



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

8th July 2021

Jean Contrevent,

RE: ASYLUM ACCOMMODATION CONDITIONS

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of asylum accommodation conditions; your comments upon which I have read with interest.

I understand your concern regarding this important issue. This is a complex area and I hope I can provide some further information in this response to help explain the current situation. I know that the Government takes the welfare of people in Home Office care extremely seriously and is fulfilling its statutory duties to ensure decent, safe and humane conditions.

I believe that it is right that the UK has safe and legal routes to help the world's most vulnerable people, many coming from simply unimaginably dangerous places. As part of this, an asylum seeker who would otherwise be destitute is able to obtain support from the time they arrive in the UK, until their claim is fully determined and they have exhausted their appeal rights. In addition, failed asylum seekers receive support who would otherwise be destitute and are unable to leave the UK for reasons beyond their control. I welcome the fact that assistance is available for those who leave voluntarily, but for those who do not, enforcement action may be taken to facilitate removal.

As you will be aware, the Home Office is required by law to provide asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute with accommodation, paid for by the taxpayer. I believe that these are vulnerable people and while they are in the asylum system of the UK, this support is necessary for their safety and the safety of the wider community.

Since March 2020, the number of people within the asylum system has risen. This is due to the fact that the Government temporarily ceased ending asylum support for those whose claims have been granted or refused. This was necessary to help stop the spread of Coronavirus and ensure they are able to follow social distancing guidelines. It has therefore been necessary for the Government to act quickly to source contingency accommodation to create additional capacity and ensure obligations are met in full.

As I am sure you can appreciate, at the height of the pandemic and to ensure asylum seekers were not left destitute, additional accommodation was required at extremely short notice. This accommodation provided asylum seekers a safe and secure place to stay. I do welcome the fact that throughout this period accommodation providers and sub-contractors have made improvements to the site and continue to do so.



I know that the Government is disappointed that this judgment was reached on the basis of the site prior to the significant improvement works which have taken place in difficult circumstances.

After looking into this, I have been reassured that those accommodated at these sites have access to appropriate medical care and have access to the 24/7 'Migrant Help' helpline to raise any issues.


I will of course continue to monitor the situation very closely. However, I welcome the action taken by the Government to ensure the UK continues to meet its obligations and commitments to the most vulnerable people. This is of course in the context of unprecedented domestic challenges caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Additionally, as part of the 'New Plan for Immigration' and to help speed up the processing of claims and the removal of people who do not have a legitimate need to claim asylum in the UK, the Government plans to introduce new asylum reception centres. I understand that the reception centre model is used in many European countries including Switzerland and Denmark. These will provide basic accommodation and allow for decisions and any appeals following substantive rejection of an asylum claim to be processed fairly and quickly onsite.

You are right to raise the issue of asylum seekers being housed in hotels. Due to the pandemic, I understand it has been necessary for the Home Office to house a number of asylum seekers in hotels. This is to ensure they can comply with social distancing guidelines. Clearly, the health of asylum seekers and those working in the system is of vital importance during a pandemic of this kind.

You may also be encouraged to hear that the Government has announced that the use of hotels to accommodate arrivals will end and that Ministers will bring forward plans to expand the Government's asylum estate to accommodate asylum seekers.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you, then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

With best wishes,


**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**