



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

MID-OCTOBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

ACTION NEEDED FROM YOU

Please take action as soon as possible (this week) on the items marked * on Children in Calais and, if you are in England, the NHS Health Regulations.

CHILDREN IN CALAIS.

On 24th October last year the makeshift camp in Calais was demolished and thousands of refugees were displaced. Thanks to pressure from people like you, the Government successfully transferred 750 child refugees to the UK. But the crisis hasn't gone; there are still close to 200 unaccompanied children in Calais living in terrible conditions. Safe Passage say " [By attending your nearest house meeting](#), (meaning one organised by activists locally), you will show your MP that people locally still care about the situation in Calais, and you'll make a plan to encourage the Government to end the misery of children in Calais once and for all".

If you don't have chance to go to a house meeting, then * please do contact your MP, whatever party, to ask them to go to this debate, and even better see if you can persuade any organisations or schools to do so. You can use [this template](#).

* If you can get to London for 12 noon on October 24th for an action outside Parliament then please do and contact Bradley Hillier Smith, bradleyhilliersmith91@gmail.com [Details here](#) of the event..

There is also a [broader appeal for help](#) in both Calais and Dunkirk, with information also about Brussels.

NHS CHARGING REGULATIONS

The Government recently proposed to amend a set of rules, the "NHS Charging Regulations" around who can access healthcare in England, and when they have to pay for it. The City of Sanctuary briefing [explains more here](#). There are two significant changes.

From August 2017, healthcare charges were introduced for services provided by all community health organisations in England, except GP surgeries. Any organisation receiving NHS funding is legally required to check every patient before they receive a service to see whether they should pay for their care. This will impact on a wide range of health services, including, public health services commissioned through Local Authorities such as public mental health and drug & alcohol services, school and district nursing, and a number of charities.

From 23rd October 2017, the regulations will introduce a legal requirement for all hospital departments and all community health services to check every patient's paperwork – including passports and proof of address – and charge up front for healthcare, refusing non-urgent care where a patient cannot pay. This means that every patient, British citizen or person under immigration control, will be asked about their residency status and will need to prove they are entitled to free NHS care. If a patient cannot prove that they are entitled to free care, they will receive an estimated bill for their treatment and will have to pay it in full **before** they receive any treatment other than that which is 'urgent' or 'immediately necessary', as defined by doctors on a case-by-case basis.

Clearly this will have a significant impact on those seeking sanctuary here who do not have, or cannot access, relevant paperwork, the regulations are complicated for different types of status. Also there are concerns about those who are worried about being charged, so do not seek treatment available. There will be undermining of public health as communicable diseases are not treated, early treatment is missed, and vaccinations do not take place. This will have an effect on everyone, as will delays for all as bureaucratic checks cause delays.

193 organisations and more than 880 individuals - of which over 300 are doctors and 50 are nurses - have [signed an open letter to the Secretary of State for Health](#) warning that "by denying healthcare to the most vulnerable in our society, these regulations will have negative consequences for us all." LD4SOS signed, and were the only political organisation to do so. The [Guardian report is here](#). Ed Davey MP has tabled questions (we will publish this in our next newsletter), and our Peers are gearing up for when the issue comes to the Lords in the next few weeks.

***For those in England, please can you write to your MP, contact any Peers that you know, and make as much fuss as possible. If you are a health professional, please do make strong points relevant to this. For a model email see [here](#). *For those that tweet please use #PatientsNotPassports.**

MORE ON THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT – Bank account checking.

In case you missed it, a [recent article](#) in the Guardian revealed that banks and building societies will be carrying out immigration checks on 70m current accounts from January 'in the biggest extension of Theresa May's plans to create a "hostile environment" for illegal immigrants in Britain.' The accounts of those found to be staying illegally – such as visa over-stayers, failed asylum seekers and foreign national offenders facing deportation – will be frozen in an attempt to incentivize them to return home. A [Free Movement blog post](#) on the issue notes that with a Home Office error rate of 10%, many people are likely to see their accounts wrongly shut down or frozen, impacting on their ability to keep up with rent or mortgage payments, and provide for themselves and their families.

CAN THE HOME OFFICE COPE AFTER BREXIT? [Ed Davey warns](#) that the Home Office is making awful mistakes now, never mind coping with the aftermath of Brexit. The Home Office needs better funding & much better training to avoid even more injustices, now, and the Home Office and its employees need to understand that their task is to administer the immigration and asylum rules fairly.

DETENTION

Good news - Verne Detention Centre is going to close down, significantly reducing the detention estate, although this former prison, formidable looking place, should never have been opened. However it must only be the first steps to implementing the Shaw 1 report; there must be a radical overhaul of immigration detention, it should only be used as a last resort and there should be a maximum time limit of 28 days for anyone detained. We agree with the fuller [Detention Forum statement](#).

Good news that should never have been needed. Torture Victims were wrongly detained, a court has ruled. But it shouldn't have taken a court to tell the Home Office this and Ed Davey makes the point that the torture victims should have an apology from Government and the immigration detention situation needs a radical overhaul.

Awful news. There has been [another death in detention](#) in Morton Hall. Life itself has no price to put on it. Also the quality of life has no price to put on it but the Government continues to spend huge amounts of money on keeping people in immigration detention with no time limit. Costs must be really adding up with yet another enquiry into the death. Just what do they do with the results of enquiries?

Last year, responding to the news there had been a death in Colnbrook detention centre, Michael from [#FreedVoices](#) said: "Spin this any way you want, detention has killed someone. And this is not the first time either. It's the twenty-fifth! What's the magic number that makes the government sit up and realise this system is broken? It's like they are addicted."

MODERN SLAVERY is mainly hidden, but when anyone escapes from it and claims asylum they need a lot of support. In order to end modern slavery, there is a pressing need to alert the public to the signs, so that they can alert the authorities. This is an [interesting report](#) from a Modern Slavery Conference in Poole on 8th October. Baroness Sally Hamwee has been [asking for the Government](#) to toughen up legislation.

THE SHAME OF BORIS. One of the most moving and memorable comments we heard at the Autumn Conference was at the LD4SOS AGM, when someone spoke of his time in Libya and how there was training for people on how to pick up and properly dispose of the many bodies on the Mediterranean shore in there. Unimaginable horror! We were so disgusted when Boris Johnson joked that a Libyan city could become the next Dubai once it has "cleared the dead bodies away". No wonder his words sparked a backlash.

SWEET NEWS

[Ben and Jerry's "Home Sweet Honeycomb" ice cream](#) is supporting Safe Routes for Refugees, something we are very strong on campaigning for. We are asking people to click on the button on the link to support the work of the International Rescue Committee, persuading European politicians to work for this.

***Share the link, click the button, then enjoy the ice cream that has Fairtrade ingredients. Win, win, really.**