**ASYLUM MATTERS UPDATE ON LIFT THE BAN 04-Feb-2022**

Dear partners

We hope you're all well. Please see below the latest update from the Lift The Ban campaign, including more support in parliament and in the media from across the political spectrum for people seeking asylum to have the right to work.

**If you take just one thing from this email:** we're asking partners to put us in touch with any national businesses which may be willing to back Lift The Ban. See below for further information on our plans!

With thanks as ever for your continued support.

Best wishes

Paul

**House of Lords debate**

Members of the House of Lords from every political background spoke out in support of the right to work yesterday, during a debate on amendments to the UK Government's Nationality and Borders Bill - or anti-refugee bill - currently at committee stage in the House of Lords. Among the many highlights from the debate are:

* Liberal Democrat peer Lords Paddick, who tabled one of the amendments in question and [told the House](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-02-03/debates/9DC6EED3-5277-4E39-B2E5-CE25FEA89DA3/NationalityAndBordersBillhighlight=maryhill#contribution-BD7DA06C-0167-4D51-9A3B-FB29FBD56D58): *"the key to any successful immigration policy is integration, and allowing people to work is key to their integration into society. It also makes them less likely to be exploited, for example by becoming victims of modern slavery."*
* Conservative peer Lord Bethell, [who noted](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-02-03/debates/9DC6EED3-5277-4E39-B2E5-CE25FEA89DA3/NationalityAndBordersBillhighlight=maryhill#contribution-8A59007C-BD0F-4535-9AEB-123C4F17D4F2) the *"overwhelming public support"* for change, and said: *"There is a basic human dignity argument for this policy. I believe that every individual should be able to support themselves and their family."*
* Labour peer Baroness Lister, who highlighted the recent call from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) for a change in approach from the Home Secretary on this subject; and that MAC had noted the Home Office's recent conclusions of its review on the right to work policy contained no evidence to support claims of a pull factor. [She asked](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-02-03/debates/9DC6EED3-5277-4E39-B2E5-CE25FEA89DA3/NationalityAndBordersBillhighlight=maryhill#contribution-28161E08-259B-4436-A3C4-3358A9FF9440): *"In the interests of good policy-making, then, will the Minister now undertake to publish that evidence, because all the evidence that I have seen, including academic studies, does not support the pull-factor argument?"*
* Crossbench peer Baroness Prashar, [who made the case](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-02-03/debates/9DC6EED3-5277-4E39-B2E5-CE25FEA89DA3/NationalityAndBordersBillhighlight=maryhill#contribution-A3340242-8083-459F-A982-5351299DC7CA) that if the ban were lifted and people seeking asylum were allowed to work, "*this would improve family life, give them better prospects for their lives in the UK, and they would be able to rebuild their lives in the UK and eventually integrate better"*

You can [read](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-02-03/debates/9DC6EED3-5277-4E39-B2E5-CE25FEA89DA3/NationalityAndBordersBillhighlight=maryhill#contribution-8F6B9A86-EB64-4A1C-B3A2-4E148E07DB0E) the debate, or [view](https://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/70f779c7-adeb-4d14-986a-553ffb78dafd) it (from 14:00:41). And please share [Refugee Action's twitter thread](https://twitter.com/RefugeeAction/status/1489613119739600899) on the debate!

**Expert by experience testimony in the Lords**

A further highlight from yesterday's session in the House of Lords came with [a powerful intervention from Baroness Lister](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2022-02-03/debates/9DC6EED3-5277-4E39-B2E5-CE25FEA89DA3/NationalityAndBordersBillhighlight=maryhill#contribution-28161E08-259B-4436-A3C4-3358A9FF9440). She referred to the recent online briefing session for peers on the right to work that she attended, hosted by MIN Voices, RAS Voice and other expert by experience campaigners; and read out testimony from some of those who spoke at the event. You can view the video footage and share MIN Voices' [twitter thread](https://twitter.com/Maryhill_IN/status/1489560508126699522).

**Support for LTB in Conservative Home**

The Chair of Surrey Heath Conservatives Richard Robinson has published [an opinion piece on the Conservative Home website](https://www.conservativehome.com/platform/2022/02/richard-robinson-allowing-asylum-seekers-to-work-is-the-most-conservative-of-policies.html), setting out his views on why people seeking asylum having the right to work is common sense, and in line with Conservative values and thinking.

Within the article Mr Robinson highlights strong public support for reform in his own constituency (where the MP is Cabinet minister Michael Gove) with polling showing that 73% of voters back lifting the ban and giving people seeking asylum the right to work.

As well as reading the article in full, we'd urge you to share the [ConHome](https://twitter.com/ConHome/status/1489254980674469890) or [Refugee Action](https://twitter.com/RefugeeAction/status/1489264986576674821) tweets.

**Calling all business contacts!**

We're looking to amplify business voices on their support for lifting the ban, as part of plans to maximise support from across the political spectrum for Baroness Stroud's amendment on the right to work at the next stage of the Bill's passage through the House of Lords.

There are of course already several wonderful and very active, committed businesses and business groups within the Lift The Ban coalition - but we want to identify even more! So we're calling on all Lift The Ban coalition members to let us know if you are able to share any suggestions - please get in touch with us if you have contacts in medium-to-large national companies who may support the right to work. Please contact us at [LiftTheBan@asylummatters.org](mailto:lifttheban@asylummater.org) by no later than the end of February.

(And we're definitely not underestimating the importance of smaller local businesses. Their support is absolutely vital too, and we'll be sharing resources with the Lift The Ban coalition in the weeks ahead to allow partners to capture and build on that support!)

**And there's more...**

* The Refugee Action team has worked on two blogs with the Center for Global Development, a Washington-based organisation that has been writing a series of pieces on refugee labour rights. Do please read and share the blogs, which examine the [current situation on right to work in the UK](https://www.cgdev.org/blog/lifttheban-why-uk-asylum-seekers-dont-have-right-work), and the [impacts of the ban on people seeking asylum](https://www.cgdev.org/blog/lifttheban-impacts-work-ban-uk-asylum-seekers).
* The Daily Mail has highlighted the recent call from the Government's Migration Advisory Committee to lift the ban, [in an article](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10437645/More-12-000-migrants-Britain-waited-ten-years-decision-future.html) on the high numbers of people seeking asylum waiting ever longer for a decision on their protection claim.
* Last but by no means least, the Greater London Assembly has continued to hear further discussion on the right to work, with Lift The Ban champion and Assembly Member Hina Bokhari [pressing the Mayor](https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2022/0302) to increase support for the campaign. In his response, Sadiq Khan confirmed *"I wholeheartedly support the Lift the Ban campaign"*, and emphasised the importance of efforts to support the social integration of people seeking asylum.

**Paul Hook**

**Asylum Matters Director**