



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

23 Lincoln Road, Hindley, Wigan. WN2 3QY

johnskipworth038@btinternet.com (correspondence)

info@ld4sos.org.uk

www.ld4sos.org.uk

facebook.com/ld4sos

twitter.com/ld4sos

President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

LD4SOS LATE JUNE NEWSLETTER

DETENTION

The amendments on ending indefinite detention, tabled now by David Davis MP, have now been supported by his colleagues Steve Baker MP, Andrew Mitchell MP, Richard Fuller MP, Tim Loughton MP and Henry Smith MP. So there is movement, and **if you have not already contacted your MP on supporting this crucial amendment please do so, especially if they are a Tory MP**. As well as detailed information on how to do this in the last newsletter, there is a template [here](#) from the Rene Cassin organisation.

Sally Hamwee has been [asking questions](#) on risk assessment and processes re #COVID19 for those in immigration detention centres. Of course nobody should be left in Detention right now anyway.

MODERN SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING

We have a new policy document [here](#), on “people trafficking and modern slavery”, compiled from party policy by LD4SOS and Lib Dem Immigrants. The issues are a present scourge of our times, and whilst all are rightly condemning slavery from past times, we need to be more aware and act on what is happening right now, in our communities in the UK.

Despite warm words from Government, [this article in The Independent](#), “Trafficking victims and vulnerable asylum seekers will be left unable to access legal representation because of new rules on [legal aid](#) that constitute a ‘hammer blow for access to justice’, lawyers have warned”, highlights that maintaining a route to justice is badly needed.

HEALTH CHARGING

The Lib Dems marked Windrush Day 2020 by Christine Jardine saying that those who have put their lives at risk for our country are welcome to live in it. Christine renewed calls on Government “to give all NHS & social care workers who have worked in the UK during the coronavirus pandemic indefinite leave to remain.” She cited statistics from the Nursery and Midwifery Council which show more than 10% of the total registered nursing workforce in the UK come from overseas.

You can see how Hostile Environment policies have had impact on the health of BAME and migrant communities in [this report](#). It raises serious issues about access to health care for migrants. There are far too many barriers, so care is denied, and can impact on us all in the end!

We have signed [this petition](#) calling for healthcare for all, as well as justice and dignity for all. Please do so too, if you value access to healthcare without fear, recrimination or cost.

IMMIGRATION BILL

As MPs debate the Immigration Bill, the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants set out [here](#) what needs to change. We agree with all of these, and it is worth reading the detail in full. MPs should not give the Home Secretary “Henry VIII powers”, so:

No blank cheque to Home Secretary to write new rules; Use this opportunity to fix some of the many issues already facing migrants; Scrap rules that separate people from the ones they love simply because of what they earn; Lift the "No Recourse to Public Funds" rule which leaves migrants with



nothing; Ensure migrants can work safely and legally; Scrap the Hostile Environment; Reform the 'Settled Status' scheme so EU nationals are not at risk of the harsh Hostile Environment.

CHILD REFUGEES

Christine Jardine has tabled an [Early Day Motion](#) calling on the Government to set out new, long-term commitments on refugee resettlement in the UK and to commit to resettling a further 10,000 refugee children from elsewhere in Europe over the next 10 years. This would replace other schemes such as the VCRS, VPRS, Gateway & Dubs. As well as by most Lib Dem MPs her motion has been signed by other parties including the SNP, Labour, DUP and Alliance.

There is a [good article in the Independent](#) on child refugees after Government backtracking quoting Christine Jardine saying it is "heart-breaking to think of the children unable to join their families because of the failure to live up to the promises of the Dubs scheme." We have relevant long-held Lib Dem policy here: <https://libdemfocus.co.uk/ld4sos/archives/1648>.

Christine also makes a pertinent comment on risky channel crossings, "Providing refugees with safe and legal routes to sanctuary in the UK is the best way to combat people smuggling and human trafficking, and to prevent people from making dangerous attempts to cross the Channel."

REFUGEES

[These figures](#) from UNHCR show the terrible situation in the world with nearly 80m people displaced. 80% are in developing countries with huge problems of their own already. Only a small proportion are seeking asylum and a tiny proportion come to the UK.

Also the UK site [Free Movement](#) presents updated asylum figures in the UK, showing that, despite the global crises, and contrary to perceptions, recent years have not seen a rise in the number of asylum seekers arriving in the UK; and that key countries of origin remain ones with which the UK was (or still is) intimately involved - Iraq, Pakistan, and Iran are three of the top five countries, alongside the Eritrean dictatorship and Albania.

CHANNEL CROSSINGS - A PUZZLE

Are any of our readers able to let us know what has happened to people who were being smuggled into the UK across the Channel, but were intercepted by Border Control? We reported in an [article](#) on our website the media accounts then available of an increase in the number of those intercepted after UK lockdown began on 23rd March 2020. Once handed over to immigration, all who asked for asylum should have had their claim processed properly. Since then, a [report](#) from Sky News said that there were concerns that migrants were being returned illegally to France under Operation Sillath. This referred to a [Guardian](#) article on migrants being deported. The Sky information was reported quite widely, notably from a non-Guardian perspective [here](#) and [here](#). We would like to hear whatever readers can tell us about Operation Sillath and what campaigners in France have heard from migrants returned from the UK. It may be significant that guidance for staff published on 2nd April 2020 omits from the online copy a section on [clandestine](#) arrivals, pp. 26-27 of 84, as 'restricted for internal Home Office use'.

FAMILY REUNION

Families belong together - now more than ever. But spouse visa rules are still splitting up families, even during Covid. [JCWI are asking](#) for people to write to their MP.

They say, "We believe that no one should be separated from their loved ones because of how much they earn - not now, and not ever. But that's the situation right now for tens of thousands of people living in the UK. Rules in place since 2012 mean that at least 15,000 children are growing up without one of their parents, just because their family doesn't earn enough to meet strict Home Office income rules. These rules have caused heartache for years. But in the current crisis, when so many of us are struggling financially, it's more urgent than ever that we take action and scrap this rule - called the Minimum Income Requirement - so that families can be together, where they belong. We can and must get this broken system fixed, so that no family has to fear being split up by these anti-family rules.

PROTECTING CLIMATE CHANGE

[This article](#) for Liberal Democrat Voice was written by LD4SOS Council member, James Cox, on the impact that climate change is having on causing people to leave their homes as refugees.

NO RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS.

We wrote quite a lot on this in our last newsletter, and matters are no better now. We ask how can the whole country be so concerned about the Corona virus and its impact on all of us, and yet our Government is ruthlessly abandoning some of the survivors to destitution?

Local councils are [demanding](#) that the Government lift “No Recourse to Public Funds” conditions, declaring this would “reduce public health risks and pressures on homelessness services”.

DECISION MAKING

Here Roger Roberts is [raising again](#) the issue of so many asylum decisions being wrong first time, and now 52% are overturned on appeal. The system is rotten, decision making must be moved from the Home Office, and there must be better training and support for those who interview and assess. How Lib Dems would radically change decision making on asylum applications is [here](#).

ALLOWANCES



We have signed this excellent letter. What is needed now is for Government to read it and act on it.

Asylum Matters say “People seeking asylum have been given 26p/day to help them through the #Covid19 crisis. That totals just £5.66/day in Asylum Support. It’s an insult, not an increase. [We’ve joined](#) 220+ orgs in writing to Priti Patel to demand better:

- **STOP PRESS. FREE SCHOOL MEALS.** Some new and confusing information about eligibility for free school meals over the summer holidays has just come out. It is essential that applications for free school meals are made before the holidays start. Those with No Recourse to Public Funds and on Section 4 payments will be included, if applications made in time. Contact us or your regional Asylum Matters rep for further information if needed.

HOUSING

Asylum Matters and [NACCOM](#) have produced a [joint policy paper](#) on the situation for people living in asylum accommodation who face a ‘cliff edge’ if current emergency measures are withdrawn at the end of this month. The paper calls for the suspension of evictions from asylum accommodation into homelessness for at least the next 12 months or longer while COVID-19 poses a public health risk; a permanent end to no recourse to public funds (NRPF) conditions and a new funded duty for local authorities to house everyone at risk of homelessness. See also [this report](#) from Inside Housing, and the report from [The Independent](#) that people are imminently facing eviction.

Crisis have launched a campaign “[Home for All](#)” calling on the UK Government to commit to a plan that will enable everyone across Britain to have the security of a safe and settled home; and to implement the immediate policy changes and funding needed to continue to protect people experiencing homelessness, and to prevent homelessness for the duration of the pandemic. The campaign calls for a new duty on local authorities, along with funding, to house everyone at risk of homelessness; the suspension of NRPF conditions; a further extension on protections from eviction for people in asylum accommodation; and the implementation of Housing First policies.

There must be an end to forced room sharing. As [Tim Farron says](#), Lib Dems [say](#) it is completely wrong that an asylum seeker has no place for privacy & that those with no shared language, country, culture, or faith have to share bedroom space.

HOSTING

[Refugees At Home](#) which connects those with a spare room to refugees and asylum-seekers has a new online exhibition here.

LEGAL AID

Young Legal Aid Lawyers have launched a new campaign, #APrayerForLegalAid, to highlight that the new Coronavirus regulations being brought forward by the UK Government on legal aid fees in asylum cases will make legally aided asylum and immigration work financially unviable and harm access to justice. They are calling on people to [contact their MPs](#) to support an Early Day Motion opposing the changes. Calling for the restoration of Legal Aid for seekers of sanctuary was part of the [policy made](#) in our September 2018 Conference.

DIGITAL DIVIDE

We have been very concerned for a while about asylum families not having either the wifi data or equipment for home schooling and pleased that the Lib Dems have now said this as part of a statement on schooling. "End the online learning void for thousands of children. Develop a bold strategy to leave no child behind by partnering with the private sector to get laptops and internet access to any disadvantaged child currently unable to learn online. Recognise that the current target of 230,000 leaves too many children behind, and that councils are neither receiving the equipment they have asked for, nor seeing high uptake rates for the kit they're given. Begin major advertising campaign to encourage families and children to ask for equipment. Back this up by working to get more physical resources including textbooks to children lacking internet/computer access."

WINDRUSH REPORT

We do hope that "significant cultural and systemic reform of the Home Office" actually happens after [accepting all 30 of the Windrush Report recommendations](#) and promising to "look again" at the Hostile Environment. along with the "determination to right the wrongs & the injustices suffered by the Windrush generation". We will be watching!

REFUGEE WEEK CONTRIBUTIONS.

So much has been done throughout the country to celebrate the contribution of refugees, we just highlight 2 videos here of two incredible refugee activists in the North East - [Shams](#) and one of our members [MD](#) - who were imagining a better world for refugees and the changes they'd like to see in the UK.