



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

MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

DETENTION

UPDATE. Detention Action have just told us that, although there have been successes in getting detainees released, 368 people are still held in detention centres. This includes 13 women at Yarl's Wood. Many of those still in detention are highly vulnerable. There are over 40 cases of trafficking, torture, or other vulnerability in Detention Action's client group alone. Many also have risky conditions like asthma or diabetes.

For those left in detention, the distress is more intense than ever, and detainees in fear of their lives.

Thousands have signed the [emergency COVID petition](#), exposing what's happening in our detention centres, and showing the government just how many oppose their brutal and inhumane policies. More are needed, please sign if you haven't, and spread the word that others need to do so too.

A PLEA FROM THOSE WHO KNOW FIRST HAND. [Freed Voices](#), whose members have experienced immigration detention themselves, make the case for closing down all detention centres now. You can read what they say in [this article here](#). It is bad enough at the best of times, but even more frightening and worrying now.

As **Christine Jardine** says *"Liberal Democrats will continue fighting 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 and in safety."*

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE. We are shocked to [read here](#) that the Home Office were trying to say that courts must give full written reasons for their decisions on anyone in detention who has been granted bail. The independence of the judiciary is a core part of our democracy. There is no way that politicians should be interfering. First they went for the immigration detainees, and then, who?

DESTITUTION

Whilst much has been said about protecting the most vulnerable during the Covid-19 crisis, what we are hearing says that isn't happening. It is a desperate situation for those with no recourse to public funds - but they are people, and they live here. [This article](#) and [this](#) tells some of the awful stories. It helps nobody to leave them destitute, especially now.

The Children's Society has just [published a report](#) on the issue, and has a good summary of action that needs to be taken, both short and longer term.

ALLOWANCES

Key ask! Please [sign this letter](#) for the safety for all, including asylum seekers. We have. It covers asking for an increase in allowance already available to others, for extra Covid costs & keeping safe; claim asylum without having to travel; and accommodation where safe distancing can be practised.

Sally Hamwee [has asked](#) if the Government will pay the allowance for more than one week at a time. A good question, particularly for the situation all are in now. The answer was that the level of allowance was reviewed each year. Nil points to the Minister for not answering the question.

HEALTH WORKERS

Following the Home Office's announcement of one-year visa extensions for certain health and care staff, the Liberal Democrats have called, in a cross party letter, for an automatic extension to all visas

beyond the end of May and to give all NHS and social care workers indefinite leave to remain.

Munira Wilson said *“I’m glad the Government is finally recognising the enormous contributions of foreign nationals, not only in our NHS but also social care workers and other health professionals on the frontline of this pandemic. It is the least they could do.”*

Christine Jardine adds *“This announcement is welcome, but a one-year extension simply isn’t enough, especially given the Home Secretary’s inability to give any clarity about who exactly it applies to. And thousands of other people, including many working on the frontline, are not covered at all by this announcement and face their visas expiring in just a few weeks.*

“The Home Office must extend everyone’s visas until this crisis is over. Forcing people to leave the country in June would be impractical and inhumane. All health and social care workers on the frontline of this crisis must be given indefinite leave to remain. It should be unthinkable that any of them would be forced to leave the country after their service to it.”

Meanwhile the Daily Mirror reports a migrant saying *“I feel ashamed because I have the skills and all I want to do is help in any way I can. Foreign doctors who are desperate to join coronavirus fight [but] sit at home numb and helpless”*.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES are changing, as in [this important analysis](#) of the British public's attitudes in response to the coronavirus crisis, showing how much people expect fairness and value migrants.

WIFI. [Boaz Trust](#) is working to provide WIFI access to all their shared houses for destitute asylum seekers and refugees. They are [crowd funding here](#) if you want to donate. We need the Home Office to enable all housing providers for asylum housing to do the same.

STATUS FOR ALL. The [Jesuit Refugee Service](#), [Women for Refugee Women](#) and 30 front-line facing organisations working with asylum seekers, refugees, and those with irregular immigration status have written to the Prime Minister asking that the government grant a period of “Leave to Remain” to everyone with insecure immigration status. You can read more about the #StatusForAll campaign [here](#).

FREE SCHOOL MEALS. These have not been available for school-aged children on low income grounds for those in families on “Section 4” (which is an allowance for asylum seekers at an even lower rate than the usual “Section 95”). Thankfully the Government has allowed this under the new Covid-19 regulations, including vouchers during the Easter holidays. The snag is they didn’t tell them they could claim, and schools do not necessarily know which the Section 4 families are – only the Home Office and housing providers know. After quite a bit of campaigning, one of our LD4SOS Council members has persuaded Mears Housing to message all of these families to tell them to apply. £15 a week per child is a lot of money for a family. The next stage is to make sure the other housing providers do the same.

INTERNATIONAL. This [#Covid_19](#) knows and respects no boundaries and borders. Shas Sheehan is right to keep reminding UK Government of international responsibilities such as [here](#).

FAMILY REUNION. We are of course delighted that at last there has been a [Family Reunion Rescue flight](#) from a refugee camp in Greece. Just a beginning, but great progress. One thing we must take from this is that campaigns do work. They take too long, but all that raising in Parliament, letter writing and petitioning has had an effect. Congratulations to Safe Passage for keeping on, and for encouraging others.