



Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP  
Chair, Joint Committee on Human Rights  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Harriet,

12 April 2019

## **IMMIGRATION DETENTION INQUIRY REPORT**

I am writing in response to the Joint Committee on Human Rights' (JCHR) report of its inquiry into immigration detention. We recognise the deprivation of liberty for immigration purposes is a significant use of state power, with life-changing implications for those concerned. We therefore very much welcome the report's contribution to the continuing debate on this important issue.

I am grateful for the Committee's acknowledgement of the improvements we have made to our approach to immigration detention. I note many of the issues raised in the report are in areas where we are already doing work, as set out in my letter to you of 3 December. We remain committed to ensuring decisions to detain, or to maintain detention are well made.

The Detention Gatekeeper system we put in place in 2016 has improved the quality and consistency of initial decisions to detain. Similarly, the system of case progression panels, established to review ongoing detention has been strengthened, and we are considering how to introduce an independent element to the panels considering those people who have been detained the longest. We continue to strengthen the Adults at Risk policy, which has provided a valuable framework for identifying vulnerable people more effectively, to ensure that the most vulnerable and complex cases get the attention they need.

We are continuing our work around promoting voluntary departure and exploring the greater use of alternatives to detention, which includes the pilot scheme currently underway for a number of women who would otherwise have been detained. We have increased the number of Home Office staff in each immigration removal centre to ensure that there is a good quality induction for all detainees and to improve the level of face to face engagement with individual detainees.

We accept there is still more to do, and that is why we remain committed to the ambitious reform programme announced by the Home Secretary last July. The key priorities for that programme (to do more on alternatives to detention, improve support for vulnerable people, greater transparency around detention and a drive on detainee dignity) remain unchanged and will be at the centre of our work going forward.

In addition to the publication of the JCHR's report, there are number of other developments in this area that we would wish to reflect on before responding to your report. Those developments include the recently published report of the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry into immigration detention, which covers many of the same issues raised in your Committee's report, and debates around the issue of detention during Committee stage of the Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Exit) Bill last month. We anticipate that immigration detention will also feature in debates during the Report stage of the Bill.

We are carefully considering the conclusions and recommendations of the JCHR's inquiry against this backdrop and will respond formally in due course.



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