



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS FOR SEEKERS OF SANCTUARY MAY 2018 NEWSLETTER

THE NEW HOME SECRETARY and THE HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

Your LD4SOS Council put together a letter to send to Sajid Javid on what we expect of him. You can see it on [our website here](#). We will let you know what the response is – if we get one, that is!

We fully support [Detention Action's response](#) to him on the urgent need to “stop detaining around 30,000 people each year” and “take the opportunity to save his department [hundreds of millions of pounds](#) and stop this heartless approach. He should introduce a 28-day time limit on immigration detention as a matter of urgency, and drastically reduce the size of the detention estate over time.”

WINDRUSH SCANDAL

The Windrush scandal has shown the British public how the Home Office works – or doesn't – in dealing with cases under its jurisdiction. What has come to light is only the tip of the iceberg creating its own hostile environment: not believing people, being target driven, and pandering to the right wing media. Thankfully, the outcry as the scandal was unveiled was sufficient for a lot of backtracking, but not before lives and health were destroyed. We only hope that what is already happening in the shadows to asylum seekers is also dealt with in a much better way.

Ed Davey says *“I forced the Home Secretary to confirm the new dedicated unit for the Windrush Generation would also apply to all people from former Commonwealth countries in similar situations – whether they were born in Australia or India, Canada or Pakistan”*. And adds “ But what about the thousands of people from other countries who've lived here for decades, yet are treated appallingly by the Home Office?”

As the scandal broke, Lib Dems in both the Commons and Lords spoke passionately and well, asked searching questions, and stood up for our Lib Dem values. Too much said for us to link to, but believe us, whilst other parties were much quoted, ours was working hard. Thank you to them.

DECISION MAKING LOTTERY

[This article](#) gives a shocking insight into how decisions are made on whether or not an asylum seeker's claim is believed. A decision that is literally life or death is being made under highly pressured circumstances, where meeting a target of how many negative decisions are made is king. Ending the hostile environment means the Home Office having adequate numbers of properly trained staff, and ending the culture of disbelief.

LIBERTY has [produced a guide](#) to the “Hostile Environment” which is a good source for campaigners, and **POLITICS UK** has [a good round up](#) of the effects.

DATA SHARING ON HEALTH

Instead of telling you more [here](#) of the problems raised by this data sharing, we are delighted to report that the Government has done a welcome U Turn, and is no longer expecting health professionals to be acting as immigration officials. Thank you to Asylum Matters and others for coordinating a strong campaign on this, and to our Lib Dem Parliamentarians for their contributions. However, there are still issues around what the NHS has to do, and much more needed to end other forms of data sharing, including landlords having enforcement duties imposed upon them in our Hostile Environment. [This article](#) gives a lot more information.

PARLIAMENTARY ROUND UP

ROGER ROBERTS [asks about school twinning with Syria](#), and there is an interesting response that there are twinning programmes with Jordan and Lebanon where there are a lot of Syrian Refugees. Maybe some of you with connections to schools might like to think about this?

ED DAVEY is raising the important issue of how the **new Data law** could lead to more Windrush Scandals. You can read the Liberal Democrat Voice article [here](#), and there is a [more detailed article](#) in Politics Home. An article [on our website](#) gives the link to the petition for you to sign too.

ROGER ROBERTS has been [pressing the Government](#) to take more Syrian refugees, following on from the military action in Syria. He did not get a positive response though.

TIM FARRON has sponsored an [Early Day Motion](#) on Refugee Week, signed at the time of writing by nearly all of our MPs.

SALLY HAMWEE'S [question](#) on the withdrawal of education from young asylum seekers reaching the age of 18 appears to clarify that these young people will be given a new bail notice so that they are eligible. Eyes need to be kept open to make sure it does happen though!

ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL [has welcomed](#) that the contract for some immigration centres run by G4S has only been renewed for 2 years, but asked that there be an overhaul of process to establish why people are in a detention centre at all.

SHAS SHEEHAN has been asking [many searching questions](#) about the Rohingya refugee camps, and facilities and support for them.

GOOD NEWS STORY of Dales Farmers welcoming and enjoying the company of asylum seekers and refugees [here](#). Do YOU have any good news stories about refugees or asylum seekers in your area? If so, please do let us know.

RIGHT TO WORK. We have been urging a change in the law to enable asylum seekers to access the job market for years. [This Economist article](#) demonstrates why this is not only morally right, but also economically sensible for asylum seekers to be able to work.

SHARED ROOMS. One of our members has had a letter on the problems encountered by asylum seekers in forced bedroom sharing published in the Church Times, you can see it on [our website here](#).

FAMILY REUNIFICATION. Thank you to the terrific support from 72 Lib Dem Peers for family reunification in a successful amendment by Lord Dubs to the EU Withdrawal Bill. Sally Hamwee & Shas Sheehan made terrific and successful contributions in a [further debate](#) where a Tory Peer put forward an amendment, trying to limit the number of family members to “up to two”. Just who decides which two? Thankfully, after hearing the debate, the amendment was withdrawn.

SYRIAN REFUGEE VPRS SCHEME. The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration report on the Syrian Resettlement scheme has now been [published](#). Whilst there is much reported that is good and working well, there are also a number of problems highlighted that concern us. Not least, as the Refugee Council [says here](#), that although refugees wait in the camps for 35 weeks to come to the UK, they only have “a two day cultural orientation workshop, two weeks before they travel”. The report describes this as a case of “too little, too late”, especially as many have little or no English, and calls on the Home Office “to make better use of this time”. Other problems include there not being sufficient opportunities to learn to speak English once they get here, Job Centres sanctioning them for attending English Classes, and local authorities being reluctant to take some very vulnerable large families as the Benefit Cap means that the rent cannot be met by housing benefit.

[This article](#) by the BBC shows which areas are taking the VPRS Scheme refugees, which the most and which the least. Check to see what is happening in YOUR local authority.