



## 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

# LD4SOS NEWSLETTER

## March 2019

### IMMIGRATION BILL

The toxic Immigration Bill was agreed in principle by 63 votes but could have been defeated outright if 76 Labour MPs had been there, which they would have been if the disorganised mess which is the Labour leadership had not changed its mind half way through. The Lib Dems were all there, and even some Tories voted against. This Bill is shameful, and will affect thousands in future.

*"This immigration bill does nothing to solve problems. It's bad for our society, it's bad for our economy,"* said Ed Davey. *"Britain deserves better than this bill which will hurt our vital public services, communities and British business."* The Committee stage has now started, to end on 7 March.

A superb speech by Roger Roberts on immigration procedures in a debate he initiated. There is [more information here](#), including points from Sarah Ludford, Tony Greaves and John Shipley.

### DETENTION

The situation changes daily, but at the time of writing there are amendments to the Immigration Bill to bring in a time limit to detention and other important related matters. There is backing so far from at least some of the political parties and Ed Davey is one of the signatories.

**\*CAMPAIGN POINT\***. It will help if you can tweet a selfie of yourself, naming your location, tagging Sajid Javid, and if you feel appropriate your MP. There are more details about this and hashtags to use [here](#). If you don't do twitter, send the photo to us and we will retweet for you. It is important not to lose the momentum this amendment is gaining, and it is clear that support is coming from everywhere in the UK.

**PARTY POLICIES**. You can read what the political Parties promised about immigration detention in their manifestos [here](#). The Lib Dem commitment to a "Time for a Time Limit" was strong then and has been reinforced and added to since. We will continue to campaign for a maximum of 28 days detention and judicial oversight within 3 days. You can see the full Lib Dem policy [here](#). Whilst we are thankful other political Parties have now followed our lead, don't forget it started with us!

**NEWS FROM THE SECTOR ON DETENTION ISSUES**. This [article from Rights Info](#) tells the story from Freed Voices. Detention robs people of basic human rights with no justification and is mental torture because it is indefinite. Even terrorist suspects have a 14-day limit. Over half are freed so should never have been there in the first place, 24 have died from self-inflicted injuries since 2000 and it has cost over the last 4 years more than £500 million. More children are now being detained and we remain the only country in Europe with no time limit.

Right to Remain [have a wonderful blog](#) setting out the hope for an end to indefinite detention and saying why, but also emphasising it must apply to ALL in immigration detention. No-one, no-one, should be left behind in detention.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) [report](#) on detention was released days before start of Immigration Bill with five key proposals:

- The decision to detain should be made independently, not by the Home Office.

- Introduce a 28-day time limit to end the trauma of indefinite detention.
- Detainees should have better and more consistent access to legal aid to challenge their detention.
- More needs to be done to identify vulnerable individuals and treat them appropriately.
- The Home Office should improve its oversight of the immigration detention estate to ensure any ill-treatment or abuse is found out immediately and stopped.

## **VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THOSE HELPING ASYLUM SEEKERS WITH THEIR CLAIM.**

Right to Remain have [important information](#) about the preliminary information questionnaire (PIQ) which is now a very important part of the asylum claim process.

Asylum Aid is offering free resources for women to help them prepare for their asylum interview and for men and women to know what to expect at their appeals. Information for women before their asylum interview :[From us to you](#) Protection Gap Advocates film 4 mins (in a range of languages).

[What a woman seeking asylum needs to know](#) Protection Gap Advocates leaflet.

Information for asylum appellants (women and men) [Your asylum appeal hearing: information to help you](#) film 13 mins

## **RIGHT TO WORK.**

The campaign goes on. Christine Jardine said *“in the Immigration Bill debate I renewed my call on the Home Office to allow people who come to the UK as asylum seekers to work earlier, so that they can make a contribution to our economy instead of being robbed of their dignity.”*

## **CHANNEL CROSSINGS.**

[This article](#) explains why 48 people want to come to the UK despite the dangerous Channel crossing. They have fled terrible situations; they want to be reunited with family here; they have no other choice; they want to live peacefully and contribute to our community.

## **UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN.**

Sally Hamwee [told the Minister](#) that 1,045 children being accepted under the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme is just a “drop in the ocean” when looking at the appalling situation in the war torn region they are from. She also questioned how the Home Office convinced itself of the quality of its process.

## **YOUNG PEOPLE REACHING AGE OF 18.**

This is a separate issue which demands flexibility as children grow up, but represents a particular cliff-edge for [unaccompanied minors](#). No one should be deported for becoming an adult.

## **SOLDIERS.**

The immigration rules for Commonwealth soldiers are outrageous. Hundreds of troops who joined the British Army after a targeted Commonwealth recruitment drive in 2016 are having to take second jobs in order to meet the Home Office income threshold necessary to bring their families here. Commenting, Jamie Stone, Lib Dem Defence Spokesperson said: *“This is yet another example of the Tory’s botched immigration policies. These soldiers were asked specifically to come and defend our nation and the government repays them with a hostile environment. It has all the hallmarks of the policies which caused the Windrush crisis.*

*These people have responded to a call to serve the country and it is outrageous that immigration thresholds mean they must work second jobs just to bring their spouses and children with them. The Liberal Democrats demand better, Commonwealth soldiers who have been asked to come and serve must be welcomed into UK society."*

## **MOVE ON.**

The Red Cross evidence based report "[Still an ordeal](#)" says that only having 28 days to move on from Home Office accommodation is not nearly enough, leads to destitution and to some decisions made by the new refugee which are later much regretted. It is Lib Dem policy to have 60 days to move on, and longer for the vulnerable.

## **LGBT+ RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS.**

London University researchers are looking for volunteers to take part in a study about LGBTQ+ asylum claims and how sexual and gender identities are understood by the asylum system. For more information about this study, or to volunteer it, please contact: Alex Powell at 020 7040 5160 or email [Alexander.Powell@city.ac.uk](mailto:Alexander.Powell@city.ac.uk). This is for you if you know, or are an LGBTQ+ person, who is or has been an asylum seeker. The study is not confined to London; they will visit people in different parts of the country. There are many difficulties and barriers faced by LGBTQ+ asylum seekers and this research could pave the way for a better understanding by those assessing asylum claims.

## **JUDGEMENT ON HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT.**

We are delighted to hear that the court case taken by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants against the Government's "Right to Rent" policy has been won. The High Court ruled that the policy not only causes racism but cannot be reformed. The details [are here](#). The Government should hang its head in shame at yet again being found guilty in the courts. The least they can do is to scrap the "right to rent" quickly, as a first step in ending the Hostile Environment on all issues.

## **A "FAIR SHARE" OF ASYLUM SEEKERS.**

The NE Politics Show on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2019 recorded interviews with various people, including LD4SOS Suzanne Fletcher in her 'non-political hat' for Tees Valley of Sanctuary, about asylum seekers in Stockton and Middlesbrough. The programme's angle was that "there are more than our fair share" in Tees Valley and Labour and Tory politicians talked of the "burden" of asylum seekers. Suzanne disagreed, though with no certainty what would make the broadcast snippets, saying they are not a burden but enrich us and that it would not be a good idea to send asylum seekers equally around the country, because we would be placing vulnerable people where there is no support from the voluntary sector, specialist legal help or health care, which we have in the larger conurbations. All people should be treated with dignity and respect and no one should be forced to share a room.

## **ZIMBABWE.**

It was good to hear Lords Roberts, Chidgey and Dhokalia [in Parliamentary Questions](#) on the crisis there. Lib Dem policy in our 2014 paper stated that "*Accurate, up-to-date understanding of relevant Country of Origin Information must be provided to decision makers.*"

Someone we know had been destitute, not having her claim believed for 10 years, but thankfully eventually got leave to remain last year. She couldn't work, had no money and no home (was supported by a local church) and had children in Zimbabwe. Why else was she staying here and not going back to danger?

Another person here, one of our members, who has had leave to remain for a while says that "*Just as much as those deported might have had the asylum cases refused, I am sure Humanitarian leave was going to be the next option as the government is failing in Zimbabwe and the fact is that people are*

suffering and that human rights are violated. "Thanks for sharing your thoughts and it's really heart-warming to have people like you and the Lib Dems who have immigration issues at heart."

And she is right – people could be applying for Humanitarian Leave.

## **LETTER WRITING.**

Why not put fingers to keyboard and send a letter to the local paper? Particularly when incensed by the "less well informed". This is a good example from Jemma Joy in Middlesbrough *"In response to Councillor Steve Kay's letter questioning mass immigration as a detrimental result of 'over Liberal policies', I have to take issue. In these crazy days of destructive division in our country, has he not learned to question the rhetoric spoon fed to us by those with an irrational fear of 'other'? The trend at the moment is to demonise immigrants from the Middle East. I agree, the government should be directing resource to stabilise conflict in the Middle East. But to stir up this feeling of immigration changing the face of Britain? That's what Britain was founded on. We ARE a nation of immigrants and should welcome the benefits that brings. Our NHS is woven with the cloth of Indian, Pakistani, European and worldwide workers. His accusation of freedom of speech, laws and customs under threat is simply untrue and an irresponsible myth to peddle. It's not a matter of being 'Christian', it's being human."*

## **DECISION MAKING.**

We are all aware that the Home Office's 6-month target that for making a decision on an asylum claim is rarely met and there are many cases that are years old. They are now looking urgently at better ways of making speedier decisions. The deadline for comments to this process is 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019. If you have anything to say, other than what is already in our policy, <http://libdemfocus.co.uk/ld4sos/archives/1447> please get in touch. **We are emphasising that quality of decisions is extremely important.**

## **AND FINALLY**

Suzanne Fletcher bought hand and body cream from Lush, because it has Fairtrade cocoa butter and olive oil in it - giving a fair price to workers. The charity pot bought donates to Right to Remain too! Win win win.