



## Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

## JUNE 2020 LD4SOS NEWSLETTER

### A MESSAGE FOR ALL OF OUR MEMBERS.

Thank you for your continued support for us. As you can see much is happening in Seekers of Sanctuary issues. We do our best to keep abreast with all of the issues, and would like you spread the word as to what Lib Dems are doing and saying. If you have a twitter account you could retweet from @ld4sos and for those using Facebook, share from [facebook.com/ld4sos](https://facebook.com/ld4sos). The newsletter is not confidential, so please feel free to share it amongst others who may be interested, both in and out of the party.

Our next newsletter will bring news of an online hustings with the Lib Dem Leadership candidates. Autumn conference will take place virtually, and we will be taking part in its proceedings as much as possible. Updates to follow.

### NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS.

Boris's latest blunder has brought to light the plight of those with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). There are different groups of people affected by this, as [explained here](#). We are campaigning on the issue affecting destitute asylum seekers, and we are campaigning on behalf of destitute asylum seekers, and with [Lib Dem Immigrants](#) on those who are destitute after obtaining leave to remain.'

Christine Jardine wrote to the Prime Minister 2 months ago asking him to lift NRPF during this Corona Virus crisis, and says: "We got a "no" from Priti Patel but nothing from the PM. Maybe he'll finally read it now..."

We have supported the campaign from [JCWI](#) to scrap NRPF. It would be helpful if you would sign too. This [excellent report](#) from Homeless Link shows the importance of safe accommodation for destitute asylum seekers, and encourages further pressure for the Government to end NRPF.

Refugee Women Connect are [asking that](#) forced migrant survivors of sexual and gender based violence, in need of protection, be able to seek safety when required, regardless of immigration status and NRPF conditions.

Hashtags to use for these campaigns include #everyoneinforgood #Support4ALL #EndNRPF

### IMMIGRATION BILL

This has now had its second reading, and whilst all of our MPs voted against it, it was passed. Ed Davey said "The aims of the bill were wrong before, and are wrong now. Wrong for post Covid too. It needs radically amending."

At the next stage there will be at least 3 amendments, all with cross party support from opposition parties, and hopefully some Conservatives. They will cover Ending Indefinite Detention; Family Reunion; and the Right to Work. The campaigning sector is working hard to bring people together on these, and our role is to explain the issues and get all MPs to support the amendments. Watch out for briefing papers to help with this.

**STOP PRESS** Conservative MP, David Davis, has submitted the amendment on Ending Indefinite Detention (and is supported by 7 Lib Dem MPs so far). A briefing paper is now available for discussions with Tory MPs. This will be sent out to you very soon, along with other briefings, so please start thinking about making arrangements to meet your MP.

## ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

This is an [excellent policy briefing](#) from Lancet Migration on urgent universal and equitable access to health services for migrants, including the need to suspend NRPF, close detention centres, and much more. It is evidence based with practical solutions.

We fully support [Docs Not Cops](#) in their campaign, and couldn't put it better ourselves "*We believe that no one should be forced to pay a double tax because of where they're from*". #ScrapTheSurcharge "

## DETENTION

[Crucial questions](#) were asked from [@cajardineMP](#) on the provision of soap, sanitiser and testing in Immigration Detention Centres. She has [already asked](#)

4 weeks ago that Immigration Detention Centres are emptied urgently, for the safety of detainees and staff.

Also [good questions](#) from Roger Roberts about releasing people from Immigration detention, and how supported they are when they leave. The Minister did not answer the questions properly though, so STOP PRESS, Roger has now tabled more.

Christine Jardine, when she spoke out on the Home Office unlawfully detaining a trafficking victim for 24 days, says that the Government's policy on detaining victims of human trafficking should be simple – "*don't do it*".

The [emergency petition to](#) release all from Immigration Detention now is still there, so please sign it if you haven't already. LD4SOS have also signed this [petition](#) about releasing all from detention. Shocking figures from Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID), show that [95% of cases taken by BID were successful](#). Those detainees should never have been there in the first place, and the Home Office should be ashamed. Keeping detainees there wastes lives, endangers others, and probably wastes money too.

### Government's policy on detaining victims of human trafficking should be simple - don't do it

Responding to reports that the Home Office is reviewing its policy on locking up vulnerable people in immigration detention, after being forced to admit that it unlawfully detained a trafficking victim for 24 days, Liberal Democrat Home Affairs Spokesperson Christine Jardine said:

"Detaining people for months on end – without giving them any idea how long they'll be there – is clearly inhumane. When those people are victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, it's especially abhorrent.

"It's a scandal that it took legal action to get the Conservative Government to release a trafficking victim who'd been unlawfully detained. This shows how important judicial review is for upholding people's rights, and why Liberal Democrats are right to resist Tory plans to restrict it.

"The Government's policy on detaining victims of human trafficking should be simple: do not do it.

"This Home Office review must result in real change, unlike the false hope offered by Priti Patel on the £400-a-year Immigration Health Surcharge paid even by doctors, nurses and others working in our NHS.

"Liberal Democrats are continuing to fight for an end to indefinite detention and for detention itself to be an absolute last resort. That will save taxpayers millions and ensure people are treated with more dignity."

## TREATING PEOPLE PROPERLY

We say that there should be safer routes and stop encouraging people smugglers. More patrols won't catch them all, so they will keep coming. See our [article on our website](#) "On treating people properly".

## SUPPORT LEVELS

All of our MPs have written jointly to the Home Secretary urging her to increase asylum support by £20 a week during the coronavirus crisis – in line with the increase to Universal Credit. This matches calls from charities Refugee Action, the Salvation Army and others.

[The letter](#) also called for asylum seekers to be given the right to work if they are waiting for a decision for more than three months. This would allow them to fill essential roles during the pandemic, as well as support themselves, integrate in their communities and contribute through taxation.

Christine Jardine said: "*The coronavirus crisis is leaving the most vulnerable in our society at risk. We must ensure no one is left behind. People who've come to the UK having fled war or persecution should be welcomed with compassion and enabled to contribute to our society, not trapped for months on just £5.39 a day – especially now during this pandemic.*"

**MENTAL HEALTH.** Claire Tyler has been raising the issue of mental health emerging from some asylum seekers. Also lockdown is bringing on flashbacks of their time in indefinite detention, for even those with no previous mental health issues.

**INFORMATION.** British Red Cross have produced [this helpful information](#) ( bottom of the page), for asylum seekers about keeping in touch. Also, an "emergency contact card" to be filled in.

## **FAMILY REUNION**

We have heard that the Government is about to close down routes for child refugees, and we think that it is inhumane to do so. This is especially when lots of councils in UK have offered to care for them. Ending of the Dubs scheme is devastating for those children, and will only push them into taking unsafe routes to UK that will end in tragedy. Only 480 places have been filled when the scheme could have allowed thousands of child refugees in Europe without family in the UK who will lose their only safe, legal route to sanctuary in the UK. Now more than ever, we must fight for safe passage

**STOP PRESS.** We have just had this request from Safe Passage:

“The Government have announced their plan for refugee family reunion – and it’s **so bad it’d be the end of family reunion as we know it.**

It’s being discussed with the EU this week, so we have to act right away. [Please write to your MP today to make sure they fight to save family reunion for refugees.](#) When the Government removed the legal obligation for family reunion back in January, it promised it wouldn’t abandon child refugees. But now, their plan does just that. **This draft plan is not what the Prime Minister promised vulnerable refugees in January.**

If this plan becomes law, people’s hopes of safe passage to their family will be dashed, creating a blank cheque for smugglers.

By campaigning together last time we defeated the Government in the House of Lords, and pushed them into making repeated commitments to the principle of family reunion. We have to work together again now. “

## **AND FINALLY, a heartwarming story.**

A PCSO in Northumberland, on hearing about the struggles of some asylum families locally has used her spare time to provide them with educational material for children, toys, games and other supplies. On receiving the packages the local press reported “the families were grateful & tears of joy & appreciation were shed, some of these families are isolated & have very little support or income.’