

5 ways we have fought to protect jobs during coronavirus

Throughout this terrible disease, people have not only faced heartbreaking loss of life, but also crushing anxiety over their livelihoods.

Lockdown has been necessary to prevent an even greater catastrophe, but the economic shutdown has thrown millions of people into financial hardship.

Liberal Democrats have been fighting to make sure people do not feel left behind as the country slowly recovers. **We cannot allow this to create a new wave of inequality in Britain**; the damage done to businesses and jobs falls harder on some than others.

Here's how we've been fighting to ensure no one is left behind.

1. Pushing the Government to help the self employed

Back in March, as the Government announced its financial support plans for businesses and employees, there was one group of workers that was conspicuously left out: the self-employed.

Over five million people – cleaners, taxi drivers, hairdressers, builders – all of these people faced tremendous uncertainty with the lockdown, but were not initially included in Rishi Sunak's plans. We spoke out and pushed the Government to go further.

A key Liberal Democrat amendment to the emergency [#CoronavirusBill](#) could help support 5 million self-employed people through this national emergency.

We urge the Government to ensure that no-one is forgotten as this crisis continues. <https://t.co/qwLcXJL84>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 24, 2020](#)

It worked. The Government expanded their offer, and we urged them to move even quicker to ensure that these people had enough to get by throughout the hardest period of lockdown.

2. Fighting for the furlough scheme to be extended

In early May, Rishi Sunak suggested he was hoping to “wind down” the furlough scheme in the coming weeks.

The furlough scheme has been a lifeline for millions of people this year whose employers were shut down or suffering dramatic loss of business.

In fact, it is estimated that the furlough scheme covered around a quarter of all jobs. The fact is that the scheme prevented even greater numbers of redundancies than we have seen – it has been essential in preventing cruel mass unemployment. Yet Rishi Sunak wanted to wind it down prematurely.

That's why we spoke out against his plans and launched our "Safe to Return to Work" scheme that would give people that time and that confidence and help avoid further large-scale job losses.

3. Speaking up for the hardest-hit sectors

The economic turmoil of COVID-19 has not been felt equally across all sectors. That's why we've spoken out for those who are feeling the pinch the hardest.

Take the creative industries.

We enjoy a world-leading creative sector, but without additional support they risk emerging smaller, weaker and with lasting damage.

That's why in July Daisy Cooper called for a package of support to reinvigorate creative industries. Daisy's plan, Power of Creativity: Recovery and Renewal, pushed the Government to take ambitious action to address the specific needs of a vulnerable sector.

4. Standing up for the 3m Excluded

We have heard too many heart-breaking stories from those who have lost their livelihoods as a result of coronavirus and are excluded from the Government's support

Jamie Stone MP

Even now, there are too many people not receiving the help they need.

There are still around 3 million people who are not currently covered by the Government's support.

New starters, newly self-employed people and freelancers all face difficulty getting the help they need.

But these people cannot be left behind as our economy begins to recover – that's why we're campaigning hard to get the Government to go further for the 3 million excluded.

Jamie Stone led the creation of an All-Party Parliamentary Group dedicated to helping these people, and as a party we're going to keep pushing the Government to take action to support these people

5. Calling for an extension of the Brexit transition period

Instead of acting in the national interest, Conservative Ministers have been content to drive the UK towards a disastrous Brexit in the midst of a pandemic.

Refusing to extend the Brexit transition period not only threatens our vital medical supplies during this crisis, but also risks a huge economic hit.

Liberal Democrats have been speaking out against this reckless behaviour from the Government, calling for an extension of the Brexit transition period in order to protect jobs in Britain for those only just recovering from lockdown.

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Author:

[Returning Officer's Ruling 5th August 2020](#)

A complaint has been made about Ed Davey's campaign's conduct in its communication with members as to their voting intentions, specifically that they instructed canvassers not to disclose the identity of the campaign they were actually calling on behalf in calls made on the 11th and 14th of July 2020.

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[Students](#)

Like many young people and students in the early 2000s, I first joined the Liberal Democrats because of Charles Kennedy's brave stance on the invasion of Iraq.

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[Returning Officer's Ruling 31st July 2020](#)

A complaint has been made about Layla Moran's campaign's use of data gathering tools ('Cookies') in their official website.

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[Why we're fighting to give NHS and care staff the right to stay](#)

What are the Liberal Democrats calling for?

We're calling on the Government to grant indefinite leave to remain in the UK – the right to stay – to all foreign nationals currently working in the NHS and social care, and their families.

How many people from other countries work in the NHS and social care?

About 1 in 7 people who work in the NHS are foreign nationals, according to the latest data from NHS digital.

In England alone, that's 171,000 people – including 36,000 doctors, 59,000 nurses and 40,000 clinical support staff.

Meanwhile, figures from Skills for Care show that 1 in 6 of the adult social care workforce in England are foreign nationals: **249,000 care staff**.

As these numbers demonstrate, there are hundreds of thousands of people from other countries on the frontlines of the coronavirus pandemic here in the UK. Like the rest of our wonderful NHS and care staff, they are putting themselves in harm's way to make sure we get the care we need.

Surely they already have the right to stay?

You'd think so, but no.

Some do already have the right to stay, but many others face having to reapply or being forced to leave the UK – some as soon as October.

First, there are the EU citizens (68,000 in the NHS and 115,000 in adult social care in England), most of whom have come to work in the UK thanks to free movement. Under the Conservatives' plans, they will lose that right when free movement ends at the end of 2020. Boris Johnson promised them the automatic right to stay, but has reneged on that – instead forcing them to apply for Settled Status and putting them at risk of a new Windrush-style scandal.

Then there are those from outside the EU (103,000 in the NHS and 134,000 in social care). Many of these are on "Tier 2" general work visas, often lasting for just two or three years at a time. When their visas expire, they will either have to reapply or leave the UK.

So what is the Government doing about this?

The Government has announced a free one-year visa extension for around 3,000 health and care staff with visas due to expire before 1st October.

However, **the Government has excluded many of those on the frontlines**, such as hospital porters, cleaners and social care workers, from this offer. Even those who are included will be forced to renew their visas next year – at a cost of around £700 per person – or leave the country.

And then there are the NHS and care workers whose visas are due to expire after the end of September. The Conservatives are doing nothing for them, which means frontline workers could find themselves being forced to leave the UK as early as October.

That's simply not good enough.

The idea that anyone who has worked so hard to save lives during this emergency might one day be forced to leave should be unthinkable.

What's the solution?

The UK should say, loudly and unequivocally, that those who have put their lives at risk for our country are welcome to live in it.

That's why the Liberal Democrats are fighting to give all NHS and care staff from other countries the right to stay in the UK. The Government should grant them and their families the right to settle here, without the costs or bureaucratic hurdles that usually involves.

This would be a small way to recognise and celebrate the enormous contributions that people from all over the world make to our NHS – and to our society, our economy and our communities more broadly.

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