



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP  
Chair, Home Affairs Select Committee  
House of Commons  
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Dear Yvette,

15/03/2019

### **Asylum Operations Service Standard**

In line with our ambition to promote a greater understanding and transparency of the asylum system and to develop service standards that are meaningful and command confidence, I am writing to inform you that UKVI plans to consult on and implement new service standards for asylum caseworking. This change means we will be moving away from the six-month service standard for straightforward cases and will no longer be categorising cases as 'straightforward' or 'non-straightforward'.

The current published service standard, which was introduced in 2014, states that 98% of initial decisions on straightforward asylum claims should be made within six months from the date of claim. This allowed for more strategic management of the casework process and provided a clearer level of customer service expectation. However, it has become clear that the current standard no longer best serves those that use our services and a number of stakeholders, including your Committee, have been concerned that not all cases are captured by it. Having reviewed this, I share some of those concerns and, in particular, the fact that the current service standard does not always allow us to prioritise applications from the most vulnerable people in the system if their claim is 'non-straightforward'.

For these reasons, the Home Secretary and I have agreed to change how Asylum Operations prioritise their workload. This means, in the short term, Asylum Operations will reprioritise cases by focusing on claims raised late in detention and/or with the potential to frustrate removal, cases with acute vulnerability and those in receipt of the greatest level of support, including Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). Additionally, we will prioritise cases where an individual has already received a decision, but a reconsideration is required.

The intention is for this approach to bring balance back to the asylum system while we take steps to increase the capacity of the asylum decision making system and focus on process improvements to deliver better quality decisions more efficiently. I will be closely monitoring the performance of the asylum system during this period and have been clear with officials that we need to improve current performance levels.

To come to a longer term arrangement for service standards that meet the needs of those seeking asylum and the country, UKVI are engaging with key partners in the Strategic Engagement Group and other NGOs to redesign the way in which claims are prioritised. I will keep the Committee apprised of these plans and will ensure that the new service standards are publicised and understood.

The UK has a proud history of providing international protection and these changes form part of our commitment to continue to do so.

*Yours sincerely*  
*Caroline Nokes*

**Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP**  
**Minister of State for Immigration**