



Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson MP  
Chair, Home Affairs Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1 0AA

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*29th* January 2023

*Dear Dame Diana,*

1. Thank you for your letter of 11 January to the Prime Minister in which you asked for further information in relation to your questions. Please find the answers to your questions below.
2. **In the Liaison Committee session, you said that the commitment to abolish the backlog made on 13 December referred to around 92,000 cases recorded before June last year. Can you confirm that that is correct, what number of cases are included in that commitment, and what number of currently outstanding cases are not included?**
3. **Can you confirm whether you will consider the commitment met if those 92,000-odd cases are concluded, even if the total number of cases outstanding has risen by the end of this year because arrivals have outstripped disposal of cases?**
4. On 28 June 2022 the Home Office introduced a new "Legacy and Flow" model, so that different approaches could be applied in order to generate overall efficiencies.
5. Any asylum cases opened after 28 June 2022, or new arrivals from this date will be considered as "Flow" cases and processed in line with the Nationality and Borders Act 2022.
6. The Prime Minister made the commitment on 13 December 2022 to clear the backlog of the 92,601 asylum claims made before 28 June 2022 by the end of 2023. I reiterate that commitment to your committee today through your position as Chair.
7. At the end of September 2022, the total number of cases awaiting an initial decision was 117,400, relating to 143,377 people.
8. The number of cases awaiting an initial decision is published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-year-ending-september-2022/how-many-people-do-we-grant-protection-to>.

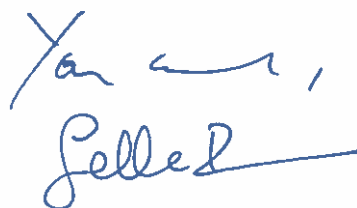
9. **You stated during the Liaison Committee hearing that “we have undertaken an extensive exercise to map the process end to end and, on the basis of a bunch of modelling that has been done, which is relatively sophisticated”, and that this will enable the Home Office to triple the productivity of asylum caseworkers. Please can you provide full details of the modelling and end-to-end mapping process that the Home Office has undertaken?**
10. The Home Office is providing dedicated focus on working through the legacy cases, by introducing specialist decision making units, providing greater ownership and management of cohorts of asylum cases.
11. Further to that, the Home Office are radically streamlining and modernising the end-to-end asylum process. This is possible due to factors includes more user-friendly guidance, and omitting long, substantive interviews where decisions can be taken on the evidence available.
12. The Home Office intend to publish further details about this new process later this year.
13. **We are keen to follow the progress of the Home Office in tripling the productivity of asylum caseworkers. As such, will you provide the Home Affairs Select Committee with fortnightly updates throughout 2023 on the number of asylum decision-makers in post and number of initial asylum decisions made? This information should include: (a) a breakdown of how many asylum-decision makers are actually making decisions as opposed to in training or delivering training and (b) the overall number of asylum claims awaiting an initial decision.**
14. The Government publishes data on asylum decisions every quarter and on the number of asylum decision makers in post annually.
15. We have no plans to increase the frequency of this reporting, but as part of our transparency data we will make a distinction between claims made before 28 June 2022 and the total work in progress so that the commitment can be tracked.
16. **What steps, if any, are being taken to ensure that new caseworkers recruited are also retained for reasonable periods, given the attrition rate reported for 2021? Will you also confirm what the attrition rate for caseworkers was in 2022?**
17. I am pleased to tell the Committee that the Home Office continues to mitigate high attrition rates as this can hinder productivity as experienced Decision Makers are used to up skill new colleagues.
18. Whilst the Home Office is increasing the number of decision makers and expect the numbers of decisions to increase, it can take up to 12 months for a decision maker to become fully proficient in their work. The Home Office is putting in place a range of interventions, including looking at job design, reward, management capability to reduce staff turnover.
19. As the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office set out to you on 23 November, the Home Office has implemented a recruitment and retention allowance, whereby if people stay for a year, they get paid £1,500 more; if they stay for two years or more, they get £2,500. This has helped reduced Decision Maker attrition rates by 30%, helping us maintain experienced asylum Decision Makers.

20. **The Home Office, as was widely reported, modelled for up to 60,000 Channel crossings occurring last year to enable it to plan provision for arrivals and dispersals. As you will know, the final total was just short of 46,000. What is the Home Office worst-case scenario planning figure for 2023?**

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21. The numbers of crossings are leading to unprecedented pressures on the asylum system. As the Prime Minister told the Committee, the Home Office has not forecast an official figure for illegal Channel crossings in 2023 but there are various scenarios which are informing planning for how to handle small boats this year and ensure the system is resilient.
22. Many of those who cross originate from safe countries and travel through safe countries. That is unfair on those who come here legally, unfair on those who have a genuine asylum claim – and unfair on the British people who play by the rules. Meanwhile, criminal gangs continue to profit from facilitating life-threatening journeys across the Channel.
23. That is why I have prioritised this issue since I took Office including the new deal with France which secured UK officers embedded with French counterparts for the first time, and increased cooperation with our international partners through the Calais Group.
24. **Will you clarify what ‘commercial contracts’ you were unwilling to comment on in relation to the MEDP with Rwanda? Please can you also clarify why you were unwilling to comment on these contracts, given that they involve UK public money being used in an arrangement with another country? How many people would the UK Government expect to be able to relocate to Rwanda during 2023 under what was announced as an unlimited programme but on which it has been widely reported that limited accommodation and asylum processing facilities may be available in Rwanda?**
25. I am unable to comment on any such contracts as these would be commercially sensitive and could hinder future negotiations with any other countries. We have always been clear that the Rwandan Government has plans to scale up capacity once relocations begin.
26. The number of individuals who can be relocated to Rwanda under the Migration and Economic Development Partnership (MEDP) is uncapped but is expected to be in the thousands over the lifetime of the partnership.
27. **You confirmed that payments of £120 million and £20 million have been made to Rwanda, but added that “There’s nothing else that we have said publicly or will in a commercial contract”. Would you clarify whether payments have been made that have not been made public? And would you confirm that the full costs of any payments to Rwanda will be reported, regardless of which body or organisation they are paid to?**
28. The Home Office is committed to being open and transparent through the publication of data. Actual spend will be reported as part of the annual Home Office Reports and Accounts in the usual way.
29. Through the MEDP, the UK is providing substantial investment to boost the development of Rwanda, including jobs, skills and opportunities to benefit both migrants and host communities. This included an initial investment of £120m as part of a new Economic Transformation and Integration Fund to help the economic development and growth of Rwanda.

30. We have also undertaken to provide funding to Rwanda for all individuals who are relocated. This funding will cover asylum processing (case workers, translators etc), accommodation, healthcare, and for those granted protection, a comprehensive integration package. As part of this, the UK made a £20m advance payment to the Government of Rwanda to support initial set up costs. This amount is a credit to pay for the anticipated future asylum and operational costs and separate from the £120m figure above.
31. **You did not quite answer whether you agree with the Permanent Secretary of the Home Office that there is no evidence of whether the Rwanda MEDP is (or is not) value for money? Do you agree with Sir Matthew Rycroft?**
32. As the policy has not yet been implemented due to litigation, it is not possible to have a clear basis for evaluating its value for money.
33. Until relocations commence, I would not expect to make a judgement on any sustained deterrent impact from this partnership. However, it stands to reason that for those willing to pay smuggling gangs thousands of pounds to facilitate a dangerous and illegal journey to the UK, the probability of relocation to Rwanda at the end of that journey, will prove a deterrent.
34. I have consistently said there is no single solution to tackle the issue of illegal migration; we need to seek radical new approaches to fix this global migration crisis. There is also no monetary value we can attribute to saving lives.
35. While I understand it is not possible for HMG to accurately model the deterrent effect from day one, together with Rwanda, we are confident this policy is our best chance at producing that effect. It is only by introducing new incentives and effective deterrents into the system, as international partners like Greece and Australia have done, that we can take on the criminal gangs facilitating illegal entry and break their lethal business model.
36. **Finally, what indicative timetable can you give for the introduction of the new legislation that you have mentioned? Will there be any opportunity to consider that legislation in draft?**
37. Our aim is to introduce the new legislation as soon as practicable. It is not proposed to publish the Bill in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny; it is important that we progress the Bill at pace so that it can be enacted this session. MPs and peers (and relevant select committees) will have the usual opportunity to thoroughly scrutinise the Bill as it makes its way through both Houses.
38. Thank you for taking the time to write on behalf of the Liaison Committee. I trust this response addresses the points raised in your letter.



**Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP**