

Compassion and dignity for seekers of sanctuary

World Refugee Day is an important reminder that we must do all we can to protect people forced to flee their homes to escape war and persecution.

People who've come to the UK having fled war or persecution should be welcomed with compassion and enabled to contribute to our society.

The UK has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those in need, but now the Conservative Government is turning its back on refugees and failing to live up to our obligations to them.

The Government has closed the Dubs scheme for child refugees and is ending the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, but hasn't announced details of what will replace them.

In the Brexit negotiations, the Government is seeking to end the UK's mandatory obligation to reunite unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with their families. Unlike every EU country except Denmark, the UK does not allow unaccompanied child refugees to sponsor family members to join them.

Thousands of asylum seekers are forced to wait many months for a decision, unable to work, rent a home or support their families.

Asylum seekers are forced to rely on just £5.39 a day. The Government has announced that it will raise it by a miserly 26p a day – not nearly enough, especially during the coronavirus pandemic.

Too many people are wrongly denied asylum, with 40% of refusals overturned on appeal. LGBT+ applicants face particular hostility, with far too many denied asylum because officials assume that they are lying about who they are.

The government must not turn its back on the children who need us now. ↓ [#RefugeeWeek](https://t.co/yXvxazl2kG)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [June 16, 2020](#)

People who've come to the UK having fled war or persecution should be welcomed with compassion and enabled to contribute to our society, not met with disbelief or trapped in poverty.

That's why Liberal Democrats are calling on the Government to:

- Set out a new long-term commitment to continue providing sanctuary to vulnerable refugees in the UK, including resettling 10,000 refugee children from elsewhere in Europe over the next 10 years.
- Guarantee continued rights for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe to be reunited with family members in the UK.
- Support Liberal Democrat peer Sally Hamwee's Bill to expand family reunion rights so that unaccompanied child refugees in the UK can sponsor close family members to join them.
- Give asylum seekers the right to work three months after they have applied, enabling them to work in any role so that they can support themselves, integrate in their communities and contribute through taxation.
- Give asylum seekers an extra £20 a week in asylum support during the coronavirus crisis, in line with the emergency increase in Universal Credit.
- Move asylum policymaking out of the discredited Home Office and into the Department for International Development, and establish a dedicated unit to improve the speed and quality of asylum decision-making.
- Offer asylum to people fleeing the risk of violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identification, end the culture of disbelief for LGBT+ asylum seekers and never refuse an LGBT+ applicant on the basis that they could be discreet.

The government must not turn its back on those who need us now. Liberal Democrats will keep fighting to protect refugees.

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Author:

Introducing our online conference!

One of the defining features of the Liberal Democrats is that we have a democratic conference with one member, one vote. We discuss and debate policy together and party officers and Parliamentarians are held to account.

In these extraordinary times, however, we are having to change the way we work as a party.

Conference will take place from 25th to 28th September

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has meant that we have had to cancel our physical conferences for Spring and Autumn 2020. That does not mean, however, that we have to suspend our internal democracy.

To that end, **Autumn Conference will be taking place online this Autumn.** We will have the same sort of sessions that we usually have and we hope to replicate as much of the conference experience as possible.

Conference will take place from 25th to 28th September. The exact timings will be confirmed once the Conference Committee has selected the agenda in mid-July.

We are delighted to have partnered with Hopin, a professional conferencing platform, to bring you our Autumn Conference. [You can find out more about Hopin and how the online conference will look here.](#) In order to access conference, you will need a computer, smart phone, or tablet. **That's all.**

This video describes a generic Hopin event. For our Federal Conference, Hopin will be customised. You will see the usual party logo and colours, the terminology will be familiar because we will be using the terms, 'fringe', 'training', 'auditorium' and 'exhibition' to describe the different parts of our conference. We have highlighted this video because we thought you would like an introduction to Hopin as early as possible. We will be running other training events to get you used to the system as conference approaches.

Hopin will recreate our auditorium virtually and it has a voting system that will allow us to hold the debates that we are used to.

Submit a motion for conference here: libdems.org.uk/submit-motions

There will be a virtual exhibition as well as training and fringe meetings.

We are presently calling for motions for conference. You can submit a motion in the usual way here: www.libdems.org.uk/submit-motions. The deadline is the same announced before, 1pm, 1st July 2020.

We are working hard to make sure that registration opens in the coming weeks.

We will also be taking bookings for virtual fringe meetings and exhibition stalls. If you would like to discuss that, please contact Wilma Robinson: Wilma.robinson@libdems.org.uk for commercial and charity bookings or Isabelle Pucher: Isabelle.pucher@libdems.org.uk for party bodies.

We are really excited about conference. This will be a new way to meet, debate and engage with each other. We hope to see you (virtually) in September!

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Author:

[The Prime Minister must think again on abolishing UK Aid.](#)

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced that the Foreign Office and Department for International Development are set to merge.

By working internationally we can achieve so much more than we can alone.

The Liberal Democrats have always made absolutely clear our unequivocal support for Britain's role as a world leader in providing aid to those most in need.

UK aid prevents suffering. By working internationally we can achieve so much more than we can alone.

It was the Liberal Democrats who enshrined the 0.7% aid commitment into UK law. This is a commitment the UK should be proud to uphold.

Yet Boris Johnson's decision threatens to undermine that commitment, and with it our global influence.

By working internationally we can achieve so much more than we can alone. – [@Wera_Hobhouse](#)

The government must rethink scrapping DFID. †
pic.twitter.com/X77u1VurZt

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [June 16, 2020](#)

It is no surprise three former Prime Ministers have condemned this move.

Boris Johnson has wanted to use the 0.7% for international aid for his own political projects ever since entering government.

This decision shows the extent of the Prime Minister's determination to see the UK turn its back on the world. The Prime Minister should think again.

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Author:

The Prime Minister must not turn his back on child refugees

The UK has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those in need, but now the Conservative Government is turning its back on child refugees and failing to live up to our obligations to them.

That's why over 40 Liberal Democrat parliamentarians have signed letter to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, urging them to uphold the UK's proud tradition of providing sanctuary to unaccompanied refugee children from elsewhere in Europe and to deliver on the Government's commitment to continue reuniting unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from across the EU with their families in the UK.

Provide sanctuary to unaccompanied refugee children

The government must not to turn their backs on the children who need us now.

Providing refugees with safe and legal routes to sanctuary in the UK is also the best way to combat people smuggling and human trafficking, and to prevent people from making dangerous attempts to cross the Channel.

Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the "Dubs amendment") has been a lifeline for the 480 children resettled under it, offering them a safe home and hope for the future.

However, the Lord Dubs' original amendment called for the Government to resettle 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children – and it is heart-breaking to think of the children who have been left behind.

We are urging the government not to turn their backs on the children who need us now, and to make a new commitment to resettle 10,000 unaccompanied refugee children from elsewhere in Europe over the next ten years.

Reunite unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with their families

The government must reunite unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with their families.

We are also deeply concerned about the Government's proposals for refugee family reunion in negotiations over the UK's future relationship with the EU.

The Government's draft working text for an agreement with the EU would end the UK's mandatory obligation to reunite unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with their families.

That would have terrible consequences: leaving hundreds more child refugees separated from their families and without a safe home, pushing more desperate people into the hands of people smugglers and human traffickers, and leading to more perilous attempts to cross the Channel in small boats.

We are therefore urging the government to change their negotiating position to match previous commitments to maintain refugee family reunion rights after the transition period.

The UK has a proud history of providing sanctuary to those in need. The government must uphold this important British tradition.

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Author:

Government must not use new commission to avoid tackling racism straight away

Yesterday the Government announced it would undertake a cross-governmental commission to address the inequalities that BAME communities face.

It is vital that the commission has full representation from across different BAME communities.

The Liberal Democrats have joined with BAME communities in calling for a government-wide race equality strategy, so this commission is a welcome first step.

It shows that the Black Lives Matter protests are working, and that is to the credit of everyone who has raised their voices against racial injustice since the appalling killing of George Floyd.

To be successful, this commission must be wide-ranging, far-reaching as well as truly cross-departmental and cross-party.

It is also absolutely vital that the commission has full representation from across different BAME communities.

Its findings must not become simply another report on a shelf in Whitehall – the Government must implement them without delay.

The government must not use this commission to avoid tackling racism & injustice right now.

There are measures they could take now such as scrapping their hostile environment policies or suspicion-less stop & search, that would begin to heal inequality. <https://t.co/80dXm1YZwa>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [June 15, 2020](#)

Responding to the announcement, our Equalities Spokesperson Christine Jardine said:

“Conservative Ministers must not use this commission to avoid tackling racism and injustice right now.

There are measures they could take tomorrow, such as scrapping their Hostile Environment policies or suspicion-less Stop and Search, that would begin to heal the divides and achieve true justice for BAME communities.”

Too many people’s lives are blighted by discrimination, inequality and injustice. The Government must move further and faster to redress institutional racism in the criminal justice system and many other parts of our society.

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Author: