



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

LD4SOS NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2021

WELCOME

Every time we see those words "we have a proud history of supporting refugees...." it makes us cringe. What really matters is just what are we doing now, and plan to do, to genuinely and positively welcome refugees. So very well done on this [video](#) from Refugee Action.

PLEASE SHARE - FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

LD4SOS has been made aware of the new [fellowship scheme](#) offered **exclusively to LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees**. Please share appropriately. The deadline to apply is **18 February 2021**.

HOME OFFICE FOUND TO HAVE ACTED ILLEGALLY AGAIN

In December 2020, the High Court passed yet another damning judgement against the Home Office saying that they were acting unlawfully. This case was about delays in relocating disabled asylum seekers into accommodation suitable for them and their initial provision of support. It also slammed the Home Office for failures in monitoring housing contractors' performance in securing the accommodation. Effectively the Court is saying that Home Office have unlawfully left highly vulnerable asylum seekers who had disabilities and serious illnesses homeless and without support. You can read the whole of the judgement [here](#)

Yet more!

Court Rulings on Right to Work and Victims of Trafficking

In December, [the High Court ruled](#) that Home Office policy on permission to work for asylum seekers is unlawful to the extent that it doesn't make allowances for potential victims of human trafficking. This week, a further rule was announced declaring the same Home Office policy unlawful when applied to asylum seekers specifically. Free Movement have a comprehensive [blog post](#) on the case.

The Lift the Ban secretariat is seeking clarification on the implications of both these rulings and will share information in due course as more become clear.

NHS & SOCIAL CARE WORKERS AND THE RIGHT TO WORK

The Government has just stopped all Parliamentary sittings on Friday until March meaning no Private Members Bills can be debated. This includes Christine Jardine's Bill which would have given all NHS and social care workers from overseas the right to remain in the UK.

Christine has vowed to keep on fighting for these workers to get indefinite leave to remain and says, "Like the rest of our wonderful NHS and care staff, hundreds of thousands of people from other countries are on the frontlines of the Corvid pandemic, putting themselves in harm's way to make sure we get the care we need.....I am not giving up. I will urge Ministers again to make Government time available to pass this urgent legislation, which has cross-party support". Read what Christine says [here](#)

We totally agree with Christine. **But these staff must be given the right to work in the first place as the reports below demonstrated.**

BBC Radio 4's [The World Tonight programme](#) (20 mins in) recently told the story of two Syrian doctors who are banned from working, or even volunteering, to help the NHS at this time of crisis. Sara and Ayman spoke of their frustration at this unjustifiable waste of their skills. The British Medical Association (BMA) and Royal College of Nursing went on record to show their support for lifting the ban, with the BMA declaring "no one claiming asylum should be stopped from working by rigid immigration rules".

The [Independent](#) also shared the moving stories of qualified health workers prevented from joining the NHS frontline due to Home Office restrictions and delays. Those profiled included an experienced surgeon, a nurse with 6 years' experience in Intensive Care Units and a doctor with experience in war-time Aleppo.

The Metro's headline really says it all. ["Doctor pleads for right to save lives!"](#)

In local media, Steve Newman wrote to the [Sunderland Echo](#) sharing with their readers some of the strong evidence in support of lifting the ban and expressing his hopes for a more enlightened approach to immigration policy in future.

IMPORTANT TOOLKIT FOR THOSE SEEKING ASYLUM

This extremely useful Toolkit from Right to Remain is now updated for post Brexit. It is a valuable resource for both those seeking sanctuary and those helping them. You can find the toolkit [here](#) Please do pass it around.

CITY OF SANCTUARY GUIDE TO THE USE OF LANGUAGE

City of Sanctuary have produced a useful guide to the use of language around migration and asylum. It is a working document to encourage consistency and a mindful approach to the use of non-dehumanising language. You can find the guide [here](#)

RESETTLEMENT/ SAFE CROSSINGS

We are very concerned that there is no Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme in place after the original one ended in March 2020. Tim Farron has said in [this article](#) how UK immigration rules have become even harsher since 1 January 2021 to deter people coming here. But, of course, most migrants won't know that the rules have changed and, in any event, often either have no choice or have a particular need to come here e.g. to join family. It is no good the Government saying they should come by Safe and Legal Routes - there haven't been any since March 2020.

Alistair Carmichael also voiced his concerns about Government plans for refugees after the end of 2020 stating that "it is vital that we have safe, legal routes for vulnerable people in need of help".

This [Report](#) on Deadly Crossings and Militarisation of Britain's Borders highlights the human costs of harsh enforcement and lack of safe, legal routes as it details the nearly 300 border related deaths in and around the English Channel since 1999. These deaths and the untold number of life changing injuries, mental and physical, were preventable.

FAMILY REUNION

Here is a simple but striking [video](#) of young people with Safe Passage putting over the message on the right to reunite with family.

This was produced for the House of Lords, who did listen and voted the right way (albeit unsuccessfully). Sadly, others are not listening. The young people say they won't give up. Good for them. We are with them all the way.

DESTITUTION AND ASYLUM EVICTIONS

With the whole of the UK once again in lockdown, the Home Office has yet to publicly confirm its policy on asylum evictions. While the Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary, Robert Jenrick, [announced on twitter](#) that support would be available again to local authorities through the 'Everyone In' scheme, uncertainty remains about this provision and whether it will apply to people with No Recourse to Public Funds.

The Dying Homeless Coalition [has also called for unconditional, safe shelter](#) to people experiencing homelessness until at least the end of this lockdown, with funding for local authorities to ensure provision for everyone who needs it.

PETITION

Refugee Action have raised a [petition](#) for a fairer asylum system for all who agree with them to sign. They are saying "People who have fled war and persecution are being left hungry and homeless here in the UK. This must change. Join the fight for a fair asylum system. We have, can you?"

RECOGNITION FOR THE DETENTION FORUM

LD4SOS is proud to be a member of the Detention Forum which brings together organisations campaigning to end detention, so we were delighted to see that they have been named as one of the top 100 Change Makers for 2021 by the Big Issue. Detention Forum featured alongside other innovative and talented people and groups such as Marcus Rashford and the Public Interest Law Centre who "carried their communities through the challenges of 2020". Well done Detention Forum! If you want to know about the Forum's work do visit their (recently updated) website <https://detentionforum.org.uk> or follow them on Twitter: @DetentionForum

DETENTION - CAMPAIGN TO SHUT MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (MoD) SITES BEING USED FOR ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION

We have been appalled to learn about the conditions at the Napier and Penally former army barracks which are being used to house hundreds of men seeking asylum. There have been reports of Covid-19 outbreak at Napier Barracks in Folkestone, with residents speaking to the Independent to share their [fear for their lives](#). Many of the 400 residents at Napier had already gone [on hunger strike](#) to protest at the lack of information on their asylum claims, the overcrowding and poor hygiene conditions. The camp has been subjected to hostile demonstrations from far- right groups with one resident being assaulted by someone from these groups. [Residents who have organised protests within Penally camp](#), describe it as "very old and dilapidated, and not intended for asylum seekers and refugees and have said the Home Office is [ignoring complaints](#) about food quality and conditions.

The conditions are unsafe. Access to health care is very limited. Mental health is a big issue as the uncertainty combined with the lack of activities is putting enormous stress on the residents and increasing the risk of self-harm. Legal advice, if available at all, is also extremely limited. Local groups trying to help are being restricted in what they can do or say with reports of [volunteers being asked to sign non-disclosure agreements](#) and there are [reports of attempts to silence the residents speaking out about conditions](#).

There is a lack of accountability for these camps are run. Whilst they are administered by Clearsprings (which is contracted by the Home Office) they have sub-contracted out the day-to-day management leading to confused decision making. The decision to repurpose the barracks was done with little discussion locally. The Welsh Government has said it is [“still unclear”](#) about the legal basis under which the development was initiated and the local health board has released a [series of papers](#) outlining key issues logged with the MoD site at Penally,. [The Guardian reported](#) that the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration hopes to be able to inspect the former MoD sites ‘within a few weeks.

We have just seen a [Report](#) that some of the Napier residents are been moved out into hotels. As Stephen Hale from Refugee Action says: “This is a start. We look forward to seeing all the residents moved out of Napier. Those seeking sanctuary have done nothing wrong. They are not criminals and need to be housed in communities where they can receive the support that they need”.

We agree – these camps need to be closed now! Roger Roberts has asked [questions](#) about the barracks in the House of Lords. We will be campaigning with Detention Forum on this – watch this space!

UPDATE ON OTHER DETENTION ISSUES

Portakabin accommodation at Yarl’s Wood (female) detention centre has been developed to detain males. A petition [has been launched](#) to stop this worrying development and a Crowdfunder to fund legal action.

UK’s [largest detention and removal centre](#) Brook House near Gatwick airport [has been temporarily closed](#) following a COVID outbreak among staff. Bail for Immigration Detainees wrote an open letter to the Government calling for the release of everybody held in immigration detention. You can read the letter [here](#) and coverage [here](#).

[A report](#) from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration reveals that the Home Office [has been using inadequately trained staff](#) in deportation appeals.

Interestingly former Home Office minister Caroline Nokes MP has also raised wide concerns about the treatment of newly arrived asylum seekers post 1 January 2021 including accommodation arrangements both in [Parliament](#) and in the [Press](#) warning that the Government’s “inhuman” approach to immigration will only cause further problems and cost more.

HOPE NOT HATE LAUNCH ‘RESPOND’ PROJECT

Following an increase in far-right activity around immigration and asylum issues, Hope Not Hate are launching a new project to help equip the sector to understand and mitigate the threat of the far-right.

REPORTING CONTINUES DESPITE SECOND LOCKDOWN

Despite the second lockdown in England, the Home Office has confirmed that it will continue to maintain physical reporting for some people subject to immigration control. The new Coronavirus Health regulations exempts travel to “fulfil legal obligation, including attending court or satisfying bail conditions” and access “asylum and immigration service and interview” from restrictions. Whilst this is not a return to business as usual, and not everyone subject to immigration control will be expected to report, as The Independent Newspaper [reports](#) this has resulted in people seeking asylum being forced to travel miles on public transport to Reporting Centres.

These Walls Must Fall have launched [a campaign](#) to stop in person reporting. There is still time to sign up and write to your MP

HOME SCHOOLING

Daisy Cooper has [taken up](#) the issue of lack of digital devices for children without them for home schooling. This, of course, includes asylum families.

VOLUNTEER STORIES – ANY ACT OF KINDNESS CAN GO FAR

A positive [story](#) of how one asylum seeker is helping others

LD4SOS AT CONFERENCE

SCOTTISH LIBERAL DEMOCRATS CONFERENCE

Fringe meeting

12.45 Friday 5th March 2021

How are Councils in Scotland responding to those seeking sanctuary?

LD4SOS Council member **Suzanne Fletcher** in conversation with **Cllr Fiona Dryburgh** with time for questions.

NORTH WEST LIBERAL DEMOCRATS REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Fringe meeting

Lunchtime on Saturday 20th February 2021

Hear from Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

Suzanne Fletcher, Founder member of LD4SOS and John Skipworth, Chair of LD4SOS Council will talk about LD4SOS – its values, aims and activity and answer your questions.

FEDERAL SPRING CONFERENCE

Our Conference Fringe:

1.00p.m. to 2.15p.m. Saturday 20th March

Refugee family reunion: Brexit and Covid-19 double whammy?

(How) have Brexit and Covid-19 impacted refugee family reunion? What can civil society and Parliamentarians do to create pathways to protection

LD4SOS Council member **Dr Ruvi Ziegler** (Associate Professor in International Refugee Law, University of Reading) will chair a discussion with:

Enver Solomon, Chief Executive of the Refugee Council

Baroness Sally Hamwee, Liberal Democrat Lords Spokesperson for Immigration

There will of course be plenty of time for you to put your questions to our panel.

Our 'Virtual' Exhibition Stall – the Information Booth

The exhibition area will be open for most of Conference. It will be staffed by LD4SOS Council members at the following times:

- Friday 19th March: 16.15 - 17.15
- Saturday 20th March: 13.00 – 14.00 & 16.15 – 17.15.
- Sunday 21st March: 13.00 – 14.00 & 16.15 – 17.15.

In the booth there will be links to information you should find interesting, and you will be able to have text 'chats' with us, or speak to us directly by video link. Please use this opportunity! We look forward to speaking to our members and supporters at Conference and we will have Council members available at all these times.

LD4SOS COUNCIL VACANCIES

LD4SOS depends on Liberal Democrat members for its main activists. If you can spare some time to help make our campaigning more effective by joining our Council please email the Chair johnskipworth038@btinternet.com or Suzanne Fletcher fletcher.suzanne005@googlemail.com for more information. The Council meets monthly by Zoom at a time to suit Council members.

We particularly need a volunteer or volunteers to:

- Help with monitoring and posting on our Facebook and twitter sites and forwarding up to date information to us for putting the newsletter together
- Search some Liberal Democrat Parliamentary social media sites for relevant information to share as above.
- Help with managing our new website

Please note: You need to be a member of LD4SOS to join the Council. Annual membership is £10 or £5 unwaged. Please contact Chris Brett ld4sos5@gmail.com if you would like a membership form.

NEW WEBSITE

Our website sadly became quite unstable so it was time to change. We now have a new website www.ld4sos.org.uk hosted by Prater Raines. It is not quite as we want it yet so please be patient with us as we get used to this new set up!