



## Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

23 Lincoln Road, Hindley, Wigan. WN2 3QY

johnskipworth038@btinternet.com (correspondence)

[info@ld4sos.org.uk](mailto:info@ld4sos.org.uk)

[www.ld4sos.org.uk](http://www.ld4sos.org.uk)

[facebook.com/ld4sos](https://facebook.com/ld4sos)

[twitter.com/ld4sos](https://twitter.com/ld4sos)

President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

## APRIL 2020 NEWSLETTER (2)

**WHAT DO WE DO?** As the York Conference had to be cancelled, nobody was able to come along to our, or any other, stall to find out more about us. So James Potter has had the idea of doing a podcast of all the organisations. [Here is ours](#) and you can see the others [here](#).

### HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE.

You can see last week's proceedings of [this here](#). Like us you will probably be taken aback by the contrast between the concise and thorough evidence givers, and the sloppiness and unclarity of how the Home Office gives information. **Priti Patel** has been in front of the Home Affairs Select Committee, and we will write up information and thoughts on this in our next newsletter.

### DETENTION

In a [debate he initiated](#) on Co-vid in prisons in the House of Lords, Mike German added: "*A similar situation applies in immigration detention centres. By definition, these people are not criminals and are certainly vulnerable.*" This was echoed by other Peers and adds to the call from Christine Jardine in our newsletter last week to empty the Immigration Detention Centres.

We back the [plea from Freed Voices](#) to the Home Secretary about freeing people from immigration detention centres. There is nothing more powerful than the voice of those with experience of the situation.

**STOP PRESS:** Christine Jardine has just said "*During the coronavirus pandemic, the Home Office's inaction is even more dangerous. Given the risks of outbreaks within detention centres and zero chance of anyone being deported at the moment, the Home Secretary must release all detainees to prevent a COVID-19 crisis in UK detention centres.*"

**LATEST INFORMATION** – For the facts about exactly what the latest rules affecting asylum seekers and refugees are, do have a look at the Refugee Council [Website](#), where there is a rolling update.

**RIGHT TO RENT.** The Court of Appeal said that landlords having to do immigration checks causes racial discrimination to BME renters, including refugees, who should never have to tolerate racial discrimination, in the housing market or anywhere else. However, the judges in this particular case stopped short of declaring it unlawful.

**DESTITUTION.** Politics Home reports that "Priti Patel stands by 'mean and counterproductive' migrant Universal Credit ban amid coronavirus crisis". Christine Jardine [says](#) "*No-one should be forced into breaking social distancing just to keep food on the table. To say I'm disappointed with Priti Patel's letter to me is an understatement. We need to do so much better, & treat people with the respect and dignity they deserve*".

Refugee Action says: "*People seeking asylum have to live on just £37 a week. It's not enough anyway, but coronavirus is making it impossible. Asylum support must go up by £20 a week now, the same increase as Universal Credit.*" [Email your MP](#)

We endorse what Christine and Refugee Action are saying. In a civilised country nobody should be destitute. Those with no recourse to public funds should have the Right to Work, and those that cannot work should be supported, and not having to do whatever they can, even if it means breaking crisis rules, to subsist.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.** The Refugee Council [is campaigning](#) to ensure parity of esteem for all survivors of domestic violence, regardless of their immigration status. Also they want to replace 'hostile environment' reporting policies (which leave survivors too terrified to report abuse) with a 'firewall' between public services and immigration officials.

**CLAIMING ASYLUM.** There are clearly [problems with actually claiming asylum now](#) with the virus situation, and a few more centres to make claims at is not going to solve it. The Refugee Council said: *"It's clearly not safe for people seeking asylum to travel on public transport during a pandemic to these new regional intake units, which are not on most people's doorsteps and could require long journeys through busy areas. It seems entirely sensible that asylum claims could be made remotely during lockdown, and it's not clear why the Home Office hasn't set up a system to facilitate this."*

**HEALTH CHARGES.** A very [worrying situation](#) is arising from the health charges, with children not getting treatment for cancer and other important health issues because of uncertainty about their migration status.

**BORDERS ARE NO BARRIER.** Shas Sheehan has [made the point in The Lords](#) that "Borders are an ineffectual barrier against Covid-19" and saying that a victory must include the developing world.

**INTERNET ACCESS.** We have submitted to Refugee Council, for them to use in representations to the Home Affairs Select Committee, a list of extra reasons why asylum seekers need to be able to access wifi in the current crisis, including home schooling. Let us know if you are doing anything locally, or want to see our list.

**CITIZENSHIP.** Have you been out and #ClapForTheNHS? If so, make sure you sign [this petition](#) to give non-British citizens who are NHS workers automatic citizenship. This includes all NHS workers as well as doctors and nurses. They risk their lives & deserve a visa.

**REFUGEES AT HOME.** An excellent article [here](#), telling us more about their work:

**SAFE PASSAGE** tells us that flights cancelled because of COVID-19 have stranded refugees who were all set to reach family in the UK. Over 50 people in Greece alone, stuck and barred from sorting their own travel. Families of those trapped are writing a personal plea to the Government to get their children home. Ministers are rightly organising charter flights for British tourists - they should do the same for refugees. Show your support for families separated by the crisis and help refugees reunite with their loved ones and reach the UK. You can [Add your name in support](#)

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**SIGN THE PETITIONS.** There are petitions to sign, for important changes to be made in this, the last newsletter, and no doubt future one's. Please take a minute to sign these, and lobby your MP.

**FUND RAISING.** Instead of the Marathon that had to be cancelled, there are other suggestions to raise funds. Such as - 2.6 or 26 or 260 - what? For instance Sarah Teather says *"I am walking 2.6miles on Sunday 26th before 6.26AM for Jesuit Refugee Service because our refugee friends need help now more than ever"* You can [donate here](#) or do your own challenge for a refugee charity. Imagination caps on please.

**SKILLS TO OFFER.** **These Walls Must Fall** will be hosting virtual fundraising and awareness raising events during lockdown, streaming music and performances online. They are looking for DJs and

performers who can take part in this, as well as people with technical knowledge of streaming platforms who can help it run smoothly. If you could help, get in touch with them.

**Refugee Council** are looking for volunteers for a few hours a week to do some activities on Zoom for asylum seekers and refugees.

**DONATIONS.** One of the ways in which you can continue to support refugees and asylum seekers at this time is to think about giving a donation to one of the many groups who are working to support them at this time of crisis. In this newsletter, and forthcoming ones, LD4SOS will highlight the work of groups who our members may want to think about giving to. Here for starters is one smaller group and one larger one. Suggestions also welcome from members.

**Phone Credit for Refugees** was originally set up in 2016, following a visit by James Pearce, the founder, to the refugee camps in Calais. The aim of the charity is to enable refugees and asylum seekers to stay safe, to remain connected with their families and friends and with the agencies who support them, through their mobile phones.

Can you imagine what it would be like not to have the money to top your phone up. Phone Credit for Refugees is a group of volunteers enabling refugees and asylum seekers to do this. Donations, with gift aid if possible, can be made at <https://www.justgiving.com/phonecreditforrefugees>

**The Freedom from Torture Emergency Relief Fund** has been established to provide support for survivors of torture who have sought refuge in the United Kingdom. They have been left impoverished, alone physically and mentally and physically vulnerable because of the COVID- 19 pandemic.

As asylum seekers they are not allowed to work and will be surviving on the £5.40 a day to pay for everything. Please do support them by visiting <https://action.freedomfromtorture.org/freedom-torture-donation-page>

## HEARTENING NEWS

Our latest member, Md Mominul Hamid is a human rights ambassador and community advocate who is campaigning for the rights of asylum seekers to access higher education. He is an asylum seeker himself, and in this guest blog he shares how he has recently been dedicating his time to support other asylum seekers and vulnerable people by setting up his own food bank, as well as handing out food parcels around his community on his bike. [Please do read it](#) – it lifts the heart.

