

By email

8 January 2019

Dear Chair,

**Home Office response to Public Account Committee (PAC) evidence session**

Following the Windrush Inquiry evidence session held on 17 December 2018, I am writing to provide the Committee with further information as requested. This letter includes material relating to our response to apparent warning signs in relation to undocumented people living in this country, the deployment of the new immigration casework system Atlas, overseas media monitoring, customer service and approach to cases within UKVI, assistance with housing for those who approach the Taskforce and the work of its Vulnerable Persons team.

Atlas

The Committee asked for a breakdown of how the Atlas system would be used, and how stock and flow would be dealt with.

Atlas is already in use for a number of case types, including Tier 2 of the Points Based System (work), Tier 4 (study) and some elements of asylum casework. The roll-out will continue with a view to having all case types on Atlas by Q4 of 2019. Once a case type has “gone live” on Atlas, all new applications will automatically be processed on that system.

All the data from past cases on the legacy casework system (CID) will be available to caseworkers using Atlas as it is now, held in a central data repository. The repository is used to generate within Atlas a summary overview of a person’s immigration history on the screen (but caseworkers will be able to view more detailed records as and when required). These more detailed records will include all key data from CID, including case notes and documents sent to the applicant.

The approach to cases which are 'in-flight' when we move from CID to Atlas will be to complete applications on CID if work has already started on them. Where necessary, we can migrate cases from CID to Atlas before the case is decided, but we will do this in a relatively small, and very carefully managed, number of cases. Work is ongoing to ensure we adopt the optimum approach to data migration including finalising our approach to assuring data quality using management information, business activity monitoring and data comparison.

### Overseas media monitoring

The Committee requested information about the work we have done to promote the Windrush Taskforce to those overseas. We have worked through Government networks to promote the Windrush Taskforce in the Caribbean and globally, with communications giving direction to anyone affected on how they can get in touch, including a free call back option, or applying for the Windrush Scheme online.

We issued information about the launch of the Taskforce to all UK Government overseas posts highlighting who may be affected, who is eligible to seek support and the support available. Communication materials (factsheets, posts for use on social media) highlighting the issue and support available were sent to all Foreign Office communications teams overseas. Further, much of our UK activity has included information on who may be affected overseas and providing information on how to get in touch with the Taskforce. This includes our communications to diaspora groups within the UK, given the strong links between these groups and those eligible for the Scheme living abroad.

There has been international and diaspora media coverage of the Windrush issue and the Taskforce to support anyone affected, with high levels of coverage in the Caribbean specifically. All our press notices are added to gov.uk for international media to run if of interest to their audience.

From Home Office social media channels, for posts on Facebook highlighting the Taskforce (with no targeted spend), 4-5% of views were from the Caribbean and less than 1% from non-Caribbean Commonwealth countries including Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Australia and Canada. All posts can be shared and anyone can view the posts globally. We also targeted paid Facebook posts to be visible in key

UK cities containing diaspora groups of Commonwealth citizens. We monitor public social media mentions of Windrush and the Taskforce, and will continue to do so to inform our communications approach.

Anyone overseas who thinks they may be impacted can get in touch with the Taskforce for free, or with their government or the British Embassy or High Commission which will support them. Individuals overseas can also email and request a call back from the Taskforce. All information is listed online at [Gov.UK/Windrush](http://Gov.UK/Windrush).

We keep our Windrush communications strategy under constant review and are planning further targeted media to non-Caribbean Commonwealth countries including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

### Warning signs

The Committee asked for an explanation of why the Department did not act upon information raised in the Chasing Status report and a diplomatic telegram, which briefly referenced the issue of people who are undocumented, raised by Caribbean Commonwealth Ministers in 2016.

The committee will be aware that Wendy Williams is leading a lessons learned review that will consider what the key policy and operational decisions were that led to members of the Windrush generation becoming entangled in measures designed for illegal immigrants; what other factors played a part; why these issues were not identified sooner; what lessons the organisation can learn to ensure it does things differently in future; whether corrective measures are now in place; and if so, an assessment of their initial impact. Wendy Williams aims to publish her findings in a report by spring 2019.

In our view it is more appropriate for this review to address these and other questions in an independent and authoritative manner.

In the meantime, we have put mechanisms in place to prevent a similar situation arising in the future. For example, we have created the Border Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS) Hub, a team tasked to look across the BICS and identify emerging issues as they arise, so prompt action can be taken.

### Customer service and approach to cases within UKVI

The Committee asked for information regarding what we are doing within UKVI to improve customer service and how we are ensuring a consistent approach to cases.

The UKVI Chief Caseworker Unit was established in June 2018, led by the newly created post of Chief Caseworker and supported by a cadre of experienced senior caseworkers both recruited and redeployed from across the Department. This unit ensures that decision-makers across UKVI place greater emphasis on the customer. The Chief Caseworker seeks to enhance decision making capability across UKVI. Where additional judgement or discretion is required to progress a case to an appropriate solution, the Chief Caseworker will ensure that systems are in place to ensure this happens consistently.

Additionally, the newly appointed post of UKVI Caseworker Training lead will help to improve decision-maker training capability, establish career paths for decision-makers, and help to create a stronger and more customer-focused culture.

### Work of the Vulnerable Persons team

The Committee asked for further information on the work of the Vulnerable Persons (VPT) team and in particular what they do to assist with housing. The VPT sits within the Windrush Taskforce and provides dedicated support to customers who have been negatively affected, faced hardship or loss of public services as a consequence of being unable to demonstrate their status in the UK. Whilst all call handlers within the Taskforce are equipped to identify, handle and offer support to vulnerable customers, the VPT was established to ensure that those in most urgent need could obtain support and advice via a single point of contact within the Taskforce. In the case of Mr Vanriel, as set out at the hearing, the VPT has been in contact with him on a number of occasions since September and is liaising directly with his local authority in relation to his housing situation. He has been made aware of the housing offers available.

The VPT has had notable success in resolving individual issues and building trust. This has been reflected in the feedback provided to the team by those who have received assistance. To date, the VPT has provided support to 614 individuals

with 52 cases currently 'live' with the team. They continue to receive new referrals (between 10 and 20) each week. 215 referrals have been made directly to DWP with regard to fresh claims and reinstatement of benefits, with 177 individuals given advice and support on issues relating to housing.

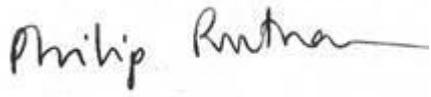
The vast majority of individuals impacted by Windrush are in the United Kingdom with access to housing, but we recognise that there are small numbers, such as those returning from overseas, who need help to secure accommodation. While the primary responsibility for housing remains with Local Authorities, our work with OGDs and HMRC in particular has been key to identifying and obtaining access to other services. Successful relationships have been developed with local charities and the Salvation Army, with 18 individuals being provided with assistance to obtain urgent provisions such as clothing and furniture.

#### Points of clarification from the hearing

Finally, we would like to take the opportunity to clarify comments made during the hearing about refusals under the Windrush Scheme. At the hearing, the Permanent Secretary referred to the good character test and stated that the test is a custodial sentence of 12 months or more. The good character test also has broader criteria, which can be found at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/701902/annex-d-v4.0-ext.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/701902/annex-d-v4.0-ext.pdf).

Furthermore, at Question 195 and 196 of the transcript, there was a discussion about Citizenship refusals not being a bar to a person retaining or being issued with a No Time Limit (NTL) biometric resident permit. To clarify, where a person already holds NTL but does not qualify for Citizenship then they will retain their NTL status, however, not all of the 186 Windrush refusals issued so far, fall into that category. Some of them relate to refusals of applications overseas due to ineligibility under the scheme e.g. because there is no evidence individuals were in the UK at the relevant time. All refusals have the right to apply for a free, independent review by the Chief Caseworker Unit referred to above.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Philip Rutnam" followed by a horizontal flourish.

**Sir Philip Rutnam**  
**Permanent Secretary**