

Home Affairs Committee

Committee Office House of Commons London SW1A 0AA
Tel +44 (0)20 7219 2049 Email homeaffcom@parliament.uk
Website www.parliament.uk/homeaffcom

From the Committee Chair

Dr Tracey Cooper
Chief Executive
Public Health Wales
2 Capital Quarter
Tyndall Street
Cardiff
CF10 4BZ

11 May 2021

Dear Dr Cooper

Public Health Wales advice to the Home Office regarding asylum accommodation at Penally Camp

You will be aware of the [findings](#) of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration following site visits to Penally Camp and Napier Barracks. In particular, ICIBI key findings which state:

In September/October 2020, Public Health England had advised the Home Office that opening multi-occupancy dormitory-style accommodation at Napier was not supported by current guidance, and both they and Public Health Wales expressed concerns about the COVID-safety of the accommodation. Both sites were opened before Public Health Wales and Public Health England recommendations had been actioned.

Public Health England further advised that if the accommodation was to be used, the ability to isolate positive cases and/or establish effective cohorting arrangements was essential to containing any COVID-19 outbreak. Given the cramped communal conditions and unworkable cohorting at Napier, once one person was infected a large-scale outbreak was virtually inevitable. In our resident survey at Napier, none of those who responded felt they had been kept safe from COVID-19. At Penally, where overall numbers were lower and cohorts smaller, the vast majority still did not feel they were being kept safe from the risk of infection.

In light of these statements, and apparent discrepancies between evidence given to the committee and the ICIBI report, I am writing to request that Public Health Wales provide the committee with the advice, assessments and recommendation that it gave to the Home Office regarding Covid-19 measures and the use of dormitory accommodation at Penally Camp.

In addition, please confirm specifically

- (i) whether Public Health Wales had advised the Home Office that opening multi-occupancy dormitory-style accommodation was not supported by current guidance, prior to the opening of Penally Camp and Napier barracks in 2020;
- (ii) if so, on what date that was communicated to the Home Office and what response was received from the Home Office;
- (iii) if not, what advice was given by Public Health Wales to the Home Office on the opening of multi-occupancy dormitory-style accommodation during the pandemic;
- (iv) when Public Health Wales was first consulted on the decision to house asylum seekers in Penally camp and what was your response;
- (v) what access you had to the site in advance of providing your advice; and
- (vi) what response to your advice was received from the Home Office

Please provide a reply by Monday 24 May.

Yours sincerely

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

Yvette Cooper MP