

Home Affairs Committee

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Dame Anne Owers

National Chair of Independent Monitoring Boards

By email

5 October 2020

Dear Dame Anne

Receipt and processing of migrants at immigration removal centres and short-term holding facilities

As you will be aware, the Home Affairs Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into [Channel crossings, migration and asylum seeking routes through the EU](#). You will also have heard recent statements by the Home Secretary and Permanent Secretary at the Home Office indicating that the Government is looking for alternative ways of managing the asylum process.¹

In this context, the Committee would find it helpful to receive your assessment of the current operations of the system for receiving, assessing or returning newly arrived asylum seekers and other people arriving by small boat or other clandestine migrant crossings: how this system is operating in short term holding facilities (STHFs) and immigration removal centres (IRCs). We would be particularly interested in your insights into the following:

- The numbers of newly arrived migrants currently arriving at STHFs and IRCs, and the distribution of migrants between different facilities;
- Current policies on short term detentions and returns of new arrivals as evidenced in STHFs and IRCs;
- The capability of the system locally and collectively to receive and assess people who are arriving and to operate asylum and immigration processes;
- The effectiveness of the system for assessing individual cases (including assessment of any individual medical requirements and vulnerability as well as legal process around any asylum or family reunion applications, the resources needed within STHFs and IRCs for these purposes, and the availability of those resources);
- Any concerns arising from management of the system in the context of Covid-19;
- Any concerns arising from uncertainty about future arrangements for family reunion and for returns to other European countries following completion of the UK's withdrawal from the EU;
- Any other concerns raised by independent monitoring boards about the ability of IRCs and STHFs to respond to recent migrant arrivals.

¹ See for example [Priti Patel says Conservatives will bring in new laws for 'broken' asylum system](#), Guardian, 5 October 2020 [Asylum seekers could be processed on old ferries](#) bbc.co.uk 1 October 2020;

It would be helpful if you should be able to provide this information to the Committee by Monday 26 October.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvette Cooper', written in a cursive style.

Yvette Cooper MP