



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 OCTOBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

LIFT THE BAN

At the Autumn Conference our stall, as well as providing lots of information, promoted “Lift the Ban”, a campaign involving many organisations, including the Liberal Democrats, who want the right to work for asylum seekers.



Members were invited to sign the petition and also have a selfie taken to declare their support for asylum seekers to be given the right to work.

We were pleased at the interest shown and nobody needed persuading! We had ‘ordinary’ members, the Party President, those in wheelchairs, those with prams, MEPs, Members of the House of Lords and House of Commons, Councillors and would-be-MPs all taking part, along with Liberal Democrat Trade Unionists, Young Liberal Democrats and Women Liberal Democrats.



Christine Jardine spoke in Parliament putting the issue of the right to work directly to the former Home Secretary, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sajid Javid. She cited Lift the Ban research estimating that the potential economic benefits of lifting the ban would be £42 million and asked if he would therefore support granting people seeking asylum the right to work from his new position. You can read the transcript of the exchange [here](#) and view the video footage [here](#).

“I JUST WANT TO STUDY” – LD4SOS Autumn conference fringe with the [Refugee Support Network \(RSN\)](#)

Emily Bowerman, Head of Programmes and Catherine Gladwell, Chief Executive gave a really interesting presentation from them on the important work undertaken by the RSN, as an organisation dedicated to changing the lives of young asylum seekers and refugees through education. In particular how the RSN supports young asylum seekers, refugees and survivors of trafficking facing particular educational challenges and why they launched a national helpline to advise young people who aspire to university.

We will be putting an article on our website, and linking to it from our Facebook and twitter pages, so do look out for that.

REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE MEDITERRANIAN AND AROUND THE WORLD

There was a meeting run by the Liberal International British Group at Conference with the theme of the refugee crisis in Mediterranean & wider world. Speakers were our president, Roger Roberts, and Suzanne Fletcher of LD4SOS Council. Both agreed that urgent and radical action were needed, listing and agreeing with the UNHCR recommendations. Both ended with saying that a message of hope was also very important to all in the situations they outlined. You can read [more here](#).

Liberal Democrat policy is already addressing these issues [as here](#).

THREE GOVERNMENT U TURNS FOR THE WORSE

Here are just 3 examples of promises made and betrayed:

1. The Refugee Council [has a petition](#) to sign and share about the Government taking away important funding if there is a “No Deal Brexit.”
2. Detention Action has an [open letter](#) to be signed about the Government backing down on commitments to end indefinite detention, adopt proper legal protections against unfair detention and protect the human rights and dignity of migrants.
3. LEARNING ENGLISH. We are appalled but sadly not even surprised that Sajid Javid has [not kept his promise](#) to increase the spending on money for classes to learn English. It would even end up saving money as it would increase job opportunities and save money on interpreters!

HOW CAN YOU BE A LESBIAN AND A CHRISTIAN?

The groups within the Liberal Democrats representing Christians, LGBT+ people, immigrants, and those seeking asylum, have put out the following statement:

“Following reports that Home Office officials have been accusing asylum-seekers who are both Christian and LGBT+ of “contradiction” [as reported here](#), we condemn this ignorance and insensitivity of the Home Office.”

We also note that the Home Office's “culture of disbelief” has impacted both Christian people and LGBT+ people in the past — and that this in turn is just a small part of the injustices that have led the Liberal Democrats to call for the Home Office to be stripped of all immigration and asylum responsibility.

LGBTQ

Yet again there is the issue of “What they say and what they do” [Boris Johnson said](#) “***who you love, who you are, how you choose to live, should not and will not stand in your way.***” but his words are not met with Home Office action, as is highlighted in [this report](#) on the danger faced by those from the LGBTQ community in detention

DETENTION

Whilst it is good news that Brook House won't be run by G4S in the future, it shouldn't be outsourced at all. Liberal Democrat policy is “We oppose the outsourcing of government functions related to migration. There have been particular problems reported relating to the outsourcing of detention centres.”

As well as Detention Centres not being outsourced, we are still campaigning for detention being a last resort, closing 8 out of 10 detention centres, having alternatives in the community and the need for a time limit as in our [policy briefing here](#).

[A report](#) from the [@HMIPrisonsnews](#) has found that more than half of the people held in Brook House immigration detention centre during a six-month period were then released back into the community, instead of being returned to where they came from. It highlights a massive waste of money as well as people's lives.

The Government has just issued its response to the Home Affairs Select Committee report on immigration detention (which was published in March this year). The Government has [rejected quite a lot of recommendations](#) of the committee report. This is very disappointing and the campaign will continue through into the next Parliament if necessary. Our Liberal Democrat policy on detention issues [is here](#).

DESTITUTION

This report from NACCOM (No Accommodation Network in the UK) has produced [a report](#), looking at the experiences of people who have been denied asylum by the UK government, but, for various reasons, are unable to return to their home countries. This is an issue we need to look at and campaign on.

Liberal Democrats already have policy such as extending the time a new refugee has for leaving their accommodation from 28 to 60 days, [as here](#), but this report highlights further issues to be tackled.

REFUGEE CHILDREN

A “No Deal Brexit” will badly hit refugee children as [reported here](#).

The Home Office is preparing to end the current system of family reunification for asylum-seeking children if the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

Lawyers and campaigners say they will be trying to get through as many claims as possible in the next two months, warning that the impact on migrant children stranded alone in countries such as Greece and Italy could be “fatal” as more head for the Channel to try to cross to the UK irregularly.

SAFE ROUTES NEEDED

Nearer to home, vulnerable refugees are [continuing to risk their lives](#) crossing the English Channel. 1200 people have crossed the Channel in 2019 already. When faced with brutal conditions in camps and no hope for finding safety, this dangerous journey seems the only option left.

We say that to prevent this number increasing, the UK government must fulfil its moral duty and provide a safe, legal route to sanctuary.

Add to this that, 3 years on, the UK Government has only filled 250 of 480 places for child refugees under the Dubs Scheme.

WELCOME GUIDE

The Home Office has produced a [series of guides](#) in different languages. It is worth signposting asylum seekers or those helping them to this document that could be helpful (and to the credit of the Home Office they did consult before producing it!)

STOP PRESS

LD4SOS is not endorsing either candidate in the forthcoming election for Party President. We are however very pleased that both candidates support Lift the Ban.

We will be asking both candidates the same questions and will let you know their replies.

