

Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
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Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State
Department for Transport
33 Horseferry Road
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15 January 2021

Dear Secretaries of State,

Following the Government's announcements on pre-travel testing and flight restrictions from South America, and in the light of evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee this week, please could you provide us with answers to the following questions.

1. Why was the guidance on pre-travel testing not published until Wednesday evening, making it impossible to implement the requirements today?

- Why did it take so long to draw up the guidance? How long did the Government expect it to take to draw up the guidance when it announced the policy on 8 January and advised that the policy would take effect the following week?
- Given the Government's own Global Travel Taskforce recommended on 24 November that a pre-departure testing system be devised,¹ what work was done since then to research and prepare guidance and implement a system?
- What advice had Ministers received prior to the 8 January announcement, and from whom, about the time required to prepare and implement guidance?
- Given that other countries have already introduced pre-travel test requirements—in some cases months ago—why was the UK not simply able to adopt the guidance other countries already operate?

2. Can you confirm that, as a result of delaying the implementation of pre-flight testing, this weekend it will be possible for UK residents to return home from Brazil, Portugal and 15 other countries² on

¹ Department for Transport, '[Global Travel Taskforce Recommendations](#)', 24 November 2020

² Department for Transport, '[Travel from South American destinations, Portugal, Panama and Cape Verde banned to prevent spread of new variant](#)', 14 January 2021

flights via other countries without being tested either before they travel or on arrival, and that they will then be able to use public transport in the UK to get home?

- Given the concerns from the Government and scientists about the infectiousness of the Brazil variant, what action is the Government taking to address the risks this poses?

3. On Wednesday 13 January, Professor Annelies Wilder-Smith told this Committee that she would recommend Lateral Flow Tests on arrival in the UK in addition to pre-departure tests and quarantine.³ We note that pre-travel tests might have been completed up to 72 hours before arrival in the UK. We also note that Japan identified the Brazil variant in the first place as a result of genomic analysis on tests done on travellers in airport quarantine. Why has the UK Government not considered introducing testing on arrival before people go onto public transport, in addition to quarantine arrangements?

4. Please could you describe how post-arrival quarantine measures are enforced, including by Border Force, Public Health bodies and the police?

- Could you explain why the latest police data on Fixed Penalty Notices contained notably less information about the enforcement of international travel regulations than the previous such release?⁴
- Could you explain why Border Force has not published data on enforcement measures since September 2020?
- Please could you provide enforcement data for international travel regulations for each month from September 2020 onwards, to include:
 - The number of spot checks carried out on Passenger Locator Forms at the UK border, and the proportion of overall UK arrivals subject to checks;
 - The number of spot checks successfully carried out by Public Health authorities on those required to quarantine, and the proportion of overall UK arrivals subject to quarantine who are successfully contacted by Public Health authorities;
 - The number of spot checks attempted by Public Health authorities on those required to quarantine which were unsuccessful;
 - The number of referrals made to the Police;
 - The outcome of visits made to individuals by Police, akin to data released by the National Police Chiefs' Council in December 2020;
 - The number of enforcement actions ultimately taken.
- Will you commit to publishing comprehensive monthly data which includes the data described above?

5. On Wednesday 13 January the Immigration Services Union told us that Border Force aims to check 10% of passengers to see if they have completed their Passenger Locator Forms.⁵ The Prime Minister

³ [Q885](#)

⁴ Cf. NPCC, [‘More Fixed Penalty Notices issued since national Coronavirus restrictions were introduced, with crime 9 per cent lower than last year’](#), 30 November 2020; NPCC, [‘Update on national Crime Trends, and Fixed Penalty Notices issued under Covid Regulations’](#), 8 January 2021

⁵ [Q869](#)

said at the Liaison Committee that 30% of passenger forms were being checked.⁶ The Transport Secretary said that a quarter of passenger forms were being checked.⁷ Please could you provide us with the correct figure, and confirm what data is used to inform it?

6. Please could you describe to us the nature of the checks that Border Force undertake on Passenger Locator Forms?

- The Immigration Services Union told us that: “[the check on a Passenger Locator Forms] is very basic. It is simply: has the form been completed, and is the information contained in it vaguely plausible? Unless it is manifestly unreliable, we accept the data that is put there at face value. We have no way of knowing”.⁸ What instructions are given to Border Force officials regarding the extent of checks required on Passenger Locator Forms and the circumstances in which data provided by passengers should either be accepted or subject to further checks?
- In some countries border officials undertake further checks such as calling mobile phone numbers listed. Why is this not the case in the UK?
- What further checks are Border Force officers empowered or required to carry out where there are doubts about the reliability of information a passenger has provided? Please provide a copy of any instructions or guidance provided to officers relating to further such checks.

7. Please can you describe to us the nature of the subsequent checks for compliance with quarantine arrangements? In particular could you describe the nature of the checks carried out by Public Health authorities upon quarantining individuals?

- Could you also explain:
 - What training is provided to Public Health officers to assess whether a person is providing accurate and truthful information about their quarantine;
 - What priority is given to checking those arriving from particularly high-risk countries, and what extra measures are taken to ensure their compliance with quarantine;
 - Whether the Government has contracted any private companies to support the checking of quarantining individuals; and if so, what training is provided to their employees, and what performance measures must those companies meet?

8. In what circumstances are cases passed to the police?

- On Wednesday, police representatives told us that if they are unable to locate an individual they “will refer that back to the border agency for further work and consideration”⁹. However, the Immigration Services Union said that they were “concerned to hear that the police believe

⁶ Liaison Committee, 13 January 2021, [Q52](#)

⁷ BBC Radio 4, ‘[Today](#)’, 15 January 2021

⁸ [Q868](#)

⁹ [Q863](#)

that they refer matters back to Border Force” as the agency does not have an in-country role.¹⁰
What is the process in cases where police have not been able to engage with an individual?

9. Other countries have introduced a range of measures to prevent arrivals from high-risk countries potentially infecting others in the community. Examples include quarantine taxis to return people to their home address, quarantine hotels, quarantine apps that people have to use during the quarantine period, and firm criminal penalties for those who breach quarantine. What consideration has the UK given to these tools? If any has been considered, why was it rejected?

I copy this letter to the Chair of the Transport Committee. Please could you respond as soon as possible, and by 22 January at the latest.

Yours sincerely

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

Yvette Cooper MP

Cc: Huw Merriman MP, Chair, Transport Committee

¹⁰ [Q869](#)