

# LDI proposals on immigration

## Principles

- As liberals we should value the freedom to live and work in the country of one's choosing.
- We should value the benefits that this freedom brings to immigrants as well as to the UK
- We must be unafraid to make radical changes to the way that we treat those who seek to make Britain their home

*We have not covered asylum policy in these proposals. We strongly recommend consulting Liberal Democrats For Seekers of Sanctuary (LD4SoS) and we defer to their recommendations.*

## Lessening burdens on immigrants

- Restore free and widely available English lessons
- Cost of citizenship or ILR applications to be equivalent to the cost of a passport
- Abolish the *Life in the UK* test; instead develop resources to help newcomers integrate and deliver these at the time of entry, not five years later
- Extend voting rights to longer-term non-citizen residents
- Abolish (or develop exceptions on compassionate grounds) to rules penalising immigrants for spending time outside the UK; e.g. make ILR a permanent status.
- Ensure that changes in population in an area (whether due to immigration or not) are matched by appropriate changes in provision of public services and housing

## Family life

- Abolish spousal/child income limit. If we accept a person has the right to live here, we must automatically accept their partner and their dependent children.
- No-one should be penalised for marrying an immigrant (e.g. with respect to their benefits eligibility)

## Enforcement

- The longer someone has been living here, the more reluctant we should be to force them to leave. Removing by force someone who has made their home here for any significant length of time is a serious act of violence only justified in exceptional circumstances.
- When someone is found to have irregularities in their situation, efforts should be made to allow them to regularise retrospectively
- No-one should be deported before having been given the opportunity and the resources to appeal the decision in a fair and accessible manner.
- Reconstitute Immigration Enforcement from scratch — possibly as a national police force (*cf.* British Transport Police), with the accountability and oversight that this implies.
- Overhaul detention system (including ending indefinite detention)

- End the “Hostile Environment” practice of requiring teachers, medical staff, landlords, employers etc. to act as informants and enforcers
- Remove the extensive exceptions that put much of the UK’s immigration system outside the scope of the Equality Act 2010, as well as data protection exceptions.

## Work-related admittance

- Just as people who have an offer of studentship for an accredited university are allowed to live and study here, people who have an offer of employment from an accredited employer should be allowed to live and work here.
  - NHS trusts would be the obvious example of employers who should be accredited. Universities, research institutes, and technology companies are some other examples.
  - Accreditation should be conditional on the employer using it reasonably (e.g. not recruiting from overseas before making good-faith efforts to recruit locally)
  - Accreditation could be granted for certain categories of jobs (e.g. by sector, wage, or geographical location) and not for others.
  - This should apply *in addition to* current avenues of immigration
- Students who have completed their course of study here should be granted a reasonable period to find work and be permitted to stay should they find it.

## Immigration and International relations

- With countries where we have reason to believe that migration flow would be roughly symmetrical, we should seek to negotiate bilateral freedom of movement treaties.
- With other countries we should recognize that economic inequality is the main reason for the asymmetry, and take active measures internationally to help abolish that inequality. Liberalising immigration rules may be a part of that effort.