

**Liberal Democrats Policy Consultation**

# **Immigration, Asylum and Identity**

**Consultation Paper 115**



## Background

This consultation paper is presented as the first stage in the development of new Party policy in relation to Immigration, Asylum and Identity. It does not represent agreed Party policy. It is designed to stimulate debate and discussion within the Party and outside; based on the response generated and on the deliberations of the working group a full Immigration, Asylum and Identity policy paper will be drawn up and presented to Spring Conference for debate.

The paper has been drawn up by a working group appointed by the Federal Policy Committee and chaired by Sir Andrew Stunell MP. Members of the group are prepared to speak on the paper to outside bodies and to discussion meetings organised within the Party.

Comments on the paper, and requests for speakers, should be addressed to: Robert Craig, Policy Unit, Liberal Democrats, 8-10 Great George Street, London, SW1P 3AE. Email: robert.craig@libdems.org.uk

Comments should reach us as soon as possible, and no later than 11<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

Federal Policy Consultation Paper No. 115 © August 2013

*Published by the Policy Unit, Liberal Democrats, 8-10 Great George Street, London SW1P 3AE.*

*Layout and Design by Christian Moon.*

ISBN: 978-1-907046-80-3

Printed by Sarum Colourview, 23-24 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8ND



### **The cost of not choosing our greener options**

Every year for Conference, we spend around **£30,000** and use over **2 tonnes** of FSC® recycled paper on printing copies of agendas, directories, policy papers, and reports to conference.

Hundred of our members are already selecting our Green Pack and our online-only options.

Why not join them next time and get your papers digitally at:

[http://www.libdems.org.uk/autumn\\_conference\\_papers.aspx](http://www.libdems.org.uk/autumn_conference_papers.aspx)

# Contents

<b>Context.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Student and Academic Migration .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Employment and Economic Migration .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Family Migration .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Getting the Basics Right after UKBA .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Preventing and Returning 'Overstayers' .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Asylum Seekers and Refugees .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Sticking Together in Tough Times: Identity and Social Cohesion.....</b>	<b>20</b>

# Context

## 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The policy working group *Immigration, Asylum & Identity* aims to craft a practical, liberal policy which rebuilds public confidence in an immigration system that should be robust, efficient, and fair.

1.1.2 This consultation paper focuses on the future of migration as it affects the UK, the operation of the asylum process in the context of our obligations under international law, and the integration of immigrant communities and new citizens in the United Kingdom. It does so in a context where polling evidence shows that over the last couple of years the general public has consistently put 'Immigration' near the top of their concerns, often second only to the economy. We want to make it clear that whilst 'asylum' is part of this policy review, it is a human rights issue.

1.1.3 The group will also focus on policies to help both new and existing migrants integrate and engage with the host communities around them, and play an active and positive part in the economic and social fabric of our wider society.

## 1.2 The Bigger Picture

1.2.1 Migration to and from the United Kingdom, and within it, has been of fundamental importance in shaping our country for hundreds of years. Migrants have hugely enriched our economy, our language, our culture and our society generation after generation. Conversely those many Britons who left carved out new nations, and in this generation thousands are going overseas to study, to retire, or to build careers world-wide. There are currently more British-born people living overseas than there are foreign-born people living in Britain.

1.2.2 Our country, its economy, and its world-view would be severely diminished without that energetic ebb and flow of human resources, experiences and cultures.

1.2.3 At the European level that benefit is clearly acknowledged in the aim to establish the 'free movement of trade and people' as a fundamental objective of the EU, designed to enhance prosperity for all.

1.2.4 Despite this very positive 'macro' picture, there have always been pressures and tensions associated with any migration at the 'micro' level, and it would be naïve to suggest otherwise. Current public concerns are real, and have doubtless been fed by high levels of misinformation, but also by chronic failure of governments to deliver on promises made, or to put in place resilient and effective mechanisms for measuring and managing migrant traffic.

1.2.5 There has been a breakdown in public trust, the credibility of the migration control machinery is very low, and the general public's belief in any existing statistics is virtually nil.

1.2.6 It is therefore now the task of policy-makers to rebuild that trust and to put in place robust means to regulate migration and deliver on service provision so that the benefits in real terms clearly outweigh the costs, and that both the host community and those who come can have real assurance that their concerns are being heard and their interests are being safeguarded.

## 1.3 Patterns of Migration

1.3.1 A person is commonly said to have ‘migrated’ if they have been resident in the host country for more than 12 months. Migration is generated by a wide range of different circumstances, each of which poses distinct practical and political questions and requires its own set of policy responses.

### ***Student and academic migration***

Last year 200,000 study visas were issued.

**See Chapter Two** for fact file and consultation questions.

### ***Employment and economic migration***

Last year 173,000 work visas were issued.

**See Chapter Three** for fact file and consultation questions.

### ***Family migration***

Last year 228,000 family and dependents’ visas were issued.

**See Chapter Four** for fact file and consultation questions.

Although migration from EEA countries is not included in any of these figures we have included some questions relating to EEA migration in the consultation sections.

### ***Asylum seekers and refugees***

Last year there were 21,000 new applications for asylum.

**See Part 7** for fact file and consultation questions.

### ***Overstayers***

This includes those who have overstayed a legitimate visit to the UK, or whose circumstances no longer match their visa, together with those who previously entered illegally. Estimates of this stock are uncertain but generally large, in the order of 600,000.

In the UK context there is public perception that many people who should have left the country remain in residence. The majority of these are overstayers, who have come on student or visitor visas. There are also a lesser number whose asylum claims have been refused. **See Chapter Six** for fact file and consultation questions.

1.3.2 The consultation questions overall are intended to identify the scale of the challenges created by each type of migration, and open a discussion on the range of possible responses that will be needed to deliver a sustainable outcome overall.

## 1.4 Existing Liberal Democrat Policies

1.4.1 Policy paper 86 *Security and Liberty in a Globalised World* (2008), policy paper 92 *Thriving in Globalised World* and policy paper 105 *Sustainable Prosperity and Jobs* (2012) as well as the Party’s 2010 Election Manifesto contained a wide range of migration-related policies.

1.4.2 Since the General Election the Liberal Democrats have had substantial success as part of the Coalition Government in implementing some of our policies relating to migration, for example

ending routine detention of children for immigration purposes. Perhaps less obvious has been the change created by 'localising' policy on social cohesion as set out in the DCLG paper *Creating the Conditions for Integration* (February 2012).

1.4.3 However alongside this there have been significant developments in the wider international and national context, to which the Coalition Government has made a variety of policy responses.

1.4.4 The Queen's Speech in May 2013 gave notice of a new Immigration Bill, to be published later in the year. This will set a new baseline from which any new policy proposals will need to build. Key features of the proposed Bill are still subject to agreement, but could include:

- New validation requirements before non-UK citizens receive various public services.
- Tighter rules on eligibility for access to benefits and services for migrants.
- New proposals for the running and management of the visa and migration control systems.

## 1.5 Moving forward to 2015

1.5.1 All of this makes it right to review existing policy, and to draw up relevant proposals that the Party should put to the electorate at the next General Election and that an incoming Liberal Democrat government would then want to implement beyond 2015. This consultation paper aims to identify the key issues and the key questions to which Liberal Democrat policy-makers must provide answers. We have done so by reference to the categories of migration set out in 1.3 above. Each is distinct, but it is also necessary for the full range of responses to be internally consistent, proportionate and workable, with a perception of fairness both to migrants and migrant communities, and to the host community.

1.5.2 As a starting point it is worth addressing some over-arching questions:

1. *What do we mean by a sustainable migration policy, and what would it look like?*
2. *Is there an optimal level of NET migration for the UK, and if so what is it?*
3. *In what ways has immigration benefitted the UK in terms of society and the economy, and in what ways has it damaged it?*
4. *Are the separate categories of migration the right ones for policy-making? For instance is there a case for tourism being treated differently?*
5. *How should national and local governments balance respecting differences between different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds and promoting community cohesion and integration?*
6. *Do you consider it unfair that migrants can gain immediate access to some public services, having never made a contribution through National Insurance? If so, how would you tackle this?*

## 1.6 Getting the Basics Right: the Mechanics of the System

1.6.1 Long-term and severe criticism of the formal immigration system and its administration has come from every source: applicants and their advocates, the general public, the media, employers, universities, and a stream of Home Secretaries and Governments. Crucial to future good management of migration policy, and any chance of restoring a public perception of its integrity will be the accountability, structure and organisation of UKBA's successor bodies.

1.6.2 The Coalition Government has announced its intentions to restructure the mechanics of the system and has ended UKBA's agency status, returning accountability directly to the Home Secretary again.

1.6.3 We have taken evidence widely on how the fuller reform should proceed, and now present some options for consideration in the consultation. **See Chapter Five** for factfile and consultation questions.

## 1.7 Sticking Together in Tough Times: Promoting Social Cohesion

1.7.1 Social cohesion can be an elusive concept. It is something you can recognise when you see it, but can be challenging to describe. It certainly is not value-free, and the partners in the Coalition Government have expressed quite contrasting views on how it is to be seen.

1.7.2 The Working Party has taken evidence which shows that developing effective policies to promote successful long-term social cohesion is not primarily about having a fair and workable system of migration management. Indeed building a community's cohesion and social capital can be just as much a challenge for non-migrant, and long-established communities as for new-comers. The evidence shows that factors beyond migration policy are more relevant to developing strong local communities, in particular access to good education, jobs, and housing.

1.7.3 Nevertheless it is clear that having a visibly working migration system that has a large measure of public acceptance will be important in building consensus around policies designed to build social cohesion.

1.7.4 Our consideration of policy options on *Identity and Social Cohesion* therefore follows on from our work on migration, but is intended to stand separate from it. **See Chapter Eight.**

## 1.8 Next Steps

1.8.1 In the light of the responses this report generates, more detailed proposals will be drawn up for consideration at the party conference in Spring 2014.

## Student and Academic Migration

2.1 Higher Education is one of the UK's most successful export markets. Students travelling to the United Kingdom to study were worth an estimated £7.9 bn in 2009. That figure is projected to rise to £17 bn by 2025 (BIS figures). In addition in their later careers there are further substantial but unquantified benefits to the UK not just from graduates' familiarity with and use of British practice and products when working in their home countries, but also as export ambassadors for UK firms who employ them here. This is why Lib Dems support the proposals in Julian Huppert's paper (Developing a future: Policies for Science & Research; July 2012) to allow foreign graduates from UK universities to stay in the UK for at least three years. This policy will also increase the attractiveness of the UK as a destination for foreign students. In some sectors, such as medicine they fill vital gaps in UK provision: there are 40,000 foreign-born doctors and 58,000 foreign-born nurses at work in the NHS.

2.2 Clearly student migration is beneficial to the UK economy, and there is indeed fierce international competition to recruit students by countries such as the USA and Australia as a consequence.

2.3 However, legitimate concerns associated with student migration do exist. They revolve around abuse of the student visa system to by-pass entry controls, the role of bogus and unaccredited colleges, and overstayers who fail to comply with visa conditions after study.

2.4 The Coalition Government has done much already to address and deal effectively with the bogus colleges problem, and UK academic and learning standards are internationally recognised as high. But it is important that in curbing abuses the UK does not make studying in the UK less attractive to international students and therefore damage this vital export market.

### Student Migration Factfile

- **197,000** migrants arrived to study in the year June 2012, lower than **239,000** the previous year.
- **Study remains the most common reason stated for migration.**
- In the year to Dec 2012, there were **209,804** visas issued for the purpose of study (excluding student visitors), a fall of **20%** compared with previous 12 months.
- Sponsored visa applications fell **22%**, with a **3%** increase for the university sector and falls of **62%**, **69%** and **14%** for further education, English Language schools and independent schools, respectively.

### Questions

7. *Should there be a limit on the number of students from abroad? If so what should it be?*
8. *If a net migration target is set, should students be included in it?*
9. *What measures should the government use to more effectively deal with colleges who flout immigration rules?*

10. *Does more still need to be done to deal with bogus or non-accredited colleges?*
11. *What restrictions, if any, should there be on students staying on after their course has finished?*
12. *How can we best identify home-based graduate shortages, and ensure we fill the gaps (e.g.: doctors)? What measures could we introduce to more effectively deal with this?*

## Employment and Economic Migration

3.1 The Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) points out that economic migration is beneficial to the UK economy, estimating that a net migration rate of 250,000 per year boosts annual GDP by 0.5%. They also estimate that if net migration were to stop tomorrow the UK's net public sector debt would rise by £18bn in five years (equivalent to a 5p rise in income tax).

3.2 However, some members of the general public see migrants as more of a burden on the state than a benefit. There is a perception amongst some people that migrants place a heavy extra load on public services like housing, schools and the NHS without ever having contributed to these services through taxes like National Insurance. With UK unemployment at over 2.5 million there is resentment at the idea of migrants coming to work here at all. In practice there is no correlation between areas of high unemployment and high migrant settlement, but the pressure on public services is real.

3.3 An effective policy package therefore needs both to fulfil the demands of the UK economy whilst ensuring that people already living in communities affected by migration have faith that the system is fair. It must also recognise and allocate resources to meet any identifiable additional public service pressures. As Liberal Democrats we are committed to building a stronger economy and a fairer society, and it is this balance that needs to be struck when developing our immigration policy.

### Economic Migration Factfile

- In the year to June 2012: **173,000** people were issued with visas **to** enter the UK for work (**down** from 194,000 in previous year) from non-EEA countries.
- In the year to June 2012: **83,000** people emigrated **from** the UK for work (**up** from 70,000 in previous year).
- So **net** economic migration was 90,000 (down from 124,000 in previous year).
- Unlike Germany and Belgium, there is no system for recording migrant flows from and to EEA countries (other than Bulgaria and Romania until December 2013).
- There are strict limits to the number of skilled non-EEA workers admitted. The rules have been tightened periodically, and the main current limits (May 2013) are:
  - **Tier 2:** General visas (skilled non-EEA workers **with a firm job offer**) - **20,700** visas p.a. limit, undersubscribed this year. Any entry **without a job offer** is now **closed**. Skilled migrants qualified under Tier 2 now have to be earning £35,000+ p.a. to be eligible for permanent settlement.
  - **Tier 1:** Exceptional Talent (scientists, academics & artists of international repute) - 1,000 visas p.a. Graduate Entrepreneur (world class innovative ideas/skills) - 900 places, international graduates; 1,000, MBA graduates; 100 places for UKTI students.
  - **Entrepreneur & Investor visas:** eligibility criteria has been **relaxed** to encourage more to come to UK to set up businesses.
  - Migrant **Domestic Workers** are no longer eligible for permanent settlement. Maximum stay of six months.

Questions

13. *How can we convey the benefits to the UK of economic migration?*
14. *How can we maximise the benefits of economic growth via migration and minimise the pressure on public services via migration?*
15. *What can or should be done to reduce uncertainty over workforce planning and public service provision caused by unmeasured EEA migration?*
16. *Should any of the rules on migrants' professional skills, pay levels, language proficiency or absolute numbers of visas be changed? If so, in what ways?*
17. *How can skill-deficits in the host workforce be identified and addressed to reduce the demand for migrants? Is anything extra needed to prevent undercutting of local pay and conditions by migrants?*
18. *Would allocating visas on a regional points-based system depending on the local availability of public services and housing be either feasible or desirable?*

## Family Migration

4.1 'Family' migration may arise in a variety of ways, for example:

- People who have gained permission to work or study in the UK may seek to bring spouses and family members with them.
- First generation established migrants might seek permanence and wish to bring family members to join them (typically their parents).
- Some people from long established minority communities look to their country (or even village) of origin for spouses.
- A spouse or partner overseas often seeks to join or accompany their partner with UK citizenship in Britain.

4.2 These may not always be distinct categories, but do illustrate the wide range of circumstances that any policy designed to exercise humane restraint on inward migration must account for.

4.3 And on top of all that there are many cases of relatives seeking to visit families based in the UK and then planning to return home after a short stay, e.g. for a family event.

4.4 Liberal Democrats will want to make sure that the rules governing the right to family life are fully recognised and properly applied whatever the origins of the applicants may be, applications from Bangladesh should receive the same high standard of service as those from the USA.

4.5 The recent introduction of stiffer financial and language thresholds looks likely (and is intended) to produce some quite substantial changes to family migrant flows. We will need to take stock of how to balance the impact of such changes on the family against the assumed benefits to the social cohesion of local communities.

### Family Migration Factfile

#### Year ending March 2011/12 statistics:

- **45,000** entry clearance visas issued via **family** route. Down 16% from 53,000 in 2010/11.
- In addition, **44,000 workers'** dependants, **20,000 students'** dependants and **13,000 other** dependants, total **77,000 dependants** were given entry clearance.
- Family formation and reunion grants of settlement issued were 49,000. Down by 19% from 60,000 in 2010/12.
- **The total number of 'new' entry clearances granted last year was 228,000.**
- **Extensions** to stay were granted to 17,000 on the **family** route, **37,000 workers'** dependants, **13,000 students'** dependants and **7,000 other** dependants.<sup>1</sup>
- **The total number of extensions to existing clearances granted last year was 74,000.**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-january-to-march-2012--2/immigration-statistics-january-to-march-2012>

- The current minimum earning threshold for a sponsor wishing to bring a spouse to the United Kingdom is **£18,600**. This was the lowest recommendation given to the Government by the Migration Advisory Council and represents the estimated salary at which a couple would no longer be eligible for state benefits.
- There is a further increase of **£3,800** for the first non-British child, and **£2,400** for each non-British child after that.
- There is an alternative route, similar to the above but based on savings.
- **There is no minimum income requirement for sponsoring adult or elderly dependent relatives who wish to settle in the UK.** However narrower eligibility criteria have been introduced for these visas - only close relatives with a need for long-term personal care are now eligible.

### Questions

19. *Is all family migration equal? If not, what types are priorities for support? E.g. spouses, children, parents, grandparents?*
20. *Should the rules be more relaxed about the family members of rich or highly skilled workers, provided the net benefits to UK plc are clear?*
21. *Should we retain the financial rules a sponsor currently has to abide by to bring over a family member? If so, should they be higher or lower than now? Or differentiated by applicant status or country of origin?*
22. *What restrictions should there be on British citizens' ability to have their parents come and live in the UK with them?*
23. *Is there a better way of deciding outcomes for short-term family visits? Should a 'bond' or 'deposit' system be an option?*

## Getting the Basics Right after UKBA

5.1 On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013, in a statement to the House of Commons, the Home Secretary announced that she was abolishing the United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA).

5.2 This announcement came following sustained criticism against the organisation, not least from the Home Affairs Select Committee about, amongst other things, its inability to get on top of the backlog of applications, which at the time of its closure stood at more than 310,000 cases.<sup>2</sup>

5.3 The Home Affairs Select Committee found that UKBA had failed to deport more than 600 of the 1,013 foreign prisoners who were released without being considered for deportation between 1999 and 2006. Furthermore, the Committee found that the Agency has still not resolved the entire portfolio of asylum legacy cases first identified in 2006. Its action to tackle the 'overstayers' issue was deemed to be almost completely ineffective. Perhaps worse, it had deliberately obscured its failure behind complex administrative processes.

5.4 Clearly UKBA was not fit for purpose, and the Coalition Government's return of its functions to the Home Office following its closure now provides a foundation for a completely fresh approach.

5.5 The challenge now is to find an organisational structure that can build a culture and teams motivated and resourced to properly police our borders, to get to grips with the ever increasing backlog of cases still waiting for a decision, to improve current decision-making and to install a functioning system of reporting and accountability in which Parliament and the general public can have confidence.

5.6 To achieve that we need a border security system that functions well, and where well-informed and appropriate decisions are taken as early as possible; people are treated with humanity and dignity and the rule of law is upheld.

### UKBA Factfile

- Current 2013 organisations:
  - a) **Border Force** – polices the border immigration and customs functions (airports, sea ports, juxtaposed controls).
  - b) **UK Visas and Immigration** – responsible for handling visa applications to come to the UK, applications to extend a stay in the UK on a temporary and permanent basis, applications for asylum, appeals, correspondence and sponsor management.
  - c) **Immigration Enforcement** – responsible for investigating immigration offences, detaining and removing individuals with no right to be in the UK, preventing abuse of the immigration system.

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2013/mar/26/uk-border-agency-broken-up>

- Basic numbers, 2012 (excluding Border Force):
  - a) Number of FTE UK-based staff – **13,165**.
  - b) Number of FTE Global-based staff – **23,500**.
  - c) Budget (2012-2013) – Resource: **£1001m**.
  - d) Budget (2012-2013) – Capital: **£88m**.
  - e) Generated **£862m** income in **2011-12** from fees paid by foreigners wishing to visit, work, study or settle in the UK.

Questions

24. *How can we improve the standard of initial decision and therefore reduce the number of appeals?*
25. *Is the right amount being spent on training, staffing and equipment to deliver a fit for purpose service? What changes would you make?*
26. *How can we introduce greater accountability and continuity of personnel dealing with a particular case into the system?*
27. *What loopholes exist in the current system of border control that need to be closed?*
28. *How best can the migration control system be made accountable to Parliament?*

## Preventing and Returning 'Overstayers'

6.1 It has been estimated<sup>3</sup> that around 620,000 people have entered the United Kingdom lawfully, and then remained longer than they were legally entitled to, either because their visa expired or their circumstances no longer matched its validity, and their new application to remain has been refused, has never been submitted or remains unresolved. In addition there are those who have evaded entry controls in the first place.

6.2 There are a wide variety of circumstances leading to a person overstaying. However, there is one common factor – none of them have a right to be here and they should be expected to regularise their status or (if necessary, made to) leave.

6.3 Their opportunity to overstay was increased by the woeful failure of previous governments to keep track of people's whereabouts, and the extraordinary inability of UKBA and its predecessors to manage the visa process. Liberal Democrats campaigned hard for the comprehensive re-establishment of exit checks at all ports and airports and this will have been largely achieved by the end of this Parliament. The Coalition Government has also moved to improve visa handling as well. There are questions on the replacement of UKBA in Chapter Five.

6.4 The Deputy Prime Minister has floated some options to reduce the temptation for visa holders to overstay in future, including a possible 'security bond' that would provide a strong financial incentive for people to adhere to the conditions stipulated by their visa. Since then the Home Secretary has announced that a pilot scheme will be launched in November 2013.

6.5 To tackle the estimated backlog of existing overstayers previous Liberal Democrat policy included a controversial proposal to allow any who had been present in the United Kingdom for a period of ten years to qualify for an 'Earned Route to Citizenship'. This was dubbed an 'amnesty' and heavily criticised at the last election as being unfair to all those who, having been refused a visa or an extension, left voluntarily.

### Questions

29. *What approach should be taken towards illegal immigrants and overstayers who have been resident for a number of years? Should we continue with the existing policy of permitting earned citizenship after 20 years?*
30. *How can we improve enforcement procedures? Should we accelerate removals? Would a security bond be an effective safeguard against future overstaying?*
31. *Is the current system of fines for businesses that employ illegal immigrants/overstayers effective in deterring the practice? If not, should the level be raised or are there other policy options you favour?*
32. *Should measures to tackle visa overstayers be targeted at those countries from which most overstayers arrive? Would that unfairly penalise visitors from countries deemed "high risk" or could it offer an opportunity for people from these countries who otherwise wouldn't receive visas to obtain one via the bond?*

---

<sup>3</sup> *Economic impact on the London and UK economy of an earned regularisation of irregular migrants to the UK (LSE/GLA 2009)*

33. *What alternative policy options would be both effective and fair in tackling the backlog of overstayers, and the deterrence of future overstayers?*

# Asylum Seekers and Refugees

7.1 The UK is bound, under the United Nations Convention on Refugees, to admit persons “with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social group or political opinion, who are outside the country of his/her nationality and who are unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country and return to it”.

7.2 21,000 people arrived in the UK last year claiming asylum. The working group is aiming to establish policies on asylum that properly reflect Liberal Democrat values. We have had popular Liberal things to say about this in the past for example a key Liberal Democrat policy in the coalition agreement was ending the detention of children for immigration purposes.

7.3 There is widespread political agreement that the current operation of the asylum system under the Home Office has failed. There is also concern amongst the public that the UK asylum system is out of control.

7.4 In response to these concerns we need to look at better ways of making just and sensible decisions as to whether someone seeking sanctuary can remain here. In this process we need to find ways of establishing which asylum claims are genuine whilst ensuring that people are treated with compassion, humanity and dignity.

## Asylum Fact File

### 2012 Asylum Applications:

- **21,785** applications for asylum, excluding dependants, were made in 2012. **10%** more than in 2011.
- **14,257** asylum applications were still under consideration at the end of 2012, compared with **12,435** the year before.
- Among the EU states the UK had the 13<sup>th</sup> highest number of asylum applications per 1,000 inhabitants.

### 2012 Asylum Decisions:

- **16,918** initial asylum decisions were made in 2012, this was **462** fewer than in 2011.
- **5,139** applicants were granted asylum at initial decision, **30%** of the total.
- **27%** of asylum appeals determined were allowed. There were **8,229** appeals determined, of which **2,192** were allowed.

## Questions

34. *What step should be taken to improve the consistency of decision-making on applications? ‘Fast track’ procedures are designed to cut delay and uncertainty (and costs) but do they risk worse decisions? How can we improve decision-making practice to avoid wrong decisions, and the current level of successful appeals i.e. get it right the first time?*

35. *How can we ensure that people seeking sanctuary (asylum seekers) are treated with dignity and*

*respect? What changes are needed to improve the treatment and support of those at different stages in the process, e.g. awaiting decision, appealing against a refusal, being removed from the UK?*

36. *What circumstances justify indefinite detention, and what are the alternatives to detention?*
37. *Should applicants be 'required to work' or 'allowed to work' with an element of conditionality on their support by public funds?*
38. *What criteria should be used to decide on where asylum seekers live and how should continuity of public service be ensured if they are forced to move, e.g. for pregnant asylum seekers?*
39. *What steps should be taken to ensure public confidence in the refugee programme?*

# Sticking Together in Tough Times: Identity and Social Cohesion

8.1 Recognising the importance of identity and coming up with policies that ensure better social cohesion are both vital parts of any holistic immigration strategy.

8.2 The recent experience of 'identity politics' tends to put people into categories constructed through the census mechanism that force them into essential choices, rather than recognising that people have multiple heritage and multiple ethnic affiliations. Factors such as social class, home environment, financial stability and aspirations all play important roles in forming individuals' identity, not simply one's ethnicity. Our identity is multi-faceted and can change over time, and trying to pigeon-hole each other is not useful, likewise, whilst encouraging integration can be important, integration is not the same as assimilation.

8.3 Integration can take place within a number of spheres without either the majority or minorities giving up or denying their heritage. For example, people can learn English whilst retaining their minority language and British families can adopt minority community practises and celebrations. Virtually all religions are compatible with general British values and all work and educational environments can accommodate different cultural traditions, which engender a sense of 'two-way' integration. We therefore need a much more nuanced approach to integration which recognises that it is multi-level and should therefore not be presented or perceived as a threat to past heritage.

8.4 Many of our communities now contain people and families from a wide mix of ethnic, cultural, religious and class backgrounds. We also need to recognise the risks presented by intergenerational tensions and cultural differences. Even the least diverse neighbourhoods can sometimes struggle to build civic capital and strong local communities. So building community capacity is a necessary next step to social cohesion in very many areas not at all defined by their level of inward migration.

8.5 As Liberal Democrats we approach life in a liberal way, welcoming difference rather than being unduly worried by it, we are reluctant to prescribe policies that dictate to people how they should live their lives and coexist on a local level. However, we are also deeply concerned at the thought that any community should divide either on class or race grounds and become more segregated leading to people living parallel lives.

## Questions

40. *What areas of British life do you feel it is most difficult to adjust to as a newly-arrived migrant? What are the specific barriers to integration? And what works well?*
41. *Can more be done to familiarise people with key public institutions like education and health?*
42. *How do we deal with resentment towards migrants who have access to these services but haven't contributed through National Insurance?*

43. *What are the particular challenges faced by different generations of migrants that are unique to them? Is there anything the Government could do to help overcome these challenges? If so, what?*
44. *What steps can we take to better promote social cohesion?*
45. *What is the best mechanism through which to ensure that all migrants have a good level of English language, and how should we deal with the problems surrounding migrants who stay in the UK indefinitely but don't have a strong grasp of English?*





