**Lift the Ban Month of Action**

**Toolkit for Coalition Members**

**Contents:**

1. Introduction to the Month of Action
2. The Campaign Journey So Far
3. Why is Action Important Now?
4. What Should Events Look Like?
5. What’s the Plan for Political Action?
6. Event Organiser Checklist
7. Budget Guidance
8. Campaign Materials (postcards & placards)
9. Template Invitations, Press Release and Flyers

**1. Introduction to the Month of Action**

Throughout June, the Lift the Ban coalition is seeking to mobilise supporters across the country for a ‘Month of Action’ in the form of a series of events and activities in support of the Lift the Ban campaign, bringing together a cross-section of stakeholders engaged in the campaign and supportive members of the public. The objective of these events is to firmly demonstrate the breadth of support for Lift the Ban across the country, while renewing political pressure on key decision-makers. This toolkit has been produced to give Lift the Ban coalition members a helping hand in organising those events, and to ensure that organisers are well supported to make these events as impactful as possible.

**2. The Campaign Journey So Far**

Since the Lift the Ban campaign launched in October 2018, the coalition has succeeded in placing the issue of the right to work firmly on the public and political agenda and has made huge strides towards our goal.

Across the UK, small charities on the frontline of supporting people going through the asylum system have met with MPs, mayors and local councillors to make the case for lifting the ban, while national partners have reinforced those efforts in Westminster. People seeking asylum have shaped the campaign and have spoken about their experiences to decision-makers and the media, including at an event in Parliament.

While it is impossible to capture all the brilliant work the Lift the Ban coalition have undertaken, here are some of the key highlights of the campaign journey so far:

* **Securing Cross-Party Support:** Labour, the SNP, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party all back the campaign’s objectives, while individual Conservative MPs have also taken action.

* **Action in Westminster:** A parliamentary [debate](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/giving-asylum-seekers-the-right-to-work-can-rebuild-lives-2qmspk3z6?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=newsletter_119&utm_medium=email&utm_content=119_24.10.18%20Red%20Box%20Speaking%20(1)&CMP=TNLEmail_118918_4360181_119) in support of the campaign was held just one week after the campaign’s launch, while in February Labour MP Catherine West tabled a [10 Minute Rule Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-02-20/debates/307060AB-D6C8-494D-B5E9-536024A06B93/AsylumSeekers(PermissionToWork)(No2)) co-sponsored by Conservative MPs Caroline Spelman and Andrew Mitchell, among others. This followed a [Presentation Bill](https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/asylumseekerspermissiontowork.html) tabled by Lib Dem MP Christine Jardine in January.
* **Backing of Devolved Governments:** The Scottish and Welsh Governments have confirmed their support for the campaign and have lobbied the UK Government for change.
* **Influential Voices:** Many opinion-formers have expressed support for the campaign, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, the Equalities & Human Rights Commission, the Archbishop of York, and the Chief Economist at the CBI.
* **Extensive Media Coverage:** Numerous media outlets have covered the campaign, with many using voices and experiences of people seeking asylum, including [articles](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/16/i-wanted-to-feel-worth-something-an-asylum-seeker-willing-but-unable-to-work) and [Opinion](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/oct/16/sold-abused-clothe-children-work-uk-asylum-system) pieces in the [Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/05/asylum-seekers-should-be-allowed-to-work-sooner), The [Independent](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asylum-seekers-work-uk-economy-home-office-benefit-lift-the-ban-a8586016.html), [Sky News Online,](https://news.sky.com/story/i-could-not-afford-sanitary-towels-asylum-seekers-charities-and-firms-join-forces-to-call-for-uk-jobs-ban-to-be-lifted-11527317) [The Financial Times](https://t.co/lPmFxnsGyv), The [Telegraph](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2018/10/23/letters-hounding-old-soldiers-feeds-northern-irelands-cycle/), [Breaking Barriers](https://simplecast.com/s/15d54dc0) and BBC Radio 4’s [The World Tonight](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0001m8n).
* **Local Authority Support:** Four local authorities (in Newcastle, Gateshead, Redcar & Cleveland and Stroud) have passed motions to join the Coalition, demonstrating powerful regional support for the campaign.
* **Social Media Actions:** We’ve seen a number of social media campaigns such as [‘If the Ban’](https://twitter.com/hashtag/iftheban?src=hash) and [‘Tools of the Trade’](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23lifttheban%20tools%20of%20the%20trade&src=typd) widely used and shared, as well as Ben & Jerry’s [‘Nonsense Pints’](https://twitter.com/RefugeeAction/status/1108040064905424896) initiative gaining attention on and offline!
* **Award Winning Campaign:** In March, the Lift the Ban Campaign won the Sheila McKechnie Foundation National Campaigner Award for best coalition in recognition of our creative and genuinely collaborative work.

* **Growing Strength of the Coalition:** The Lift the Ban Coalition is now over 190 members strong, bringing together charities, businesses, trade unions, think tanks and faith groups, all united by the common purpose of lifting the ban.

**3. Why is Action Important Now?**

Thanks to the sustained efforts of the Lift the Ban coalition, we are now closer to our goal than ever before. Ministers have given a number of public indications that the Government is actively considering a change in policy, while the Immigration White Paper published in December 2018 noted that the Government is ‘listening carefully’ to the arguments and considering the evidence.

Crucially, the Government has now committed to reviewing thepolicyaround the right to work for people seeking asylum. **A policy review is taking place** **over the coming months**, meaning that **this is an important moment to take action** and demonstrate to the Government and to the Home Secretary the breadth of public support for lifting the ban.

**4. What Should Events Look Like?**

Our aim is to hold uplifting community-based cultural events, with people coming together to celebrate the coalition’s efforts to date, while also publicly pressing the Home Secretary on reform as our main campaign ask. This type of event will secure a stronger turnout and make it stand out from a typical campaign gathering. It’s important that experts by experience are involved in the event and are able to take part.

As the events are designed to generate pressure on the Home Secretary, a crucial component of the events will be to take a **photo for use on social media** that demonstrates support for Lift the Ban and/or a **postcard action to the Home Secretary**.

**Suggested event activities therefore include:**

1. **‘Make your own placard’** Some pre-designed Lift the Ban branded placards will be provided, but we also encourage you to make your own and get creative with your messaging. You can also ask attendees to make their own placards, for example reading:

* *‘I am a…MP, councillor, mayor, nurse, teacher, student, person seeking asylum etc.’*
* *‘Together, we will #LiftTheBan’*
* *‘Home Secretary, it’s time to #LiftTheBan’.*

A photo will be taken of all invitees lifting the placard, ideally those in uniform will be featured prominently.[Approx. 30 mins]

1. **Speeches**with supportive local politicians, experts by experience and a coalition partner [3 to 4 speeches; max 15 mins in total]
2. **Postcard/letter writing activity** where invitees write a short postcard to the Home Secretary. A template will be provided, with invitees adding one or two personal sentences. The organisers of the event will take responsibility for postage. See below for more information on campaign materials.

You are free to shape the nature and timing of the event depending on what works for your local community. You can hold the event during the day or just after work. Events on a Thursday evening, Friday or Saturday will mean that MPs are more likely to attend, if they are not taking place at the same time as their constituency surgeries.

**Note on Media:**

**Securing coverage of your event in local or regional media will help maximise the impact of your event.** You may want to consider writing a letter to your local paper about why you are holding the event or asking an influential member of the community to write a short op-ed about why they support the campaign. Please also encourage local or regional media to attend and cover the event by sending a press release (see below for suggested template press release).

**Type of events:**

* A **smaller event** could be a photo opportunity of supportive people in the community or workplace, holding their placards. If you have more time, you could also include postcard writing to the Home Secretary for attendees.
* For those with even less time, you could give your friends, family and colleagues a postcard and ask them to return it to you with their own message inscribed at a later date.
* A **larger event** would see you do all the above in an evening with speeches, food and drink and music, poetry or dance.
* However small or large your event, make sure you share it on social media using the hashtag #LiftTheBan and, where you can, please encourage the local press to attend and cover the event.

**Who to invite?**

Depending on the location and nature of your event, invitees could include:

* Refugees and people with experience of the asylum system
* Local groups that work with refugees and asylum seekers
* Supportive local decision-makers (councillors, mayors, MPs, MSPs, AMs)
* Influential local people and community leaders
* Local charities and community groups
* Supportive members of the public
* Local/regional media

**Key outputs from the events:**

* Group photographs of attendees with their Lift the Ban branded personalised placards to be shared on social media with the #LiftTheBan hashtag.
* Written postcards to the Home Secretary calling on him to lift the ban
* A press release to local media about your event (see the template attached)

**5. What’s the Plan for Political Action?**

In order to ensure the Month of Action events have an impact on the Government, we encourage partners to take two forms of political action.

Firstly, we are working to design and produce a series of postcards which will be provided to all organisers of events. The postcards will contain a message in support of policy reform to the Home Secretary on one side, with a space overleaf where attendees can write their own message to the Home Secretary on why the issue is important to them. We will then collect these postcards from event organisers and deliver them to the Home Secretary in one delivery for maximum impact.

Secondly, we invite event organisers to carry out an online action to mirror the offline postcard action, targeting the Home Secretary on twitter. More details on the specifics of this action to follow.

**6. Event Organiser Checklist**

**Prior to event:**

* Pick a date – preferably Thursday or Friday as MPs are in constituency then.
* Organise a venue
* Invite local MPs and Councillors and ask them to speak at the event
* Invite experts by experience– invite them to speak and provide support for those who do
* Publicise the event to local networks- this can be through mailing lists, social media, word-of-mouth, flyers, local and regional blogs and any other creative means!
* Organise refreshments/music – if appropriate
* Tweet an invite to the local media
* Send press release to local media
* Order placards, postcards and no photography stickers (for those who do not wish to be photographed)

**In the run up to the event:**

* Follow up with invited MPs, Councillors and Experts by Experience.
* Send a reminder of the event to your networks
* For the more artistic Lift the Ban campaigners, you can make your own placards and banners for the event, or add personal touches to the branded placards ordered from the secretariat

**On the Day of the event:**

* Ask for permission to take photos that will be used on social media – give no photo stickers to those who do not wish to be photographed.
* Take plenty of photos (ensuring all those included in photos are happy to be) and tweet from your own account with #LifttheBan #MonthofAction
* If you have speakers at your event tweet quotes from their speeches
* Send photos to Lift the ban secretariat

**7. Budget Guidance**

The Lift the Ban secretariat has a small central pot of money which can be used to support events around the country. If you need some support with your event, please get in touch with the secretariat at [lifttheban@asylummatters.org](mailto:lifttheban@asylummatters.org) with a breakdown of costs for your event. While we may not be able to cover the full costs of each event, we can look to cover bigger items like the costs for venues or campaigns materials. Due to funder restrictions, we're not able to sub-grant to coalition members but will instead pay invoices directly. Please get in touch with your request and any questions.

**8. Campaign Materials (flyers, postcards, placards)**

The key campaign materials for the Month of Action events will be placards and post cards. The Lift the Ban secretariat have designed and prepared some of these including branded placards with key messages and post cards addressed to the Home Secretary ready to be personalised.

We will be providing the design spec of the campaign materials to coalition members and will reimburse the cost if you’re able to organise printing locally (though please check with us first to make sure we can cover the amount!).

We have a small central stash of printed resources, but unfortunately not enough to cover all events. For urgent upcoming events, please get in touch and we’ll see what we can do about getting some of these central resources to you in time.

The design specs for printing we will be sharing with the coalition are:

* Postcards to the Home Secretary for the political action
* Lift the Ban branded Placards to be displayed at events and used for photo opportunities
* Sheets of no photography stickers for those who do not wish to be photographed

**9.** **Template Invitations, Press Release and Flyers**

We have produced a number of template documents that might be helpful for organising events:

1. You can send or email the attached **template letters** to any local decision-makers- such as MPs, MSPs, AMs, mayors and Councillors- that you would like to invite to attend your event. One version of this letter is for decision-makers already engaged on the campaign, and the second is for those who you seek to reach out to for the first time. We encourage you to attach the [Lift the Ban briefing note for MPs](http://lifttheban.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Lift-the-Ban-UPDATED-Briefing-for-Parliamentarians.pdf) to the latter invitation. Please do personalise and amend as you see fit.
2. You can adapt and use one of the attached **template flyers** to invite supporters and the general public more widely to your event. You just need to add in the time, date and location, and any other details you see fit.
3. In order to maximise the impact of your event it is important to try to secure coverage in local and regional media. We’ve drafted a **template press release** that can be adapted and used to inform local media of the campaign and to invite them to attend and cover your event.



**For more information on any of the above, please feel free to get in touch with the Lift the Ban secretariat on** [**lifttheban@asylummatters.org**](mailto:lifttheban@asylummatters.org)**.**