



BLAC Liberal Democrats

Black Lives Action Committee (BLAC) Policy Agenda

Freedom, Justice, and Opportunity

I. Foreword

For all Britain's forward movement in promoting racial equality, Black people in Britain today are still disproportionately excluded from social protection systems, economic uplift, and representative democracy, while facing shorter lifespans, lower educational attainment, and dramatic over-criminalisation and imprisonment compared to their white counterparts.

The BLAC Liberal Democrats Policy Agenda proposes a comprehensive dismantling of racist structures and systems, combined with an investment of unprecedented scale in the freedom and self-determination of Black Britons.

The BLAC Liberal Democrats Policy Agenda proposes steps to dismantle old systems and structures that inhibit prosperity and build new ones that will unlock the collective potential of Black people in Britain. This includes reforming broken criminal justice and health systems; increasing access to better-quality education and improving educational outcomes; strengthening access to credit and injecting capital into the Black community; improving both access to housing and the quality of housing; and bold steps toward fulfilling long-broken promises of true equity.

It is incumbent upon a liberal party that believes in freedom and fairness to help rectify the racial injustices that British political policies have consciously and unconsciously enabled over centuries. Additionally, direct investment in communities unfairly precluded from economic opportunity will lift the economy, providing benefits to all British people, regardless of race. Economic uplift and wealth creation must combine with legal and social change to create a more equitable Britain.

In committing to a comprehensive plan that focuses on Black Britons, the Liberal Democrats' BLAC Policy Agenda does not ignore the specific histories and experiences that have impacted on other ethnic communities in Britain. We understand that racism is not a black and white issue, and that we must also address the unique challenges facing other communities, including the Islamophobia impacting Middle Eastern, Arab, and South Asian communities; antisemitism; the dehumanising stereotyping of people from Asia; and prejudice and hatred shown towards other ethnic minorities and those of mixed heritage. By achieving greater equity for Black Britons, we lay the groundwork for achieving greater equity for other ethnic groups.

Britain's racist attitudes were developed to justify its exploitation of Black Africans through the slave trade. British politicians built on these racist structures and systems to maintain those attitudes and deny exploited subjects the dignity and justice they deserved after the slave trade ended. British colonial history as written by White Britain is a white-wash, attempting to maintain the illusion of superiority and a benevolent Empire when it was anything but.

The BLAC Liberal Democrats Policy Agenda reflects a fundamental belief about racial justice in Britain: not only that it is right to remedy centuries of dehumanisation and discrimination brought about by colonisation, but also that when Black Britons live in freedom and justice, all Britons have greater opportunities to live more freely and fairly.

When Black Britain experiences economic justice and opportunity, we all benefit. When our democracy works for Black Britain, it is a better democracy for all of us. When we place Black women at the heart of the struggle for reproductive justice, the lives of all women are made healthier and freer. All of Britain benefits from greater economic contributions, when young Black men have equal employment opportunities. The BLAC Liberal Democrats Policy Agenda is a specific plan for Black Britain—but it also establishes a deep and solid foundation for racial and economic justice for all diverse communities and all people in the UK.

After the accumulated weight of colonisation, Britain cannot simply replace centuries of discrimination with non-racist policy; it must intentionally mitigate the gaps created by those discriminatory policies. The BLAC Liberal Democrats Policy Agenda aims to provide the scale and scope necessary for true nationwide restorative justice. Its policies touch every facet of British life, and, like the values that animate Liberal Democrat campaigners, these proposals reflect the principles of freedom, justice, and equality.

It is our hope that this document will be referenced by local parties when considering the development of their election manifestos, and that politics are lifted from it wherever appropriate. It is imperative that all Liberal Democrats elected to office should highlight the importance and value of diversity, in all its forms, to society.

2. Freedom

Freedom is the ability to act without constraints imposed based on skin colour. You aren't free if your postcode, name, and race determine your quality of life, education, health outcomes or employment opportunities. You aren't free if you're subject to disproportionate police surveillance, use of force and aggression, or given harsher sentences via the judicial system for minor offences. You aren't free if the schools you attend and career advice given function as a pipeline to low-income employment.

Freedom means freedom from state and other institutions treating anyone differently based on race. It means all Britons having the freedom to seek out the same opportunities on a level playing field, regardless of their race, and ensuring a fair and just starting point.

To secure these freedoms, we ask the Liberal Democrat Party to commit to implementing a policy package that acknowledges the inequalities identified and mitigates them with a corresponding investment in education and other sustainable measures to enable a fundamental shift away from unequal outcomes.

The Party must bring about the policy change that can end the hyper-criminalisation and imprisonment of Black Britons.

2.1 Health Equity

As underlined by the 2020 Public Health England report, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on Black and minority ethnic groups in the UK. True freedom also means the freedom to live the healthiest life possible to pursue your dreams, and freedom from having your quality of life or lifespan determined by the colour of your skin, gender, postcode, or job. Yet Black Britons are burdened by daunting social conditions that impact health due to institutional racism and implicit bias, and thus disproportionately suffer worse health outcomes.

In practice, this means that Black Britons are more likely to be unstably housed, live in unhealthier housing, be unemployed or to receive lower wages, and be limited to accessing lower-quality food which negatively impacts their health. It means that a Black mother's physical pain during birth may be treated less seriously* and her access to painkillers restricted. If her emotional pain after giving birth isn't taken seriously by her doctors, so her postpartum depression goes undiagnosed.

While we welcome NHS efforts to understand and tackle issues of racial inequality with initiatives such as the newly-announced NHS England Race & Health Observatory, plenty of evidence of racial health inequalities already exists: Black Britons cannot afford to wait for yet more evidence-gathering exercises before decisive action is taken to eliminate those inequalities.

A report published in *Social Science & Medicine* found that in all national key indicators, attention to ethnic diversity and inequity was a marginal concern within English national healthcare policy, an assessment reiterated by respondents in all case studies and in three national workshops. This disjuncture raises questions about how central government policy is translated into local services.

Healthcare commissioning organisations are a potentially powerful influence on services, but have rarely been examined from an equity perspective. Government aspiration for commissioning organisations to drive up service quality and efficiency was reflected in the range of resources available, but few of these national resources included any consideration of ethnic diversity and inequity. Further, the materials developed nationally in support of ethnic (and other) equalities work were noticeably less extensive and sophisticated. Ambivalence – and at times active resistance – to the consideration of ethnic inequality within commissioning work is apparent.

- A disproportionately high number of people of African and African Caribbean ethnicities use mental health in-patient services.
- Young Black men are six times more likely than young white men to be sectioned for compulsory treatment under the Mental Health Act.
- Black women are five times more likely to die in pregnancy, childbirth or in the postpartum period, compared to their white counterparts. Focus group work carried out in Bradford with local Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women from 2009 until 2011 showed that Black women have had poor experiences of using local maternity services.
- Prevalence of stroke among African Caribbean and South Asian men is 40% to 70% higher than for the general population.
- Undiagnosed HIV remains unacceptably high in the heterosexual Black African population, with between 10% and 50% of HIV cases among Black African heterosexuals remaining undiagnosed in London,
- Disproportionately low numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) people use community hospitals, older people's mental health services, and continuing healthcare (Equality Impact Assessment work carried out by BTHFT, NHSBA, and BDCT).

- Staffing: Bradford Research in 2010 found that BME staff were almost twice as likely to be disciplined when compared with white staff, while a significantly lower proportion of BME staff worked in non-clinical senior positions.

Similar reports by the Race Equality Foundation, such as “Racial Disparities in Mental Health” and “Race equality and health inequalities: Towards more integrated policy and practice”, have highlighted similar issues. A lot of work is done on diversity and equality within the NHS. However, much of this is focused on socioeconomic inequalities and largely ignores race as an additional - and often compounding - factor.

2.1.1 Mental Health

When it comes to mental health issues, there are significant differences in experiences and outcomes for Black people at all levels, including in prevalence, access, assessment, treatment and recovery. The Black experience of the mental healthcare system is emblematic of the issues that are faced in all areas of health equity and healthcare access:

Prevalence

- Black and minority ethnic communities are at a comparatively higher risk of mental ill-health than their white counterparts, and are disproportionately impacted by social detrimental effects associated with mental illness.
- For example, people from African Caribbean communities are three times more likely to be diagnosed and admitted to hospital for schizophrenia than any other group.

Access

- Black and minority ethnic communities are less likely to access mental health support in primary care (i.e. through their GP) and more likely to end up in crisis care.
- Black (and other minority ethnic) people are 40% more likely to access mental health services via the criminal justice system than White (White English) people.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: commission services based in the community, to develop relationships of trust and promote access and awareness of mental health services among Black communities.

Assessment

Once in the system, Black people face further inequalities and discrimination:

- a higher likelihood of poor physical health conditions of Black patients (such as cardiovascular illness, diabetes, and obesity) is likely to lead doctors to focus on those physical conditions, despite the fact that some physical diseases are complicated by depression and other mental health conditions.
- there is no evidence of direct racial discrimination in assessments, but there is evidence of ethnic bias, including greater uncertainty by clinicians in the diagnosis of emotional problems and depression in Black people.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: raise awareness within healthcare and recognise the impact of racism on accessing mental health care and in perpetuating ethnic and racial inequalities.

Treatment

After being assessed, inequalities persist into treatment:

- it has been proven that Black and minority ethnic people are less likely to be referred to talking therapies and more likely to be medicated for mental ill-health.
- the impact of racism and wider inequalities on mental health must be addressed in treatment for mental illness.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: target and resource the matching of cultural, linguistic, religious, and/or racial identity between service users and practitioners to improve treatment duration and outcomes.

Recovery

- Traumatic, inappropriate, and discriminatory experiences of services can have a detrimental impact on chances for recovery, particularly if the same risk factors of bereavement, family breakdown, incarceration, poverty, and exposure to racism continue to be present.
- There has been criticism of a Eurocentric approach to recovery for Black people, as the definition does not take a race equality perspective and look at the external factors that impact on the individual.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- target and resource a better understanding of cultural and faith beliefs to help with designing services that promote recovery for Black people; and
- commission voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to play a role in supporting Black people with mental illness in navigating the mental health pathway; providing culturally appropriate advice and support; and access to therapies to help cope with everyday activities.

2.1.2 Maternal Health

In November 2019, a report into maternal morbidity in the UK from researchers at Oxford University found Black women are five times more likely to die in pregnancy, childbirth or in the postpartum period, compared to their White counterparts. This data was up from previous years, which still staggeringly showed Black women were three times more likely to die than White women.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- commission research into why the maternal outcome for Black women is disproportionately worse than for White women; and
- fund improved maternal health care outcomes for Black women, to include:
 - increased support of at-risk pregnant women – e.g. making sure clinicians have a lower threshold to review, admit and consider multidisciplinary escalation in Black women;
 - outreach services for pregnant Black women with tailored communications
 - Ensuring hospitals discuss vitamins, supplements and nutrition in pregnancy with all Black women; and
 - ensuring all providers record on maternity information systems the ethnicity of every woman, as well as other risk factors, such as living in a deprived area (postcode), comorbidities, BMI and aged 35 years or over, to identify those most at risk of poor outcomes.

2.1.3 HIV

While much progress has been made on HIV diagnosis and treatment in the UK population generally (and among gay men in particular), evidence suggests that the rate of undiagnosed HIV

remains unacceptably high in the heterosexual Black African population, with between 10% and 50% of HIV cases among Black African heterosexuals remaining undiagnosed in London, [according to one study](#), compared to an overall UK rate of less than 8% (i.e. more than 92% of people living with HIV in the UK have been diagnosed). While rates of new diagnoses have, thankfully, been falling in some of the most affected populations, the rate of decline in new cases among heterosexual Black communities has been plateauing and among Black African men has recently increased slightly. Additionally, although the overall numbers are small, cases are rising significantly among Black Caribbean women.

Reasons for differences include forgoing testing for fear of diagnosis, misconceptions about illness and treatment, stigma, cultural differences and sensitivities, poorer access to healthcare generally, and lower rates of both awareness and take-up of PrEP (HIV prevention medication). Studies have shown, in particular, that Black women are less likely to be offered PrEP by clinicians, are less likely to request it and more likely to be refused than other high-risk groups.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: commission local authorities to establish an HIV outreach program to openly discuss diagnosis, treatment, and support service options for Black people with HIV.

2.1.4 Healthcare for the elderly

Many elderly Black people would prefer to rely on an extended family network for support rather than social services, often preventing or causing a delay in their seeking external support services. Engagement with social and health care services may be resisted by the elderly because they fear the loss of independence, unwelcome government interference, discrimination, or they find services difficult to access. This may mean the person is not in contact with appropriate services until the illness is advanced or the person's family is in a crisis.

More than 25,000 older Black and minority ethnic (BME) people are living with dementia in the UK, in part due to vascular risk factors such as hypertension often found in African-Caribbean and South Asian UK populations. Gaining information about dementia is often exacerbated by language barriers when people have lost cognitive skills, or if online information is not accessible.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- commission local authorities to establish **grant-funded** links with culturally-appropriate community groups, particularly encouraging support from those religious groups with large African and Caribbean membership who are willing to support and coordinate communication between BME individuals, their families, and the health service. These commissioned community groups will advocate for the elderly and provide reassuring opportunities for individuals and their families to openly discuss diagnosis, treatment, and support service options for elderly Black people; and
- campaign for all adult social care services to be provided on a not-for-profit basis. The existing system of using private companies has created a broken system whereby workers, often from Black and other ethnic minority communities, are exploited and those who need help if they receive it find it is of poor quality.

2.1.5 Black disabled people in the UK

We know that disabled adults from Black British ethnic backgrounds face more barriers to accessibility than all other ethnic groups. Black disabled people are less visible, less heard, and less represented in

society, and this issue becomes even more apparent when you begin to look into the resources available for Black disabled people in the UK. In every corner of the country, there is a significant lack of charities, non-profits, platforms, networks, organisations, or support groups for those whose experiences of discrimination cross the intersections of anti-Blackness and ableism.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: improve the lives of Black people with disabilities, and commit to providing local support, advice, and opportunities through ring-fenced funding of services commissioned against criteria designed by Black and minority ethnic people with disabilities, to shape appropriate interventions that will improve inclusion for that group.

2.1.6 Overarching Health Improvements

Liberal Democrats must commit to centering Black Britons in our public health system by launching an inter-agency National Health Equity Strategy. This strategy will prioritise anti-racism, underpinned by the belief that quality health outcomes should be the norm for everyone living in the UK, regardless of race, place, or income.

To achieve this, **WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:**

- work with Primary Care Trusts and Local Commissioning Groups to designate centrally funded Health Equity Zones to address communities' most pressing health disparities, especially in communities with histories of economic and social marginalisation. These Health Equity Zones will support the identification, development, implementation, and monitoring of plans tailored to address local health inequities. Building from models successfully used elsewhere, also create multi-sector coalitions focused on health equity and closing health disparities, and reflect the fundamental economic, social, and political determinants of health in a community. Continuing funding to a Health Equity Zone will be conditional with concrete, executable plans to address high-priority health disparities in the local community, with a specific emphasis on racial and demographic health disparities;
- train our current health workforce to combat bias – especially racial bias – when treating patients, while transforming our institutions to ensure that they are prepared to engage with communities in culturally, linguistically, and historically appropriate ways;
- develop and codify the frameworks, systems, data collection and analysis, and protocols for this work at the highest levels of government, and ensure that our health providers and systems can readily access these tools and support;
- address the low proportion of BME staff in non-clinical senior positions and the disproportionately high numbers of BME staff facing disciplinary action and exposed to disproportionately high levels of risk as seen during the frontline response to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- create an Office of Health Equality within the Department of Health to ensure that frameworks are in place to address health inequities, promote equal access, and prohibit discrimination; that agencies explicitly consider racial impact in their regulatory decisions and rule-making; and that legal recourse and enforcement is readily available to people and communities to protect these basic human rights; and
- provide additional funding for budgets for:
 - public health and wellbeing issues (such as obesity, diabetes, nutrition, HIV/PrEP and other sexual health issues, and reproductive and women's healthcare issues such as period poverty); and
 - addressing disparities between mental ill health and physical health, both of which are long-standing Liberal Democrat policies, but which should be re-assessed through the lens of tackling racial inequality.

2.2 Education - Schools of the Future

2.2.1 Schools of the Future Plan

As revealed by the Department for Education, Black African and Caribbean children, in particular, are three-and-a-half times more likely to be excluded than all other children in primary, secondary and special schools. These are disparities that exist not because of any underlying propensity to cause trouble, but most likely because educators perceive Black children as fundamentally disruptive.

Britain needs to create an educational system that trains and empowers the next generation of Black scientists, artists, writers, university professors, lawyers, tech entrepreneurs, doctors, software engineers, police officers, teachers, and more. Yet today, too many Black children are being denied educational justice. From a lack of adequate resources to critical teacher shortages to discriminatory disciplinary policies that reduce instruction time and feed the school-to-street pipeline, Black students are far too often not afforded the same educational opportunities as their white peers. And when the intellectual lives of black students are diminished, Britain loses.

Extrapolating from the data compiled in “The Economic Cost of the U.S Education Gap” we are confident that the U.K opportunity gap is likely to cause millions in lost economic growth annually and is one of the most significant contributors to the perpetuation of the Black-white wealth gap. Most people’s wealth is built through well-paid work, but many Black students have been denied equal access to excellent education and in-demand job skills. The Schools of the Future Plan is the Liberal Democrat commitment to providing the resources needed to ensure every child in the UK gains access to the skills they need to thrive in the economy - and society - of the future.

There are too few Black and ethnic minority teachers in schools, with 86% of all teachers in state schools being White British in 2018 according to government statistics. Those we do have are finding that they tend to be not only lower-paid but, according to surveys, more likely to be subject to disciplinary or capability procedures and forced out of their job. If we want to have the best teaching profession, then it has to be inclusive, and it is not. This is a national scandal that successive governments are responsible for. Clear statutory duties in respect of equality apply to schools as employers, but governments have not sought to reinforce it in schools. Worse, successive secretaries of state have removed equality from the accountability systems, and that includes race equality. To address this,

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- invest in an equitable state education system by increasing government resources for students in deprived areas. Schools that serve students who come to school hungry, who experience insecurity at home, and who know firsthand the indignity of racial discrimination need more resources—not fewer—if they are to experience opportunity equal to their peers. We seek confirmation that a Liberal Democrat administration will dramatically increase funding for deprived areas to support higher teacher pay and supplemental services for low-income students above and beyond local funding resources;
- issue new regulations to diversify the teaching profession. Studies show that same-race teachers can have an enormous impact: in the US, it is shown that Black students with at least one Black teacher in grades 3-5 are much more likely to graduate high school and attend university. That is why we need new transparency around teacher hiring procedures: schools should disaggregate

their applicants and hire by race according to realistic and achievable targets, and document teacher diversity initiatives as part of their school improvement plans;

- set new guidelines around the use of funds to invest in recruiting, training, and supporting the next generation of school leaders of colour; and
- invest in high-quality local educational programmes, and increase government investments in primary and secondary school, and university programmes to increase readiness and competitiveness for Black women and men in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and fields of growing employment opportunities, especially health, software, finance, and alternative energy.

2.2.2 Higher Education

While higher education remains a clear pathway for much of the middle-class, for too many—particularly for Black students—those paths are littered with hurdles. Black students are disproportionately likely to enroll in universities with a low graduate earning average. And given historic wealth disparities, they are disproportionately likely to face challenges in affording university, leaving them at greater risk of dropping out of university with debt and no degree.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- invest in university students' futures by expanding access to free university tuition among low-income students and ensuring the lower-income students can cover living costs without taking on student debt through the widening of the Student Grant program;
- cancel the debts of borrowers that failed to find "gainful employment" within 10 years of leaving university and develop a system of rules designed to ensure students receive an adequate return on their investment in education; and
- provide dedicated resources and rewards for universities that play an extraordinary role in educating Black students, developing remarkable leaders, and building a burgeoning Black middle class.

2.2.3 Promotion of the Education and Celebration of Black History

Freedom is seeing your history and culture accurately taught, reflected, and celebrated. Black history, in general, and slavery, in particular, is poorly taught throughout the U.K. This is largely due to our nation's failure to reconcile our history and reshape how it is taught to be more accurate, honest, and inclusive. The history of Black people did not start with colonisation and the slave trade, and it did not end with the equal rights movement.

In 2013, the teaching of British colonial history and its role in the slave trade was removed from the compulsory syllabus and made optional. This means that crucial parts of our nation's history can be left out and children of today will not get a comprehensive, accurate picture of the past. For example, children are taught about British Industrialisation, but not about the role that slavery and racism played in underpinning and financing the revolution. They learn about the Second World War, but not about the vital contribution of Africans and Caribbean people to Britain's war effort. We are doing our children a disservice by not educating them about this important aspect of Britain's past and putting it in the context of the legacy of empire and colonialism that exists in the present day.

We are committed to correcting the record and developing a strategy for inclusive ongoing representation and the commemoration of Black people's contributions around the world. Promoting the education and celebration of Black history is critical to maintaining an ongoing dialogue about race relations in the United Kingdom and seeking to overcome institutional racism.

What's more, focusing African and Caribbean black history exclusively on the European colonial period leaves out a more positive and enlightening narrative of pre-colonial history. For example, the famous Nok Culture (approximating the Nigeria of today) was technically more advanced than European culture of the time. When Portuguese traders first arrived on the 'Gold Coast' in what is now Ghana, they were amazed to find imported goods from the Middle East.

Children in the UK learn abstractly about the Pyramids of Egypt, but not how and why advanced Ancient Egypt was a product of Nubian and other African cultures that stretched all the way to what is now Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya, and which led to Hellenic and then Roman culture; the foundations of modern European culture.

These histories are neither taught in British schools nor African schools, but have the potential to change perception of Africa and Africans.

When children learn that the US moon landings would never have happened if three of the world's top mathematicians had not been able to make the required calculations; Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan and Mary Jackson, all black women, they would not be so 'surprised' if they had already learned of scientific traditions in Africa going back thousands of years!

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: ensure history teaching enlightens children not only about European colonialism in Africa and the evils of slavery, but also about the rich pre-colonial history of the Continent. African history didn't begin only after the arrival of Europeans, just as the history of Spain didn't begin with the conquest by the African Moors.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- increase funding for the Arts and create targeted grant funding to promote the ongoing documentation of Black history and promotion of Black culture in the United Kingdom. Freedom means seeing your history and culture accurately represented in museums, libraries, and other cultural representations on an ongoing basis. It is not just remembering the past, but also acknowledging great talent and cultural contributions happening today;
- support cultural and historic sites documenting the history of Black people in the United Kingdom;
- prioritise grant funding for a Museum of Black Britons in London and Bristol to assist in the collection of materials, and diversification of current museums and libraries;
- prioritise the repatriation, or make financial restitution for, African artifacts that were pillaged during periods of colonialism.
- pledge to implement the Black Curriculum <https://www.theblackcurriculum.com> and outline best practices for the content and instruction inclusive of Black history and Black Britain's contributions. This guidance will support schools on how to incorporate Black history throughout the Y1 to Y12 curriculum, and not just into a certain unit during certain months or grade levels. Curriculum changes shall be targeted at:
 - providing young black people with a sense of belonging and identity;
 - raising the educational attainment for young black people through greater inclusivity; and
 - improved social cohesion between young people in the UK.

3. Justice

3.1. Criminal Justice Overview

At every level of the criminal justice system—from over-policing to over-prosecution, to over-sentencing, to conditions while imprisoned, to reintegration upon release—Black Britons are subject to systemic racism. Data from the Metropolitan Police shows that during the London lockdown due to Covid-19, “when compared with the composition of the resident population, higher proportions of those in Black and minority ethnic groups were issued with Fixed Penalty Notices or arrested across London as a whole.” To excise the injustices of racism from our policing and criminal justice system, the question as to whether police forces in Britain remain institutionally racist needs to be asked across the board and concrete recommendations implemented to tackle unconscious bias at every stage of the criminal justice process, recognising the ways in which they interact with each other, and investing in social programmes to mitigate any harmful effects. We must ensure less contact with an overreaching criminal justice system. Once people are released from prison, we must ensure they are free to reintegrate into society and have the support to do so.

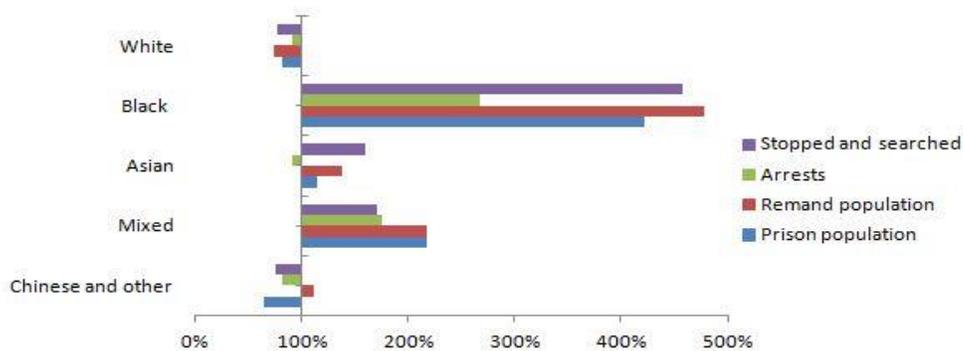


Figure 1 Over representation of ethnic minorities in the criminal justice system (MOJ statistics 2011/12)

Figure 2 shows the proportion of those found guilty of an indictable offense who are then sentenced to custody. Figure 3 shows the average custodial length of those sentenced for an indictable offense. In each case, ethnic minority offenders receive harsher treatment than White offenders, with the exception of duration and those in the Chinese and other groups, who have a similar length to those in the White group.

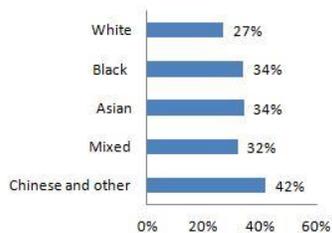


Figure 2 Proportion of those convicted who are sentenced to custody

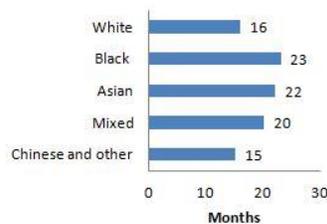


Figure 3 Average custodial sentence length

It is essential that we ensure more people are free by significantly reducing the number of imprisoned people in the United Kingdom by 30%. Britain locks up more people and for longer than any other European country, and often those who end up in prison would benefit more from having their mental health or educational needs met. It's not just a matter of closing down prisons; we also need to invest in social services and diversion programmes and allow people to rehabilitate. We need better ways to address crime and poverty, both in the criminal justice system and in society.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- implement the Lammy Review's recommendations in full to address the disparity of treatment and outcomes for black and other ethnic minority people within the criminal justice system;
- ensure uniform record data on ethnicity across the criminal justice system and publishing complete data to allow analysis and scrutiny;
- provide sizable government grants for criminal justice programmes that commit to reform and prioritize funding for programs aimed at pre-trial reforms and expansion of alternatives to imprisonment programs. It is not enough to simply reduce the number of imprisoned people. We must address the root causes of racism, poverty, and crime—and doing so will require resources. These grants will allow us to reduce our imprisoned populations while investing in programs that make communities safer, including drug rehabilitation, affordable housing, and subsidized transportation. It will also increase funding for technical assistance and training efforts. Such incentives will help statutory bodies reform their systems, while grant requirements will hold them accountable to follow through;
- eliminate imprisonment for drug possession, reduce sentences for other drug offenses and apply these reductions retroactively, legalize marijuana, and expunge past convictions. Research shows that imprisonment for drug offenses does not affect drug misuse, drug arrests, or overdose deaths -and, in fact, makes each of these issues worse;
- eliminate mandatory minimums. Eliminating mandatory minimums and decreasing overall sentence length for a significant number of crimes is critical to ensuring that people are not imprisoned when there is no reasonable state safety purpose;
- commute the sentences of imprisoned people beyond what justice warrants by establishing an independent clemency commission that sits outside the Ministry of Justice. An independent clemency commission, with diverse professional backgrounds and lived experiences, will make the process streamlined and comprehensive;
- end the current “Hostile Environment” policies and seek justice for the Windrush Generation, end racist practice of forced deportation of those released from prison, many of whom have no ties to the countries to which they are being deported;
- bring an end to the excessive use of stop and search powers, including the nationwide use of Section 60 ‘suspicionless’ stop and search, as well as ending the use of ineffective facial recognition technology, and deliver community-focused policing by consent;
- replace Prevent with cohesive community policing that engages rather than antagonizes Black and other minority communities and introduces safeguarding programmes to protect those vulnerable to the recruitment propaganda and ideologies of those who promote terror as a political strategy;
- reduce the criminalization of poverty and its link to imprisonment Criminal-justice-related fines are millions of pounds. Many individuals give up necessities such as rent, food, and prescriptions to pay their court debts—and some resort to committing another crime just to be able to pay. These targeted fines and fees are most often imposed in and negatively impact Black communities;
- require responsible authorities to account for a person’s ability to pay before levying fines and late fees, and end practices that create additional economic burdens;

- appoint legal leadership within the government committed to the fundamental transformation of the criminal justice system, and ensure that the Ministry of Justice, the courts and the legal profession include more women and black and ethnic minority people; and
- ensure police recruitment panels are diverse to encourage diversity and inclusion at every level of the police.

3.2 Prison reforms

We must protect people's freedom from draconian criminal justice practices and safeguard their freedom to reform and rehabilitate while imprisoned. Freedom is not binary. Just because the justice system has taken away someone's freedom in certain ways does not mean it has the right to subject people to inhumane conditions while they are imprisoned. If you want someone to turn their life around, you must ensure that the odds are stacked in their favour: not against them. To achieve this,

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- reduce reliance on solitary confinement;
- ensure people who are imprisoned have improved access to education, mental healthcare, and intensive rehabilitation from substance misuse. Studies show that access to postsecondary education while imprisoned increases the likelihood of finding jobs upon release and decreases recidivism rates;
- double funding from the government to commit to supporting literacy programs and Y6-12 education of people in prison;
- provide funding to empower Councils to provide better opportunities for individuals to prepare for life after imprisonment. Probation services are already working on programs that provide better opportunities for imprisoned individuals, and we want to encourage, support, and greatly expand these reforms by involving local authorities more;
- end Friday release. Nearly half of those released from prison are released on Fridays. That means they usually have no access to a benefits officer, housing officer, probation services, etc. for up to three days after their release;
- reinstate legal aid. Too often legal costs are borne by Black women and contribute to the financial burdens of Black families;
- protect the freedom for people with criminal convictions to fully integrate into society provide the tools necessary for success while reducing government intrusion in peoples' lives;
- support initiatives that ensure that people with criminal records have equal access to employment. The Home office will issue guidance and model policies to reduce implicit bias and encourage private employers to adopt these practices; and
- ensure the availability of tax credits for employers who hire formerly imprisoned people.

3.3. Policing

To protect the freedom of Black people in Britain, we shall bring fewer people into the criminal justice system in the first place and minimise police overreach. Black people have a higher likelihood of arrest by age 28 than white people. Black people are disproportionately subject to excessive force from police officers. We need accountability, training, and enforcement to ensure that no more Black people are unjustifiably arrested and that no more Black lives are wrongly abused at police officers' hands.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- establish comprehensive measures to hold police accountable to their communities;
- establish a comprehensive government database both documenting use of stop and search, force, and develop corresponding accountability practices for police use of stop and search;

- make Police Forces collect data related to the use of force, line-of-duty deaths, policing activities (including traffic stops), officer safety and wellness, officer misconduct, arrests and charges, and crime;
- require law enforcement agencies to publish documents like protocols and manuals that promote transparency – especially related to the use of force investigations, technology, surveillance, and intelligence;
- legislate on the use of body-worn cameras and develop a national analytics process for safety processes and results; and
- tackle the rise in hate crimes by making them all aggravated offenses, giving law enforcement the resources and training they need to identify and prevent them.

Too many police forces use a “reasonableness” standard for use of force; some lack substantive guidance past the “bare minimum standard. Stricter policies regarding the use of force correlate with fewer injuries at the hands of police.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- promote policies and training that require de-escalation efforts and limit force to circumstances when it is absolutely necessary;
- work to eliminate unfair and discriminatory practices, which are shown to be biased against black people. This will require us to train officers and departments to prioritize the most serious offenses while creating diversion opportunities such as restorative justice approaches, for less serious offenses;
- support Police Forces that actively strengthen community relationships and implement inclusive community policing, and encourage other forces to follow their lead. This includes departments that have recruited a diverse police force that reflects their communities, encourages hiring of police officers who live in communities they serve, and departments that have effectively responded to officer misconduct. Such departments will have selection and promotional policies that reward officers not simply on enforcement;
- promote effective, informed independent civilian oversight of local law enforcement agencies. We seek the replacement of the Police and Crime Commissioners with locally elected Police and Crime Boards, where each unitary authority holds public elections for the election of representatives to their local Police and Crime Board;
- provide incentives for Police and Crime Boards to have transparent policies so communities can better understand the policies governing the police; and
- invest in community-based healthcare, especially mental health services, and other front-end social supports that will minimize the need for police officers to serve as de facto social workers and thus allow them to resume their primary role as guardians of public safety.

4. Opportunity

You aren't secure without economic security, which is closed off to many who have been excluded from accessing the wealth engine that is British capitalism. The racial wealth gap is the most visible economic consequence of our long history of discrimination. The legacy of colonialism is a legacy of stolen wealth. Predatory institutions who prey on the disadvantaged, such as gambling and pay-day lenders, sustain this dynamic today. The Liberal Democrats BLAC Policy Agenda takes deliberate steps to dismantle those systems while providing the necessary capital and tools to mitigate wealth and opportunity gaps.

4.1 Equal Employment and Business Opportunity

The Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME) found that firms owned by people of African and Caribbean origin generate over £10 billion for the British economy. According to the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA), the spending power of Black consumers is £300 billion. Yet, Black companies face underlying vulnerabilities, including having significantly less access to capital and venture capital investment. A report conducted by Diversity VC and RateMyInvestor found that less than 1% of venture capital is invested in black businesses in the US and the number for the UK is no better. It is a reality that venture capital investment goes to companies founded and led by white men.

During the recession that followed the 2008 global financial crisis, a report prepared for the Department for Business Innovation and Skills by Warwick Business School into the effect on bank lending to SMEs found that businesses owned by black Africans were 11.9% more likely to be rejected for an overdraft than white-owned businesses. When Black-African-owned businesses did manage to secure overdrafts, they paid margins that were 2.12% points higher than margins paid by businesses with a white principal owner. When it came to term loans, the report revealed that businesses with a Black African principal owner were 14.4% more likely to experience rejection than businesses with a white principal owner.

We know that discrimination means investment capital does not always find the best opportunities: Pat McGrath, MBE, the British makeup artist and powerhouse behind global cosmetics brand Pat McGrath Labs; Cathy Hughes the billionaire founder and chair of publicly-listed Urban One; and Richelieu Dennis, founder of global skin and hair company Shea Moisture, which was acquired by Unilever, were all rejected by various investors. To address this,

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- create the government Entrepreneurship Fund to invest in entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds. This fund would co-invest in funds with the explicit goal of investing in entrepreneurs from underrepresented backgrounds, particularly based in low-income and minority communities. The government would co-invest for £10 million within five years, which will activate another £10 million of private capital. Additionally, there would be corresponding investments in increasing access to capital, entrepreneur training and development, and rigorous measurement and data tracking;
- introduce the Debt-for-Jobs Plan to help students start businesses. All students will have their university loans deferred and forgiven over a five-year period if they start and maintain a business employing at least three people within five years of leaving school;
- aim to award 15% of government contracts to small business owners from underserved communities in urban and rural areas, including minority-owned firms and women-owned firms. Awarding more contracts to business owners who are economically and socially disadvantaged would inject millions into underserved communities;

- extend the Equality Act to all large companies with more than 250 employees, requiring them to monitor and publish data on gender, Black and other named ethnic minority groups, and LGBT+ employment levels and pay gaps;
- convene a task force to identify additional ways to reach our entrepreneurship goals and report back to the Cabinet within the first 100 days of the Liberal Democrat administration. This task force will be a highly-diverse and credentialed collection of entrepreneurs and will represent the government's deepest collaboration with the minority business community. This commission will also work to secure additional private sector commitments to increase minority entrepreneurship;
- launch an inquiry into discrimination in the bank lending sector; and
- establish Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) to support lending to low-income, low-wealth, and overlooked communities. They will be connected to and understand the needs of communities. We want to ensure the ability of CDFIs to invest in entrepreneurs, nonprofits, and businesses in their communities.

Based on decades of systemic racism and exclusion, Black Britons continue to be disproportionately unemployed and underemployed, especially young Black British men. In most occupations and professions, Black Britons continue to be underrepresented, especially in executive, management, and leadership positions. The gaps in promotion and pay are even larger for Black British women in the workforce. There are numerous, interconnected reasons for this persistent employment gap that require both short-term and long-term solutions. To address this,

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- implement the Parker Review recommendations to increase ethnic diversity on the boards of Britain's largest companies;
- implement the recommendation from the Baroness McGregor-Smith Review, starting with all Public Sector Employers first, advocating that regular publication of workforce data disaggregated by ethnicity and pay at all levels of the organisation;
- vigorously enforce equal laws ensuring equal opportunity;
- launch an inquiry into names-based discrimination in the private sector and extend the use of name-blind recruitment processes in the public sector;
- raise the minimum wage to at least £10: Black workers are disproportionately likely to earn less than £10 per hour, so increasing the minimum wage will especially empower Black Britons. Support career mentorship, employee resource groups, and peer support programs and initiatives across multiple industries and occupations;
- increase the oversight and powers of bodies charged with enforcing minimum wage laws and preventing modern slavery and people trafficking in the UK;
- implement the See Hear campaign by Catherine Bearder http://www.bearder.eu/end_human_trafficking; and
- mainstream the use of unconscious bias training in the public sector and encourage its use in the private sector.

Additionally, WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- appoint cabinet secretaries and ministerial staff that include Black Britons, and reflect Britain's diversity; and
- appoint Black Britons and other ethnic minorities to government commissions, task forces, and advisory bodies. Government departments will establish and build relationships with community leaders and stakeholders from across Black Britain— teachers, health professionals, business leaders, faith leaders, artists, professional athletes, community organisers—to make sure there are seats at every government table to listen to and be more accountable to Black Britain.

4.2. The 21st Century Community Housing Act

Housing policies of the 1980s and 1990s directly invested in white homeownership. This investment has compounded over generations and combined with centuries of conscious and intentional discrimination to entrench the racial wealth gap. It is estimated that equalizing homeownership rates amongst races would significantly reduce the racial wealth gap between white and Black families significantly

According to the U.K. government website:

- 63% of households in England owned their own homes in the 2 years from 2016 to 2018.
- 68% of White British households owned their own homes.
- Households in the Black African (20%) and Arab (17%) ethnic groups had the lowest rates of homeownership.
- In every, socio-economic group and age group, White British households were more likely to own their own homes than all ethnic minority households combined.

The BLAC Liberal Democrats Policy Agenda proposes a 21st Century Community Housing Act to launch a trust that would purchase abandoned properties and provide them to eligible residents in pilot cities while simultaneously investing in the revitalization of surrounding communities. This plan will attack the racial wealth gap by directly fostering asset ownership among those previously prevented from accumulating capital, while simultaneously investing in the communities around them. Contrary to traditional private incentives for urban regeneration, this plan directly invests in the British people instead of further enriching the private sector.

- Cities would place bids through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for comprehensive financing provided by a new “Homeownership Fund”.
- A housing task force would choose cities based on factors such as available employment, new employment to be created, state spaces, the amount of land and property available, the magnitude of affordable housing needs, the prospect of revitalization, community participation in the plan, and the environmental effects of revitalization.
- An eligible grantee would be a resident who has less than the area median income (AMI) over the last five years and is 1) a current resident of the pilot area who has lived in the area for a period of at least three years during the previous decade; or 2) a current resident of any historically recognized area of multiple deprivations or a resident of such an area for at least three years over the previous decade.
- Participating homeowners would be granted absolute ownership of the property, with a 10-year forgivable loan to promote the home renovation and its use as a primary residence. The homeowner would enjoy the entire value of the home’s appreciation.
- Each pilot city would create a plan to work with local organisations and entrepreneurs to build facilities, infrastructure, and/or technology to spur job creation. The Homeownership Fund would fund infrastructure, facilities, or a jobs program that suits the region's profile.

In addition to helping families across Britain, the investment in these communities would provide greater services and infrastructure for new industries and sectors to thrive, creating a multiplier effect of jobs and prosperity for local residents.

4.3. Payday lenders

In the UK, when the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) took over responsibility for payday lending in 2014, they capped payday loan costs at 100 percent of the amount of the loan. This level is irresponsibly high.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: cap lending rates to be more in line with jurisdictions such as Canada, where some provinces have limited interest rates on payday loans to a maximum of 20 percent above the Bank of England base rate.

4.4. Gambling

In 2016, the Gambling Commission estimated there were up to 340,000 problem gamblers in the UK, with many more individuals at risk.

Their report suggested problem gamblers were:

- five times more likely to be male than female
- more likely to be unemployed than in work, studying or retired
- most likely to be aged 25 to 34 (if male)
- more likely to be from a black or other minority ethnic background than from a white or Asian background (on a three-year view)
- more likely to indicate signs of mental ill-health
- more likely to indicate signs of low wellbeing

To address this, **WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:**

- strengthen the reach of the Gambling Commission introducing a new structure of protections for vulnerable adults particularly focused on the online gaming sector;
- investigate the cumulative impact of betting shops being placed in lower-income areas, and act on the recommendations of this investigation; and
- invest in addiction recovery services, including gambling addiction - and in mental health provision - to help those trapped by their addiction behaviours.

4.5 Environmental Justice

The cost of poor housing to the NHS is estimated to be around £2.5 billion per year. In terms of manageable health risks, this puts it in the top five. It's less expensive than obesity (£5.1-£5.2 billion), alcohol intake (£3.2 billion) and smoking (£2.3-£3.3 billion), but costs the NHS more than physical inactivity (£0.9-£1 billion).

Shortcomings in our housing infrastructure disproportionately affect communities of Black Britons and low-income households. Those living in poverty are more likely to live in neighbourhoods with poor air quality, and Black Britons are disproportionately more likely to live in such conditions.

We can make measurable progress towards mitigating negative health impacts that disproportionately impact communities of colour through the following actions,

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- expand the enforcement of environmental protections and invest in solutions to environmental threats, particularly focusing on communities of colour and working families who face disproportionate health effects from pollution and inadequate infrastructure;

- lead with science in developing regulations to protect Britain from environmental hazards. All branches of government will be required to consider environmental justice in all its regulatory decisions;
- create a 21st-century state health data system that expands on existing environmental health tracking networks to provide an early warning system, down to the neighborhood level, of health threats—from the effects of climate change and other environmental changes to clusters of chronic and infectious disease; and
- ensure expanded and equitable disaster preparedness and relief, so that all communities get the resources they need to recover and rebuild from disasters, whether it be due to flooding or apartment block fires.

Many of these solutions require integrating resources from across the government, including from the Departments of Health, Home Office, Housing, Agriculture, Environment, Energy & Climate Change (or BEIS), and Transport. It will also require new investments that take a comprehensive approach to rebuilding after a disaster.

4.6 Immigration

Africans seeking short term visas in the U.K are more than twice as likely to be refused than other applicants. Bias and discrimination are evident against Black people throughout the immigration application process. To address this,

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- overhaul the current immigration system, and make it fairer and more compassionate to ensure the Windrush scandal never happens again;
- scrap the Hostile Environment, end indefinite detention, and take powers away from the Home Office;
- commit to an expanded Windrush compensation scheme and make a ‘Windrush Day’ bank holiday, to celebrate the contribution that migration has made to our society;
- end the Home Office’s practice of high charges for passports, visas, tests and other documentation;
- ensure our embassy staff treats all visa applicants with the utmost respect and dignity at all times;
- put in place new, more robust, transparent complaint processes for those whose visa application is rejected;
- end automatically forced deportations of those released from prison; and
- end the ability of the Home Secretary to remove UK citizenship from people and make them stateless.

4.7 Democracy

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: make democracy inclusive by expanding access to the ballot. Registration must be made easier, by automatically registering eligible voters using the local government’s information, allowing online and same-day registration.

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO:

- make voting easier by holding Election Day on a Sunday;
- make voting accessible to all, by ensuring accessible registration materials and other language access provisions, and greater accessibility at polling places;

- reduce the power of big money in politics and elevate ordinary voices, by capping donations to political parties and introduce wider reforms to party funding along the lines of the 2011 report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. The economic imbalance in our political donation system sustains a racial bias because wealthy donors are overwhelmingly white, with policy priorities often out of step with Black voters and the general public;
- replace the unelected House of Lords (another legacy of bygone-era privilege) with an elected upper chamber with diverse representation;
- redistribute power away from a small Westminster elite to the nations, regions, and local authorities, giving power to communities to hold local services to account and decide how their taxes are raised and spent;
- legislate to allow political parties to have all-ethnic-minority shortlists;
- bring into force Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010, requiring political parties to publish candidate diversity data;
- establish a Race Equality Unit based within the Treasury which will review major spending announcements for its impact on black and other named ethnic minority communities; and
- establish a process to give citizens of British Overseas Territories (more than half of whom are Black) some form of democratic representation within Parliament. Whilst it is right and proper that overseas territories generally have devolved governments and local democracy, the UK still legislates on their behalf when it comes to areas such as foreign affairs and defence. There are over 250,000 citizens of Overseas Territories. They currently have no democratically accountable say in matters still controlled by Westminster. This is another legacy of the empire and needs to be corrected.

5. In Closing

WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO FULLY RESOURCE A CAMPAIGN TO: demand greater freedom, security, and democracy for communities that need it most. And while we do not pretend to have all the answers, a fully-effective program for empowering Black Britain will require further listening to voices from communities themselves. The deep wounds of centuries will not be healed with a handful of targeted programs. But with the BLAC Liberal Democrats Policy Agenda, we seek confirmation that a Liberal Democrat administration will make an unprecedented commitment to listen to and lift those who have historically faced discrimination. This amounts to a commitment to replace racist systems with inclusive ones. It is a down payment on the future we hope to see. WE CALL ON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS TO CAMPAIGN TO: enrich not only Black Britain, but all of Britain.



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