



## Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

# RIGHT TO WORK FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Currently some asylum seekers wait two or even more years for a decision on their asylum claim in the UK. In the mean time they receive asylum support from the public pot, instead of being allowed to earn their own money to support themselves or contribute to the UK.

**The EU Reception Directive, which the UK has opted out of, places an obligation on member states to provide access to the labour market no later than 9 months from the date of the initial application to asylum seekers. Eleven EU countries not only abide by this but have gone further by allowing asylum seekers to work after six months or less from making their asylum application.**

The UK does grant the right to work after 12 months if the applicant is still awaiting a decision, BUT the job must be on the Shortage Occupation List, so very few indeed qualify under this.

Those seeking asylum here want to work, and have skills they could use, if only they were allowed to do so.

Those who do not have their claim for asylum accepted, but cannot, through no fault of their own, return to their own country of origin (for instance it is not safe to do so, or that country will not accept them), then they are destitute, with no support and no means of being allowed to earn a living.

**It is Liberal Democrat policy that “so that asylum seekers can better support themselves, while contributing to the public purse, Liberal Democrats will require all working age asylum seekers to look for work if their case has not been resolved within 6 months. Current restrictions on which occupations asylum seekers can work in will also be lifted.”**

We go on to say that Asylum seekers who cannot work, or who cannot find work, will remain in housing funded through the Home Office and on the section 95 rate of benefits.

Whilst asylum seekers await their decision (pre-6 months) we will aim to make sure that appropriate training and volunteering opportunities are made available so they can make a contribution to society and be better prepared to find work.

This policy means that an asylum seeker has 6 months in which to settle in and pick up language and cultural ways, before needing to be available to work – but it cannot be said it is a “pull factor” for anyone wishing to work here to come to the UK to do so.

Lord Roger Roberts has repeatedly raised this issue in the House of Lords. In 2013 he said “At present, taxpayers’ money is used needlessly to ‘support’ those who are both willing and able to contribute to society as asylum seekers are denied the dignity of supporting themselves.” Lib Dems attempted to get Right to Work in the 2016 Immigration Bill but there was not enough support from others.

He introduced a Private Members’ Bill (to amend the Immigration Act 1971) saying “that will allow asylum seekers to work after waiting six months for a decision. This Bill would be a first step towards creating a more compassionate system for people that have already endured so much, whilst also crucially preventing public funds from being allocated to those who are both able and willing to support themselves and their families.”