

# Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Caroline Nokes MP  
Minister for Immigration  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

9 July 2018

Dear Caroline

You will be aware of the Committee's longstanding interest in the provision of asylum accommodation. It has come to our attention that the Home Office did not receive a compliant bid for the original retendering of the 'North East, Yorkshire and the Humber' and Northern Ireland asylum accommodation contracts.

The tender notice states "The Asylum accommodation and support services contracts are expected to be in place by December 2018 to allow adequate time period for mobilisation and transition for full service delivery to commence in September 2019 when the current contracts expire." A revised tender notice was published in May 2018. We note that the second notice states "the Authority under section 29(10)(a) of The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 will apply compressed timelines as a state of urgency exists."

The Committee is understandably alarmed that a state of urgency exists in the future provision of services to vulnerable people. The COMPASS contracts ended in 2017 with the option for a two-year extension then taken up. The Government has therefore had a long time to get this process right and it is therefore of great concern that with months to go before the Government expects contracts to be in place, there have yet to be any compliant bids for the two regions. There is a clear risk that the lack of competition for the contract means that potential bidders may have more influence over the terms of the contract than would be appropriate, for example, by insisting on reduced obligations in return for submitting a compliant bid. These are ten-year contracts and it is crucial that the Government gets them right from the outset.


There were huge problems in the transition to COMPASS in 2012, with local authorities having to step in at the last minute to accommodate people Providers could not house. We are concerned that these problems may occur again. The Committee recommended that local authorities be consulted as part of the process of putting in place the new contracts and we are very concerned that this has not happened. It is local authorities that will have to pick up the pieces if the contracting process fails yet they have been kept in the dark. We are further concerned that the reference to working with local authorities in the original tender does not appear in the second tender notice published in May. I would be grateful for an urgent reply to following questions:

- When did you first become aware that no compliant bids had been received for the original tender for the 'North East, Yorkshire and the Humber' and Northern Ireland asylum accommodation contracts?
- What progress has since been made in tendering for these two contracts?

- Have the terms of the contract changed between the November and May tender notices?
- Why is there no reference to working with local authorities in the second tender notice?
- What contingency plans are in place if the Government does not receive a compliant bid for these regions?
- How many compliant bids were received for each of the other asylum accommodation contracts?

I look forward to your early response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvette Cooper', written in a cursive style.

**Yvette Cooper MP**