



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

DECEMBER 2018 LD4SOS NEWSLETTER

DETENTION

DETENTION FORUM AWARD

LD4SOS Chair John Skipworth writes : [Detention Forum](#) have named Liberal Democrat Peer and LD4SOS Vice-President, Sally Hamwee as one of their 'Detention Champions for 2018'.

Those of you who attended our AGM will already know about this but it was mine and Janet King's privilege to attend the formal presentation to Sally at the House of Lords on Tuesday 4th December.

Suzannah Willcox of Detention Forum presented Sally with a trophy recognising her contribution to fighting for an end to indefinite detention and then Eiri Ohtani thanked Sally for her work. Other tributes were paid by representatives of [Detention Action](#), [Freed Voices](#) and [Jesuit Refugee Service](#).



During a round table discussion we heard how detention had affected individual lives and the consequences that followed!

On a personal note it was great to be able to put faces to names and also further appreciate what esteem Sally is held in. You can see more detail [here](#) of the Liberal Democrat policies that Sally and other Lib Dem Parliamentarians have been continuously pursuing for many years.

MOVES IN PARLIAMENT

Layla Moran and Christine Jardine have been co-sponsors in Tulip Siddiq's Private Members Bill for a 28-day limit on immigration detention. Such a Bill will not make law, but is an important step forward in the long march for justice. We are delighted that MPs of other parties are now taking up this cause, but don't forget it has long been Lib Dem policy and campaigned on by us as [here](#).

CLOSE CAMPSFIELD

The amazing news that the Home Secretary has authorised the closure of IRC Campsfield House near Oxford by the end of May 2019 has encouraged all those groups campaigning for an end to immigration detention.

It has been a long wait; the Close Campsfield group has been actively working to close this well-documented* detention centre ever since it opened 25 years ago in November 1993. Bill MacKeith, founder member of the Close Campsfield group, writes 'The campaign's twenty-five year anniversary coincides with the **welcome news that Campsfield is finally to close**. *'We think soberly of all the harm done, the lives damaged or destroyed, and those lost – 18-year-old Kurd Ramazan Kamluca in June 2005 and Moldovan Ianos Dragotan in August 2011 – at Campsfield over the past twenty-five years.'*

LD4SOS, which is represented on the Detention Forum, is campaigning for the closure of more IRCs and will not stop until our Party policy to close 8 out of 10 centres has been achieved, [as in here](#).

*`[Inside Immigration Detention](#)' by Mary Bosworth.

SARAH TEATHER

As part of the Unlocked Detention18 Campaign, giving a voice to those who are not heard, Sarah Teather [has been interviewed](#) by someone who has experienced indefinite immigration detention. A very real experience being told here, with the impact it had on Sarah and the work she did as Chair of an All Party Group on Immigration Detention.

MP OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Congratulations to Ed Davey being given an Other Party MP of the Year Award in the Patchwork UK awards, for championing minority communities. Standing up for the voiceless & powerless, fighting for their rights, is not always recognised.



“As an MP, and as a liberal, I have consistently championed the idea that our democracy is only as good as the people who engage with it, and so it is vital that all parts of our diverse society feel empowered to participate within democracy and public life. Britain’s democracy is being strengthened every day by the efforts of Patchwork to engage people of all communities, so even to be a small part of this journey is a privilege”

A MEMORIAL TO KINDERSPORT

[This is a beautiful speech](#) from Lord Roger Roberts. Very heartfelt, all of it a must read, ending with "*I suggest that if we want a memorial to the Kindertransport of 80 years ago, the best one would be a new attitude and for us to show renewed care. That is a memorial that would change people and it is what I would like to see, us, as a Parliament and as a people, embracing.*"



We have a responsibility to child refugees, we must show them “*We are your guardians, we are your parents, we are your uncles and aunties. Instead we close the borders, we don’t change by building walls, you change by changing people’s hearts*”.

Hoping for link to video otherwise this from Safe Passage

<https://twitter.com/safepassageuk/status/1063735090835070977>

WEST MIDLAND LIB DEM AGM

The LD4SOS stall at regional conference attracted plenty of support for the #Time4atimelimit initiative which asks for the introduction of a time limit of maximum 28 days in immigration detention. Supporters took selfies and sent them to Detention Action during the day. Lib Dem members were delighted by the good news about the impending closure of IRC Campsfield House and were encouraged to write to their MPs outlining our immigration policies. Let us hope that other parties can learn from us. Here is Rob Hunter, promoting the message.



RIGHT TO WORK

Commenting on the Home Secretary saying he would “review” the right to work for asylum seekers, Ed Davey said “I’m pleased to hear that the Home Secretary is open to lifting the ban, but asylum seekers don’t need a review. They need action now.

Along with employers, charities and refugees, the Liberal Democrats are demanding better for asylum seekers. We are calling on the Government to give them the right to work while their cases are decided. This would give asylum seekers a sense of dignity and more money, as well as enabling them to contribute to the Exchequer and saving taxpayers money.”

AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

What a great initiative [written about in this Guardian article](#), in a US museum. Now imagine the economic and social benefits of enabling 10,000 refugees a year from places like Syria and Myanmar to settle - and then allow them to work after three months. Both Lib Dem policies!

USEFUL GUIDANCE

Please pass both of these around any networks you are part of.

PATH FOR CLAIMING ASYLUM

Right to Remain have produced a [useful board "game"](#) to help people through the path for claiming asylum. It is £40 for funded groups and free for unfunded one's, but looks to be easy to use, and very informative. This link gives other useful resources too for navigating the asylum process and preparing for the interview

APPEAL HEARING PREPARATION

[Asylum Aid](#) have produced a film on how to prepare for an appeal. It is very easy to follow and should give sound advice as well as confidence for anyone going to an appeal hearing, as well as anyone advising them or going with them. Simple and clear.

REMOVALS TO UNSAFE COUNTRIES

It is appalling that the [Government is warning British Nationals](#) not to visit Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo – but is prepared to send back there those who have fled from those countries, having decided not to grant them asylum. Treating them as second class people whose safety does not matter.

Also, there is rightly outrage at the Home Office not attempting to contact those wrongly deported in the Windrush scandal, as Ed Davey says [here](#), but neither the Home Office nor any other department is looking to see what happens when seekers of sanctuary in the UK are sent back to country of origin because our Government deems it "safe".

On this issue, Professor Sue Clayton's excellent film `Hamedullah` illustrates exactly what happened when one 18 year old from Afghanistan was returned to his former home. On arrival in his village he found this home and most of the place had been destroyed and the film documents his struggle to find safety and a life in one of the most insecure places on earth.

Sue's latest film `Calais Children`, which illustrates the careless way in which the Home Office is dealing with unaccompanied children in northern France, is being shown widely including in Parliament and LD4SOS member Janet King recently gave a copy to Sajid Javid, Home Secretary and her local MP.

NEW IMMIGRATION BILL

[Article by Ed Davey](#) in Politics Home re the new proposed Immigration Bill. He sets out the much needed reform to the Home Office; an end to the Hostile Environment; the need to "Lift The Ban" and giving the right for asylum seekers to work; to learn from the Windrush scandal, have a fairer system for determining applications for leave to remain; and celebrate the positive contribution of asylum seekers & refugees to the UK.

ASYLUM SEEKERS REPORTING

Just why are [asylum seekers living in Stoke](#) being required to travel 3 hours each way to Salford to report, as required by the Home Office? Could it be the Hostile Environment to make them want to go back to danger in their country of origin?

There has been appalling treatment of a woman forced to go to an immigration reporting centre when very ill, & medical evidence to show this, [reported in](#) The Independent. It has been condemned by Ed Davey "*The Home Office's inflexibility causes untold human misery. Forcing people to report when they're too ill to stand is senseless and cruel. In this case, it also placed unnecessary extra burdens on the NHS, because it resulted in the individual being taken to hospital by ambulance.*"

HOUSING

The new 10 year housing contracts have now been let by the Home Office, but they have not said who to. In the meantime a report from the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration on asylum housing has been published 5 months after it should have been because of Home Office delays.

A lot of organisations submitted evidence to this report, including some our members belong to, but disappointingly much of it was not used. Even worse though was the session at the Home Affairs Select Committee, and subsequent letters.

There is much to clarify, and we are trying hard to do so, but in the meantime asylum seekers are living in bad conditions with rats, damp, and other housing problems, along with inadequate equipment supplied as cheaply as possible by housing providers. This includes thin duvets, bad mattresses, very little cooking equipment. If any of our readers are dealing with such housing problems, please get in touch.

PAKISTAN CHRISTIANS

Quite rightly there has been much publicity about the awful treatment of Asia Bibi, the Christian in Pakistan being persecuted. A letter from one of our Council members about this has been published in the Church Times, pointing out that Pakistan Christians who fled to the UK for safety are treated by our Government badly. Put into indefinite detention, not allowed to work, and in bad housing. Our information sheet "[Life as an Asylum Seeker](#)" sets out what Lib Dems think.

HOMELESSNESS

A [letter](#) from one of our Council members, about homelessness and destitution for refugees, has been published in The Observer newspaper. It makes the point that 28 days to get out of their accommodation when given leave to remain is not long enough, and 60 days would remove a lot of homelessness. It is of course [Lib Dem policy to do just this](#), and we need to press the case.

POVERTY REPORT

The report of the Special Rapporteur of the UNHCR has been in the news. He found much poverty in the UK, but also found that *"Destitution is built into the asylum system. Asylum seekers are banned from working and limited to a derisory level of support that guarantees they will live in poverty. The government promotes work as the solution to poverty, yet refuses to allow this particular group to work. While asylum seekers receive some basic supports such as housing, they are left to make do with an inadequate, poverty-level income of around £5 a day. For those who have no recourse to public funds as a result of their immigration status, the situation can be particularly difficult; such individuals face an increased risk of exploitation and enjoy restricted access to educational opportunities."*

DATA SHARING SUCCESS

Well done to Migrant Rights Network and Liberty for the successful campaign to end data sharing between the NHS and Home Office on patients to aid immigration removal.

A HAPPY STORY TO END WITH

A friend of one of our Council, Syrian refugee Emad Raad, has finally been reunited with his twin brother. They were separated for over a year as Emad made it over the Channel before the wall was built, and his brother was left in Calais. [This is the story](#) and picture.