



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

LD4SOS JUNE 2018 NEWSLETTER

OUR NEW HOME SECRETARY. Whilst we have not had a reply from him since we wrote to him last month, it is encouraging to know that at least he is acknowledging the way the Home Office has been working and promising to do better, as in [this Guardian article](#). Along with all the organisations that work on behalf of those affected by how the Home Office works, we will be keeping a close eye to ensure that promises of better ways of working are kept.

DETENTION

OUR POSITION. In the Coalition years, under Nick Clegg, we made sure that ending the detention of children was in the Coalition agreement, was made into law, and implemented. This unravelled immediately after the 2015 election with the Conservatives winning an outright majority and children are still being detained under Theresa May's premiership.

The Labour Shadow Home Secretary [has announced](#) that, in government, Labour will close some detention centres and end indefinite detention. This is of course excellent news, and a big step towards what we have been campaigning for, for years now. Our policy since 2014, in both our 2015 and 2017 manifestos, is ending indefinite detention with a time limit of 28 days, greatly reducing the detention estate, not locking up vulnerable people at all, and having alternatives to detention. We are pleased that Labour is now catching up and look forward to them supporting our Parliamentarians to achieve this, not least in the House of Lords.

One Tory MP has publicly said that a 28 day limit on detention is needed, so again it is welcome movement. But we must not let up on our campaign to see this actually happens.

EVIDENCE TO HOME AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE. Peter Clarke, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons [told the Home Affairs Select Committee](#): "The biggest issue is the uncertainty, the distress that is felt by many detainees because ... They don't know how long they will be there for". This independent, nonpolitical, non-campaigning person, responsible for inspecting many different holding facilities, went on to say: "There is more resistance from the Home Office on immigration detention than any other sort of holding facility. There is supposed to be a response and action plan in 3 months, but this has lapsed, and last year pointed out that they are waiting for 12 responses, but now there are 16 outstanding, going back to December 2016." As he said, if he has this difficulty how bad is it for detainees to get a response?

Also shocking, if not surprising, is that Government has both ignored reports from Independent Monitoring Boards and taken up very few recommendations.

COST. 'The financial cost is unjustifiable'. [Freed Voices](#) argue money spent on detention could be redirected to vital services. It costs around £32,000 to detain someone for a year, funded by the taxpayer. There need to be [alternatives to detention](#).

INDEPENDENT MONITORING BOARD REPORT ON CAMPSFIELD HOUSE

Well said, Layla Moran MP, responding to [this report](#): "An independent report has raised concerns about health care & the length of time people are detained at Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre in Kidlington. It is time the Government ended indefinite detention"

One of the points in the report is that the Board is disappointed that not only was there no response from the last report for 10 months (deadline 6 weeks), but 6 recommendations were rejected, 5 not responded to, and only 1 was accepted. Just how valued do the independent inspectors feel, giving up their time to do this work and then being ignored?

YARLSWOOD. 77% of Yarlswood detainees went on to get leave to remain, so most certainly should not have been there in the first place. Moreover, shortcomings have not been addressed in procedures on removals and in the number of female staff and mental health assessments, [as seen here](#).

UNLAWFUL DETENTION. Lawyers have warned that the Home Office is unlawfully holding asylum seekers in immigration detention, despite courts ruling they can be released. Detainees "languish" in removal centres for months on end after being granted bail because the Home Office is refusing to fulfil its duty to provide asylum accommodation, claiming emergency housing is "not dissimilar" to detention.

The government has a duty to provide housing for asylum seekers and refused asylum seekers who are released from detention and would otherwise be "destitute", [as reported in The Independent](#).

WAITING FOR A DECISION. [A Report](#) from Refugee Action sums up what we see happening on the ground, with the distressing long wait for a decision on what is for them life or death. For many it is the time of life to start in jobs and start a family, but this is denied, and whilst waiting life ebbs away.

REFUSAL of LEAVE TO REMAIN For those who have had a refusal, *Right to Remain* have a [very useful toolkit](#) to be used by them or anyone helping them, now available translated into six languages.

APPEALS SUCCESS RATE. Roger Roberts has highlighted [the very high rate of appeal successes](#) for those refused an asylum application, meaning that far too many decisions are wrong first time. Sally Hamwee said in a debate: "If personal information is to be dealt with more reliably in the [HomeOffice](#), can we expect a reeducation in the number of successful appeals to the tribunal, which currently stands at 40%?" Alistair Carmichael MP is asking questions on rates of success for other appeals against government decisions. We will report back.

GAY ASYLUM SEEKER TREATMENT. [A Guardian report](#) highlights how badly the UK treats those seeking sanctuary here because they are gay, making it very difficult for them to "prove" that they are, and as many as two thirds claims are rejected.

GAY STEREOTYPING. An immigration lawyer in [Pink News](#) offers horrific and tragic insights into the way that the Home Office is using "gay stereotypes" to reject LGBT asylum seekers.

HOUSING. There is new and updated information from us on housing issues for asylum seekers in dispersed Home Office accommodation. The situation keeps changing but these are up to date, and the latest is here [on our website](#).

SHARED ROOMS. We now know that Newcastle Council has lost the tribunal case on forced shared bedrooms for asylum seekers, to landlord Jomast, so room sharing there, and everywhere else in the North East where Jomast is the landlord (subcontracted from G4S, who have the Home Office contract), can continue. We are unclear where else in the country this is happening and welcome feedback, please. There is a [web article here](#), with more detail. Also see [this Guardian article](#) for more.

WINDRUSH. So much has been coming out about the whole ghastly situation, and the media is rightly reporting so much about it that we are not going to try to give links. Our Lib Dem Parliamentarians are actively questioning and probing the Home Office on behalf of those who have been so badly treated, and not forgetting that what we know so far is only the tip of the iceberg on the “Hostile Environment”.

[This is](#) another example of the sheer meanness of the “Hostile Environment”.

GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES. UNHCR has [recently published](#) the second draft of the *Global Compact on Refugees* proposed as part of the [Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework \(CRRF\)](#) The [government’s statement](#) in July 2017 was self-congratulatory but the UK has hitherto made little commitment to support global responsibility-sharing.

PUBLIC’S POSITIVE VIEWS ON IMMIGRATION. [A study \(https://theconversation.com/new-poll-shows-british-people-have-become-more-positive-about-immigration-95813\)](https://theconversation.com/new-poll-shows-british-people-have-become-more-positive-about-immigration-95813) shows how more people are looking on immigration as a positive contribution to our society, though the detail of the poll shows some are simply reassured by the decline in net migration over the last eighteen months or so. It is important we get over positive messages, and create a “climate of hospitality”, matched by a fair points system for those seeking work that is consistent with the British sense of fair play.

SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT SCHEME. Paul Scriven secured [this debate](#) in the House of Lords following [this inspection](#) referred to in our last newsletter, which raised many issues. He spoke well on the whole issue, making the points that the scheme was there for those who were LGBTI, traumatised children as well as so many others that were very vulnerable indeed from the atrocities in Syria. Also excellent points from our Lib Dem Peers Shas Sheehan, Roger Roberts & Sally Hamwee. Many important points were made on the right preparation whilst still in the refugee camps, and then during resettlement, including being able to learn to communicate in English when here.

REFUGEE WEEK. This year marks the [20th anniversary of Refugee Week](#). This is a nationwide celebration of the contribution that refugees make to the UK. Across the country there will be arts, cultural and educational events. We hope that you will be able to take part in activities and raise awareness. Some of the [\(free\) downloadable materials](#) are particularly helpful (<http://refugeeweek.org.uk/resources/free-materials/downloadable-materials/>).