



## Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

# ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION. NEWS ON THE NEW CONTRACT, (February 8, 2018)

## Our initial thoughts on what is proposed.

### DISAPPOINTMENT

- That the Home Office is saying there will be very large areas that will be put out to tender. There is no way that smaller, and more local, organisations, or indeed groups of small organisations will be able to tender for the contracts.
- That inspection of property to ensure compliance with accommodation standards is not going to include talking to asylum seekers in the property, is not going to be done by an organisation independent of the housing provider, and is not going to be independently verified.
- It is a detail, so not yet known if inspection will include checking the inventory.
- Whilst there is going to be safeguarding training for housing officers, it does not say that it will include training and support for all staff of accommodation providers dealing with service users around those who are vulnerable in any way. This includes specific issues around sexual abuse, sexuality, torture survivors, and mental health. The training also needs to include awareness of cultural, language and faith issues. All staff, including those who are in the accommodation to carry out repairs, need to have this awareness training.
- There is nothing to tackle house sharing by people with different backgrounds; that can cause problems for many, however hard they try.
- There is no funding for local authorities or the voluntary sector to support the work that they do.
- That there will still be forced bedroom sharing between unrelated adults.

### VAGUENESS

- About the inventory.
- It says there should be adequate cleaning equipment, but only brooms mentioned.
- About some services like orientation for new arrivals. Whilst it is says it will be better, there is no mention as to how. On arrival into a new area, and new home, there is the need for good signposting for essential services such as GPs and the Post Office, as well as support such as given at advice centres and drop ins, and places of worship, ethnic shops etc. This needs to be given in person, not just pointed to whilst in a van, and in a language understood by the new arrival. Leaflets should only be to back up such information, and of course in the relevant language.
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### ANGER

- That there will still be forced bedroom sharing between unrelated adults.
- They say that "vulnerable" people will not have to share, but they have no definition of what is meant by vulnerable, and it will be dealt with on a case by case basis. There is going to be infinite wrangling on this, and it is going to mean that sharing

will have to take place before the argument as to what problems are caused takes place.

### **SOME HOPE, with a NEW SERVICE**

- 'Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility Service (AIRE)', which will integrate advice and guidance services into a single, nationally operated end-to-end service, and provide a single point of contact for Service User complaints and issues.
- The service will also contain requirements for the provider to support Service Users (as asylum seekers in accommodation are called) as they move out of the asylum support system, either into mainstream services or returning to their home country.

This **could be good**, separating out provision of welfare services from providing accommodation, and resulting in more and better individual support.

It also **could be good** that there will be defined support for those whose support ends if they have been given leave to remain and need to find housing, get a job and/or claim benefits. Or if they have to leave to return to country of origin. There is the possibility of it putting an end to destitution at this critical time, but it **will need to be carefully monitored** to ensure that it actually does.