

Written evidence submitted by Dominic Akers-Paul, Glenda Caesar, Christian Hayibor, Gertrude Ngozi Chinegwundoh, Carl Nwazota, Grace Nwobodo, Holly Stow, Anthony Williams (WCS0025)

[Note: This evidence has been redacted by the Committee. Text in square brackets has been inserted where text has been redacted.]

Transcript of Group Discussion on the Windrush Compensation Scheme with the Home Affairs Select Committee on Tuesday 1 December 2020

Attendees: Dominic Akers-Paul, Glenda Caesar, Christian Hayibor, Gertrude Ngozi Chinegwundoh, Carl Nwazota, Grace Nwobodo, Holly Stow, Anthony Williams

Members: Yvette Cooper MP, Diane Abbott MP, Stuart C McDonald MP, Adam Holloway MP

Chair: I'm Yvette, Yvette Cooper. The Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee. Welcome all of you. What I thought we would do is go around and each introduce ourselves just first before we start. But just to say, I've been chairing the select committee for a few years now. And we first took evidence on the Windrush scandal a few years ago when we took evidence from Amber Rudd, when we took evidence about the initial problems when it first all came to light about just how much had gone wrong and the way in which the Home Office and the British State had so badly let all of you down and so many people across the Windrush generation. And we did a report at that point.

But we've tried to keep track of everything that's happened, especially with the Compensation Scheme. We have raised individual cases with Ministers, with the Permanent Secretary and so on in the meantime. But we've had a sense of frustration that this is still not working the way that it should've been, and it is still not putting right the wrongs that were done. And that's why we've now decided to open this as a short inquiry into the Compensation Scheme and the issues that are being raised as part of that.

So, really what we wanted to do today was just to completely hear from you about your experiences; the frustrations you've had, the things you feel have gone wrong, the things you feel ought to change about it. We're hugely grateful to you for sharing your experiences.

We've got a lot of people here. We want to hear as much as possible from everyone and that means there's an awful lot to get through as well. It may be there are some issues that we ask you to send as email or write to us further about it if we don't get a chance to cover all of the details in the discussion today. Because we would very happily look at that. And I know that some of you have already sent some things in, in writing as well which we've already got and really appreciate too.

So, to start, we'll introduce ourselves from the Committee. I'm Yvette, I've been the Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee for the last few years. I'm a Labour MP for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford which is in Yorkshire. Very grateful to have all of you giving evidence to us today. Diane, do you want to introduce yourself?

Diane Abbott MP: My name is Diane Abbott. I'm the Member of Parliament for Hackney North and Stoke Newington. I have a great many Windrush and descendants of Windrush people in Hackney. My parents came to this country in 1952 and they and their relatives and friends were definitely Windrush. And I would just say I feel very sympathetic to people who

had difficulties with the system. Clearly, clearly, I don't think the Compensation Scheme is working properly. It is pathetically small, the numbers of people that have got compensation. I will finish there.

Stuart C McDonald MP: Hello everybody. Thank you very much for giving up your time to share your own experiences. It is very much appreciated. My name's Stuart McDonald. I'm an SNP MP for the constituency of Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East, it's just outside Glasgow in the centre of Scotland. I take a strong interest in immigration matters; in particular the Windrush scandal, has obviously dominated this policy area for the last two or three years so it really is helpful to be able to speak to you directly and hear your own experiences. So, thank you very much indeed.

Chair: I wondered now if you could very briefly introduce yourselves. Glenda?

Glenda Caesar: Hi, my name is Glenda Caesar. I live in Hackney. I've got to say I'm a victim of this whole scandal. I think I was one of the first few to get my paperwork as a British citizen but still fighting the cause and we're part of the Windrush Lives group trying to help other people going through this.

Grace Nwobodo: I'm Grace Nwobodo. I'm Nigerian and unfortunately, I'm a victim of the Windrush saga. I've been following the whole events concerning Windrush since I was made aware of the Windrush scandal in 2018 by my cousin Gertrude. And since then I've been following and attending engagement meetings and so on and so forth. And so, I'm very pleased to be here today to be part of this meeting. Thank you very much.

Carl Nwazota: My name's Carl Nwazota. I'm British-born but my mother is from Jamaica, my father is from Nigeria but me and my brothers were all born here. I think about 10 years ago my passport expired, my British passport. I went to renew it and that's when my problems began. I haven't had a passport since, before 2000. It's been extremely difficult.

Gertrude Ngozi Chinegwundoh: Hello, my name's Gertrude Chinegwundoh. I'm Grace's first cousin. I first realised there was a big problem with victims in Nigeria when the Windrush scandal broke. I realised that Grace and our family friends and other relatives were involved. And most of them are still stuck out there. They applied under the Windrush Compensation Scheme and have been refused. So, Grace is the only one that got through because she actually flew over here and submitted her application. All the others are still over there. So, I'm fighting for justice for them.

Dominic Akers-Paul: Hi, I'm Dominic. I'm a Camden resident. I was born in the UK, born in London. But my issue was with my Mum, she struggled to get her status. She was effectively made stateless by the Home Office in fact. She arrived here by ship from St Kitts when she was about 2, 3 days old. Obviously, when the landing cards were destroyed, she was unable to prove when she landed. So, they said, well you weren't born in Britain physically, therefore, you're not British. Obviously, you're not born anywhere else, so you're not from anywhere else. So, she was effectively trapped in limbo until I started pushing. But that wasn't until she was 48, when she got her first British passport, I was 18.

Christian Hayibor: My name is Christian. I came over when I was two years old with my family from Ghana. We came over with my Dad who was a diplomat at the time with the Ghana High Commission. In 2006, I was a victim of a crime – I basically had my sports bag stolen out my car. In that was my passport and my birth certificate, so I lost my documents. I didn't realise there was problem with Windrush because I always assumed... well I say

assumed, I always assumed that I was legally here as a British citizen as I was given an Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) card when I was 18 years old. And my sisters and my brothers and my Mum and Dad, they all have British citizenship, so I've always assumed I was fine with my ILR. I don't travel, I've never left the country.

In 2006, I was still working, and I didn't realise there was a problem, I was a bus driver. I didn't realise there was a problem. In 2009, I left my job thinking I could walk into another job just like that. Until that point, I hadn't realised there was a major problem. Once again, I tried to contact the Home Office and then realised, from the Home Office, that I wasn't going to get any documents to prove that I was legally here, and it went on like that until the present day.

Holly Stow: Hi my name's Holly Stow. I'm a senior caseworker at North Kensington Law Centre. We're also part of the Windrush Justice Clinics and work closely with Windrush Lives to assist people with making a claim or with the review stages. I think we're currently assisting around, just over 50 claimants under the Windrush scheme. I'm here to support and listen to all of you guys and what you have to say.

Anthony Williams: Hi, my name is Anthony Williams. I arrived here in 1971. Had a great time. I joined the Army in the 80s, came out of the Army in the 90s. Had a great life until 2013, Windrush hit me, I've been fighting it ever since then. Great stuff from the guys at Windrush Lives, I'm working with them as well. That's it.

Chair: Great, thank you very much. We wanted to spend quite a bit of time on the Compensation Scheme and realise some of you may also not have your original Windrush issues, if there's anybody that still has issues around passports and issues around citizenship and any of those, resolved. It might be worth us covering those as well afterwards.

But if it's okay by you, I'd like to start with the issues around the Compensation Scheme because those are the things we're going to have a chance to ask questions about in our evidence session next week. So, what I just wanted to do was to start by asking each of you to tell us very briefly, when you applied for the Compensation Scheme and how far you have now got along through the Compensation Scheme and what the key problems have been for you in it. And what I would suggest is if everybody could sum it up as briefly as possible and then we can go into more the detail of some of the issues, if that's okay. So, Carl, I don't know if you are okay to start? And just tell us when you applied for compensation and how far you've gotten through the system.

Carl: I first applied in 2016. To date, I've done two application forms and none of them have been processed. I'm no further than that to be honest with you. Keep it brief.

Chair: In terms of how often the Home Office have updated you, have they told you where your case is in the system, what's the latest that they have told you?

Carl: We had a meeting recently, which I attended. And then after that meeting, I received a phone call a few days later, only because I attended the meeting and I was there. If I had not been there, I would not have gotten a call. In one word, sporadic. The contact from the Windrush team has been sporadic. That's the best way I can describe it to you.

Chair: What were they saying about how long it's likely to take, about what they are asking for next and in terms of where in the system it's now got to?

Carl: Nothing. When they phoned me last time, obviously I had to reiterate to them again that they had lost two of my compensation forms already, which they accept. And obviously, I was living on the streets for just under 11 months. I've only just been housed now. They were speaking to me throughout the whole duration of me being homeless, living on the street, and still they just kept giving me sporadic phone calls, with no actual offer for help. I tried to apply for the vulnerable persons' fund or the emergency fund and they just kept denying me basically. And that was it.

They said until they received a completed compensation form from me, they can't help me. That's what they said. I tried to explain – because of you, I'm living on the street and I'm finding it difficult to complete a compensation form where I'm living on the street. And my life is not structured due to the situation you've put me in. They didn't seem to understand that. They just said, 'well there's nothing more we can do'. That was it. I had a key worker, homeless worker, he actually helped me fill in the second compensation form and he said that to them on the phone and asked them about the emergency fund for people that are in difficulty. They just continued to make excuses basically.

Chair: Have they accepted that they've got a form from you now?

Carl: No, they've accepted that they've lost... They accept that I did do the two forms and I sent the two forms to them. And they accept the two forms must have got lost in the system. That's the clearest way I can say it to you. They said the forms must have got lost in the system. I tried to explain it's getting cold out here, I'm running out of money and resources and I asked them to contact my local council to explain that I can't rent another property without a passport and they just kept saying, 'we'll call you back', and they never did.

In my desperation... Well, I'll just say, at my lowest, I tried to take my own life. And after that I started reading about Glenda online. And then, I just searched and got Glenda's contact details. I rang Glenda and just told her where I was and where I was at. And, I'm here now and that's how I'm here now basically. I don't hear from them. I've had one phone call to say that I am a British citizen now, they found my records up until 1995. They apologise for what I've been through and they will send me some fresh compensation forms. That's all I've had.

Chair: I'm sorry this has been such a complete nightmare for you. And that is just awful. Where are you now? Have you got somewhere to live now?

Carl: Yes. How I knew something was wrong was that, where I had to leave Wood Green because I had applied for my passport four times and they hadn't replied. And obviously, I'm paying money each time. And then I started to hear about people doing the raids in Haringey, where I'm from. I'm from Wood Green in Haringey. People were getting picked up and people weren't really sure if it was deportation or if it was to do with ex-criminals and all that and all this sort of thing. So, I moved from Wood Green to Bristol. Made a fresh application in 2016 to renew my passport and the problem was still there basically. And that was it. So, I've been in constant contact with them, but it's just been, with no disrespect, a complete waste of time. It's the same things they say over and over again.

Chair: And have you got... They have now accepted that you're a British citizen and they have apologised for that.

Carl: They have offered me my passport back, but I've had legal advice from Holly and I'm not just going to accept my passport just like that. I want a letter of apology. I want some sort of explanation. With all due respect to some of the other people in this call, I'm not prepared to go through some of the hoops that some of the people that you're going to hear from today have already been. I'm a British citizen, I shouldn't have been exposed to this. I feel I've only been exposed to it because of my mother being born in Jamaica and having a Nigerian surname. That's what I believe.

Last time, I spoke to them, I said to them that Holly will be in contact with them. I want some money straight away, sorry to be crude. I've said that I want money straightaway. I should've had money when I was on the street. Holly will sort all that out with them. I said I'm not going to fill in any more forms or jump through any more hoops. After all the stuff that we now know that has gone on at the Home Office, I don't think there's any more need for that. I said I'm not even going to provide you with any more information now that you that I'm British. I'm just going to leave it with my representation to acquire some sort of interim payment for me.

Their answer to that was... It felt like the [caseworker] speaking to me had someone speaking in [their] ear as well. I think it might've been, is it Mr Hobbs? I don't know if that's right. Someone was definitely coaching this [caseworker]; [their] name was [***]. [They were] being spoken to by someone in [their] ear while [they were] speaking to me and I just put it on the line. I said, 'I'm not doing this anymore'. 'I'm not even comfortable dealing with you as the Home Office'. And they said, 'we're going to right the wrongs' and everything else. I said that I'd heard it all before. I'm going to make Holly aware of where I stand. I want an interim payment as soon as possible. Their answer was yes, we can do that for you Carl, but it will come out of your eventual compensation settlement.

I said to be fair with you, as a member of Windrush Lives and I've been doing this for many years, it's not even worth talking about a settlement because no one I know has got anything. So, we don't have to talk about a settlement. I'm not even bothered about all of that. I just need money now. That's what I said to them. And not any silly amount. When I hear some of my brothers and sisters receiving £7000 for example for impact on life and I just made this [caseworker] and whoever was with [them] aware that I haven't come for that sort of compensation. I'm not here for that. I'm a British citizen, I've been made stateless for over 10 years and I want to be treated fairly and respectfully.

Chair: When did you lose your passport? When was it taken away?

Carl: I believe, I can't be sure, and I don't want to make any accusations, my passport was lost or, I believe it was taken by Haringey Police, when I was younger. The point I made to the Home Office was that it had expired anyway. It was only the physical copy of the passport. I think that was 2000, the last time I saw my passport.

Chair: At what point, what year did the problems start happening for you?

Carl: I wanted to be a Refuse Driver for Islington Council and I applied for my driving license. It just took forever. Many phone calls, many problems. They were asking me who I am. And in the end, I lost the job opportunity. It was very stressful.

Chair: What year was that roughly?

Carl: I'm guessing, maybe, 2000 and something, 2001, 2002. I'd have to go through my DWP records and then it will show when I was at that address. That's when I first realised something was wrong. My driving license... it took ages to get it.

Chair: Thank you Carl. We'll probably come back to you again in a second. Glenda, can I ask you about your experiences of the Compensation Scheme and the things that have happened.

Glenda: My problems started when I had taken a position as a GP Practice Administrator. I got the position from an Interim Manager at the time and she was happy because I had worked for the NHS for over 20-odd years. It was time for me to sort of retire but I still wanted to work so I took a position with shorter hours. While I was in the position, we got a new manager and he was just based on me not having a passport.

I came here when I was baby, so I've always thought that I was British. I never, ever had to look to do anything. I didn't think about going on holiday because I became a mother at a very young age, so my main interest was to just build a home for my children and get myself back up to scratch, you know, developing my education. My first child I had at the age of 16 and I just wanted to build a home and do something for the kids.

Once I managed to get my career going, NHS was where my career took off. So, having over 20 years' experience, retiring, getting this job, the manager just approached me and kept going on about not having a British passport, but I have a work record, so I don't know. He said, 'Well, no, you can't stay here. There are other people who can get the job. People who have the right to live here and work here'. It became very draining. I was going home and crying. My sons were getting annoyed. In the end he gave me a letter and dismissed me for gross misconduct because I didn't have the right to live here or to work here.

That was in November 2009. After that, I tried to claim benefits. I was told I didn't have a British passport, so you can't claim benefits. I would try everything. I would be on the gov.uk website to see what clauses included me. I made an application for entitlement of abode. They took my money and they refused me because they said... Oh, what did they say... Something to do with my Dad. So, every time I got a refusal, I was trying to gather more and more information to see if it could help my case and send off to them. They said about getting a status letter, so I applied for a status letter. They took my money and they turned me down. So, what do I do now? There's nothing I could do.

Most of the times they were asking for information on my father. So, I tried to find information on my father. Went down to Kew Gardens, there was nothing on my Dad. Nothing at all. It's like my father didn't exist. My mother, she passed away in 1998 while she was abroad in Dominica, so I couldn't even attend her funeral because... I didn't have you know... I was scared anyway.

[***] I continue fighting, I continue trying to get information to do different things but then it was a no hope. Like Carl, I had reached the stage where, I just thought, well, what do I do now, there's nothing for me to do. I've tried everything. [***] I thought the problem was because of me and I had contemplated suicide as well because I thought perhaps if I'm out the way then everything else will just come together. I went to the doctor and told them about it.

I tried to do different things. I was selling old trainers, cleaning them up and putting them on eBay. Just something to live. My elder children had to support me. They were supporting me financially, money on the gas, electric, doing shopping, having to pay the access on my rent. It wasn't good to watch a mother and your child and having to see one who's depressed as well.

In 2018, that's when someone said to me, my sister said, there's people on the telly going through what you're going through. I said really. And then I got contacted by the media, do you want to talk about it. Yes, I do. Yes, please. It was relief. After this all happening, someone actually phoned me and told me you could make a claim of compensation which I did.

Chair: So, when did you apply for compensation?

Glenda: In April 2018, is when I got approached. In seven days, I got my citizenship. After waiting nearly 10-odd years. It was a couple of weeks after, it might've been early May, that someone called the Home Office on three-way and then they told me about compensation. I don't think the scheme had even started yet but they were in the process of doing it, so I put my name down on it. I also tried to claim for the vulnerable... the fund¹. It was the longest process. Even though I had submitted all of my documentation to the Home Office already, this team wanted me to submit paperwork again. But I was like, you've got the paperwork. And then they sent me back a form, 'fill this in', 'how much is this, what do you pay' and I was like, no way, I can't do this. It was just like having to do the same thing over and over again. I was like, you know what, I won't apply for that, I'll just wait until the compensation comes.

So, I did get an offer... I can't even remember the date... 2019 I think I got an offer... December 2019. I got my first offer of £22,664. £13,000 for loss of employment, £7,000 for impact on life and £1,500 for being detained at the airport for a couple of hours. I had a Dominican passport and my sister had taken me on holiday and I got detained at the airport because they said they were ready to send me back. I said to them, okay, whatever information you're going on, you find on my Dad, you're doing me a favour. Because that might help me. And they came back, and they said, 'no, we can see where you've made a search. But we can find nothing on your Dad. We'll let you in. But if you leave the country again you won't be able to come back in'. So, I was stuck in England until then.

But, compensation, I filled in the forms by myself because at the time the compensation started there was no help, there was no form of help. If there was, I didn't know because it wasn't public. So, I was doing things by myself. But I didn't understand the form because what we were told is fill it in and it will be simple. And this was told by the Home Secretary then, Sajid Javid. I went to his office, we got invited to his office. And he said, 'it's a first-come first-served basis, fill in the forms' so I thought, okay, they've got all my paperwork, brilliant, I'll just fill it in.

But, unbeknown to me, it didn't go like that, you really needed legal help. I had to contact the task force team myself. It was a continuous phoning up – 'what's going on... you lot haven't contacted me'. The caseworkers were useless, as far as I'm concerned, useless. If you phoned them up – you weren't getting answers back. The people on the helpline didn't have a clue what was going on. So, you were talking to someone who didn't even know who

¹ The Emergency Payment

you were. Then, you'd say, 'I want the caseworker to call me', 'no, well, they will call you when they can'. Which I found was really rude. Persistence and speaking to senior people, I got a second offer which I've turned down again because as far as I'm concerned it is not enough.

And I got help from Holly, God bless her, who was sent to me by an angel. So, now, it's all in her hands.

Chair: So, you'd applied quite early on in 2018, basically as soon as it came out. That first offer, they gave you, so they just gave you £13,000 for a capped one year's loss of earnings and then, nothing for any potential lost benefits, like if you weren't earning then you could've been claiming benefits, they didn't compensate you for any of that?

Glenda: No, what they did say to me in the letter was that you had to contact the Department for Work and Pensions yourself to get the back-dated money. So, I did. I contacted the Department for Work and Pensions and they said to me, 'oh, we've got nothing that goes back further than five years'. I said, 'but before then I wasn't getting benefits'... 'Well, I don't know why they turned round and told you that'... So, I said, 'what happens then, what do I do?'... 'Well there's nothing we can do Mrs Caesar'. So, I'd lost all of those benefits that I would've been entitled to. It's like a headache – there's just so much that you can do.

I'd left that job. I was an Administration Manager. I didn't want to have to deal with paperwork and all this, I just wanted to sit down and relax with my grandkids.

Chair: Did the DWP give you any back-dated payments?

Glenda: £564 from April, that's it. I'm not lying... That's it.

Chair: So, you didn't get five years backdated or anything like that?

Glenda: No, nothing like that.

Chair: Again, I'm really sorry that this has been such a nightmare for you.

Adam Holloway has joined us everybody. He wasn't on at the beginning. Adam, do you also want to quickly introduce yourself before you raise anything?

Adam Holloway MP: Yes, sure. I'm a Conservative MP in Kent. I was brought up in Vauxhall in South London and I'm a former Army Officer and an ITN News at 10 reporter. But the question I want to ask is when this was going on, did any of you get any sympathy from the staff you dealt with? Was there any understanding or were they just bureaucrats?

Glenda: No, there was no sympathy. It's the same story we're hearing now. It's like a script – 'oh we're going to right the wrongs'. There was never any sympathy. I would've loved if they had sent me a letter saying that they were so sorry this has happened to me. But I've never had that. My case was one of the first to go into the media and I've never had that, nothing at all. So, no, they haven't.

Anthony: I'm not going to go back to 2013, they were dark days. I think I'll start at the compensation bit. I applied for compensation in April 2019. I didn't receive my first offer until July 2020. That was 15 months, I had to wait for my first offer. Which I found disgusting. And the only reason I received the offer was because of you, Yvette, because

you put pressure on Matthew Rycroft to do something about it. Matthew Rycroft not a friend of mine.

Between those 15 months, I only received two phone calls from the help team or the caseworkers. On the first occasion, they were asking me about my pay statements which in my application, I explained to them, I did not have any payslips for the simple reason I was working for the company for only four weeks. They refused to put me on the payroll because of Government guidelines. So, I couldn't produce what they were after, which actually, wound me up.

The second phone call was the same thing. Again, asking me for something, which I'd already told them about, which again started winding me up. Which to me was no help at all. The caseworkers, I found the caseworkers completely useless because they are not actually doing the job they are supposed to be doing, which is helping us secure all the evidence that we need. So, we can actually make a proper claim.

For a simple reason, access to employment... Again, just like Glenda and the rest of the guys, they offered me 12 months which is a general award because I could not provide my income information. Now, as far as I'm concerned, my caseworker should've phoned my ex-employer to gain that information. Why didn't they do that... being lazy I suppose. Again, in that period as well, I did receive a couple of payments from working tax credit. So, again, if they wanted information on my salary, all they to do is go to DWP to get that information.

But, no they didn't. They just put me on a general award. So, for five years, they offered me £13,700 and something, which is wrong. So, I have no faith in the scheme at all. I think the scheme was designed so that we failed. We have no legal aid. As Glenda mentioned, we needed people to help us to actually fill out these forms, full stop.

One thing I think the Home Office could do to make it better... They are difficult cases the Home Office has, but if they keep saying a lot of these cases are difficult, why can't we have face to face meetings with our representatives to go over the difficulties, instead of all of these emails, gathering evidence? It's a waste of time. So, that's telling me they are not really there to help us, they are there to hinder us, nothing else. I call it a spreadsheet compensation scheme. Because they have been given a set figure and they are going to stick to those set figures, it will fall between those set figures.

Chair: Have you had any face to face contact with them?

Anthony: No, I haven't. And now, I have a solicitor and I've just said to her, look, here is everything, get on with it. Don't call me unless they make an offer. Because mentally, it's destroying me. That's another issue I had with the Home Office. I had no access to the NHS. So, when they ask for evidence to prove that I'm having mental health issues, where am I supposed to get this evidence from, considering I have no access to help? So, that now impacts on my impact on life payments.

They know what they are doing. They are not stupid people, are they? They are intelligent, aren't they? They work for the Home Office. They are just making it difficult for us, full stop.

Chair: So, they only offered you £13,000 for lost earnings even though you've lost five years in earnings by the time you applied?

Anthony: That's right.

Chair: And what about... did they give you any award for lost benefits? Did DWP give you any backdated benefits?

Anthony: Like Glenda, they don't keep records after five years, that's their excuse. But again, that's wrong again. Because they gave me those couple of payments on working tax credit, guess what, they made me pay it back. What they sent me on working tax credit, they made me pay it back, all of it.

Chair: When was that? Was that right at the beginning or recently?

Anthony: That was in-between. That was about 2016 or 2017. They managed to find information that I owed them money and they wrote to me and made me pay it back.

Chair: Have you put in an application to DWP for any kind of backdated claim?

Anthony: No, because, when I read what the Home Office sent me, I thought, no, waste of time. It's the hassle of doing things really at the end of the day. Too many barriers. There are far too many barriers.

Chair: And in terms of the elements of the award that they did offer you, they offered you a small payment for employment, did they give you an offer around the loss of NHS care or anything like that?

Anthony: Okay, the funny thing with the NHS one, which I find really disturbing. Back in 2014, when I went to register with my local medical centre, they asked for two forms of ID: one was a letter with my address on and photo ID. At the time, I had my driving licence, great photo ID. I gave the receptionist and she noticed on my driving licence it had the word Jamaica, because on your driving licence it says where you were born. That's when she asked for further identification.

Now, when the Home Office spoke to the medical centre and the medical centre told them that their procedures are letter, photo ID, they took it as gospel and said to me I had access to the NHS. But, I didn't because the receptionist noticed Jamaica on my driving licence and then asked me for further ID. But the Home Office does not believe me. They took the side of the medical centre, so I was refused payment. And the worse thing about that, in that period, I think it was 2015, I had dental issues and I could not find a dentist that would take me on. I actually lost most of my teeth. I've got teeth now which are implants and I've had to fund that privately and to date, it's over £5,000. What they offered me on impact on life was £5,000 exactly.

It's disgusting. I had five years of sitting in a flat. I live in a studio flat, looking at four walls, looking out the window at people going to work in the mornings and knowing that I couldn't do that. And, Yvette, to make it even worse, when DWP refused me at first to pay me benefits, I took them through their appeals process. Got nothing. Then, I took them to tribunal, and I won that tribunal. So, the letter came back saying Mr Williams served in the British Army so, at some point, he must have had Indefinite Leave to Remain. A year later, I took it to the Job Centre. Showed it them, they said, 'okay, you can sign on, but you cannot work'.

So, for about four years, every two weeks, I had to go to the Job Centre and sign on, knowing that I couldn't work. The senior management at the Job Centre would not entertain me. My coach worker at the Job Centre didn't even know, for four years. I told him, when I got my Indefinite Leave to Remain ID card, and he looked at me and said, 'I wondered why

you weren't getting any work'. I said, 'didn't you know about this?'... and he said, 'no'. So, you can imagine, I signed on for four years, not being able to work and DWP didn't want to know.

Chair: Thank you, Anthony. Again, I'm really sorry this has been such a problem for you. Gertrude, can I ask you about your experience but also your family's experience as well?

Gertrude: I'm not an actual victim, I'm just going on what's happened to my family and friends. Grace has waited for over a year for her compensation, no offer yet.

Chair: I was just going to ask; do you want to talk about all of the family, or should we hear from Grace first?

Gertrude: It's better to hear from Grace directly.

Chair: Grace – do you want to start and then I'll come back to Gertrude in terms of the other family members as well.

Grace: Thank you very much Yvette. I guess I'd like to start by thanking the Home Affairs Committee for even arranging this kind of platform for us to be able to express our views. And I believe it is the hope of all of us here that this intervention will give the much-needed boost to the efforts of the Home Office in righting the wrongs caused to the Windrush generation.

I know you said at the beginning that this is supposed to be just on the Compensation Scheme, but I do want to put it out there that I felt that this meeting should also have incorporated submissions on the Windrush scheme itself, being that the issue of status and knowing one's status, is a fundamental aspect of the whole Windrush scandal. I find it very distressing.

I've been exiled, so to speak, from the UK for the past 35 years or so. I was also like Glenda, a teen mum. I left the UK because of the ill-health of my baby who I had in 1973. I had to go back to Nigeria in 1975 because of repeated reports of her being ill with malaria. So, when I went back, I didn't plan to stay that long but then I had an extended stay in Nigeria. And when I tried to get back in 1985, at the time my daughter was ready to go into secondary school, I was not allowed to get back in. My passport then was stamped with Leave to Enter for six months, even though I arrived in this country at the age of five in 1963. But when I tried to get back in 1985, my passport was stamped with Leave to Enter for six months and employment was prohibited and there was no way I could now come back to live with my daughter if I couldn't work.

So, I left to go back to Nigeria. So, I've literally been exiled in that country since 1985. Not being allowed to work in the UK, that didn't make sense staying on. It's been a long battle trying to get back to the UK. If not for my cousin Gertrude in 2018, who came Nigeria and told me about the Windrush scandal, I would still be in Nigeria, making my yearly sojourns to England, to see my mother and to see my siblings, all four of them born in the UK. At a point, I thought it was crime for me to be born in Nigeria, being the only one of my siblings to have been born outside the UK.

I know my parents made dogged efforts to try and get me a British passport when we were still here. I went to secondary school here, I went to primary school here. They were always told I couldn't get a British passport, which was wrong information anyway, because I wasn't born in the UK. But I'd been here for more than ten years after I'd gotten here in

1963. Surely, I should've been able to get a British passport at the time when my other siblings, who were born here, got theirs. But that wasn't to be.

So, from 1985, I've done repeated telephone calls to the British High Commission in Lagos trying to find a way to get back to the UK with my daughter. All my efforts fell on deaf ears. Anyway, to cut a long story short, eventually, I was able to come back after Gertrude told me about the Windrush. I came in with a visitors' visa. I sent in my application in October of 2018. I was granted my Indefinite Leave to Remain, once again, in April 2019.

And so, at the time I attended my very first engagement meeting on the Windrush Compensation Scheme, I was not in a position to do anything about it because my status had not yet been determined. So, it was only until April, when I did get my Indefinite Leave to Remain restored. And after months of waiting to even be able to get benefits of any sort, I came in with very little money and of course, my money finished before the confirmation came through. It was a very, very hard time for me. But, eventually, having gotten Indefinite Leave to Remain, I was able to get my benefits and I was able to begin the process of applying for compensation. [break in recording]

Having Indefinite Leave to Remain is not the same as being awarded British citizenship. All my siblings are British citizens, my daughter is British, my grandchildren are all British, my mother is British. And so, I don't know why I'm the only one being left out in the cold. [Someone] told me, 'it's now dependent on the knowledge of life and language test' which apparently, with effect from today, there's a statutory instrument that Priti Patel has put forward, that aspect is supposed to have been taken back off the table. To enable those of us who applied for British citizenship to now be considered for British citizenship, without taking the knowledge of life and language test.

So, I hope that is actually going to be implemented. Hopefully, I might be able to have my British citizenship given to me which should've been given to my parents way back in the 70s when they first asked about this.

Chair: Have they told you whether that is resolved in terms of statutory instruments, because we can pursue that further?

Grace: What [they] said is that it takes effect from today. The instrument that Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, put in it takes effect from 1st December, which is today. So, I'm hoping that somebody will get back to me based on [their] promise that somebody would get back to me, on or before or after the 1st December.

We need to look very, very critically at the way the issues are handled by the so-called caseworkers. Because they do not empathise, they do not know sufficient information about individual cases or the cases they are supposed to be handling to be able to give informed information to the claimants whenever a call is put into them. That is not happening. And the vulnerable persons' team as well need to be more sensitive to how they treat people with issues. They are treating vulnerable persons, even the name of the team defines itself. You are treating vulnerable people. Therefore, you should be sensitive, you should be empathetic and considerate in how you respond to people's queries and questions.

Chair: Thank you, Grace and again, I'm really sorry about everything that you have had to go through as a result of the actions of the Home Office and the British state. I'm very sorry.

Grace: Can I just ask you something before I do sign off... The widened Windrush issue, because some of us have children who are caught up in all of this. My son was born in Nigeria in 1988 and if, I had not had my Indefinite Leave to Remain taken away in 1985, I believe that my son should've been and would've been born in the United Kingdom. I've asked [names] and the team what they can do for me, for my son, under Windrush, and they keep coming back that he can apply under the general application format for getting visas. I don't think that is right. He has been to the UK several times. The last time he was here was in 2012. And since then, he has had issues trying to get a visa to come to see me, to come to see his sister, his only sibling. To come and see his grandmother who is my mother that I'm staying with right now.

It pains me greatly that my family has been cut into pieces and we're all in different parts of the world which is not how [inaudible] family life [inaudible]. It pains me that he is not having that access. I keep telling him to try and apply under the general rule, he says he is not going to do that because it's a very tedious process. The form itself is about 30 pages long. And he's done several and he says he's not doing it again. I really need someone to help me. Even though, Holly said she will look into it, I really need help in that direction.

Before, we even begin to talk about my father's case... I think Gertrude will probably mention her uncle, who is my father, who was also denied access to the UK to get his pension, to get medical treatment. Then he died in 2003, struggling to get access to the United Kingdom, where he worked for more than 30 years having his own private business, working for British Rail and still he was denied access.

Chair: Let me turn to Gertrude now. The specific inquiry that we opened up is to look into the Compensation Scheme. However, we can pursue wider issues at any point, we can raise questions, we can write letters and we can look at all of these wider issues as well. You've certainly raised some troubling things about the wider operation of the Windrush scheme as well as the Compensation Scheme. If there are any further details that you want to send to us, we will look at those and raise questions about those as well. So, let me ask Gertrude now, if you could tell us a bit about some of the other family members and their experiences.

Gertrude: Our parents ... so my Dad was the senior brother of Grace's Dad - my uncle, [Gregory](#). My Dad came here in 1957 and my uncle came in 1961. They both worked for British Rail as well as building up a property portfolio. So, at one point, they owned about six or seven houses around Balham, Norwood, Brixton. So, they had this property portfolio. My uncle went back to Nigeria. After the Biafran War, he went back to Nigeria. He was coming and going for a while and he still had Indefinite Leave to Remain. We've got his passport, his original passport. At some point, he was stopped from coming back. For years and years and years, he tried to come back, and he kept on being refused a visa. Back then, it was ... I would almost say it was almost standard practice to deny men visas to come back. Married women, usually, were able to get visas to come and go but men, no.

One of my classmates, somebody I went to school with, he went to Nigeria in 1979 as a teenager and his brother went in 1982, he's a bit older, and they have never, ever been able to come back. They have tried so many times to return. They have never been able to. Their Dad naturalised in 1970 – he was British. Their Mum is British. They have five siblings in this country who are all British. When I flew to Nigeria in 2018, I met with all of them, including Grace and they completed the application forms. Grace didn't.

But the refusal letters I've got, I've found the reasons given for refusing them under the Windrush Scheme very, very offensive. They told [name] that he had been ... he is married to a Nigerian national, he's been away for too long. He hasn't proved when he went to Nigeria that he planned to go there temporarily even though he had a good job here and had a flat. So, they have said things like you've been away for too long. Your five siblings here – basically they don't count as strong ties so obviously, they are desperate to get back. They are desperate to resume their lives over here. They have had such a rough time in Nigeria – not working, he's always ill. It's just ridiculous. When, I look at the reasons in the refusal letters, they are totally ridiculous.

My friend was born in Balham in 1971, her parents took her back as a baby. She's been trying from 1989 to come back here. She is British by birth. And because of some clerical error she made when she was a teenager, making her first application, she has never been able to come back. I spoke to her this morning and she is turning 50 in April. I've been going back and forth with the Home Office, sending emails for over a year to [name] about these people. I've been saying that I think the people in Nigeria are being treated less favourably than the Caribbean cases I've read about in the Guardian.

Some of those people were flown back, all expenses paid, and they are denying any kind of favourable treatment or preferential treatment and I'm insisting. I've got five refusal letters with the most ridiculous reasons in them.

One of the ladies is in her late 70s. She has never met some of her grandchildren in the UK and now she's got a great-granddaughter and she is desperate to come back. They have refused her based on the fact that they said she has now spent most of her life in Nigeria. She has two British sons. She actually gave birth to her son here in 1972. My main concern is with status for these people. I think they are three deceased people now that I know of or knew of. They couldn't get back here to get their pensions. Every time I tried to sort out their pensions, including a former miner, I was told they have to actually be here. But every time they tried to come here, they were refused visas. They never got their pensions. It's just been an absolute nightmare.

When Grace's Dad was ill, we had to fly him to Italy for medical treatment. It cost thousands of pounds and he couldn't come here.

Chair: Gertrude, I'm just going to pause there for a second as I know we also have the written evidence that you sent us which is really helpful as it was slightly breaking up when you were talking. Dominic, I think you have got to go, haven't you? Christian, are you tight for time as well? Dominic, can I come to you to talk about your experiences and your family's experiences and the key points you want to make to us. Apologies, for keeping you waiting.

Dominic: No worries, I'll be really quick. Essentially, I was born here. My Dad is British. He was born in Grenada when it was still a British colony. Moved here before it got independence. My Gran on my Mum's side, my Mum's mum, she was British as well. She was born in St Kitts before they got independence. Even my Mum's Dad, in fact, was British, born in St Kitts as well.

However, when my Gran was moving over to the UK, she was pregnant with my Mum. She came over by ship and my Mum was born on said ship. Because she was born at sea, it posed difficulties. Also, because her Dad couldn't afford to travel with them at the time so,

he wasn't on the birth certificate. In my Mum's generation, you get your citizenship through your Dad. So, the Dad not being on the birth certificate effectively rendered my Mum stateless by the British Government.

Because when she went to apply for a passport, they said they couldn't prove that she was in the country before '71, '73, something like that. She arrived in '63 so she was here before that time. So, when I came to apply for my passport, my generation gets citizenship through the mother. So, because my Mum was stateless, I became stateless as well. So, I couldn't leave the country, I couldn't get a job at 18 and so on and so forth. Eventually, after hassling them for a few years, they accepted their mistake and they issued me a passport.

My Mum managed to get a passport because they changed the law, I forget the year. Essentially, they made it so you could essentially get yourself naturalised through your mum so if your mum was British you could naturalise through your mum's citizenship and become British as well.

I applied for my compensation in around June or July, I was given my offer end of October, beginning of November. But the offer essentially disregarded everything apart from impact on life and even that, I got a low offer. Impact on life, for basically being made stateless for the first 18 years of my life, they offered me £3,000 which works out at 46 pence per day. Which they thought was righting the wrongs and justified. I came through Holly and me and Holly are appealing that assessment and that amount.

Chair: You applied in June, July of this year and you got the offer in October of this year, is that right?

Dominic: Yes... end of October, beginning of November.

Chair: So, what had you applied for? Had you applied for loss of earnings or...?

Dominic: So, I applied for loss of earnings, I applied for discretionary because I missed out on family events, when my Gran died, buried in Grenada, I couldn't go etc. etc. I applied for impact on life because I couldn't behave like a normal British kid in school, so school trips - France, the Alps etc. etc. I couldn't go. As well as other things I couldn't do. I also applied for banking - it was difficult to get a bank account without a passport to prove you were eligible to have a British bank account.

And initially, my caseworker, he was receptive and said, yeah, I agree with that. I sent a lot of paperwork. I had paperwork from my local MP, who was Frank Dobson at the time. I had paperwork from them, their office, they were trying to deal with it at the time. Sent that all in. My caseworker said it's clear what's happened here, it's clear what's said is happening. But in the letters he sent, he said that it's not clear, and without proof from either employers saying clearly the reason they didn't give me the job is because I was British and couldn't prove it, they won't be able to compensate. I couldn't even get a discretionary award for the loss of employment, they just gave me a zero award etc. etc. The same for discretionary - they said there was no award to give in that section. They only awarded for impact on life. For impact on life they only offered me £3,000.

Chair: What was the period between leaving school and then getting all of it resolved and finally getting your passport or ability to be able to work? How many years did it last for?

Dominic: The first time I applied, from then to when I think... it's been about four years. I first applied for a passport in 2009-ish but I was still in school. They declined it. When it was finally solved was about 2011, 2012.

Chair: How old were you when it was finally solved?

Dominic: I think I was 18, 19, something like that.

Chair: What's your experience been then dealing with the caseworkers? Whether people get back to you? Whether it was easy to get hold of people?

Dominic: They don't really get back to you. I'm someone that has to pester them. They don't show any sort of initiative to help you out. The way you get bounced around is also annoying. The number you get is to a standard hotline, you call that... the person on the hotline tells you, 'oh well, I don't know anything, I'll put you through to your caseworker'. Nine times out of ten they are telling you your caseworker is unavailable, for whatever reason, at that time. So, it's just pillar to post, easy to get frustrated.

And the last thing I wanted to say, just get it on record, for someone like my Mum, she is very worried about, even though whatever has been said in statements and press releases, she is worried about applying on this scheme. She's seen what's happened to the Jamaican 50 etc. etc. And she's thinking you put your head above the parapet, who knows, once the Home Office gets you in their sights anything can happen. They say that they are not going to be targeting anyone. That everyone is secure in everyone's statuses... Irrelevant when you're applying for this compensation. But someone like my Mum, she's in the mindset of "why rock the boat when it's okay at the current moment. Why rock the boat and risk it for the opportunity to get some money." So, stuff of that needs to be solved in some way to try and make it a safer environment for people to come forward.

Chair: So, you've applied for review now?

Dominic: Yes, we're in the process of doing that now.

Chair: I'm conscious of your time as well. Is there any other point that you want to make?

Dominic: No, everything else I did send to your Parliamentary email address, but I can send it again. If there's anything else just let me know.

Chair: Thank you very much. Really appreciate it Dominic and I'm sorry again that this has been such a nightmare for you and your family as well. Christian, can I ask you then – tell us about your experiences?

Christian: I'll make it quick, very simple. When I first came to this meeting I was going to talk about my status and about the compensation. I'm skipping the status. I don't really care about the status because the truth is, I want the compensation. My status I can sort out myself. I've had many problems like I've heard from Grace and Gertrude. I've had the same similar problems. But, I'm not here to talk about my status. I want to get compensation resolved because until the compensation is resolved, my life can't get back to normal. Giving me status doesn't give me my life back.

I'm sorry – they gave me my Indefinite Leave to Remain card in 2018 and it hasn't given me life back. It just means I can live in Britain. For me, I really want to separate myself from the status and just concentrate on my compensation.

I applied for my compensation in August 2019. I originally applied on July 26. I waited approximately four weeks. Four weeks later, I rang up the Home Office to ask them what had happened with my application because I had heard nothing, they told me they hadn't received it. So, I said to them, well I've emailed it. I got the email correspondence because they give you back an automated response when you email your documents. I said, I've got all of this, so it proves I sent it. They said, oh we're really sorry, we're still working out, just to say, all the nuts and bolts of this problem. So, could I please send it again. I sent it again in August.

In my background, I've done a lot of paperwork. I've studied a lot of things. When I read the compensation form, I knew straightaway it needed legal help. It was so obvious you had to get legal help but the way they worded it for anybody to read, it would seem like you were about to write out a children's book. The problem was they worded it simply, but they didn't tell you the in-depths of what you would be required to give. So, people were writing out the compensation claims, like myself, very sparingly. Saying, look, you've got information from the past – this is what happened, basically giving them bullet points on my form.

I didn't hear anything back from them for approximately another month. But I had got the correspondence emails, but I did ring them to make sure they had received it a couple of days after sending it. They told me they had received it, they assigned me a caseworker and they said to me that my claim would get processed. In September, I rang them back again, four weeks later, asking them again what's happening with my claim. You lot said it was being processed, I want an update.

They told me my claim had been assigned and I would be contacted in due course. In December, I called them again to ask what had happened with my claim. Same answer. This continued until March this year, just before the COVID lockdown came. I was getting very frustrated with my claim, I was getting very irate, I was upset. I know what I'd been through, I know that I'd given them plenty of evidence. I couldn't understand why they couldn't use my evidence because I didn't give them evidence that was just verbal, I gave them documentation, emails from the agencies that I had applied for.

I must apologise to Diane Abbott because I went online, and I couldn't find any information on Windrush and I couldn't get any help anywhere. So, I started blasting text messages and comments on everybody's posts who was an MP that had something to do with Windrush, asking them respond to me, I need a response. I pestered her so much that they ended up blocking me. That's how much I was in distress.

And then Glenda came along, and she was a godsend. Glenda came along – she told me, you know what, we're all in this boat. She actually opened my eyes to the fact it wasn't just me. Up until that point, I actually thought it was just me and everybody else was being dealt with fine. Glenda opened my eyes – "it isn't just you, we're all fighting". Then she told me about the events. I went to the events and until I came to any event, they didn't actually contact me again. It was me constantly contacting them. Once I had attended the event, they contacted me three days later saying that my claim had now been given to a caseworker.

This I need to make clear – this was the third time I had been told my case had now been given to a caseworker. But when I told them that my case was already with a caseworker and, I know this was a fact because that same caseworker had asked me for more

information, they told me, well, no your case is actually only being looked at now. And that was this year, March, they actually started looking at my case.

I then continuously rang them, asking them, because of the time limit, I said, it's coming up to a year, why am I still waiting. They kept giving me excuses. Then I went back to Glenda. Glenda gave me a bit more help, got me in touch with Dan Hobbs and [inaudible]. It wasn't until I got in touch with them, that they started telling me, yes, your claim is being processed. In October, I got a payment of £7,588. I got £4,588 for loss of employment and I was offered £3,000 for impact on life.

Now, if I go back, my claim starts from 2009. I made it quite clear to the Home Office that I was rejecting that claim based on the fact that my £4,588 was for approximately four months loss of employment. I asked them why they had only given me four months of loss of employment as I was unemployed until 2015, from 2009. They told me because up until that point I was able to collect DWP. I said to them, but I did not collect DWP on my own basis. I only collected working tax credit and the only reason I was collecting working tax credit is because in 2010, I signed on for Jobseekers' Allowance because I couldn't get a job.

I was given Jobseekers' Allowance but after a year of signing on my caseworker said to me, 'don't think you'll get a job, you've been on 46 interviews'. They started thinking there was problem with me. But I said to them, no, I'm well-educated, I've got qualifications, I've got a degree. The jobs I was applying for were actually beneath me, but I was still applying for them. I couldn't even get a job in McDonald's.

This went on for many, many months and then my caseworkers told me about going to work as self-employed. She said, though you probably won't make any money self-employed at least you won't have to sign on anymore, you can collect working tax credits and then you can just declare to them that you've not made any money every single month when they pay you. So, that's what I went on to do. And I've done that for approximately two and a half years.

Because of that, I was then called into the DWP Office and told I had owed over £3,000 because I wasn't legally working. So, I had to pay all that money back that they paid me for working tax credit even though I was running my own business, my own company, I was an inventory clerk. I had to pay them back even though I could prove to them that I actually was legally working. The problem was because I couldn't prove my status, I wasn't allowed to have a business in the UK. So, I was illegally running a business in this country. They went as far as telling me if they went to the Police I would be arrested. Which is why I stopped my company because it was illegal.

Chair: From 2009, you weren't able to work. So, was the reason that you weren't getting jobs linked to your immigration status or to what the Home Office said your immigration status was or was it for other reasons?

Christian: No, it was all solely linked to my status. I went in 2006 to a solicitor. I was paying him to try and get a status from the Home Office for me in 2006. The Home Office sent a letter back to me. In the letter, it stated, that yes, Mr Hayibor has been given his status to remain in this country indefinitely. At the bottom of the letter they also wrote, we cannot confirm that Mr Hayibor still has his Indefinite Leave to Remain in this country because we cannot confirm if he's left the country for more than two years. Because of that statement at

the bottom, the letter was invalid for any employment which was the only ID I had, the only proof I had for status.

In 2007, the letter was accepted for employment. In 2009, the letter was no longer accepted for employment. Employers were told they must have a passport or a biometric card and they cannot accept letters from the Home Office and they cannot accept other documentation which stopped me from being able to work.

I gained employment in 2015. Hence why they only paid me for four months because they said that I had proved to them that Sainsburys had offered me a job which I couldn't take due to status because Sainsburys sent them an email saying, yes, it was because of his status. I proved that to them. Because I then got a job four months later, they only paid me for the four months from the date I made my application to the date I started a new job in the care industry.

I don't want to take up too much time... In the job that I got... I only got the job in 2015 because she was a friend of my mother's. She lived next door to us for 35 years. She saw me grow up, from when I was a child, so she knew me. She was the manager of a care home and she managed to employ me but two years later, HR asked for my documentation and because I couldn't produce it, I was sacked from that job in 2017. The Home Office, the letter they sent me for my offer, states clearly on that letter, that they will not pay me for the loss of the second job because they still believe that I am employed there even though they have proof that I am collecting universal credit as of 2017. But they won't pay me any loss for that job and the letter states that, because, according to our records you are still employed.

Now, the problem I had with my whole offer letter – they basically didn't look at anything in my case. They basically made the letter up. They basically looked at the employment for Sainsburys and they basically decided that my life was worth £300 a year for the impact from 2009-2017. During that time, I have suffered from suicidal tendencies, I have had anxiety. I take tablets for anxiety. As of 2013, I proved to them that I was writing letters to the newspapers and to my MPs telling them there was a problem with the legislation and I couldn't get a job and I couldn't live like a normal citizen. They have all this information, the caseworker has this because, lucky for me I kept myself well-documented, so I kept a lot of my paperwork from 2006 right through to present-day. They had all this as proof and evidence, but all of this was disregarded during my case, none of it was considered as compensating. They did not compensate for any of it.

Chair: Thank you Christian. I'm really sorry again that you've been through all of this. And that it is still on-going. That this is still such an incredibly difficult and frustrating experience for you. I see Carl has got his hand up to come back in again. Just before I bring you in Carl, just ask anybody else, if there are any further issues, comments, things that nobody has covered yet, things that you think we should be aware of that are particular difficulties with the Compensation Scheme or things that aren't working? But I also wanted to ask Stuart or Diane if you wanted to come in and ask any questions or raise anything at this point?

Stuart C McDonald MP: Thanks Chair. No, I think everyone has been really comprehensive and detailed in what you've said, and it has been incredibly useful. I don't think I can begin to understand the anger, apart from anything else, and the rage that you must feel at the way that you've been treated and that it's still going on today.

One issue perhaps someone could comment on, is whether the review process is any better? I don't know how many of you are going through reviews. I'm guessing it just operates in pretty much the same way with the same issues but again if anyone could maybe just say a few words about that, that would be useful as well, thank you.

Carl: I just wanted to say, when you were asking the questions initially, I wanted to raise the point with you. I went to meetings when the scandal first came out. There was a meeting in Bristol with Caroline Nokes. She led the meeting and she was doing a country tour. A Windrush whistle-stop tour to talk to people about the thing.

And I just wanted to say... I still had a roof over my head at that time, I raised this at the meeting with Caroline Nokes as well, when they sent me a letter in 2016 asking for further information, they asked me for previous Nigerian passports and they said in the letter that they only give British passports to British citizens. They asked me for Nigerian passports and all the other stuff that I mentioned in the beginning: photographs with my family--which I found extremely peculiar--and my mother's birth certificate. But also, they asked for my driving licence.

While in Bristol, I managed to start my own demolition and scrap metal company, with the help of the DWP I might add as well. They asked for my driving licence and I explained to them, because I had gone to my MP, Chris Skidmore in 2016 as well, and he'd written to them a few times and not really gotten anywhere. He said to send the original copies of my driving licence to them. You know, they kept my driving licence and my birth certificate for a year. They would not return them.

Excuse me, Ms Cooper, when you spoke to me initially, I thought we were going to be speaking in stages of our story, I didn't realise everyone was putting out what they had been through. So, I just wanted to put this clear to you. The documents they asked me for, I supplied. They then went on to not only say that those documents were not enough, my birth certificate and my driving licence. I was born in Brent in Wembley. But also they didn't return those documents for a year. And because they held my driving licence and my birth certificate for a year, I couldn't run my business. And I explained this to DWP as well.

The law states that you have to have these documents when you go into any waste yard or any scrap metal yard because of problems we have now and the Environmental Bill and all this. You have to identify who you are. And I tried to explain this to them repeatedly. To be honest with you, Mr Skidmore, not personally, in the four years since I've been to him, he's never spoken to me personally, it's always the people that work for him, which is fine. But I found it strange. He even went on TV and was asked about Windrush and he didn't mention me or anyone else at all, he just glossed over it. He basically left it – that he can't force them to give me my things.

Even getting my documents back, that was left to me. I had to continuously ring them and ask them, 'where are my documents, I need my things back to live'. They just weren't... Eventually, I got my documents back but with nothing else. They came back in a plain, brown envelope, a Home Office envelope. Just my birth certificate and driving licence. And that was in 2017 or 2018, they returned them. I just wanted to add that they kept my documents.

Chair: When that happened, when you had to send in the documents, was that before or after people became aware of the Windrush scandal and it was in the news?

Carl: After. First of all, I thought I was on my own. Obviously, I follow what goes on. I started to hear whispers about the Windrush thing and then once I realised I was part of it, then I realised there were these meetings. Thangam Debbonaire was the first person to hold a meeting in Bristol. I attended that. I spoke to the BBC and ITV at that meeting. They filmed the letter that I have here in my hand which had all the demands saying that they only give passports to English people and they asked me for my Nigerian passport which obviously I don't have.

I wanted to add, at the Caroline Nokes meeting in Bristol, I felt that, me and another gentleman, Jashwaha Moses, who has sadly died before receiving any of his compensation, he was giving me a lot of support with this when I came to Bristol. He was at the meeting. They separated us... The press wanted to speak to us but they seemed to intentionally separate me and Jashwaha. When the press wanted to speak to me and Jashwaha, they were like no, we can do something for you now, we can go into a side room. Basically, they just took us in there and kept us in there for an hour, talking, telling us stuff we already knew.

But the point I wanted to make was that they were insistent that I had to take a biometric card. As a British citizen, I refused. I flat out refused. Two of them were there in this room, I was on my own with them and they were insisting that if I didn't take the biometric card my life would become extremely difficult. And I said I shouldn't take a biometric card because I'm British, I just want my passport back. That's what I got from that meeting. I just wanted to add that.

Chair: Anything else just in terms of your experience with the Home Office?

Carl: The point that Christian brought up: I felt I was being discriminated against by my local authority. I'm from London but I have family in Bristol and that allowed me to apply for council accommodation here. The waiting list here in [nearby council] the maximum waiting time is three to four years. They had me waiting for nine years. That is exactly the same amount of time since I've not had my passport. I didn't make any accusations because I know you can't just throw these things out there. But I did approach them, [nearby council] and explain – I am a Windrush victim, is there any problem with my status as to why I'm being overlooked on properties and I've been on their waiting list for nine years?

Obviously, I was renting privately at the time, but I was having issues with my landlord then. And I felt that my issues weren't being addressed correctly. I don't want to be disrespectful to anyone, but I felt I was being treated as a second-class citizen, as a foreign immigrant. I don't want to use the word racism, because I feel that can be conflated and used in different places.

And I said this to Glenda. The first thing Glenda was concerned about is why am I on the street. And I had to explain to Glenda that I've never been in any arrears, I'm a grade A tenant, I've never had any problems, I've got good reports from other landlords. I just couldn't understand why [nearby council] asked me to leave temporary accommodation and the reason that they gave is because I moaned about being on the waiting list for nine years and, maybe, me saying, it's because I'm a Windrush victim, that I've been on the housing list for so long. That's all I wanted to add. I didn't find myself on the street for any other reason.

[Nearby council] asked me to leave temporary accommodation and that was after the Windrush Vulnerable Persons' Team contacted them. I just wanted to make that point. I just thought it was a bit of a coincidence that once the Windrush team had contacted me, next minute, [nearby council] are asking me to leave my accommodation. I just thought that was a bit strange. That's all really.

Christian: The review is not really a review. The reason I say this is because I've made an application for a review. I'm in the tier one review stage now. The letters I've received from this review are the same letters I received when I made my claim – telling me I'm now with another caseworker who have nine people involved. They are all going to look at my claim. And they are all going to, now, make a judgement on my claim. Feels like I'm now going to wait another two more years to have my review assessed. Because they are saying the person who is now going to assess it will have had nothing to do with the claim before. If it took them two years before, then why won't it take these lot two years?

My point is this review is not organised properly. They are not giving enough information. We still don't have contact with a caseworker, and I think, now that we are in a review, a caseworker should be giving us one on one contact because they've got to look deeper into a review. Deeper into why we've rejected it. One thing that I did want to bring up which has frustrated me a lot is in the hostile environment, one of the things that caused it to be hostile was the time limit they would give you to gather evidence. They would give you 14 days.

Now, I have a letter. I just want to read one sentence of this letter just so you can understand. I don't believe that the Windrush Scheme Compensation people are different to the hostile environment and the reason I say this, you'll understand if you let me read this one sentence.

In this letter that I've been sent from the Home Office, it says, 'Could you please provide the additional information that you have referred to and send this to the email address that you have previously provided information. Information is to be provided by 16th November 2020. This will then be accessible by the tier one reviewer. It will then be considered as part of your review process.'

And it goes on to say, basically, 'please be assured that if you don't the tier one [reviewer] will still assess with the information they already have'. The reason I bring this up is because that's a time limit. That's a time limit I'm given until the 16th to supply information from 2009. Now, I thought when they started this Windrush Compensation Scheme the hostile environment was taken away. That only brought me back to the dark days of when I was making my application. As soon as I read that letter, I felt like I had gone straight back into the hostile environment. It gave me a time limit; it gave me a deadline and it told me exactly what would happen if I didn't meet that deadline which is what they used to do with my three applications they rejected.

So, I just wanted to put that out there just so that you're aware. I've seen the meetings and I'm going to say something, please no one take this disrespectfully, what they like to say in a lot of the meetings is, 'we'll look into that and get back to you', 'that's an individual case', 'oh we don't really know about that case because we haven't looked into it, but my colleague will write to you about that'. And when they do get back to us, they get back to us with the same headline that they got bypassed by'.

So, for example, they will say, 'yes, we have paid out £2.2 million'. We will challenge that; 'well, we'll go back and check'. And then they come back and say, 'yes, we have paid out £2 million'. It's a lie. And we need to get real answers because the transparency isn't there and we're not getting answers. We're not getting the truth. You know, I was paid £7,000 for ten years' loss. I'm sorry to say that I wouldn't even give that to my enemy. That's £7,000 for ten years – I've been through some horrendous things. I won't say in forum, I've been through some serious, horrendous things because of the Home Office.

The fact that the Home Office felt that it was feasible to offer £7,000 means they haven't even looked into the depths of what we've been through. They haven't skimmed the tip of the iceberg because the truth is, even when I heard Glenda's claim and Anthony's claim, I was actually shocked, and they were both given their claims before me. And when I heard their claim, I actually said to myself I'm waiting two years to be told something that's going to further distress me. It's not going to right the wrongs, it's going to make things ten times worse, which it has. Now, I know what ballpark they are playing in and that's what really matters because they are not even close to what they have taken away from me.

For me, it's insulting. It's derogatory. And the worse thing is, they will keep telling us, this is taxpayers' money. Taxpayers' money. 'We've got to look at it closely because it's taxpayers' money'. We did not cause the Windrush problem. We did not cause the legislation. And we should not be told it's taxpayers' money. Because everything that comes from Parliament is taxpayers' money. Every single penny in Parliament is taxpayers' money. Even the cleaners who are paid in Parliament is paid from taxpayers' money. So, the fact that they keep throwing this at us and they keep telling us, 'it's taxpayers' money, that's why we're scrutinising you', makes me believe it is a racial thing.

Because no other case have I looked at, except for Grenfell, which is the only other with high ethnic minority, have they said, 'it's taxpayers' money'. They didn't say that to Hillsborough. They never once said to the people of Hillsborough, 'this is taxpayers' money'. They never once said to the people who they just paid recently £200,000 for raiding their house, 'that's taxpayers' money'. They never said that. But to us, they throw that to us to bring us down. Especially, when we're saying, 'why are they so low?'. 'Why are the offers so low?'. They always throw back to us, 'well, it's taxpayers' money and we've got to scrutinise every penny'. They haven't been scrutinising pennies in COVID.

You can understand why we're frustrated. Because we are fully insulted by even hearing it's taxpayers' money. We're the taxpayers. They took that right from us and that's why I feel there has to be some point made to the Home Office that they should no longer be throwing that rhetoric out there because it doesn't help the claimants. And it actually makes us feel insulted.

Grace: Everything Christian has said is absolutely... it hits home very, very... It's difficult really. This whole process is really, really difficult. I just wanted to go back talking about the complaints procedure. We were not made aware that we had a complaints procedure. Only very recently that we were told that you could actually make a formal complaint. Even that in itself is very long, drawn out.

I know because I sent in a formal complaint to [name] on the 10th of November about the delay in my own compensation, not having gotten an offer, going to one year. [They] responded on the 11th of November, telling me [they] would look into the matter and get back to me. I haven't heard from [them] since. And before that, I had been in touch with

[name] before [they] left. I have been in touch with [name] also on the whole issue of the delays in the whole compensation and I really have not gotten any feedback.

What I want to say here is that the complaints procedure itself needs to be reviewed to make it more open, more accessible and more equitable. And, when I look at the review process itself, I get worried again because, when you're talking about tier one, tier two and then, after that your MP has to refer the person to the Ombudsman, I get worried about the whole transparency of that process. I mean, even the independent adjudicator--from what I understand, I could be wrong, but I am also willing to learn--from what I understand of her role is that she doesn't have the power to overturn the decisions of the Home Office anyway. In what sense is her role relevant? It seems as if she is already rendered impotent by the service level agreement that she's tied to in delivering her own performance in that particular role.

So, again what difference does it make for the person who is actually being reviewed at that level of tier two. And then you say that the person then has to now go to his MP to get a referral to the Ombudsman and it's all again part of that time-wasting process of the whole scheme itself. Every element of it or every stage of it seems to be designed to waste more time. I don't know whether they are waiting for those of us who are in our 60s and getting to 70s to die off before something positive comes out of it.

But I want us to look at that whole line of that review process. Do we believe that this line of action will actually be honest? Will it be transparent for all concerned and even fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill, trust and better understanding and will it be beneficial to everybody concerned? If the answers to any of this is yes, well, fair enough, then it will yield something at the end of the day. But, if the answers to these questions are no, then obviously, it's not fit for purpose.

And this is something that they should look at to find out how is it possible: In tier one, you say that you don't agree with what the caseworker has said then another caseworker will review within the same Home Office, so judge and jury and whatever.... And so, it doesn't make sense. Why would the same Home Office be at tier one to look at what the Home Office has done in the first instance. And then because it's a senior caseworker... but it's still Home Office.

So, again, I wonder about the transparency and the fairness and the equitable nature of that whole review process. Something is not right in that system. And they need to look at how they are going to be able to address the particular steps that somebody has to go through. And after even the tier two, if you're not in agreement, and you can't get your MP to send it to the Ombudsman, what happens? You're stuck. And that's it. You either take it or lump it. That I think is not right. And that review process needs some work. They need to look at it more deeply, I think.

Glenda: I agree with what Grace has just said and that was going to be exactly my point. In relation to the review, I remember my first review when I rejected the offer, obviously I went public with it because I wanted everyone to know if I could get £22,000 what were you going to get. £7,000 like I said was offered on impact on life. My second offer £7,000 was offered on impact on life. People who have come to me and it's not only those in this group who are going through it, I've had people come to me and say, 'I've had an offer Glenda'... 'I don't want to know how much you're offered', I say, 'what were you offered

impact on life?'. '£7,000'... they say yes... 'How do you know?'... 'Because that's what they are offering everybody'.

It doesn't matter if you said to them, 'I've cut my wrists', 'I took tablets', 'I was in a coma', £7,000 that's what you're getting and that is what they keep offering everybody. So, we need, like Grace has just said, me personally, no one wants to say it, we need to take the Compensation Scheme out of the Home Office's hands. You cannot expect a burglar to walk into your house and have your goods and then you've got to stake them out and say "pay me" for you to get back your goods. That's what I see the Home Office as, as a burglar. They stole our life. They have stolen everything away from us. They have put us through mental trauma as well but yet we still have to keep going back to them.

I do not understand, like Grace says, this tier system. I'm at the stage where I think I'm at tier two so it's with the adjudicator. What happens if the adjudicator comes back and says your offer is good? I know what I'm going to do. But I've also had to put a letter in to my legal rep giving my son permission if anything happens to me because I'm at the age where like most of the claimants are doing, are dying. Then, Holly's got to deal with my son. And why should we have to be put at that stage? But that is the way that most of us are feeling because that's what we are seeing.

Poor Paulette Wilson, may she rest in peace. Hubert Howard, Jashwha Moses. And it's as if, I said it publicly, it's a strategy the Home Office are using, they are trying to long it out to see how many of us will die. But by the grace of God and I pray God gives me another 40, 50 years on here, I'm going to stand up here and fight for everyone if I have to. And I'm not afraid of a camera, I'm not afraid to call a journalist and say this is what they are doing. And I thank you very much Yvette and the rest of the panel for allowing us to share our stories and giving us the time to listen. Because the Home Office events that they are putting on don't give us that time. They shut us off the minute that we object to anything they are doing. They shut us off just like that. And I've attended nearly every one of them. Every one of them and we get shut down instantly. That's another thing that I think needs to be looked at. It's the impact on life payment.

There was another thing I wanted to discuss, sharing information about the scheme. They are not doing enough because I don't know why there isn't an advert available, that goes out on the television every now and again to let people come forward. They say they are going to shut it down in 2023. That's not even going to be long enough. We know that's not going to be long enough. I think we need more time. And we do need to reach the people abroad who this has affected.

There are many people within the Caribbean community who don't even want to know about the compensation, but they are entitled to it. Because, I think someone mentioned earlier, they feel as if, 'oh no, if I draw attention, they might deport me'. So, how do we get that out to them and say no? I'll stand up all day and say 'no that's not going to happen, come forward'.

[***]

Their caseworkers are not experienced. They have no experience in mental health, they have no experience in compensation. We need trained people. This is why I keep saying take it away from them. Take it away from them. I've worked in mental health for over 20-

odd years so I can see if someone is going to breakdown. I understand about depression, so I know how to calm somebody down. [***]

When I first met Carl and speaking to him on the phone, I wish I could've got down the phone and dragged him into my house. But I could hear what he was going through. Honestly, I cry sometimes just hearing his story. He's like my big son now. He's my son. There's plenty of other people out there going through all of this. But I want the Home Office to understand what they are doing to us. What they are doing to us. This is why we need to take it away from them. It needs to be taken away from them.

Chair: Thank you Glenda. And Carl, I am really sorry that we are effectively putting you through all of this again by asking so many questions. Thank you for giving your time and I'm sorry that this has all been such a nightmare and is a nightmare every time.

And I think that's what's been really striking when all of you are talking that part of the massive problem here is that the Home Office, in the way in which the Compensation Scheme is being run, is basically making people relive all of the nightmare and the traumas and the frustrations all over again. Rather than solving this, it's actually just putting people back through the same problems and the same excruciating experiences with the Home Office as an institution as well. And those are the issues that we want to pursue as part of this. As well as the issues around the content of the compensation but also to pursue the issues around the process and the way in which the Home Office as an institution is effectively treating people all over again. So, I am sorry that this whole process is just a continual one for you.

Holly: Thank you. I'll keep this really short and most of it has been covered by what Grace and Glenda said. I basically wanted to say that this scheme should not be administered by the Home Office. I agree with Glenda completely that this scheme should not be administered by the Home Office. It's clearly unfit for purpose.

If we compare this to another compensation scheme, look at the Manchester City Football Club compensation scheme. That was administered with the approach that this is going to help survivors of the sexual abuse that happened with the football club, to avoid cost, time and further emotional distress and complexity of a trial. So, they can go through this scheme and it will be speedier, cheaper and more predictable than going to court.

But going through this scheme, the only option that seems available is to go to court now. If this was a proper compensation scheme there would be no reason for these tier two review processes. Because someone would be offered good compensation at that first stage and be able to get on with their life. There would be no 'I've got to wait another 18 months', 'I've got to supply more evidence to my caseworker who I don't even know'.

If it was a really good redress scheme it shouldn't be with the Home Office... But if it was put together to actually provide justice and show that the Home Office accept it, apologise properly and now say 'we want to put you back into a position that you should've been in but for our actions' then, you know, we wouldn't need these tier two review processes. We wouldn't need to be thinking about going through judicial review. Because that wouldn't be the case.

We see Priti Patel all the time saying, 'oh it's complex, it takes so long... these are complex cases'. But where is the complexity coming into it when we receive these offers? The caseworkers aren't going into every single fact that is put before them. They are not going

into the laws. They are not even calculating things properly or applying their own rules properly. So, show me what is complex in the casework. Honestly, it's so unfit for purpose. It makes me angry. Let alone all of you guys who have actually been through it. So, I wanted to just say it shouldn't be with the Home Office. You're going to have the call for evidence which is going to have a lot more information on it.

Anthony: There's something I wanted to say for a long, long time. Can you get the Home Office to please drop the 'we are righting the wrongs' line? It's like Donald Trump claiming he won the presidency without any proof. Where's the proof that they are righting the wrongs? They need to drop that because that's false. They are doing that to give the impression to the general public that they are doing a fantastic job.

Christian: I just wanted to add, Holly said what I was going to say so that's brilliant. What I did want to add is that the Home Office have put us under a blanket. They are saying they are treating us as individuals and it's no longer a number, it's the person's name and so forth. Priti Patel has been coming on, you know they have been saying like Anthony said, 'righting the wrongs', but for us, we feel like nothing has changed.

And also, there's just one thing that has really been bothering me. They keep posting out that they paid out this amount and the wording is, 'we have paid out £2.2 million'. It's that wording that's wrong. Because the stats actually show; out of 226 people paid, 209 have rejected the offer. That's a very serious thing when 209 people reject your offer, you cannot boast that the scheme is working. It's obviously broken.

And we don't believe the Home Office should deal with us because they are the same people, we found out recently who were rejecting us with our biometric cards. And so, I cannot talk to a [name] or [other name] who was my caseworker because now I think I'm talking to the same [person] who told me five years ago, 'sorry you've got 14 days or you'll be rejected'. I feel that's the person now who I'm speaking to.

I gave my case to Holly because I can't deal with the Home Office anymore. That's the truth and I think a lot of people feel the same way. They can't deal with the Home Office. The helpline is not a helpline. It's just a 'waste of time line.' The actual caseworkers are not caseworkers. They have no interaction with you and when they do, it's only because you kicked enough fuss up for them to have to contact you. So, there's no actual transparency, it's completely gone and there is no trust, we have no trust at all that they will actually come back with something decent even after we've been through many events and meetings.

And just one last thing: the events. They either scrap the events, or they have the events for real victims because the events they hold are just a repetition of headlines and lies. And all they are doing is adding new people to the events, telling them the lies and then making them feel as if they are on their own. If it wasn't for Glenda a lot of these people would've gone ahead and took their low offers or gone ahead and just listened to the rhetoric and said, 'alright, that's how it goes'.

There's a lot of lies going on. And in the meetings, they try and tell us that the lies are from the press and are from outside sources. But we're talking from experience. We're not talking from what I read in the newspaper; this is my experience. Two years later, we're still claiming. That's no justice.

Chair: Can I just massively thank you all again. And just again say sorry for everything you have been through. Also, sorry this has been a difficult afternoon to go through all these

points again and we do appreciate it. This has been a very important session for us to hear directly from you. And we have also had many other people writing in telling us very similar stories.

Our next steps, we will have further evidence next week. We will be taking evidence from Martin Forde and putting some of the points to him both about the design of it and the oversight of it. And then we will be pursuing it with Ministers after that again and also with the permanent secretary again. We will keep pursuing these issues.

December 2020