

[It's time for young carers to get the support they deserve](#)

As Carers Representative for the Young Liberals, my reaction to the Liberal Democrats' decision to focus on carers has been a mixture of relief, pride, and tentative excitement.

I have been a carer for my mother since 2009, when I was 14 years old.

It's refreshing to see a political party put unpaid carers centre stage, especially after what feels like years of being brushed aside. I'm pleased that the party is focussing on Carers' Allowance in particular, since I've been personally campaigning for its improvement since 2014.

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[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.

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[Boris Johnson's promises to EU citizens are in tatters](#)

Remember all those promises made by Boris Johnson, Priti Patel and Michael Gove to EU citizens living in the UK? That there'd be "no change" to their rights? That they'd be given "absolute certainty" and "automatically be

granted indefinite leave to remain”?

Well, those promises lie in tatters.

Under the new laws passed by the Government, citizens who have applied for Settled Status but not received a decision will lose their rights

The Conservatives are ending free movement on 31st December, and today they are pushing through a piece of legislation to make that happen – under very broad “Henry VIII” powers they awarded themselves in the Immigration Act last month.

After a six-month “grace period”, EU citizens in the UK will see their right to stay taken away at the end of June, unless they have been granted “Settled Status”.

The problem is, **the Home Office’s Settled Status scheme is anything but automatic.** EU citizens have to apply for the right to stay by the arbitrary 30th June deadline. Many are given “Pre-Settled Status”, which only gives them a temporary right to stay.

And under the new laws the Government is has passed, **even EU citizens who have applied for Settled Status but not received a decision yet will lose their rights at the end of June** – a clear breach of the Government’s commitments on citizens’ rights under Article 18 of the Withdrawal Agreement.

The Windrush Scandal should have been the end of the Hostile Environment, but Priti Patel has kept it in full force

No one seriously believes that the Home Office will be able to grant Settled Status to everyone who’s eligible by June.

Thousands will be left effectively undocumented and subject to the Tories’ Hostile Environment.

The Hostile Environment effectively turns teachers, doctors, landlords and bank clerks into border guards. For example, the “Right to Rent” scheme has been proven in court to cause racial discrimination in access to housing.

The appalling Windrush Scandal demonstrated how people who have every right to live in the UK are wrongfully denied healthcare, made homeless, detained and even deported.

It should have been the end of the Hostile Environment, but – despite her apologies – Priti Patel has kept it in full force.

Liberal Democrats voted against this new legislation and will continue our fight for EU citizens to be given the automatic right to stay in the UK. Rather than enlarging the Hostile Environment be extending to the EU

citizens, the Government should be scrapping it altogether.

Europeans who've made their lives here contribute enormously to our economy, our public services and our society. They must not become the victims of a new Windrush-style scandal.

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Author:

[Our human rights are under attack](#)

The Conservatives are at it again. **Trying to strip away the protections that stop governments from trampling on people's rights.**

First, they launched their review of judicial review in the summer. And now – before that one's even finished – they've launched a second review, this time of the Human Rights Act.

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[Local Government brilliance](#)

In reading this report, you may notice a certain similarity with previous reports. That is deliberate and, I hope, welcome. Because a relentless focus on priorities is required to ensure our party best helps people win, taking political power to turn our policies into improvements in people's lives. Trying to do too much means you end up doing nothing much at all.

So I hope regular themes such as the importance of our local government base, the value of investing in technology and the imperative of improving our record on diversity come through repeatedly. Starting off with the first of those...

Award-winning councillors

Many congratulations to our seven Liberal Democrat colleagues who were shortlisted in the Cllr Awards 2020, and especially to Niknam Hussain, Raj Khan and Waheed Raja who jointly won an award:

- Niknam Hussain, Raj Khan and Waheed Raja, Buckinghamshire (collaborative working award) – winners
- John Leech, Manchester (lifetime achievement) – highly commended
- Bridget Smith, South Cambridgeshire (leader of the year) – highly commended
- Mandy McNeil, St Albans (finance and economic development) – shortlisted
- Peter Taylor, Watford (innovation and service transformation) – shortlisted

More brilliance came with Liz Barrett's [fantastic victory](#) in the last round of by-elections for the year meant we ended on a winning note. Through the whole year, [we had the best overall result of any party](#).

Reducing intimidation in public life

The [Jo Cox Foundation](#) and the Committee on Standards in Public Life are promoting cross-party action to reduce intimidation and bullying aimed at those in public life, such as people running for election or in elected office.

As part of this, we have agreed to a cross-party statement on standards expected of parties. It reflects the standards we have already adopted on bullying, harassment and similar behaviour, and so we have been happy to add our voice to it.

We will make sure that we continue to use and improve our new disciplinary system, introduced last year, in order to ensure that the behaviour of our party members contributes towards the improvement in political debate in this country.

A sad reminder of the importance of this comes with the news this week of the [jailing of a Brexit campaign worker for threatening Jo Swinson last year](#).

I would like to thank the hard working volunteers and staff, especially those involved in our complaints and membership systems who dedicate themselves to ensuring that the Liberal Democrats stand, in word and deed, for a better kind of politics.

Implementing the Thornhill Review

The [independent review](#) we commissioned into the 2019 general election has given us a very large list of things to fix in the party. It was, frankly, a stark verdict on how we used to run the party, and all of us involved in running the party at whatever level need to learn the lessons.

One key element is the relationship and relative roles of the party leader, president and CEO. A new set of definitions of the roles, including clarity over where decision making power lies on key points, has now been produced after an extensive series of consultations and discussions. Thank you to all the party members who have responded.

The text to have come out from this will be reported to our spring federal

conference as part of the Board report, that way rightly giving party members the chance to confirm how you wish us to run the party on your behalf.

The Board and Steering Group continue to monitor implementation of the Thornhill Review, and our December Steering Group is looking at whether a form of committee self-appraisals will help committees ensure we are addressing rather than repeating the sorts of governance mistakes set out in the report.

Another element we need to fix is the role of party bodies. These should have a crucial role to play but often feel under-valued and sidelined. The final report from the [Party Body Review Group](#) is therefore also coming to the December meeting with a challenging set of recommendations on how we need to change.

It includes a change I talked about during my President election campaign – finding a way to allow party bodies to recruit new members to the party, getting a flow of income from such recruitment and an ability to contact them. I very much hope we can make that happen.

That meeting will also consider the implementation of the difficult [budget choices](#) we had to take for next year. It's vital that decisions over where to save and where to invest are driven by a properly strategic view of the party's needs and our political opportunities. Without getting into micro-managing the work of staff, there is an important job for the Steering Group in ensuring that the spending and staffing plans match up with priorities. In particular, frontline elections support through an expanded network of field support staff, investing in improving our technology and raising our game on diversity.

On the first of those, thank you to the three state parties, regional parties and ALDC for the way we've all been able to take a much more coordinated approach to getting campaign support staff in place across the country. As a result, there is a much larger network of staff than we'd expect otherwise at this point in the elections cycle.

Given the importance of technology, the Steering Group will be hearing from our new Chief Technology Officer, Duncan Gough, including on how his role fits into the party's governance structures. Technology cuts across so much of what we do, so the proposal includes having one of the Vice Chairs, Elaine Bagshaw, act as the technology project champion on the Board. She has significant experience of managing technology projects in her professional career.

Finally, on diversity we are employing a specialist advisor to help us put together an effective and practical plan. Due to the Black Lives Matter movement, such skills have been in unexpectedly high demand this year. That is overall a good thing, though it has delayed our own ability to get on with this work. The importance of the work remains as high as ever, however.

Improving the way we fill posts in the party

A consistent theme of my work, and that of the Board, through this year has been about improving the way we fill posts in the party. That is important so that we can run the party to the high standards that members rightly expect – and so that we properly bring to life our belief in diversity and equality.

Steps taken so far have included improving the ways we advertise posts, broadening the reach of the adverts and also, where appropriate, highlighting them to relevant external bodies and networks too.

We have also improved the filtering and checking processes so that we better protect both the party – and individuals themselves – against problems when previous behaviour or comments come to light after appointment.

But there is a long way to go, and this will be a major priority for me in 2021. Members have a right to expect quality and potential to trump connections when posts are filled.

Our new Federal Appeals Panel chair

At our autumn conference, members agreed a [new batch of nominations for the Federal Appeals Panel](#). This process included using some of the progress mentioned above, and as a result we had a set of highly qualified names to put forward, many of whose names are relatively unfamiliar to long-time party activists.

The new panel has now elected its chair, David Graham. He is a barrister specialising in public and administrative law, practising at Francis Taylor Building chambers in London. His work mostly relates to planning, licensing, education, highways and other government functions, as well as the governance and procedures of public bodies. This includes interpretation of constitutive documents and the conduct of administrative appeals.

Good luck to David and many thanks to the outgoing chair, Alan Masters.

Changes on the Board

Alison Rouse has been elected the new chair of the English Liberal Democrats, and so will also be joining us on the Board and Steering Group from 1st January. As a result, Prue Bray's time as the English Party's representative on the Board will also come to an end, and so I would like to add my thanks for her contributions to our work.

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