

Supplementary written evidence submitted by the Scottish Refugee Council (COR0182)

1. The written evidence from Mears Group (COR0181) was brought to our attention today.
2. On reading it, we noted references to us on p1. For ease of reference, the statement read:

“Mears informed ASH, *the Scottish Refugee Council* and the Red Cross, inviting them to provide advice on the arrangements. ASH and the SRC have visited the hotel accommodation.” (Our emphases)
3. For the purposes of clarity and an accurate public record for the Committee and any final Inquiry report, Scottish Refugee Council first learned, through a partner organisation (that were advocating for a distressed client), on Monday 13 April (“Easter Monday”) that moves from serviced apartment accommodation in Glasgow, to hotels may be happening. We had not been informed of anything about a specific or indeed any plan to moving people already accommodated in serviced apartments, to hotels in Glasgow.
4. Upon learning this information in said case, we emailed, inter alia, Mears representatives on Tuesday 14 April. This included a specific query on what was happening with hotels. We sent a chaser email on Friday 17 April which was acknowledged on Monday 20 April. We sent a further email on Tuesday 21 April specific to the “hotel move” issue. The urgency as it was becoming apparent that many people may have been moved from serviced apartments (either single occupancy or two-bedroom) where they were settled for a number of weeks or months, prior to Covid-19 as an issue and the lockdown that followed subsequently.
5. We received a response from a Mears representative, on Tuesday 21 April, comprising basic information of what Mears reported they were providing to hotel residents, who had been moved from the said serviced apartments. This included confirmation that no financial support was being provided at all. We understand now that all these moves – affecting 300+ people - happened after the UK Government’s “lockdown” took effect on Tuesday 24 March.
6. We should add, via contact with other relevant organisations who are highly experienced in working with asylum seekers in Glasgow - notably Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership and the Asylum Health Bridging Team - that none reported to us that they knew anything in advance about Mears Group’s plans to move people who were already in Glasgow on s98 (1AA 1999) support and settled in serviced accommodation, to hotels in the city. They all said they learned after the moves started. Ultimately, this is for those organisations and Mears Group but this is what we have been told by agencies we have worked with for many, many years on asylum accommodation matters in Glasgow.
7. On the reference to visit to hotels by Scottish Refugee Council, Mears Group are correct to say they kindly invited us to hotel accommodation. Again, for an accurate public record, we visited one of the seven “Mears Group” - operated hotels in Glasgow; on Thursday 14 May.
8. We hope this supplementary written evidence is helpful to the Committee.