



Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

By email only

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Safe and Legal Migration
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
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21 June 2022

Dear Mr Foster,

Committee visit to the Windrush Compensation Scheme offices in Sheffield

I am writing to thank you for inviting the Home Affairs Committee to visit the Windrush Compensation Scheme offices in Sheffield.

We made the visit on Tuesday 14 June, accompanied by Glenda Caesar, who has lived experience of the Windrush Compensation Scheme, and Jacqueline McKenzie, a solicitor and immigration adviser who has supported a number of those affected with their claims.

We are grateful to the Head of Windrush Compensation Scheme and the Private Secretary working in his office, the Head of Performance, Planning, Finance and Operations, the Customer Operations Support Services Director, the Head of Windrush Compensation Scheme Policy and everyone in the different Windrush Compensation Scheme teams who gave up their time to host the Committee and to talk us through their roles and the work that they do, especially as for some it meant travelling from Liverpool.

It was particularly interesting to be walked through the journey that a person affected by the Windrush scandal might take to receive the compensation that they deserve and are entitled to. It was useful to hear from team members in the Complex Team and Mobile Enrolments about how they can support more vulnerable claimants, for example, by travelling to where claimants are based to collect biometric data.

We welcome the fact that you and your staff are continuously considering how policies can be improved and updated, and would appreciate any updates when such changes are made.

However, we were concerned to hear about the specific delays people face in waiting to be allocated a caseworker. We understand that cases are allocated in date order, but we were shocked that approximately 1,800 cases are in the queue and, though registered, haven't even been looked at by a caseworker yet. We would urge you to address this issue urgently, and to keep the Committee informed as to the steps you will take.

We were encouraged to be told that there are now 117 caseworkers in post, with a further ten starting this month, with the aim of reaching 154 in total. We also welcome the fact that no Windrush Compensation Scheme staff have been redeployed to other areas. However, although it is positive that caseworkers have two weeks of training, and an additional 12 weeks of mentoring before taking on their first case, we are concerned that, as a result, the additional caseworkers promised may not be able to make a dent in the 1,800-case backlog very quickly. More needs to be done to prevent claimants waiting even longer to have their cases resolved.

Although staff members' commitment to their roles came across, we remain convinced that these cases are complex, and indeed unique even within Home Office casework. The Home Office must introduce funded legal assistance for claimants who wish to access this, and we ask that you reconsider our recommendation on this.

We would also appreciate further information on:

- how the outreach team is engaging with British High Commissions in other countries, such as Bangladesh and Ghana, to ensure that anyone affected in those countries is aware of the Windrush Scheme and Windrush Compensation Scheme; and
- whether the Home Office would consider offering financial advice to those who receive compensation, if it is something they would be interested in and feel they would benefit from.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dame Diana Johnson MP