



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

SUBMISSION TO UKVI FROM LIBERAL DEMOCRATS FOR SEEKERS OF SANCTUARY, ON CONSULTATION ON SERVICE STANDARDS WITHIN ASYLUM OPERATIONS.

- Establish a new dedicated unit for asylum applications, independent of central Government, to improve speed and quality of decision-making.
- Take political influence out of decision-making on applications for visas and sanctuary and move towards a caseworker-model of support for applicants, to seek just outcomes that are right first time. It is no use moving policy-making to different departments if the Home Office retains control of the process of administering and assessing applications.
- Provide better training for staff who deal directly with more vulnerable groups such as victims of torture or trafficking, mentally ill people, pregnant women, children and LGBT+ people. Also ensure that all civil servants working in this role are Executive Officer grade by 2022.
- Train civil service staff better to get decisions right first time, and quickly, with performance targets based on a low level of appeals not refusals, reducing human misery and saving vast amounts of money on costly appeals.
- Propose to re-establish the 6 month maximum target time for asylum claim decisions. All current backlogs that were built up under the former UKBA should be tackled as a priority to give dignity and justice to those who have been waiting for unacceptable amounts of time.
- Change the culture of disbelief that affects all people applying for asylum.
- Actively promote a change of culture, away from the current unfriendly, poor quality approach towards a more normal customer friendly model, where staff see themselves as caseworkers, there to help people navigate the system and provide appropriate support, whatever the outcome of their application. This would be alongside changes in departmental responsibilities for migration policy.
- Move towards a caseworker model in order to encourage a change of culture in evaluating cases. There would also be recruitment drives outside the Civil Service to attract professionals with relevant skills and emotional intelligence from other sectors.
- Ensure that better interpretation and translation services be available at each stage of the process, with safeguards in place to ensure that interpreters and translators dealing with each case have the knowledge of language required. This would ensure a common understanding of the issues, and enable the correct decision to be arrived at more quickly and cost-effectively.
- Use accurate, up-to-date understanding of relevant Country of Origin Information, which must be provided to decision makers.
- Increase reporting locations. Ensure that reporting requirements are proportionate and reasonable - people should not normally have to report more than once a month. Fund travel costs to reporting locations.