

# International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – and this year, the importance of this day has been brought into stark focus more than ever before.

The Liberal Democrats will always fight for freedom, fairness and equality for people of all races and ethnicities in the UK.

With the world facing the **biggest public health crisis of the twenty-first century**, what the UK desperately needs are compassionate communities that look after one another, regardless of people's race and background.

While so many stories of kindness are emerging, very sadly this has not been the case for everyone. In recent weeks we have seen a **huge rise in racism against East Asian people** following the **coronavirus** outbreak. Tweets from so-called world leaders such as Donald Trump calling it 'The Chinese virus' adds fuel to the hatred and fear.

In Manchester, there have been reports of racist targeting of Chinese children. In Birmingham and Central London Chinese students were seriously assaulted. Up and down the country, East Asian people have reported being spat at or verbally abused with comments relating to the coronavirus – even East Asian health workers have not escaped this rising tide of hatred.

**The media aren't helping.** Last week I filed a complaint with the BBC over their use of images of Chinese people when reporting on the outbreak, regardless of where in the world they were covering. They aren't the only ones. Newspapers and other outlets have been full of pictures of Chinese and East Asian people in masks, adding to the **fear and prejudice** being shown towards our community.

BBC and Coronavirus reporting. Please do not use images of Chinese people in the backdrop to news reports as it fuels prejudice against the British Chinese community. <https://t.co/T0Dt5QYG31>

– ChineseLibDems (@ChineseLibDems) [March 11, 2020](#)

**Unfortunately, this treatment isn't unusual for ethnic minorities in the UK.**

Since the **EU referendum** in 2016, racism and race-related hate crimes have

been on the rise. The Conservatives' hostile environment policy has made ethnic minority communities in our country fearful. The Windrush scandal and recent high-profile deportations have shown that this government is systematically trying to break apart our diverse communities and sow division.

In recent weeks we have seen a huge rise in racism against East Asian people following the coronavirus outbreak.

If this were to continue then I fear that there will be serious economic consequences with would-be investors and students from East Asia staying away as well as mass social unrest resulting from a recession due to the double whammy of Brexit and Coronavirus.

**As a country, we need to do better.** The Liberal Democrats will always fight for freedom, fairness and equality for people of all races and ethnicities in the UK. Just like I acted throughout my police career to tackle racism and my recent calling out of the BBC for discriminatory reporting, we each need to challenge discrimination wherever we see it. And as Lib Dems, the more of us who add our voices to this cause, the stronger we become.

*Dr George Lee was the 2019 Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate for Westminster North and is a member of the Chinese Liberal Democrats.*

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## [The Weekly Whip](#)

*Welcome to the Weekly Whip. Your one-stop shop for Lib Dem Parliamentary updates, covering the week that was and the week to come.*

*For up to date information from the Lib Dem Whips Office, follow us on Twitter: [@LibWhips](#)*

### **Weekly Whip w/c 16th March**

It has been a strange week in Parliament, as I am sure it has been in all workplaces. The week was broken up by the announcement that employees should be working from home unless they have an explicit reason not to. Most Parliamentary staff are now rightly working from home. Business in the House continues, and we expect it to continue into next week when both Houses will debate the emergency legislation.

## Monday 16th March

The week started with a continuation of the Budget Debate which focused on Public Services. In any normal circumstances, the Budget Debate would have attracted a lot of media attention. However, that morning, Matt Hancock put in a request to make a ministerial statement on COVID-19 which asked people to begin social distancing and working from home.

“The more the government lets the Chief Medical Officer and the scientific experts deliver these [#covid19uk](#) messages to the public, the more I think the public’s confidence and trust will be held up.” – [@EdwardJDavey pic.twitter.com/U8DzrSUZen](#)

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

## Tuesday 17th March

Tuesday continued the theme of huge announcements with the Foreign Secretary recommending against all but essential travel out of the UK. This was part of a wider statement on COVID-19.

Tuesday also saw the conclusion of the Budget Debate which unusually had no divisions and very little interest. The much bigger financial statement in the House was when the Chancellor announced the fiscal stimulus in response to the pandemic.

“People want to know that in the face of this extraordinary [#COVID2019](#) crisis – their livelihoods and businesses are secure. It’s in the government’s power to provide that certainty.” – [@EdwardJDavey](#)

The Liberal Democrats urge the Prime Minister to do so with immediate effect. [pic.twitter.com/3av5GFJfLq](#)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 17, 2020](#)

## Wednesday 18th March

By Midday we had one of the most sparsely attended Prime Minister’s Questions ever. All-Party Whips advised against attending to avoid overcrowding and spreading Covid-19.

Following this, Layla Moran presented her Bill on decriminalising homelessness, through abolishing the Vagrancy Act. Please support her campaign by signing and sharing the petition below.

The homeless may be particularly vulnerable to coronavirus.

The government has a duty of care for rough sleepers, and it should start by scrapping the Vagrancy Act, which criminalises people simply for being homeless. Sign our petition today > <https://t.co/CLNufUkpzb>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 14, 2020](#)

Labour had another of their allocated opposition days. These debates/motions were on statutory sick pay and the protection of workers.

This debate was interrupted by yet another huge announcement from the Government. In an emergency statement from the Education Secretary, it was announced that schools would close from this Friday.

## Thursday 19th March

We began with an Urgent Question on the government's support for employers. Sarah challenged the Government to do more:

The current [#covid19UK](#) financial support measures aren't sufficient for the self-employed, those who are out of work & too many others.

Lib Dems are fighting to ensure the government provides the maximum level of support for those in the least protected positions in our society. <pic.twitter.com/JMAKyM7zZz>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 19, 2020](#)

Priti Patel then made a statement to the House on the Windrush Report. Wendy spoke for us and demanded that there should be no information sharing between the NHS and the Home Office.

The backbench business motions debated on Thursday were on Loan Charges and the future governance of the Post Office. Sir Ed Davey, as the Chair of the All Parliamentary Party Group on the Loan Charge, spoke.

## Looking ahead

As we look ahead to next week, we are expecting to go through all stages for the Coronavirus Bill on Monday. We expect Parliament to become increasingly empty as the week goes on.

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# Safeguarding our children's futures

I hope this message finds you and your loved ones safe and well. What a concerning and worrying time we are in.

My mind boggles with the logistical challenge facing our education system

**Today millions of students are leaving the schools gates for an indefinite period to help halt the spread of the coronavirus.**

Already, many universities have closed their campuses and moved to online teaching.

I was a teacher and member of a senior leadership team. My mind boggles with the logistical challenge facing our education system, especially with nowhere near enough information from the government.

I welcome the news about safeguarding the vulnerable and continuing to teach children of key workers but I want to ensure no one falls through the cracks.

All teachers, parents, guardians and students will experience these closures differently. **Will you take a few minutes to let me know how they're affecting you and your family, as well as anything you think I should raise with the government?**

[Let me know →](#)

Everyone working in our schools deserves our gratitude. I've asked the Government to support supply teachers, who risk losing their entire income. We also need clear advice and resources to be made available to students and their families as soon as possible.

I'm determined to do all I can to safeguard our children's futures alongside our nation's health.

As an MP, I've been trying to strike the right balance between supporting the Government's need to act quickly in a crisis, while raising issues when needed. **But our members have an important part to play as our Party's eyes and ears.**

If you have any experience or concerns regarding the forthcoming school, nursery, sixth form, college and university closures please fill in this form: <https://digitallibdems.typeform.com/to/HJcila>

The more I know about what is happening on the ground, the more I can press for the most vulnerable children and young people to be protected and for the right information to be given to schools and parents.

**I'm determined to do all I can to safeguard our children's futures alongside our nation's health.**

Please look after yourself and one another.

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## **We must ensure the Windrush Scandal can never happen again**

People who have every right to live in the UK were wrongly denied access to NHS treatment, housing and other services simply because they don't have the right documents to prove it. Many were wrongfully detained and even deported.

We need urgent action from the Home Secretary to dismantle the Hostile Environment altogether

**The way the Government has treated the Windrush Generation – as well as other immigrants and people from BAME backgrounds – is shameful.** It is the direct consequence of cruel, discriminatory policies and the toxic culture at the Home Office. Both of those must change.

**This Lessons Learned Review is long overdue,** and reports that Home Office has suppressed some of its criticisms and recommendations are very concerning.

The Government owes it to the victims of the Windrush Scandal to ensure that nothing like it can happen again, and that cannot happen without a transparent and honest assessment of the Home Office's policies and practices.

Another key recommendation from the [#Windrush](#) Lessons Learned Review:

“The department should run a programme of reconciliation events with members of the Windrush generation.”

[pic.twitter.com/ldTAqCdY5p](https://pic.twitter.com/ldTAqCdY5p)

– Isabelle Parasram Liberal Democrat Vice President  
(@IsabelleParasra) [March 19, 2020](#)

Now that the report has finally been published, we need urgent action from the Home Secretary to dismantle the Hostile Environment altogether. That

should begin with repealing the discriminatory 'Right to Rent' law, ending immigration checks and upfront charging in the NHS, and establishing a firewall to prevent public agencies – such as schools, the NHS and the police – from sharing personal information with the Home Office for the purposes of immigration enforcement.

The Government must introduce compassion and common sense into our immigration system.

The Government must introduce compassion and common sense into our immigration system. That means making **detention an absolute last resort**, with a time limit and an end to the detention of vulnerable people.

And it means ending automatic deportations – and stopping altogether the practice of deporting people who came to the UK as children to countries they have never known.

Liberal Democrats celebrate those who choose to come to the UK to work, study or join their families for the enormous contributions they make to our society, our economy and our communities.

**We are fighting for a fair, effective immigration system that treats everyone with dignity and respect.**

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## [The Liberal Democrat Coronavirus Update](#)

**Lib Dems: Govt must act to prevent people falling into destitution**



**Responding to the Prime Minister's most recent update on the coronavirus, Acting Leader of the Liberal Democrats Ed Davey said:**

"People cannot wait any longer for news about what they will have to live on **if they lose their jobs**. Few businesses are in a position to "stand by their workers" when their income stream has **collapsed**. This is about putting food on the table."

The government must act **now** to prevent people falling into destitution. We need to see **grants immediately for struggling small businesses** before they are forced to lay off staff. And we need bold Government action **subsiding workers' salaries** before we see tens of thousands of job losses.

These are difficult and uncertain times. **We are calling on government to act now to give people financial security.**

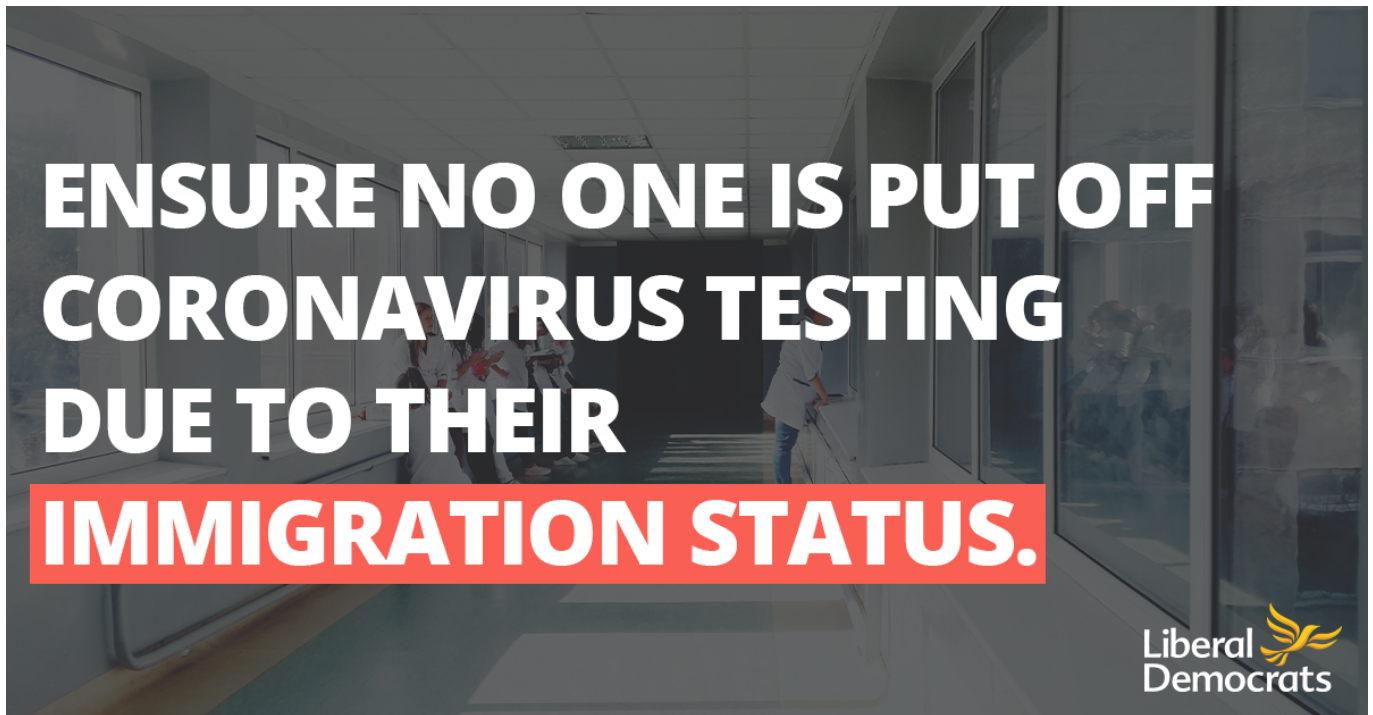
Liberal Democrats want to make sure that everyone gets the help they need as soon as possible throughout this [#covid19UK](#) crisis.

That's why [@EdwardJDavey](#) has called on the government for 4 further financial support measures to help those who are particularly vulnerable. [pic.twitter.com/ngCLTBOGJF](https://pic.twitter.com/ngCLTBOGJF)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 19, 2020](#)

**Lib Dems raise concern over migrants' access to**

## coronavirus testing



Yesterday we called on the government to guarantee that no data will be passed from the NHS to the Home Office during the coronavirus crisis for the sake of public health.

Speaking in the House of Commons yesterday, Wendy Chamberlain MP called on the Home Secretary to make sure that “no one who needs to be tested in relation to Covid 19, or indeed seek treatment, is **put off by uncertainty over their immigration status**”.

Under the hostile environment, there is a real risk that people who find themselves gravely ill with Covid-19 will be **too scared to seek treatment** in case it leads to **questions about their right to live in the UK**. This fear risks putting people off going to hospital for testing, which in turn may lead to **greater transmission** in the wider community.

We've called on the Govt to guarantee that no data will be passed from the NHS to the Home Office during the [#coronacrisis](#) for the sake of public health

“No one should be put off being tested due to uncertainty over their immigration status”-[@wendychambLDhttps://t.co/WmpeP2zgTK](#)

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 20, 2020](#)

The Home Secretary's failure to provide immediate clarity here is deeply troubling. This is purely about what is in the interest of public health, rather than any wider ideology about immigration.

We have urged the government to urgently make clear that, regardless of your

immigration status, if you are seriously ill, go to a hospital. That is the only way to effectively provide **life-saving treatment** to the most unwell, and to **limit the prospect of people transmitting this virus to others**.

## **EU citizens must have automatic right to stay, as Settled Status refusals soar**



We are calling for EU citizens to be given the automatic right to stay in the UK, as new official figures show the number of people refused Settled Status soaring last month.

Yesterday Christine Jardine MP urged the Government to back the Private Members' Bill she tabled last month that would **guarantee the rights of EU citizens in the UK**.

The Home Office statistics, published today, show that **300 applications were refused in February**, after a total of only 7 refusals in the scheme up to the end of January.

They also show that **just 1.7 million of the estimated 3.6 million EU citizens** in the UK have been granted Settled Status so far. A further **1.2 million have only been given the temporary "Pre-Settled Status"**, which forces them to reapply within 5 years. Meanwhile, there is a backlog of **345,000 applications waiting for a decision**.

Even before the [#CoronaCrisis](#), Liberal Democrats warned that tens of thousands of EU citizens will be left without Settled Status when the government's arbitrary deadline hits next year.

It will be a new Windrush Scandal on an even bigger scale. <https://t.co/jas0UeAYcj>

– Liberal Democrats (@LibDems) [March 20, 2020](#)

EU citizens in the UK have been living under a cloud of uncertainty for far too long. They are our families and friends, our colleagues and carers. **They must have the right to stay.**

Even **before the coronavirus crisis**, we were warning that tens of thousands of EU citizens will be left without Settled Status when the Conservative Government's arbitrary deadline hits next year.

That would leave thousands of people effectively undocumented and at risk of eviction, detention and even deportation. It will be a new **Windrush Scandal on an even bigger scale.**

We will keep fighting for the rights of EU citizens. The Government should back our Bill to give them the automatic right to stay in the UK, as Boris Johnson has **repeatedly promised.**

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