

Supplementary written evidence submitted by Serco (COR0162)

1) Can you provide the Committee with the number of people in your accommodation who are currently a) in shared rooms and b) specify whether these rooms are two-bedrooms or larger?

Yarl's Wood IRC - There are no residents in shared rooms; all residents currently have their own rooms. Bedrooms in the Centre contain no more than two beds per room.

Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contract (AASC) – There are 661 asylum seekers in the Midlands and East of England (MEE) region and 218 asylum seekers in the North West England (NW) region who are sharing a bedroom.

All shared rooms have a maximum of two beds, with the exception of 22 triple rooms in Initial Accommodation (IA). The asylum seekers who are in these triple rooms were in them together before lockdown started.

2) Can you confirm if you are placing any new arrivals into shared accommodation and shared rooms (including, for asylum accommodation providers in hotels or other forms of initial accommodation)? If so please explain (a) the grounds for your decision to maintain this practice, and b) how many new arrivals have been placed in such accommodation, and in what type of accommodation?

Yarl's Wood IRC - No new residents are placed into shared accommodation; they are each given their own bedroom.

AASC - New arrivals are not being put into shared accommodation; they are each given their own bedroom.

- If you have now stopped moving people into shared rooms, what was the last date on which people were moved into such accommodation?

Yarl's Wood IRC - Serco has been following the Home Office guidance for all residents not to share rooms since the lockdown in the community commenced. There were two residents who continued to share a room until the week commencing 4 May. Although we had offered them each a separate room in March, they preferred to remain sharing and following advice from our Healthcare partner, confirmed they understood the risks. One of these ladies has since left the centre and the other now has her own room.

AASC - 16 April 2020

- Do you expect to maintain/resume the use of shared rooms once social distancing requirements are lifted?

Yarl's Wood IRC - Yes, we do expect that to take place and we will be following Home Office and Public Health England Risk Assessment and guidance.

AASC – Yes, we expect to resume the use of shared rooms across our IA provision when it is safe to do so. Please note that Serco policy is that we do not use shared rooms in Dispersed Accommodation.

3) How many people in your immigration removal centres have been assessed at adults at risk levels 2 and 3; and how many detainees have vulnerabilities (co-morbidities) related to coronavirus?

Yarl's Wood IRC - There are six residents are currently classed as adults at risk level 2, none at risk level 3. Two residents currently on supported living plans due to being at increased risk of COVID-19 due to their current medical issues.

4) Can you provide the Committee with details of a) advice, guidance and/or recommendations that you have received from Public Health England at national and local level in relation to the safeguarding of individuals in immigration detention and asylum accommodation and b) any guidance received from the Home Office on the same issue?

Yarl's Wood IRC – Serco receives regular updates from the official Home Office to their guidance. These provide detailed guidance on how service providers should operate in the crisis and how to mitigate risks appropriately for both residents and our employees. This guidance is supported by PHE. Prior to the start of community lockdown when the Home Office guidance regular updates commenced, our healthcare provider Northampton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT), who were linking in to PHE, were providing the guidance and instructions.

AASC – Serco is following PHE advice that has been provided nationally. Serco has produced our own guidance based on this, which was ratified by PHE at a local and national level. We continue to maintain a dialogue with PHE.

Serco has received instructions and guidance from the Home Office about different aspects of safeguarding of individuals. These have covered issues such as the limited travel/movements of asylum seekers; shielding of those with vulnerabilities; single bedroom occupancy in contingency hotel accommodation and encouraging enforcement of social distancing in hotels etc. The Home Office also provided advice that those asylum seekers who were sharing a room prior to the start of the lockdown should not be moved unless they were deemed to be specifically at risk.

5) Can you confirm at what level your partnership team is engaging with Public Health England, i.e. at national or local director level?

Yarl's Wood IRC - The Serco Contract Director and his Senior Management Team are in close liaison with Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT), our on-site NHS healthcare provider. There are weekly meetings which the Home Office also attend. NHFT provides Serco with information and updates from PHE as and when required. Serco also receives updates from the Home Office together with any immediate changes required to processes and procedures.

AASC – The Serco Contract Director and her Senior Management Team have been engaging with the regional PHE team in localities where IA provision has been located. In localities where contingency hotel accommodation has been established, this engagement has been with the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group and regional NHS lead. Additionally, the Home Office has a dialogue with PHE at a national level.

6) Can you confirm whether anyone (detainees/service users, or staff) has been able or has tried to access the tests for Covid-19?

Yarl's Wood IRC - Serco does not have access to residents' medical records, which are managed by the onsite NHS Healthcare team. Testing is arranged via NHFT according to the PHE policies in place. Current policy is to test only residents who appear potentially symptomatic. NHFT have informed us of four residents being tested due to be being potentially symptomatic, three of which were negative and one was positive.

There have been eight Serco employees who have informed us they have been tested. Our employees, who are classed as Key Workers, have been encouraged to be tested. We have also issued guidance, but Serco is dependent on employees disclosing this information about themselves. All of our employees have been informed about the nearest testing facility and given instructions on how to attend and receive a test.

AASC – As per Yarl's Wood IRC, Serco does not have access to asylum seekers' or employees' medical records and would therefore only know if someone chose to inform us that they had had a test. To our knowledge, there have been nine asylum seekers who have been tested for COVID; seven of these had tests carried out by the local PHE and two while they were in hospital. Of the seven tested by local PHE none of them tested positive. The other two tested positive, one of whom has recovered and the other is still recovering. Serco is aware of one employee who tested positive whilst in hospital, who is still recovering.

- If so, please provide details, including how many service users and staff have done so, and how?

As above

May 2020
