

Migrant women must be protected in the Domestic Abuse Bill

The landmark Domestic Abuse Bill is due to be passed by the House of Commons today.

Survivors desperately need the new legal protections and support that this Domestic Abuse Bill will bring.

More than two million people experience domestic abuse every year. Survivors desperately need the new legal protections and support that this Domestic Abuse Bill will bring.

The Conservative Government has been far too slow bringing this legislation forward since they first promised it more than three years ago.

I'm relieved that our cross-party pressure has paid off and the House of Commons will finally have the chance to pass this long-awaited and landmark legislation today.

I'm also delighted that we have succeeded in ensuring that the Bill properly recognises children as victims of domestic abuse.

We must ensure that the Bill protects all survivors of domestic abuse, no matter where they were born.

Liberal Democrats' will continue to try and improve the Bill further.

Among the amendments we will be tabling are two which protect migrant women who experience domestic abuse.

One to grant them leave to remain in the UK and the other to prevent their personal data being shared with the Home Office for immigration enforcement.

We must ensure that the Bill protects all survivors of domestic abuse, no matter where they were born.

Today our cross-party pressure has paid off and the House of Commons will finally have the chance to pass the long-awaited Domestic Abuse Bill.

We are continuing to work to improve the Bill, with amendments to add specific protections for migrant women. <https://t.co/apkmHzUfVi>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [July 6, 2020](#)

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Author:

[Craft our vision for the world after Coronavirus](#)

Coronavirus has changed the world we know in so many ways and has highlighted many problems within British society.

As Liberal Democrats, we've always looked to the future with hope to build a better world – and we want you to be part of crafting our vision for the world after Coronavirus.

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[UK Government must act swiftly on Hong Kong](#)

This new law crushes what was left of the 'one country, two systems' framework.

It destroys Hong Kong as we know it.

The UK government must now act swiftly to uphold the promises we made during the Handover.

The people of Hong Kong must immediately be given the right to live in the UK, with a pathway to citizenship. It is not good enough for this offer to only apply to BNO status holders and their dependents, as the Government have so far suggested. This leaves behind many young Hong Kongers who have been at the centre of the calls for democracy.

This new law destroys Hong Kong as we know it.

The UK government must now pass our Bill to give BNO status holders the right to live in Britain permanently & open the scheme to those born after 1997. <https://t.co/uT2z0sCq5n#StandWithHongKong>

✉ <https://t.co/WxMbVbhHB8>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [June 30, 2020](#)

The Government need to go further. All Hong Kongers must have their rights and freedoms protected, regardless of BNO status.

Liberal Democrats are urging the UK government to ensure that no one is left behind.

It is time to step up and stand with Hong Kong.

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Author:

Immigration Bill: Our fight to prevent another Windrush Scandal

Today, Priti Patel is pushing her damaging Immigration Bill through the House of Commons.

We need a fair immigration system that treats everyone with dignity and respect.

By ending EU free movement, the Conservatives would both make it harder for doctors and nurses to come to work in the NHS and charge them thousands of pounds in fees for the privilege.

They would make it virtually impossible to recruit social care workers from overseas. And they would hurt employers across the UK, just as they are working to recover from the coronavirus crisis.

Meanwhile, they are doing nothing to dismantle the Hostile Environment, which has caused people who have every right to live in the UK to be wrongly denied healthcare, made homeless, detained and even deported – as the appalling Windrush Scandal showed.

We need a fair immigration system that everyone can have confidence in and that treats everyone with dignity and respect.

So Liberal Democrats are opposing the Tories' destructive plans and arguing instead for fair, effective and compassionate fixes to the system.

We have tabled a package of amendments to the Immigration Bill that would:

We are opposing the Conservatives' destructive immigration plans and arguing instead for fair, effective and compassionate fixes to the system.

- **Require the Government to implement the recommendations of the Windrush Lessons Learned Review in full** before ending free movement, including a full review of all Hostile Environment policies.
- **Repeal the Right to Rent scheme**, part of the Hostile Environment under which landlords face up to five years in prison for renting to someone without the necessary immigration status, and which has been proven in court to cause racial discrimination.
- **Give EU citizens living in the UK before Brexit the automatic right to remain** and require the Government to provide them with physical proof of their rights.
- **Repeal the immigration exception in the Data Protection Act**, which enables the Home Office to collect and process personal information from other public bodies – such as schools, the NHS and the police – for the purposes of immigration enforcement without individuals knowing about it.
- **Lift the ban on asylum seekers working** if they have been waiting for the Home Office to decide their claim for more than three months.

We are also supporting cross-party amendments that would:

We owe it to the victims of the Windrush Scandal to ensure that nothing like it ever happens again.

- **End indefinite detention**, which is inhumane, expensive and unnecessary.
- **Protect the rights of unaccompanied child refugees** to be reunited with family members in the UK.
- **Reduce the fee for registering a child as a British citizen** from £1,012 to the actual cost of processing the application.
- **Give visa extensions to all the foreign nationals working in health and social care** during the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Exempt people coming to work in the NHS and social care** from paying the Immigration Health Surcharge.

We owe it to the victims of the Windrush Scandal to ensure that nothing like it ever happens again.

That's why, as Priti Patel pushes ahead with her disastrous plans to end free movement, Liberal Democrats are fighting to end the Hostile Environment and fix the broken immigration system.

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Author:

Armed Forces Day

Every year, I spend this day thinking about my dad who fought in Burma during the Second World War.

Each and every one of us has a connection to the Armed Forces – even if you don't have a family member who served in the past, or who serves now, I can safely say that you will have benefited from the Forces' commitment to our safety.

Just an example from my own constituency during the pandemic: it was the Armed Forces who facilitated effective mobile testing units across the Highlands. I will always be grateful to them for taking care of my local community and the people I represent during these frightful times.

If Coronavirus had not happened I would have spent this week preparing for the second reading of my bill to ringfence NHS spending for veteran mental health services.

As my party's Defence spokesperson, I have tried to ensure that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) do their utmost to support the wellbeing of serving personnel and veterans.

If Coronavirus had not interrupted the parliamentary schedule this year, I would have spent this week preparing for the second reading of my bill to ringfence NHS spending for veteran mental health services.

Between April 2017 and January 2019, the Care Quality Commission rated two out of four MoD mental health centres as inadequate or needing improvement between. There were at least 50% shortfalls in both uniformed and civilian psychiatrist posts in 2017-18. For anyone that is interested about the scale of the funding issue, I would point them towards [this Defence Committee report](#).

Given everything that our Armed Forces have done to support us during the pandemic, I think we are more united than ever as a country in recognising their value. Making sure the MoD is providing the best support possible for serving personnel, veterans, and their families is a big part of saying thank you. It is not enough to salute them today. We must act.

But sometimes, identifying the best course of action can be difficult. This brings me to Black Lives Matter.

The movement continues to teach me a lot – and sometimes what it has to teach me is uncomfortable! – but I am grateful, nonetheless. One of the most important lessons for me is that listening is everything.

We have no hope in hell of determining what the ‘right action’ is if we don’t listen!

With this in mind, I asked the MoD for a breakdown on the number of reported complaints of racist incidents in the Armed Forces between 2015 and 2020.

On the 23rd of June they got back to me. They said they couldn’t give me that data. Johnny Mercer, the relevant Minister, said in his reply that the Department was “working to improve its data capture of all unacceptable behaviour”.

It is blindingly obvious to me that in order to tackle racism in the Armed Forces, and to support BAME personnel, the MoD must be better at actually understanding how racism functions within its ranks. If the MoD does not capture this data, what does that say about how well it is listening to complainants? What does it say about how they are trying to make things better? If they haven’t got all the evidence at their fingertips to inform their strategy to tackle racism going forward, then there is clearly an awful long way to go.

We need to understand the impact that Coronavirus has had, and is having, on the Armed Forces

I note that in May 2020, Help for Heroes conducted a study of veterans, service personnel and their families about the impact of Coronavirus on their mental health – they identified a 50% increase in those saying they are not managing their mental health well compared to before the pandemic. A month after Help For Heroes published this data, the Government announced that they would launch a “new study to understand the effect of coronavirus” on the UK’s veteran community.

We need these studies. We need to understand the impact that Coronavirus has had, and is having, on the Armed Forces – whether they are currently serving or are veterans. For that reason, I welcome the Government’s action on this wholeheartedly.

But it does beg the question: if the MoD are able to set up a study on the impact of COVID-19 as quickly as they have, can they not do the same for incidents of racism?

The Black Lives Matter movement is a constant reminder that racism remains an emergency to be addressed. Unless the MoD starts getting this data in order and using it to inform its strategy to tackle racism going forward, then I fear for what that says to our Armed Forces and anyone who wants to join up. I am not saying the MoD has no ears – it has made huge strides in making the Armed Forces a diverse and welcoming vocation opportunity, but it isn’t able to tell me how many reported incidents of racism it has had in the last five

years.

So, what's my ask on Armed Forces Day? It's that we go above and beyond to support *all* personnel, serving or not, in their ability to access specific and tailored mental health support; it's that we treat racism amongst the ranks as an emergency; and that it's a Force that listens. A Force that listens and then acts based on the evidence.

A Force that truly values everyone that serves it.

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Author: