

**I. SUPPORT
PROTECTING
EVERYONE**

LIBERTY



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**THE GOVERNMENT'S
RESPONSE TO THE
PANDEMIC HAS LEFT
SOME PEOPLE BEHIND**

**IT'S TIME FOR A FRESH
APPROACH, ONE THAT
PRIORITISES SUPPORT
AND HUMAN RIGHTS, SO
THAT EVERYONE IS
PROTECTED DURING THIS
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

**AND THAT STARTS WITH
THE CORONAVIRUS (RIGHTS
AND SUPPORT) BILL –
BETTER KNOWN AS THE
PROTECT EVERYONE BILL**

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

When this pandemic hit, we were all fearful and needed a Government response that we could be confident would protect us. One that would make sure every child was fed, that built trust in our public authorities, that protected disabled people and those who often feel the sharpest edges of a crisis.

But we were given the Government's Coronavirus Act and its various accompanying laws and regulations – the greatest limitations on civil liberties in a generation.

Instead of hope and support, the Government has watered down our rights and thrown millions into extended lockdowns with no exit route planned. Far from protecting us, we have ended up with a spiralling death rate coupled with the severe economic impact of the lockdowns.

The Government's response has hit already marginalised communities hardest, magnifying inequality and failing to support those most in need.

An emphasis on enforcement has proved a recipe for injustice. The Coronavirus Act has let local councils strip away social care. And the Government's racist 'hostile environment' initiative is still in full effect, leaving people too afraid to get medical help in case they are detained or deported.

We needed a Government response that protected our right to stand up to power because in times of crisis, Government accountability is vital – but instead it has used the pandemic to limit our right to protest. Without figures like Marcus Rashford, some crucial failures of leadership wouldn't have been corrected. Other areas affected by the crisis have not been lucky enough to have such champions.

And while Liberty has always supported proportionate measures to save lives, the Government's pandemic response both oversteps the mark and under-delivers for those who need support most.

We reject the politics of division and criminalisation and call for a new approach that bridges the divides in society, prioritising support and resources so we can all safely follow public health advice.

We demand a better way forward – one that protects everyone in the UK.

A NEW WAY FORWARD

The Government's Coronavirus Act is up for renewal in March. Our MPs must reject the harmful, punishment-focused approach of 2020 that left so many communities behind, and back the new Protect Everyone Bill instead.

Voting against the Coronavirus Act creates a three-week window to devise an alternative. That hard work is already done.

We've teamed up with expert charities, NGOs and lawyers who have fought against the damaging aspects of the Government's COVID response for the past year to present a positive alternative. The collective view is that a fresh approach is needed to get us out of this pandemic.

The Protect Everyone Bill removes the dangerous powers in the Government's Coronavirus Act and replaces them with clear and proportionate measures focused on public health, human rights and protection for everyone equally instead of criminal justice.

The Government has said it wants to 'build back better'. The Protect Everyone Bill is how we do so.



EVERYDAY FREEDOMS

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The Protect Everyone Bill will safeguard everyone's civil liberties.

Over the past year, the Government has drastically changed people's lives at a moment's notice with next to no scrutiny from Parliament, and has attempted to police its way out of a pandemic – with already over-policed communities bearing the brunt of unjust enforcement.

This strategy is completely unworkable.

Holding the powerful to account is crucial in times of crisis to make sure no one is left behind by narrow policymaking. By embracing scrutiny and having our elected MPs vote on regulations, politicians can rebuild the trust needed for a strategy that bridges divides and provides a better way forward.

That means supporting everyone to follow public health guidance instead of focusing on criminalising people. And it's backed by evidence: data from the first national lockdown shows that people followed the rules out of a sense of acting for the common good, rather than fear of penalties.

The Protect Everyone Bill rejects a strategy based on punishment and division, and instead prioritises accountability and support:

- **STRICT TIME LIMITS** – the Bill will expire after six months.
- **REAL SCRUTINY** – any lockdown regulations will be debated and voted on by Parliament before they become law. And the Bill establishes a new Parliamentary committee to specifically scrutinise the impact of the Government's coronavirus response.
- **NO EXPANSIVE POLICE POWERS** – the Bill prioritises supporting people to follow clear and consistent public health guidance, instead of criminal punishment. This is the best way to keep everyone safe.
- **SCRAP POWER TO DETAIN POTENTIALLY INFECTIOUS PEOPLE** – the Government's Coronavirus Act gives police the power to detain anyone who is "potentially infectious". The Crown Prosecution Service has said every single charge brought under this power has been wrong. The Protect Everyone Bill will remove it.
- **TRANSPARENT ENFORCEMENT** – the National Police Chief's Council must publish weekly enforcement data broken down by age, gender, ethnicity, and disability, as well as information about the location, context, and nature of the enforcement, so the public can see how powers are used.
- **POWER TO APPEAL FINES** – the Bill establishes a right to appeal any fine.
- **NO PROTEST BAN** – the Bill explicitly prohibits blanket bans on protest.
- **LIMITING THE POWER TO CLOSE BORDERS** – the Bill limits the parts of the Coronavirus Act that allow the Health Secretary to close borders with no upper time limit. It imposes safeguards to ensure travel restrictions do not undermine people's private and family life, their right to seek asylum, or ability to travel to provide humanitarian aid.

DATA PROTECTION



DATA PROTECTION

No one is protected unless we can all safely access health services. The Protect Everyone Bill will safeguard everyone's privacy.

Part of the Government's pandemic approach has been to use our personal health data to track and monitor our movements. Without proper safeguards, collecting and using this data can violate people's human rights.

Secrecy over who has access to our data has stopped people from engaging with NHS Test and Trace, including migrants whose details might be shared with the Home Office for immigration enforcement.

And in January 2021, the Government quietly changed the regulations to allow the police access to Test and Trace data to enforce self-isolation. Threats of arrest, detention, and deportation will further deter people from getting a COVID-19 test, using Test and Trace, or accessing the vaccine.

Everyone must be able to safely access important services – and especially during a public health emergency. The Protect Everyone Bill makes sure any data collected as part of the COVID-19 response is subject to robust scrutiny and safeguards:



- **PROTECT PRIVACY** – the Information Commissioner's Office must oversee the Government's collection and use of personal data. Public authorities have a duty to protect people's privacy.
- **DATA PROTECTION POLICIES** – the Government must regularly publish data protection impact assessments for COVID-19 related data systems, including Track and Trace.
- **DELETE DATA** – data collected for contact tracing must only be used for that purpose and must be deleted after three months.

EDUCATION



EDUCATION

The Protect Everyone Bill will make sure every child is fed and none are left behind when schools are closed, no matter what their family finances look like.

The Coronavirus Act gives the Government broad powers, including ordering schools and childcare facilities to close. This may be a necessary and proportionate measure to protect public health, but there are serious implications for human rights. For an overwhelming majority of disabled children, remote learning has presented a barrier to their education. Most providers don't supply accessible and inclusive materials, while the majority of schools haven't provided any differentiated online or alternative off-line curriculum for disabled students.

Children who are unable to access online resources – because they lack access to a computer or stable internet connection – may also miss class, assessments, or even exclusion hearings.

Education workers' right to a safe working environment must also be protected.

And no child should go hungry, but the Government's approach to Free School Meals has left many extremely vulnerable, leaving schools and charities to distribute food where they can. Our approach would maintain the dignity of families affected and be more streamlined, leading to less chance of children missing out, a risk inherent with the current voucher – based scheme.

The Protect Everyone Bill will protect children's rights, as well as the rights of their families, education staff and wider communities:

- **NO HUNGRY CHILDREN** – the Bill puts a duty on the Government to transfer cash to families for meals during school closures, or to fund local authorities to provide food parcels. It also requires the Government to provide Free School Meals during the school holidays.
- **NO ONE LEFT BEHIND** – the Government must publish a full human rights and equality impact assessment before ordering school closures to make sure the rights of the children, their families and school staff are protected.
- **GUIDANCE ON REMOTE EDUCATION** – If the Government decides to close schools, it must publish statutory guidance on the provision of remote education, with specific attention given to every child's right to an inclusive education.



ACCESS TO JUSTICE



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Protect Everyone Bill will uphold access to justice.

Justice must be done and must be seen to be done. Transparency in the justice system is essential for a functioning democracy. But the coronavirus pandemic has put this at risk by changing the way our courts and tribunals system works.

The sudden shift to online hearings doesn't always allow for effective participation. And people involved in non-remote hearings have expressed concerns over court safety.

The Protect Everyone Bill will defend access to justice:

- **OPEN JUSTICE AND PARTICIPATION RIGHTS** – the Government must publish a human rights impact assessment on the effect of remote proceedings on open justice, effective participation, and justice outcomes.
- **RESEARCH** – the Government must collect and publish data on virtual hearings, to better inform future policymaking.





EMPLOYMENT

EMPLOYMENT



The Protect Everyone Bill will protect workers' rights.

We all want to keep our loved ones safe but can only do this if we're all properly supported to follow public health guidance. An emphasis on 'getting people back to work' has put people's rights at risk. Some workers can't afford to self-isolate or take time off when sick, and some have been forced to return to unsafe work environments by their employers.

The Protect Everyone Bill makes sure all workers can stay safe during this public health emergency:

- **FULL PAY FOR SICK AND ISOLATING WORKERS** – the Bill requires the Government to guarantee full pay for all sick and self-isolating workers, including low-paid staff, outsourced staff, and staff on temporary and zero-hour contracts.
- **GUARANTEED MINIMUM EARNINGS** – the Government must raise the minimum wage to the Living Wage (and for workers in London, to the London Living Wage) which will ensure that workers are better able to meet their needs.
- **PPE AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT** – the Bill requires employers to provide safety equipment, including hand sanitiser and protective masks and gloves for workers in high-risk industries and workplaces.
- **RISK ASSESSMENTS** – employers must carry out risk assessments on working conditions and issue health and safety guidelines for staff.
- **INSPECTIONS** – labour inspection should be classified as "essential work", and carried out with adequate protective equipment in high-risk sectors where workplaces remain open, to ensure workers are not being exploited.

DISABLED AND OLDER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS



DISABLED AND OLDER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The Protect Everyone Bill will prioritise the most marginalised in society, and that means making sure health and social care support for disabled and older people is maintained and enhanced.

No one is protected unless we are all protected. Only a strategy that provides support for everyone for the duration of the pandemic will work. But the Government's Coronavirus Act allows local authorities to strip back formal social care. A number of councils took advantage of this part of the Act, but others that didn't do so explicitly have still diluted the level of care they provide, disproportionately impacting disabled and older people. In the first national lockdown, research from Mencap showed that almost 70 per cent of people with a learning disability reported having their care cut.

The Coronavirus Act also waters down councils' education, health and care (EHC) duties for children and young people. Research by the Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) found that 34 per cent of parents of disabled children received insufficient support to help with home schooling, while 54 per cent have not received any support from either the local authority or school.

The Protect Everyone Bill will safeguard disabled and older people's rights:

- **PROPER SOCIAL CARE** – the Bill will scrap the parts of the Coronavirus Act that allow local councils to strip back social care provision for adults, and EHC provision for children and young people.
- **ACCESSIBLE INFO** – the Bill will make sure public coronavirus broadcasts are fully accessible to disabled people, including by requiring sign language interpretation. News updates and regulations must be published with Easy Read versions.



MIGRANTS' RIGHTS



MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The Protect Everyone Bill will prioritise the most marginalised in society, which means safeguarding migrants' rights.

No matter our backgrounds, we will only weather this storm by protecting each other. Only a strategy that supports everyone, without exceptions, protects public health. But the hostile environment – a series of cruel policies that strip migrants of their rights – has remained in full effect throughout the pandemic.

Data sharing between essential public services and the Home Office has left people too fearful to access healthcare in case they are detained or deported. And those that do are still being charged for NHS care.

The Home Office still classifies thousands of people as having 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF), which means they are unable to claim any type of state aid to pay for housing, feed their families, or even access a refuge if they escape an abusive relationship.

Asylum seekers are being held in old and overcrowded army barracks, with limited access to health care.

And people are still being held in immigration detention centres. Immigration detention is fundamentally harmful, but its dangers have been multiplied by coronavirus which is spreading rapidly through the prison-like facilities.

We all want to keep our loved ones safe. We can only do this with enough support so that everyone, including the most marginalised and at risk, can follow public health guidance without fear. The Protect Everyone Bill will provide that support:

- **NO HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT** – the Bill will suspend toxic hostile environment policies and enable people to rent, work, and access state services. It will also suspend all NHS charging.
- **SUPPORT FOR MIGRANTS** – the Bill will suspend NRPF and require councils to provide essential support to migrants. Asylum seekers will be provided safe and secure accommodation and face-to-face reporting requirements will be suspended.
- **NO DATA SHARING FOR IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT** – the Bill will establish a firewall between public authorities, the NHS, the police, and Home Office Immigration Enforcement.
- **NO IMMIGRATION DETENTION** – everyone held under immigration detention powers in detention centres and prisons will be released.
- **NO DEPORTATIONS** – the Bill will suspend all deportations for the duration of the pandemic.



HOUSING

HOUSING

The Protect Everyone Bill will make sure everyone has access to safe and secure accommodation for the duration of the pandemic.

We can only keep each other safe if everyone – no matter wealth or background – is supported to safely follow public health guidance. It hasn't been possible for everyone to "stay home" during the pandemic. Some people can't afford to stay in, some don't have a home, some live in overcrowded housing, and for some home is a dangerous place.

Many tenants fear eviction because they can't afford to pay rent at the moment.

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities face being evicted from pitches and endure ongoing problems accessing water and sanitation facilities.

Homeless people and rough sleepers benefitted from the "Everyone In" scheme in the first lockdown, but are now being forced back on the streets.

Homeless migrants who have 'no recourse to public funds' have had limited access to state-provided accommodation.

Survivors of domestic abuse remain trapped with their abusers day in and day out.



The Protect Everyone Bill aims to provide safe and secure accommodation for all:

- **NO EVICTIONS** – the Bill establishes a rent waiver and bans the giving of eviction notices for the duration of the pandemic, including for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- **SAFE ACCOMMODATION** – the Government will be required to provide safe and secure accommodation for everyone in need, including survivors of domestic abuse, homeless people and rough sleepers, migrants, and those in overcrowded housing.

PRISONS



PRISONS

The Protect Everyone Bill prioritises the most marginalised in society, and will save lives within prisons and young offender institutions.

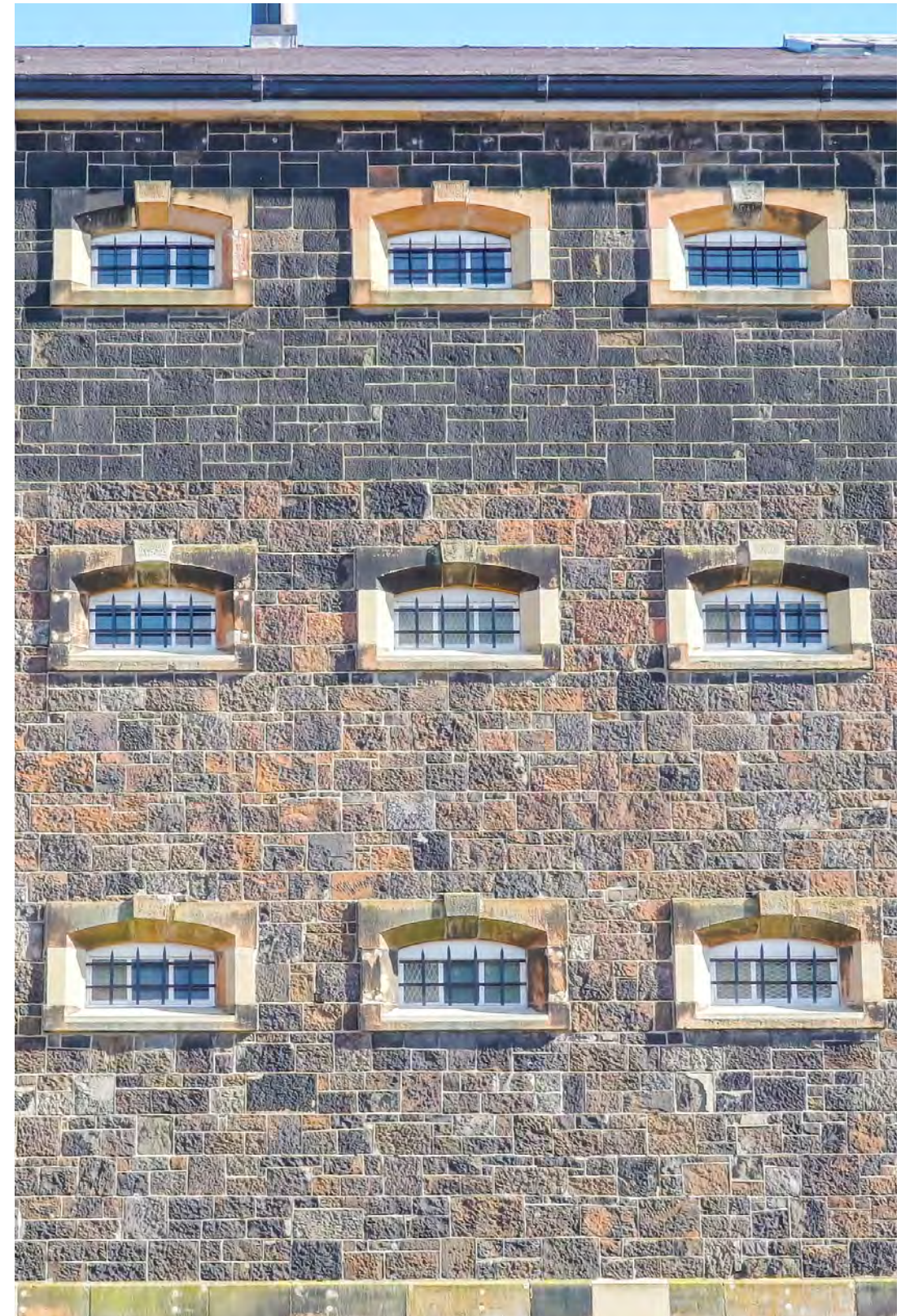
Only a coronavirus strategy that protects everyone, without exception, will work. The number of people in prison must be lowered to keep prisoners, detainees, frontline staff and the wider community safe.

Prisons are not equipped to deal with a pandemic, and Liberty Investigates – Liberty’s investigative journalism unit – has revealed inadequate healthcare provision and some prisoners being confined to their cells for more than 23 hours at a time.

The number of deaths in custody as a result of COVID-19 has soared as outbreaks continue to spread in different facilities.

The Protect Everyone Bill will save lives by supporting people to follow public health guidance:

- **LOWER THE PRISON POPULATION** – the Bill requires the Government to immediately reduce the numbers of people in prisons and youth offender institutions across the UK, and to release prisoners who fall within the shielding category if they pose no risk to the public.
- **NO DESTITUTION** – the Government must make sure no one is released into destitution, including by increasing funding to community-based services, such as women’s centres, to cope with the pressures of the pandemic.



A black and white photograph of a young girl with long, light-colored hair, looking out of a window. She is resting her chin on her hand, which is placed on a white ledge. The background shows a window frame and a view of the outdoors, which is slightly blurred. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

SOCIAL WELFARE

SOCIAL WELFARE

Coronavirus has shown how much we depend on each other. No matter our wealth or background, we will only get through the pandemic by protecting each other.

The Protect Everyone Bill will make sure everyone can meet their basic needs, including when they are required to self-isolate, helping us all safely follow public health guidance.

With the pandemic has come an economic recession that threatens many people's livelihoods. Everyone has a right to an adequate standard of living. The Protect Everyone Bill ensures everyone in need can access social welfare entitlements:

- **END UNIVERSAL CREDIT WAIT** – the Bill will end the five-week waiting period for Universal Credit so that people can urgently access support.
- **INCREASE ALL BENEFITS** – all benefits will be uplifted to match the increased Universal Credit level.



ELECTIONS



ELECTIONS

Scrutiny and accountability are crucial to safely getting through the pandemic, and the Protect Everyone Bill prioritises democratic oversight.

The Coronavirus Act postponed the local, Policing and Crime Commissioner and mayoral elections that were due to be held in May 2020 for a year. Additional changes to the timing and “manner” of an election can also be made without Parliamentary involvement.

Local elections were postponed for a month in 2001 due to a foot-and-mouth outbreak, and have occasionally been moved to match European elections, but this year-long delay is the longest in the UK since the second World War.

Holding power to account is even more important in times of crisis. The Protect Everyone Bill will make sure these decisions are not taken lightly:

- **HUMAN RIGHTS ASSESSMENT** – the Bill requires a human rights impact assessment be carried out before these powers can be used.



WITH THANKS

The Protect Everyone Bill presents a positive alternative to the Government’s harmful, punishment-focused pandemic response that has left so many communities behind.

This fresh approach – that instead prioritises protection and support – was only developed thanks to the help of expert frontline groups, unions, and NGOs, including:

ACORN

THE ALLIANCE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

BAIL FOR IMMIGRATION DETAINEES

BLACK PROTEST LEGAL SUPPORT

FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND TRAVELLERS

FOCUS ON LABOUR EXPLOITATION

INCLUSION LONDON

INQUEST

JOINT COUNCIL FOR THE WELFARE OF IMMIGRANTS

LATIN AMERICAN WOMEN’S RIGHTS SERVICE

LEGAL SECTOR WORKERS UNITED

MEDACT

THE NO ACCOMMODATION NETWORK

THE OPEN RIGHTS GROUP

PROJECT 17

TRANSFORM JUSTICE

THE TRAVELLER MOVEMENT

WOMEN IN PRISONS

WOMEN’S AID

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