

19 April 2023

PCS meets with Shadow Home Secretary to discuss Safe Passage policy

PCS and Care4Calais met with Yvette Cooper MP to discuss why adopting our Safe Passage policy would be beneficial for our members and vulnerable refugees seeking safety in the UK.

Yesterday (18) PCS officers, alongside [Care4Calais](#), met with the Shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper MP, to discuss our joint Safe Passage Policy which was launched in late 2022. The policy, which aims to implement a safe passage visa scheme, similar to the current Ukrainian scheme, would allow refugees to enter the UK safely to have their asylum claim considered. Our policy calls for investment in the Home Office and its staff to provide our members with a better working environment, as well as reform of immigration detention centres so refugees are helped rather than punished.

The meeting came as a result of work by PCS and Care4Calais on the Illegal Migration Bill. We have supported Olivia Blake MP's amendment to the bill which would see our policy adopted. Although the amendment was not voted on during the latest stages of the Bill, it received significant cross party support.

The meeting was positive. Both PCS and Care4Calais clearly set out why this policy is the only way to stop the dangerous small boat crossings; and why it will create the beginnings of a system which is humane and properly funded, allowing those with a valid claim to enter the UK via a safe route. Ms Cooper engaged positively in the discussion and acknowledged the work which has been done by both organisations. She raised numerous queries about the policy, all of which we were able to provide answers to.

A further meeting has been secured to discuss the how the policy could work in practice; as well as to discuss resourcing the Home Office to deal with the current backlog of asylum cases. We will continue to brief Ms Cooper, and her shadow team, in the coming weeks. We will attempt to secure their support for our

policy; and it's adoption if Labour form the next government. PCS and Care4Calais will continue to pursue a safe passage amendment in the House of Lords when the Bill returns in the coming weeks.

Paul O'Connor, head of bargaining at PCS, said: "Securing this meeting indicates that our campaign to create a better working environment for our members, and a less hostile environment for refugees, is now resonating with senior political figures.

"The constructive nature of the discussion indicates that our proposals are being taken seriously. We are convinced that our policy is the only rational way to stop the dangerous small boat crossings. We will continue to press for its adoption across the political spectrum, as well as continuing our campaigning work on the issue in the wider Labour movement."