



Home Office

Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP
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Julian Smith MP
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Thank you for your letter of 20 October to the Home Secretary on behalf of Ms Sara Trehitt, a member of Ripon City Sanctuary, of [REDACTED], following the screening of the BBC Panorama programme "Undercover: Britain's Immigration Secrets." I am replying as the Minister of State for Immigration and International.

I found the behaviour displayed by G4S staff in the footage of Brook House immigration removal centre (IRC) wholly unacceptable, and have made it clear that I expect G4S to take swift and rigorous action to address the issues raised.

While the UK has a long and proud tradition of providing a safe haven to those who genuinely need our protection, the Government is committed to removing from the UK those who have no lawful basis to stay here, and for those who do not leave voluntarily this may require the use of detention to enforce their removal.

The use of detention, with a view to removal of people without the right to remain in the UK but who refuse to leave voluntarily, is key to maintaining an effective immigration system. The Government is clear that all detainees should be treated with dignity and respect.

Ms Trehitt expresses concern about mixing foreign national offenders (FNOs) with other detainees in IRCs. All former FNOs in IRCs have already served any sentence handed down by the courts in prison. They are then held in detention under the same regime as those who are detained for the purposes of removal

without having served a prison sentence. For reasons of security and control, where an FNO is assessed as not being suitable for transfer to the more open regime of an IRC, they will remain in prison accommodation after completion of their sentence until such time as they can be removed.

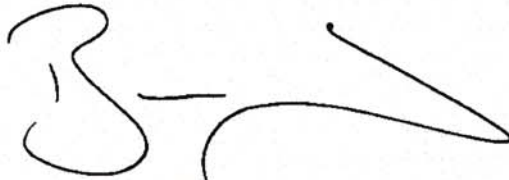
Ideally FNOs who are being removed from the UK should be taken directly to the airport on the day of their release from prison custody. This is not always possible because of such reasons as late applications for asylum or delays in obtaining the documentation necessary for removal to take place. In such instances the majority of FNOs are transferred to an IRC on completion of their sentence until their case is resolved.

Turning to Ms Trehwitt's concern about the length of detention, the Home Office uses detention sparingly and for the shortest period necessary to achieve the purpose for which it was authorised. No one can lawfully be detained indefinitely for immigration purposes. Most people detained under immigration powers are not asylum seekers but people at the end of the process, with their applications concluded and any in-country appeal rights exhausted. The Home Office deals with significant and complex challenges when seeking to return those who have no right to be in the UK to their country of origin or lawful place of return. These challenges can include travel documentation, late applications, late appeals and broader non-compliance with a lawful returns process all of which can extend the period of detention. However, the Home Office remains committed to ensuring that individuals are detained for the shortest period necessary and has introduced some reforms to the way immigration detention is managed. These include an internal gatekeeper function to provide additional oversight and scrutiny to ensure that detention is the appropriate option for those entering the detention estate, and a system of quarterly case management reviews to ensure that only those who should be detained remain in detention.

Ms Trehwitt has called on the Government to review the work practices of G4S and to end their contract to deliver detention services at Brook House. I can assure you that there is a robust and comprehensive system of contract management and monitoring in place for the delivery of services in our IRCs.

Finally, independent scrutiny is a vital part of assurance that our IRCs are secure and humane. All IRCs are subject to independent and unannounced inspection by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP). HMCIP publish their inspection reports along with the Home Office's service improvement plan responding to their recommendations. Additionally, each IRC has an Independent Monitoring Board that has full unfettered access to those in detention. These Boards report to the Secretary of State on any matter which they consider appropriate, and also submit and publish annual reports on their findings within each establishment.

I trust this reply provides an assurance that the Home Office is committed to ensuring that those in immigration detention are treated with humanity and that swift and decisive action is taken when this is not the case.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'B' followed by a horizontal line and a long, sweeping tail that curves upwards and to the right.

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