



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

## LD4SOS NEWSLETTER

April 2019

### A HOME OFFICE FIT FOR PURPOSE?

As well as many well researched reports revealing Home Office shortcomings in how it deals with those seeking sanctuary, there are as many as FOUR court cases reported in this newsletter where the Home Office has been found to be dealing with a situation wrongly by the High Court. Surely this is a strong message that the Home Office is not fit for purpose. It needs radical reform as outlined in Lib Dem policy, and a swift end to the Hostile Environment.

### DECISION MAKING

We are all aware that the Home Office does not often meet its 6-month target for making a decision on an asylum claim, and that many cases are years old. They are now looking urgently at better ways of making speedier decisions. Lib Dems [have policy on this](#), and LD4SOS have submitted our ideas to the Home Office. We are emphasising that the quality of decisions is extremely important, as well as the speed.

### TORTURE CLAIMS

Freedom From Torture, Helen Bamber Foundation and Medical Justice have [pursued the Home Office through the courts](#) to help victims of torture with claims for asylum. The Home Office should be ashamed at yet again having to be ordered by a court to do what is right and humane.

### HUGE PROFITS ON CHILDREN'S VISAS

The amount of sheer profit that the Home Office is making from overcharging for children's visas is a big scandal. We have written about what Tim Farron is doing on this in [our web article](#), where there is more.

Also in the article is the related information about work done by Ed Davey on fees for Indefinite Leave to Remain for Armed Forces personnel & their families.

*We say "Whilst the Government is fixated on maintaining a hostile environment, Liberal Democrats are continuing to stand up for, and fight for, the rights of children living in the UK to become citizens, and play a full part in our British way of life, and take up the education opportunities offered to all children"*

### CHILDREN IN CALAIS

The average wait for a positive response to a request by unaccompanied children in Calais to join families in the UK increased more than tenfold from 10.98 days in 2016 to 111.31 days, nearly four months. The average wait for a negative response has nearly quadrupled from 16.5 days to 63.44 days according to [this Guardian article](#). No wonder Calais child refugees went on hunger strike. As Tim Farron said "Every day the Government waits is another night a child sleeps rough in sub-zero temperatures". The Home Office said it could not comment on on-going proceedings.

## **DECISION MAKING ON LGBTQ+ APPLICANTS**

Despite saying something about fair treatment for those who are LGBTQ+, the Home Office is still not treating them as they should, as [this report](#) shows.

## **FAMILY REUNION**

Refugee families are being torn apart and left in danger because of the UK's desperately unfair laws. Appallingly, refugee children who have been granted asylum here aren't allowed to bring any family members to safety in the UK – including their mothers and fathers. The rules also prevent adult refugees from bringing their children over 18, or their elderly parents. These rules are tearing refugee families apart.

**That's why you need to [sign the petition](#)** to tell the Home Secretary Sajid Javid to change them (see also the article on the Brexit backlog).

## **RETURNS TO UNSAFE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

The Home Office admits in [this report](#) that it cannot track the fate of asylum seekers being returned to DRC. The Foreign Office cannot guarantee their safety, and the Home Office are manifestly not going to go and find out. It is notoriously dangerous for anyone who fled to seek sanctuary elsewhere to be returned to this country.

It is Lib Dem policy that there must be "safe destinations for people to go to" or they cannot be returned.

## **INJUSTICE TO THOSE IN DETENTION**

Home Office injustices continues, as [this report](#) shows. It has been ruled that detainees working in the detention centre will be paid £1.00 an hour, and that has not been increased since 2008. Most shouldn't be in detention anyway, and demeaning people by paying a miserly amount further dehumanises people in detention. We wish the legal appeal well, and continue our fight on detention issues.

## **VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY**

Yet again it takes a High Court judge to tell our Home Office they are acting illegally, as [reported here](#). Anyone with humanity would know it takes more than 45 days to stop needing support after being rescued from slavery.

A number of pertinent questions asked in the House of Lords by Sally Hamwee are [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Also about whether they can be removed whilst their case is being investigated [here](#), and training for staff [here](#).

## **HIGH COURT SUSPENDS HOME OFFICE DEPORTATION POLICY**

Some good news on a court case [here](#) as the High Court delivered the latest in [a series](#) of blows to the Government's 'hostile environment' immigration policy. Medical Justice has been granted an interim injunction, which will prevent the Home Office from removing or deporting people from the country without notice.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THOSE SEEKING ASYLUM OR THOSE HELPING THEM**

[This toolkit](#) from Right to Remain looks very useful. Please pass it on to anyone you think could use it.

## **MEDITERRANEAN HOPE**

The Council of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI) has agreed to expand the work of their refugee and migrant programme [Mediterranean Hope](#) with a new strand of activity, to support organisations which undertake this humanitarian work and participate in search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean.

## **NEW REFUGEES**

Very good information and advice for those getting refugee status is available on [this website](#) from Leeds. Although it is aimed at people there, it has a lot of information that is general or could be adapted.

## **BREXIT BACKLOG STOPPING CRUCIAL REFORMS**

We are angry that Conservatives and Labour have agreed behind closed doors there will be no more sitting Fridays in this Parliamentary session (2017-19). Sitting Fridays are when private members' bills have the opportunity, free of Government business, to be debated and pass second reading. Any member in the House of Commons can object to a private member's bill passing, and with no future sitting Fridays, bills that have been blocked will have no future opportunity to progress.

Vince Cable said: "These bills are under threat of being stopped in their tracks. The blocking of such bills is not a new phenomenon. This is an antiquated process that has been called into question before when both the Upskirting and Female Genital Mutilation bills were blocked."

So whilst Brexit is wasting so much parliamentary time, opportunities for bills to make a real difference to people is lost. Those that affect Seekers of Sanctuary include the

- Refugees (Family Reunion) Bill - Tim Farron
- Asylum Seekers (Permission to Work) Bill - Christine Jardine
- Immigration (Armed Forces) Bill - Ed Davey
- Homelessness (End of Life Care) Bill - Ed Davey
- Palestinian Statehood (Recognition) Bill - Layla Moran

## **PERIOD POVERTY**

Thank you to Layla Moran for instigating a [debate on period poverty](#) in Parliament, which gained support from other parties. As well as an issue for girls & women in general, problems for women seeking asylum and homeless women were raised too.

## **DESTITUTION**

The Destitute Asylum Seeker Service (DASS) partnership, co-ordinated by the Refugee Survival Trust, Scottish Refugee Council and others, have published a report '[From Pillar to Post](#),' looking at destitution among people refused asylum in Scotland. The report calls for urgent action to make sure people's basic needs for food and shelter are met, and recommends a number of additional practical steps that would make a huge difference to people's lives, including allowing people to continue with their education and providing concessionary travel to allow people to attend important appointments. We are hoping that Lib Dems will be able to further some of the recommendations.

## **LOCAL ELECTIONS**

If you have asylum seekers in your area and there are hustings for local or mayoral elections, you will find ideas for questions if you are in the audience, and a crib sheet for answers if you are on the panel, in [this material](#) from Asylum Matters.