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Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

29 June 2020

**UPDATE TO EIGHTY-SECOND REPORT OF SESSION 2017-19 - WINDRUSH
GENERATION AND THE HOME OFFICE**

Dear Chair,

Ahead of giving evidence to the Committee next month, I am writing to update you on the Department's progress against the recommendations that were made by the committee in the Eighty-Second report of Session 2017-2019 - Windrush Generation and the Home Office.

Recommendation 1 – The Department must protect and prioritise people's rights to residency or citizenship when designing, delivering and monitoring its immigration policies and systems. It should report back to us in 6 months on how it is putting impact assessments and external consultations at the core of its policy making to identify how new immigration policies could affect people and how to mitigate against the risk of unintended consequences. It should also report back to us on how it is addressing the findings of Wendy Williams's lessons learned review.

Since joining the Home Office, I have been clear that one of my first priorities is to ensure the Department reflects on Wendy Williams' Windrush Lessons Learned Review (WLLR). The Home Secretary has welcomed the WLLR and will update Parliament before the summer recess on how we will approach implementing them. We will then make further substantive announcements after summer recess and as such have adjusted the target implementation date of this recommendation to October 2020 to ensure consistency with the Windrush Lessons Learned Review recommendations.

Ensuring both impact assessments and extensive consultation form a core part of policy making is also a very clear recommendation from the WLLR (recommendations 8, 12 and 13). We will continue to ensure that consideration of this duty is at the heart of policy design and implementation, as well as the advice that goes up to Ministers.

Furthermore, in our last update, we committed to writing to the Committee with an update on the Policy Assurance Framework (PAF) by April 2020, and I apologise for the delay in responding.

I can confirm that the Policy Assurance Framework, which was launched in early 2019, was revised following feedback from policy officials, with accompanying guidance updated. This is a continuous process and will continue to be reviewed throughout the process of policy making.

Our Policy Profession Team in the Home Office is planning a programme of learning opportunities for staff at all levels, bringing together examples of good practice in collaborative policy development, including opportunities for leaders to learn from the experience of other leaders.

Since our last update to the Committee against recommendation 1, and as part of the Home Office's preparation for reviewing future immigration policies, we obtained independent advice from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) and their report has now been published.

It is important to note that consultation documents and impact assessments have been produced for major policies within the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System, including for the design of legal migration routes, and for our White Paper on the UK's future skills-based immigration system.

Furthermore, the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is a recent example of where core activities have been supplemented by the use of external consultation, including the use of independent advisory groups (made up of employers and vulnerable groups) when being designed.

We are continuing our engagement on the future immigration system with a series of external stakeholders and we have also established a Vulnerability Advisory Group including charities, law practitioners and migrant support groups to ensure our policy development takes into account the requirements of those most in need.

Recommendation 1a - *It should redesign and test its application processes and systems with applicants and staff to ensure they are accessible and easy to use. It should report back to the Committee in 12 months on the progress it has made, including a description of the testing it has done and how it is identifying and managing risks.*

This recommendation has now been implemented.

The Department's immigration application platform, Access UK, is designed in accordance with the patterns and standards of the Government Digital Service, thus ensuring compliance with standards on usability and accessibility. We continue to improve this, and the navigation of our services based on greater knowledge of customer need, learning from customer feedback and our ongoing customer insight work.

As part of the key work on designing our new immigration system, we are seeking to simplify a number of routes used by our customers – including study and work. We are simplifying application forms to reduce the complexity of questions and evidence customers are required to supply. We have both a customer insight and customer research team, working together to ensure we can gather as much feedback as possible, and then reflecting on feedback to provide further improvements.

In relation to staff, we are continuing to roll out our new immigration case work system, Atlas. The system has been designed to ensure simplicity and ease of

navigation. We have engaged with staff and received feedback during the design and development phase and conducted testing work with end users to understand changes that may be required for operational areas. We continue to receive positive feedback on how easy the Atlas services are to use.

Recommendation 2 - *In its design and roll-out of Atlas, the Department should prioritise improving the quality of its data. Alongside its Treasury Minute response, the Department should write to us setting out specific plans for data cleansing, migration of the existing case files and controls around the input of new data.*

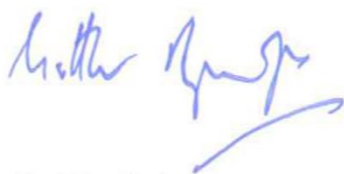
The full roll-out of Atlas has been delayed as a result of Covid-19 and we have adjusted the target implementation date of this recommendation to March 2021.

However, in terms of addressing data quality issues, we have recently established a Data Quality Board whose purpose is to continually review immigration data issues as they are identified, and ensure suitable remediation measures are in place.

This is in addition to the data cleansing team we previously updated the Committee on, who are working across BICS to clean up data sets and have already started removing incorrect duplicate records.

I hope this goes some way to updating the Committee on our progress and I look forward to answering any further questions you might have when I appear in front of the Committee in a few weeks time.

Yours sincerely,



Matthew Rycroft
Permanent Secretary