

Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
SW1P 4DF

23 April 2021

Dear Home Secretary,

ICIBI inspection report on asylum accommodation and judicial review of Napier barracks accommodation.

We understand from reports in the media that papers including the ICIBI report on contingency asylum at Penally Camp and Napier Barracks were released to the legal teams representing the applicants in a Judicial Review that took place at the Royal Courts of Justice last week regarding your decision to house asylum seekers at Napier Military Barracks in Kent. We understand that the judge in the review also ordered the release of the full ICIBI report following requests by journalists to obtain a copy during the hearing.

Given that the ICIBI's report is now in the public domain and has been shared with journalists, please can you immediately provide formally a copy of the final report, as well as any correspondence between the Home Office and the ICIBI on this matter, to the Committee by 5pm on Monday 26th April.

On 10 March 2021 we wrote to you regarding the findings of the ICIBI and expressed strong concerns that some of those findings contradicted the evidence that you and the Permanent Secretary had given to this Committee on 24 February 2021 about whether the Home Office had followed health advice in the autumn.

On 18 March you wrote back to us to say that that the ICIBI's findings did not contradict the evidence you gave on 24 February and that the Government would respond to the ICIBI's final inspection report when it is laid before Parliament. You also told us that specific advice provided by public health bodies to the Home Office in September 2020 and referred to in the ICIBI's interim report could not be shared with us as litigation proceedings were taking place.

Now that those documents and media reports from them are in the public domain, it is clear that the ICIBI's report confirms that in September 2020 Public Health England advised the Home Office that opening multi-occupancy dormitory-style accommodation at Napier "was not supported by current guidance". The report states that "Both PHE and, in relation to Penally Camp, Public Health Wales (PHW), expressed concerns to the Home Office about the Covid-19 safety of the accommodation". However, the report found that "the sites were opened before PHW and PHE recommendations had been implemented".

In oral evidence to the Committee on 24 February, in response to questioning about the guidance given to the Home Office by PHE in the autumn, you said:

advice around dormitories and the use of the accommodation was all based on Public Health advice [...] It is all working in line with public health guidance and with local authority partners... so we have been following the guidance in every single way.

Given the evidence of a clear contradiction between the information you and the Permanent Secretary gave to the Committee on 24th February and the findings of the ICIBI, please can you explain why you either believe the ICIBI's finding is wrong or confirm that PHE guidance was not followed in September. Please can you also take this opportunity to make any corrections to the information given to the Committee.


Please could you provide an explanation in writing by 5pm on Monday 26th April, including a copy of the PHE assessment of dormitory and shared bedroom accommodation dated 7 September 2020. Please could you also provide any other correspondence between the Home Office and PHE in Autumn 2020, and any other health advice the Home Office was given on the use of Napier Barracks and Penally Camp and on the use of dormitory accommodation before the sites were opened.

We further understand that during the court hearing the judge heard evidence that the Home Office had been warned about serious fire safety concerns. In the light of this, please provide us with the recommendations made by the Fire Safety Inspectorate on 24 November 2020.

As you will recognise, it is extremely important that the Home Office, both Ministers and officials, gives accurate information to this Committee.

The Committee will therefore need to discuss this serious issue at our next meeting next week. Please can you ensure that we have the full and accurate information we have requested by 5pm on Monday 26th April.

Yours sincerely



Yvette Cooper MP