



Home Office

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Minister for Future Borders and
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Rt Hon Dian Abbott MP
House of Commons
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04 May 2020

Dear Diane,

I am extremely grateful to you and other hon Members who spoke at Committee Stage and Third Reading of the Windrush Compensation Scheme (Expenditure) Bill on 24 March, and for the passionate and supportive way in which you raised your ongoing concern about the treatment of members of the Windrush generation.

Due to the unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves, in winding up at Third Reading I was unable to respond in detail to some of the specific points you and others raised, so I thought it would be helpful to set out the Government's position in writing.

Reaching affected individuals beyond the Caribbean

Stuart C McDonald, Helen Hayes and you expressed the need to look beyond the Caribbean to ensure affected individuals of all nationalities know about the Windrush Compensation Scheme and understand eligibility is not limited to individuals of Caribbean origin.

We have worked extensively with communities and stakeholders to raise awareness of the Windrush Scheme and Windrush Compensation Scheme. Feedback from communities has demonstrated face-to-face communications and engagement with people directly in their communities are important in spreading the message and building trust. We have therefore focused our approach on working in partnership with community groups and leaders.

To inform our outreach activity and to optimise its impact, the Home Office completed analysis into groups of people who may have been affected by Windrush issues and where they might be in the country. This analysis compared multiple data sources, including 2011 census data on individuals without UK passports who arrived in the UK before 1988 and internal sources (such as data on those who have already successfully applied for documentation through the Windrush Scheme). Through this we identified potential groups with particular socio-economic and demographic characteristics within specific nationalities (in addition to those from the Caribbean) to target for outreach and communication, including those from the Bangladeshi, Ghanaian, Indian, Nigerian and Pakistani diasporas. It also provided an evidence base for locations to target across the UK.

To date, the Home Office has attended or hosted over 100 engagement and outreach events and Taskforce surgeries throughout the UK and these have been open to individuals of all nationalities. But we recognise there is more to do.

This is why we have announced a £500k Community Fund for organisations, including community groups, to bid for funding to run outreach, promotional and support activity to increase awareness of both the Windrush Scheme and the Windrush Compensation Scheme. We are committed to working with members of the community to shape the design and principles of the fund. This is why we intend to work with stakeholders to co-design the fund.

Covid-19 has had an impact on our ability and community organisations' ability to run outreach and engagement events in person, but we are currently looking at digital options for engagement. I thank you for your ongoing commitment, which you reiterated at Third Reading, to support the Home Office in raising awareness of the Windrush Scheme and Windrush Compensation Scheme, including assisting with an event in your own constituency.

Communications campaign

Both Helen Hayes and you called for a communications campaign to raise awareness of the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

As the Home Secretary announced on 19 March, we will launch a national communications campaign which will build on existing communications activity to target affected groups from across the UK who may be eligible for help from the Windrush Scheme and/or the Windrush Compensation Scheme. The campaign will also reach a secondary audience of the children and grandchildren of the Windrush generation who may themselves have been affected and who are also well positioned to help older relatives apply.

The campaign is in development and will be launched in due course. A mix of advertising channels will be used, such as radio and digital channels to ensure information reaches affected communities as effectively as possible. We will work closely with stakeholders and partners trusted by the community to develop and deliver communications activity. New-look materials for advertising and community groups will also be produced. To ensure spend has been effective, we will undertake a robust evaluation of the activity.

As outlined above, feedback from communities has demonstrated face-to-face communications are important in spreading the message and building trust. This is why paid communications activity is also supported by stakeholder engagement and work with partners.

Current levels of payments

You raised concerns regarding the number of payments made to individuals.

The Home Office is processing claims as quickly as possible and our priority has been to ensure payments are being made, although as I accepted in the House, we need to get more completed. As you highlighted, to the end of December we had made 36 payments totalling £62,198. Many of these payments were interim payments, where we can resolve part of a claim more quickly than other parts, to ensure claimants receive their awards as quickly as possible.

As I mentioned at Committee Stage, more payments have been made since then. The next publication of Windrush Compensation Scheme data will be in May.

Windrush Lessons Learned Review

Both Stuart C McDonald and you highlighted the significant findings of the Wendy Williams Lessons Learned Review. As the Home Secretary outlined on 19 March, we are extremely grateful

to Wendy Williams and her team for this comprehensive report and we will now give the findings the careful consideration they deserve.

As the review makes clear, some members of this generation suffered terrible injustices spurred by institutional failings spanning successive governments over several decades including “ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the race and the history of the Windrush generation”. We are truly sorry on behalf of this and successive governments, as the Home Secretary made clear in her statement to parliament.

The Home Secretary will bring forward a detailed formal response in the next six months, as Wendy Williams has recommended, representing a new chapter for the Home Office. There will also be consideration given to ensuring parliament can debate its conclusions properly.

I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify a comment I made during the Committee stage in relation to the Windrush generation, particularly those who came to the UK prior to 1973. The Windrush generation have built their lives here, have given so much to this country – their country – and are viewed as British citizens, but may not formally hold this status. To assist them the Windrush Scheme was established to facilitate free applications for British citizenship. The Scheme also provides documentation to help the Windrush generation to demonstrate their settled status or right of abode.

I also committed to speaking to the Independent Advisor to the Compensation Scheme, Martin Forde QC, about the differing standards of proof required by the scheme for particular categories and have arranged for this to take place in a way which is appropriate under the current restrictions relating to Covid-19.

I am copying this letter to all MPs who spoke at Committee Stage and Third Reading, the Shadow Home Secretary, Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, Shadow Immigration Minister, Holly Lynch, and I am placing a copy in the library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Foster', with a large flourish at the end.

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Future Borders and Immigration