

Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
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3 April 2020

Dear Home Secretary

The Committee has this week discussed the urgent concern over the lack of any requirement or recommendation for people entering the country from areas with high prevalence of Covid-19 to self-isolate on arrival for 7 to 14 days.

I raised this issue in Parliament on 23 March, including raising the point that, until guidance was withdrawn on 13 March, Government advice was that people arriving from Italy, Iran, Daegu or Cheongdo in the Republic of Korea, and the city of Wuhan and Hubei Province should self-isolate once they get home or reach their destination. However, since 13 March there has been no recommendation to self-isolate at all.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary Chris Philp said on 23 March:

“[The advice] is under continual and ongoing scientific evaluation. The Home Secretary and I have both asked recently for refreshed scientific advice, and that is being monitored almost daily. If the scientific advice says that the safety of our country requires a further change in policy, we will certainly do that in response”

However, there has been no further public advice since then.

You will be aware that Australia, Canada, Germany, Ireland and New Zealand are among countries now recommending or requiring quarantine or self-isolation for people arriving in the country. The Coronavirus Act 2020 gives police and immigration officials powers to require those who arrive from affected areas to self-isolate, but it is not year clear whether or how these powers will be used.

Please answer the following questions:

- What advice has the Government taken, and from whom, in respect of Covid-19 policies on people entering the UK from abroad?
- Please can you send us the analysis referred to by Chris Philp in Parliament?
 - In particular, what is the rationale behind the Government's decision not to require quarantining or self-isolation on arrival?
- For example, given that people are continuing to arrive from New York where the number of cases in the state reached 75,000 this week and continues to rise, why were none of them asked to self-isolate for 7-14 days?
- What assessment has the Government made of the number of people arriving in the UK each week who are likely to be carrying Covid-19 on arrival?
- Even if everyone arriving in the UK follows Government guidance on social distancing, many may still be returning to families, households with other residents, jobs as key workers or in other ongoing businesses, travel by public transport, volunteering or shopping for essentials all within the rules. Is the Government's decision not to ask people arriving in the UK to self-isolate consistent with a precautionary approach?

Given the public interest in this and the significance for the spread of Covid-19, please could you answer these questions as soon as possible and at the latest by Thursday 9 April.

Yours sincerely

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

Yvette Cooper MP