

**Written evidence submitted anonymously (AFG0057)**

**Afghanistan: Op PITTING – Summary of Casework Guidance to MPs & Learning Points**

ACRS: Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme

AFG: Afghanistan

DC: Dear Colleague letter

FCDO: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

GWAU: Government Whips Admin Unit (HOC)

HO: Home Office

<b>Date/Time (all 2021)</b>	<b>Sender</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Learning Points</b>
16 Aug, 16:33	HO MP Engagement Team	<p>“Please find a note on the situation in Afghanistan for Members, and their teams working on casework, attached.”</p> <p>Send urgent visa-related enquiries on behalf of non-British nationals to HO (<a href="mailto:MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk">MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk</a>).</p> <p>British nationals should contact FCDO</p>	<p>There was no mention of ARAP/MoD. The impression given, therefore, was that ARAP cases (since they involved non-British nationals) should be submitted to HO (rather than MoD).</p> <p>It was helpful to have the guidance which was given as to the information the HO would need about the individual(s) being represented by the relevant MP. In addition though, it would have been helpful to have a template of how HO would like cases submitted (the UKVI team issues a template to MPs for normal constituency casework after each general election). Ideally this template would have included details of the Subject heading to be used by MPs’ offices when submitting cases. Both the template and the naming convention for email Subject headings would have enabled HO staff managing the</p>

		directly.	<p><a href="mailto:MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk">MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk</a> inbox to process emails more quickly. It would also have helped MPs' staff as they could have provided the template to constituents raising cases and asked them to populate it with the information required for the cases they were representing.</p> <p>Version control is always good practice but, in fast-moving situations, it is essential so a user can know they are referring to the most up-to-date guidance. The note attached to this email from the HO MP Engagement Team was not dated and bore no version number. Neither did the one issued on 23 Aug (see below).</p>
17 Aug, 20:16	GWAU	<p>DC from Foreign Secretary.</p> <p>British nationals still in AFG – tel &amp; email contacts provided.</p> <p>AFG nationals eligible under ARAP – cases to be emailed to MoD using <a href="mailto:localstaff-afghanistan@mod.gov.uk">localstaff-afghanistan@mod.gov.uk</a></p> <p>FCDO working to see what assistance can be provided for AFG nationals not entitled under ARAP “but who have supported UK objectives in Afghanistan and make [sic] be at risk as a result. MPs are asked to send any related cases to <a href="mailto:afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk">afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk</a>.”</p>	<p>There was no mention of how the direction given in this DC to send ARAP cases to MoD related to guidance given to MPs on the previous day by the HO MP Engagement Team that urgent visa-related enquiries on behalf of non-British nationals should be sent to the HO. Result: confusion as to whether ARAP cases should go to HO or MoD.</p> <p>The creation of the <a href="mailto:afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk">afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk</a> email address by the FCDO also created confusion – why were FCDO interposing themselves in a situation involving non-British nationals (who would need immigration clearance to enter the UK, meaning the HO were the natural department to be receiving details of non-British national cases, as stated in the email sent the previous day by their MP Engagement Team)?</p> <p>But, given the <a href="mailto:afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk">afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk</a> email address had been created, we should at this point have received guidance as to whether cases relating to non-British nationals which we had already submitted to <a href="mailto:MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk">MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk</a> (based on the guidance given to us previously by the HO) needed to be re-submitted to the new FCDO Special Cases email address.</p>
18 Aug, 11:54	GWAU	<p>Three attachments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. same DC from Foreign Secretary as sent out on 17 Aug by GWAU;</li> </ol>	<p>The DC from the Home Secretary referenced the Foreign Secretary’s DC of 17 Aug but only described the FCDO as dealing with consular support for British nationals – there was no acknowledgement of the existence of the Special Cases category for non-British nationals that the Foreign Secretary had notified to MPs’ offices in his DC. This reinforced our confusion as to why FCDO were apparently straying into HO territory, dealing with cases</p>

		<p>2. DC from Home Secretary announcing ACRS;</p> <p>3. DC from Defence Secretary.</p>	<p>related to non-British nationals. In turn, this added to confusion as to where we should be submitting non-British-national special cases (<a href="mailto:UrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk">UrgentQueries@HomeOffice.gov.uk</a> or <a href="mailto:afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk">afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk</a>).</p> <p>The hyperlink to the ARAP eligibility criteria which was contained in the Defence Secretary’s DC did not work. This was not a big deal as the criteria were easy to find but links should really be checked in Dept (and double-checked by GWAU) as a matter of course before a DC is issued.</p>
21 Aug, 15:38	PPS to FCDO Ministers (Joy Morrissey MP)	<p>“Please find below contact information for urgent casework relating to the current situation in Afghanistan.”</p> <p>The email directed cases relating to AFG nationals to HO - no mention of the FCDO special cases category.</p> <p>First suggestion that we should copy in a PPS.</p>	<p>The email did <u>not</u> mention the <a href="mailto:afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk">afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk</a> email address or the Special Cases category at all, thereby suggesting to us that it might have been withdrawn from use (our view by this point was that HO had probably told FCDO that they should not be dealing with cases relating to non-British nationals – that opinion had been voiced to me by a member of the HO MP Engagement Team during a phone call I had with them).</p> <p>Was the suggestion to cc PPS not likely to lead to unhelpful duplication, draining finite and stretched resource?</p>
23 Aug, 21:32	HO MP Engagement Team	<p>First confirmation that HO would not be able to provide updates on individual cases.</p> <p>A summary of where to direct cases relating to British nationals (FCDO) and non-British nationals (HO).</p>	<p>This letter strongly reinforced our perception that the FCDO Special Cases route had been withdrawn (meaning that all cases for non-British nationals should be sent to HO) because it did not mention the FCDO Special Cases email address and it stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We [HO] are processing requests for assistance from the UK as quickly as possible, <b>and then passing</b> eligible cases to Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ministry of Defence colleagues ...” (my emphasis in bold).</li> <li>• “For urgent representations on behalf of non-British nationals then Members’ offices can continue to mark them as such and send to ... <a href="mailto:MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.govuk">MPUrgentQueries@HomeOffice.govuk</a> ... We are prioritising .. current or former Chevening Scholars... journalists .. civil society groups for womens’ rights .. Afghan government officials ... employees of charities, humanitarian organisations and ..</li> </ul>

			<p>NGOs ”</p> <p>As with HO’s first communication to MPs on 16 August, the letter attachment to the email had no date or version number.</p>
24 Aug, 09:53	PPS to Home Office Ministers (Paul Homes MP)	<p>Duplicate of previous item.</p> <p>This email contained the first direction (as opposed to suggestion – see Joy Morrissey email dated 21 Aug) that we should cc a PPS.</p>	Was the instruction to cc PPS not likely to lead to unhelpful duplication?
24 Aug, 12:04	PPS to FCDO Ministers	Attaching update from Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon including “the most up to date contacts for casework involving evacuations from Afghanistan.”	<p>This letter resurrected the idea that the <a href="mailto:afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk">afghanspecialcases@fcdo.gov.uk</a> email address remained in operation (even though, as noted above, it had not been mentioned in the 21 Aug email from Foreign Secretary’s PPS or the updates given by HO on 23 &amp; 24 Aug, all of which had asked for cases relating to non-British nationals to be sent to HO).</p> <p>MoD email address given for ARAP cases was incorrect (stated to be <a href="mailto:localstaffafghanistan@mod.gov.uk">localstaffafghanistan@mod.gov.uk</a> rather than <a href="mailto:localstaff-afghanistan@mod.gov.uk">localstaff-afghanistan@mod.gov.uk</a>).</p> <p>FCDO email addresses seemed to be out of date but were hopefully still operational (...@fco.gov.uk rather than ...@fcdo.gov.uk).</p>
24 Aug, 16:48	GWAW	Joint FCDO/HO/MoD DC letter. It included the same table giving a summary of communications routes as had been contained in letter sent earlier the same day by PPS on behalf of Lord Ahmad (but with the MoD email address for ARAP cases corrected).	<p>This was the first communication we received which demonstrated that HO recognised FCDO were operating a Special Cases category/inbox for some non-British nationals. This letter was, therefore, a contradiction of the update issued to MPs less than 24 hours earlier by HO which had advised that urgent cases relating to non-British nationals should be submitted to it. We were once again back to thinking the FCDO were operating a Special Cases category for non-British nationals.</p> <p>Again, FCDO email addresses seemed to be out of date (...@fco.gov.uk rather than ...@fcdo.gov.uk).</p>

<p>25 Aug, 10:38</p>	<p>PPS to FCDO Ministers</p>	<p>“Just a reminder of the contact details previously circulated for Afghanistan casework. In order to get the swiftest resolution, it is important to put information through the correct channels otherwise the processing of your casework could be delayed in reaching the appropriate Department.”</p> <p>This email directed MPs to submit cases relating to AFG nationals or any other non-British nationals to HO.</p>	<p>There was no mention (from the PPS to FCDO ministers!) of the FCDO Special Cases category/inbox. Instead, the direction she gave was for us to submit cases for non-British nationals to HO. This email was, therefore, directly contradictory to the summary table of communications set out in joint FCDO/HO/MoD DC letter issued less than 20 hours previously. We were back once more to the position of thinking that the FCDO Special Cases category/inbox was a red herring.</p>
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**May 2022**