study – whom we need to attract into education and training if we are to meet the ambitious Leitch targets for upgrading skills and capabilities.

As Liberal Democrats we share the Government’s concern about England’s skills’ profile – too many people with low skills and not enough with intermediate and higher levels – even if we are sceptical about its precise targets. Our scepticism stems from the fact that we think the Government policies have been misdirected, partly because they have ignored part-timers. In our new policy paper, Investing in Talent, we set out how we would actively seek to expand educational opportunities for this group.

First, we propose that part-time students should have access, on a pro-rata basis, to exactly the same benefits as full time students. This would apply not just to university (HE) students but also to further education (FE) students – why, for example, should a 25 year-old seeking to improve skills/qualifications by studying for a BTEC evening course have to pay upfront tuition fees while a university student pays none? Similarly, a full-time
FE student should have access to the same means-tested maintenance grants as university students.

Secondly, we want to see all post-16 courses included within the national credit rating framework as part of our ‘climbing frame for learning’. This means that all courses studied, whether full-time or part-time, carry a credit rating and the individual can accumulate credits towards higher qualifications. The OU runs a system like this; it requires 360 credits for a degree with courses ranging, according to difficulty, from 10 to 60 credits. Run nationally it would mean that, say, a teaching assistant doing an official training course might earn 20 credits, and would be able to add to this by doing further courses in his/her own time with a course at the local university or FE college or through distance learning. To date, all the incentives have been for employers to provide courses; this system gives the individual an incentive to attend and to take further courses in their own time.

These two proposals, together with the endorsement of our ‘no tuition fees’ policy, open up a whole new scenario for students – one that those who are familiar with American, Canadian or Australian HE/FE systems will recognise immediately. Adding to qualifications by doing courses at your local university or college or through distance learning becomes the rule rather than the exception and in so doing, opens up opportunity for all.

*Baroness Margaret Sharp* is the Liberal Democrat for the Department of Innovations, Universities and Skills in the Lords
Apprenticeships

Baroness Sue Garden

Apprenticeship is a time-honoured way for young people to learn skills linked to employment. The training has evolved from self-regulation by individual crafts and trades – plumbers, bakers, goldsmiths - to the national frameworks of current apprenticeships, incorporating NVQs, a technical specialism and key skills.

Although the UK maintains its excellent record in higher education, in comparison with other developed countries we have a poor record in the skills necessary to sustain an advanced society. We have a higher proportion of young people in their mid- twenties below Level 2 than France, Germany, or Singapore; only the United States has levels of low skills similar to the UK. Ofsted has estimated that some 300,000 16-19 year olds are unable to access training or any worthwhile employment as a result of a lack of basic skills. And not only is a significant cohort of school-leavers ill-prepared for work, but many schools are ill-informed about the opportunities available.

The government is turning to apprenticeship as the vehicle of choice for tackling unemployment and skill shortage. They have announced an additional 35,000 places available from April, with 20,000 of them coming from the public sector. Age restraints have been lifted, to give opportunities for adults to acquire new skills. The £1billion apprenticeship budget is to be boosted by an additional £140million, with the aim of over 250,000 apprentices starting their training in the next financial year. All of this will be publicised in a national advertising campaign, to alert employers and learners to the expanded range of apprenticeships available: more than 180 career choices in some 80 industrial sectors, ranging from accountancy to football, engineering to veterinary nursing, business administration to construction.

It is an ambitious scheme. More than ever in the current economic downturn, businesses, especially small businesses, need to concentrate on making a living. The time and resource for training can get squeezed out,
even with funding available, and with FE Colleges playing their part as training providers and advisers.

The ‘Apprenticeships, Skills, Learning and Children Bill’ has just begun its passage through the House of Commons. Its 256 Clauses include 38 specifically on apprenticeships. By the time it passes into law, who knows what turn the country will have taken?

We shall be aiming to simplify administration for employers and providers, to ensure adequate funding to support adult apprenticeships and to prepare young people better for the world of work. It is in all our interests to create a skilled and flexible workforce for the future.

**Baroness Sue Garden** is a Liberal Democrat education spokesperson in the Lords
Mental Health Services for young people

Diana Coman

My concern about the way in which mental health services are provided for children and young people started when I became involved in a Pupil Referral Unit. The strategy of using the PRU as an option of last resort, with various strategies adopted to keep the young person in the existing school environment, meant that, when a young person arrived at the PRU, they presented significant challenges for the teaching staff.

Over the four years that I worked with the teachers and other professionals who supported the PRU, it was acknowledged that the children entering the PRU were demonstrating more complex problems than had been the case in the past.

When reviewing each case, largely with a view to seeing if it was possible to reintegrate the young person back into the school system, the process of drawing-in other agency support was a constant debate, and time and time again, the absence of help from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service was identified as a weakness. Even the willingness and commitment of individual staff could not compensate for the overall lack of investment in mental health services for young people and the service seemed unable to cope with the nature and number of children needing support.

My concern about, and interest in, mental health services for young people led me to discuss the issue of mental health with young people involved in our Youth Parliament. What emerged was quite shocking, with young people reporting that they had friends who had eating disorders; they were also aware of problems with self harm. And these young people were attending high performing schools.

Whilst much of the feedback I got was anecdotal, it became clear to me that across ability ranges and family circumstances, there were young people suffering from a variety of conditions and there was unmet need within our youth population.
One particularly harrowing case study included a reference from CAMHS that the young person did not turn up so the case was closed. I know of another family whose child would not talk about the problem to therapists, and rather than the service simply remaining involved until they were able to draw out the young person, the service was terminated. Reluctance to participate or refusing to attend may stem from natural fear or might be a manifestation of a condition. I found it frankly astonishing that a service dealing with mental health could not recognize and accommodate that, and that no-one I spoke to could explain why this happened.

So what has all this got to do with education?

New schools, better teaching, different curriculum, improved learning environments - all contribute to helping children and young people access the education on offer. However, unless the child or young person enters the school in the right frame of mind, they are unlikely to achieve their full potential.

I met someone recently who is working with headteachers in secondary schools, who are becoming very concerned about the mental health of their pupils - one described having one child on ‘suicide watch’. All were concerned that the structure and reorganization of the local CAMHS service was not addressing the issues that the children in their schools were presenting.

I hope that in looking at educational issues, we consider the whole child - and general well-being and, dare I say it, happiness, is something that should be further up our list of considerations. Indeed, I would argue, they should be at the top. Reports from organizations such as Unicef and the Children’s Society should make us feel ashamed about the way in which our children are treated and how they feel about their lives. Mental health issues that remain unaddressed in the child not only affect the young person’s ability to access all that is on offer, but may well carry on into adulthood and affect the adult’s ability to deal with social and economic changes in their own lives.

*Diana Coman* was a Councillor for 8 years in the London Borough of Sutton, where she held the portfolio for secondary education and young people.
Protecting children
– are we prioritising their needs?

Andrew Bridgwater

At the recent LGA Children and Young People’s conference in Nottingham we benefited from informed presentations from parliamentary and local government colleagues, including those from Haringey, followed by dialogue with several Councillors, including some in Lib Dem control, and representatives from LDEA. But with inevitable time constraints of such a wide reaching session there were two issues of fundamental importance which were not discussed.

The first is the calibre of social workers and the number available and willing to fill vacancies. With 30% plus vacancies remaining unfilled, existing statutory functions are clearly not being fulfilled in some cases. This impacts directly on the corporate parenting responsibility of Councillors.

Second is the political question of where the balance of risk should lie between supporting the whole family unit to keep the child who may need protecting within the family unit and removing the child from her/his family to protect them from further abuse.

Nearly a generation ago now we had a similar problem with a lack of teachers and insufficient numbers being trained. Whilst some shortages persist, the expansion of teacher training, and significant improvements in pay, have improved the position - although more needs to be done. Now, the teaching profession is held in much higher esteem than all that time ago.

Nothing short of the same transformation is needed to similarly raise the esteem of social workers and make their careers more attractive and progressive. Their very different work is as vital in supporting children and young people as the work of teachers. Yes, it will be very costly, particularly during a deepening recession, but can we any longer justify short changing some of our most vulnerable and needy children and young people?
Training and Continuing Professional Development must also be enhanced, to give social workers confidence to call in health professionals and the police to back up their professional judgement. This must also include a greater understanding of the role of schools in initially identifying many of the cases of child abuse.

On the second point I have no hesitation in advocating much more emphasis on the quality of life for the child as opposed to the family. At present there remains a culture in many authorities of not taking a family through a child protection investigation until it is fairly certain that child abuse is taking place, for fear of upsetting the family. Far better to act on reasonable suspicions before it is too late. A dead child can no longer be protected.

Despite recent protestations and actions from the Government, they are still not treating child protection issues in the way that they deserve. We also, in addition, need to re-evaluate our policies and priorities. This will involve some of the most difficult decisions we have to make in the interests of children and young people. But make them we must to ensure security of support and protection of children and young people whenever it is needed.

*Andrew Bridgwater is an experienced governor of Special Schools, and has previously been a lead member for Education and Social Services on Hackney London Borough Council.*
Safeguarding and the Councillor: the Serious Cases Panel in York

Cllr Carol Runciman

Following various sensational incidents reported in the media, Councillors all round the country have expressed concerns about how much they know and what they should know about Safeguarding procedures in their home areas. They have also been worried about what should and should not be made public.

At the recent LDEA Conference in Nottingham, delegates had a thorough discussion about issues around child abuse with both our Lords and Commons parliamentary teams. One of the ideas that came out of the debate was that each authority should set up a Serious Case Review panel to make sure that any recommendations are followed up.

Here in the City of York, we have just set up a Serious Cases Panel to review Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) and other serious case matters. It also considers any requests for SCRs to be carried out and recommends to the Independent Chair of our Local Children’s Safeguarding Board (LCSB) whether a formal SCR is needed. It looks at progress against any recommendations from those that have already taken place and chases them up when needed.

Members include the NSPCC, the police, PCT, Social Work reps etc, although, as it is so new, membership will be reviewed and develop over time. They are not all the same people as sit on the LCSB.

It reports to the Safeguarding Board, which reports to the Children's Trust Board (called the YorOK Board), on which I sit, as does the opposition spokesperson. This is a high level strategic partnership where such reports can be challenged and questioned as well as informing future policy.

As the Lead Member and thus the person with the legal responsibility for safeguarding, I have regular briefings with the LCSB Chair and Manager, where any concerns are brought to my attention and I can discuss the detail and request further information.
The minutes of our Safeguarding Board are on our local Safeguarding website, but not put on the council web-site by the council as the independence of the Board needs to be maintained at all times.

We hope that this system give some re-assurance to elected members that these matters are taken seriously and that the SCR recommendations are being followed up with all agencies concerned – the key to improving safeguarding practice.

**Cllr Carol Runciman** is City of York Council’s Executive Member for Children’s Services and Deputy Leader of the Council
Youth Policy Working Group

*Cllr Laura Willoughby*

Optimism. I think this is a pretty powerful word. As Liberal Democrats we could say that is what drives us every day. The problem is it does not seem to be what drives young people - it may never have done, or it may be more recent curse than that, but either way it needs to be sorted.

The Youth Policy Working group has recognised that the party has some very optimistic policies for young people but we do not often present them the enthusiasm and positivity that we would like to see reflected back to us by young people themselves.

So the challenge is on - we need you to feed in your thoughts about how we convey the optimism the Lib Dems have for young people and what big ideas you have to inspire future generations.

All of these can be sent to lauracwilloughby@me.com or give me a bell 07968 708703.

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