Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford

Maternity safety top of my agenda at this week's Lib Dem conference

ON Friday, I travelled down to Brighton for the Liberal Democrat autumn conference.

Conference is always a busy few days, bringing together members, councillors, MPs and activists from across the country to debate policy, share ideas and campaign on the issues that matter to their communities. Since becoming an MP in 2024, my diary has become rather busier, but conference remains something I always look forward to. It's a chance to step away from Westminster and spend time listening to members and organisations working on the issues that matter to people locally.

One of the main issues I worked on over the weekend was maternity safety.

The CQC's own review found that 65 per cent of the maternity units it inspected were rated inadequate or requiring improvement for safety, with none rated outstanding. That is deeply concerning, and I believe we need stronger action to make sure lessons are properly learned when things go wrong.

I proposed an amendment to our maternity safety motion to strengthen accountability. It would give NHS trust boards a clear duty to act when there are signs of systemic failings, give coroners a standardised route to refer serious concerns to the relevant organisations, and provide greater legal protection for staff who speak up.

This is an issue that matters locally too. Broomfield's maternity unit was rated inadequate in 2024 and placed under formal CQC conditions. It has since improved to "requires improvement", which is welcome progress, but there is still more to do to ensure families in Chelmsford receive the safe, high-quality maternity care they deserve.

Chelmsford MP Marie Goldman speaking at the Liberal Democrat autumn conference in Brighton, September 2026

I also brought forward an amendment to our motion on fixing the family courts. Too many families face lengthy delays, while children can be left caught in the middle of difficult and distressing proceedings. The changes I proposed would help keep the focus on children and families, and on making sure the courts can provide the timely decisions and protection that people rely on them for.

Of course, conference isn't just about debates and votes.

I had the opportunity to meet representatives from Dementia UK, Young Lives vs Cancer and Arthritis UK. I regularly hear from constituents affected by these issues, so it was particularly useful to hear directly from the charities supporting people and families every day. I'll be taking those conversations back to Westminster and making sure they feed into my work on behalf of constituents.

Food security was another important part of the weekend. At an event hosted by UK Flour Millers, I spoke about the importance of supporting an industry that plays such a fundamental role in keeping the country fed.

I was particularly pleased to pay tribute to Marriages, based right here in Chelmsford, and the contribution they make to our local economy and food supply.

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I also chaired a panel on healthy eating and, in my role as Women and Equalities spokesperson, spoke at a conference event on violence against women and girls. We discussed how rapidly changing technology is creating new forms of abuse, and the need for policy to keep pace.

There was plenty of time to focus on issues closer to home too. I met with Anglian Water to raise concerns about our local waterways before joining Surfers Against Sewage for a paddleboard and beach clean on Sunday. It was a slightly different way to spend a conference morning, but a useful reminder of why protecting our rivers and coast matters.

I also met with Greater Anglia to discuss services from Chelmsford and Beaulieu Park station and the issues that matter to local passengers.

But what I'll take away from conference most is the people I met. Teachers, retirees, students and carers all giving up their time to debate, campaign and make the case for the communities they care about. Bobby Dean's rally speech, and the contributions that followed, were a good reminder of why so many of us got involved in politics in the first place.

I'm now back in Chelmsford with plenty to take forward – from maternity safety and family courts to our local waterways, rail services and the issues raised by charities and campaigners.

Thank you for reading.

Marie

Reward offered after fish dumped

A SUBSTANTIAL reward been offered up in reward money for anyone with information after four tropical fish were found abandoned in Witham.

Up to £3,000 has been offered by by PETA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, to anyone with information which leads to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the incident.

According to reports, a large pleco, an orange parrotfish, and two gouramis were found in a polystyrene tub filled with water behind a garage in a parking area off Virgil Road on September 8.

"We're calling on anyone with information about this case to come forward so that whoever abandoned these individuals can be apprehended, before they harm anyone else," says PETA Vice President of Programmes Elisa Allen. "Abandoning an animal is an extraordinary betrayal. These fish deserved care and protection, not to be discarded like rubbish."

The RSPCA is urging anyone with firsthand information about the incident to call its appeals line on 0300 123 8018. RSPCA Animal Rescue Officer (ARO) Joe White and trainee Rik Moran went to collect the fish after they were discovered by neighbours in a parking area.

Joe said: "We'd appeal to the public to help us find out where the fish came from. Anyone who saw anything suspicious in the area at the time or who knows who these fish belong to can contact our appeal line on 0300 123 8018, quoting reference 1900213."

The fish are now being cared for by specialists who will rehome them.

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