

COUNCIL		
Report Title	Motion 3 in the name of Councillor Penfold to be seconded by Councillor Gallagher	
Key Decision		Item No.
Ward		
Contributors	Acting Chief Executive (Head of Business & Committee)	
Class	Part 1	Date: July 24 2019

Lift the Ban

Lewisham Council notes that:

(i) in London, there are at least 5,152 people seeking asylum in receipt of subsistence payments (Section 95 support);

(ii) since 2002, people seeking asylum have only been able to apply for the right to work after they have been waiting for a decision on their asylum claim for over a year, and only if they can be employed into one of the narrow, highly-skilled professions included on the Government's Shortage Occupation List;

(iii) people seeking asylum are left to live on £5.39 per day, struggling to support themselves and their families, and left vulnerable to destitution, isolation, and exploitation;

(iv) the potential foregone economic gain for the UK economy of allowing people to work is estimated to be £42.4million via increased taxable income and reduced payments of accommodation/subsistence support;

(v) 71% of people polled agreed with the statement: "when people come to the UK seeking asylum it is important they integrate, learn English and get to know people. It would help integration if asylum-seekers were allowed to work if their claim takes more than six months to process";

Lewisham Council believes that:

(i) people seeking asylum want to be able to work so that they can use their skills and make the most of their potential, integrate into their communities, and provide for themselves and their families;

(ii) restrictions on right to work can lead to extremely poor mental health outcomes, and a waste of potentially invaluable talents and skills both for the economy of Lewisham and the UK;

(iii) allowing people seeking asylum the right to work would therefore lead to positive outcomes for those seeking asylum in Lewisham and for the local and national economy;

Lewisham Council resolves to:

(i) join the Lift the Ban Coalition, which is campaigning to restore the right to work for everyone waiting for more than 6 months for a decision on their asylum claim.

(ii) Call on the UK Government to give people seeking asylum the right to work unconstrained by the shortage occupation list after they have waited six months for a decision on their initial asylum claim or further submission.