Dear Matt

I have received the attached correspondence from Hon Joan Taylor, Chair of the Child Migrants Trust.

I am very concerned that the Government has not yet responded to the Independent Inquiry report on child migration, the more so given the commitment which Joan Taylor reports that Jackie Doyle-Price made that it would do so before the summer recess. I have much sympathy with Joan Taylor’s remarks about the “dreadful impact of delay on former child migrants who have been betrayed so many times previously.”

Please let me know what the reason is for the delay in the Government’s response, and when it can be expected.

I have Joan Taylor’s permission to share her letter with you, and to invite the Committee to publish it. I intend to do that once you have replied, but will do so before then if I have not received a reply by Monday 12 November.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP
Chair of the Committee
Dear Dr Sarah Wollaston MP,

It is 222 days since the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse published its report into Child Migration, on 1st March 2018. This report stated categorically that, “It is the overwhelming conclusion of the Inquiry that the institution primarily to blame for the continued existence of the child migration programmes after the Second World War was Her Majesty’s Government”.

It is also 222 days since IICSA recommended that all former child migrants should receive compensation from HMG for exposing them to sexual and other abuse.

Over the past seven months, at least 20 former child migrants have died not knowing whether their country had finally committed to making reparations for their suffering.

Yet there has still been no positive response whatsoever from the Government to this first report produced by the Inquiry set up by the current Prime Minister when she was Home Secretary. On 3rd July, Jackie Doyle – Price MP, Health Minister, promised in a Committee debate that the Government would respond before the summer recess. Sadly, this was an example of another broken promise with fine words leading to inertia.

This, in itself, is a form of secondary abuse of the relatively few former child migrants who are still alive. But even more shocking are the suggestions that they and their families are now hearing that the Government might, yet again, be intending to refuse to accept liability for their suffering.

It is to be hoped that these are simply rumours which fill the vacuum left by the absence of any sense of direction provided by the Government.

Some former child migrants fear that the lessons of the public apology in 2010 will be lost rather than learned since a new Government and new ministers may not fully appreciate the dreadful impact of delay on former child migrants who have been betrayed so many times previously.

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The IICSA report concluded that the “continued insistence by successive governments that any abuse abroad was not the responsibility of the British government was wrong” and that “such a defensive policy position, which sought to deny responsibility for the children and deflect it to others, was understandably offensive to the former child migrants”.

Former child migrants are convinced that the powerful, institutional culture of denial and delay persists to this day. Consequently, they note the strong parallels between their experiences and the terrible treatment of those who have suffered as a result of other public policy failures, such as Hillsborough, Contaminated Blood and, more recently, Windrush. They also cannot reconcile the inaction of the Government with the Prime Minister’s declared commitment to “fight burning injustice.

We, therefore, implore you and your Select Committees to urgently call the Government to account on two related issues so that they finally:

1. Accept in full – and without further delay - the findings and three recommendations in the ICSA report. These recommendations were kept to a minimum to avoid delays in their implementation.

2. Commit to working with relevant organisations towards cultural change so that when future public policy disasters come to light the first reactions will be to listen, empathise, support and investigate, rather than to evade, deny and prevaricate.

Please do all you can to ensure that the number of former child migrants displayed on the Child Migrants Trust website who have died without knowing that justice has finally been delivered does not continue to increase.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

The Hon. Joan Taylor MBE
Chair of Trustees
Dr Sarah Wollaston MP  
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Thank you for your letter of 31 October enclosing a copy of correspondence you have received from Hon Joan Taylor, Chair of the Child Migrants Trust in relation to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) report on Child Migration Programmes.

The Government welcomes the Inquiry’s investigation report. Moving testimonies from former child migrants only affirms that child migration was utterly wrong and that it led to hardship and distress for so many.

Since the formal national apology to former child migrants in 2010, the Department of Health and Social Care has provided over £5 million to the Child Migrants Trust (CMT) and has committed £8 million to the Family Restoration Fund which the CMT administer, to enable former child migrants to rebuild relationships and help them come to terms with the difficulties caused by their migration.

We are aware that a number of former child migrants have sadly passed away since the IICSA report was published in March, and are mindful of the age and declining health of surviving former child migrants. Nonetheless, I can assure you that the Government is absolutely committed to providing a considered response to the Inquiry’s recommendations, which will follow in due course.

As you mention in your letter, it was indeed our intention, as stated by Jackie Doyle-Price in July, that Government would respond to the IICSA Interim Report before summer recess. However, as she also advised, this is a complex matter that will have an impact on a number of departments’ interests. Against that background, it has not
been possible to deliver on our intention. I can only reiterate that we will provide a considered response, as quickly as we can.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the Government’s commitment to the continued health and wellbeing of former child migrants.

Yours ever,

MATT HANCOCK