

I am proud of our party's record of defending and enhancing the rights of LGBT+ people during our time in government. LGBT+ Conservatives plays an important role making sure we are an inclusive and welcoming party for everyone, providing a voice for the many LGBT+ people in the Party, and rebutting some of the claims made by our opponents who sometimes seem to think they have a monopoly on LGBT+ issues.

I am running to be leader because I can unite the Party behind a positive, compelling vision for the future of our country. The Conservative Party is at its best when it seeks to be a force for aspiration, opportunity and self-reliance. My Conservative values are rooted in a belief that everyone who works hard and does the right thing deserves the chance to succeed and build a better life for themselves and their families. And those values extend to the country at large. I am a passionate patriot. I believe Britain is an immense force for good in the world and I want our country to prosper and thrive.

I believe that, fundamentally, we are all conservatives, and we should focus on those shared values which unite us under that banner. That means lower taxes, a growing economy, more homes, sound money, strong defence. We must bring together our whole Conservative family and build a strong, united campaigning machine which can win back the trust of the British public and win the next election.

I am particularly concerned about our dwindling support among younger age groups. The average age of a Conservative voter at the election was 63. We need to show aspirational younger voters what conservative values can mean for them – just as I saw in the Conservative Party I joined as a young man in the 1980s. That includes lower taxes for those who work hard and want to get on in life, and ensuring younger people can get onto the property ladder and start a family.

I became an MP in my late 40s after a successful career as an entrepreneur growing my own business, both here and in America. I have experience in the real world, I know how to lead, how to build teams and put in the hard consistent work needed to deliver. As Secretary of State for Work and Pensions I took forward fundamental reforms to our welfare system to get hundreds of thousands of people off benefits, saving taxpayers billions and opening up the fiscal space for tax cuts. I will bring that proven reforming zeal to the leadership of our party.

We will not get back to winning ways if we seek to tack to one part of the political spectrum or another, or take immediate, stark policy positions which make it harder to bring unity. We win elections when we have broad appeal and occupy the common ground, focussing on the issues which really matter to the lives of the people we seek to serve. We must show the public a Conservative Party that can return to where it belongs – as the natural party of government.