



Sir Chris Bryant MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

DECS Reference: MIN/0563489/23

17 April 2023

Dear Sir Chris,

Thank you for your letter of 28 March to the Prime Minister regarding statistics that he and I used last December in relation to the asylum backlog. The Prime Minister asked that I respond on behalf of His Majesty's Government, as the Minister of State for Immigration.

I clarified this matter in my comments in [the debate](#) on the Illegal Migration Bill on 27 March, in response to Stephen Kinnock MP. As I said in the House on 27 March, the statistics I quoted came from a [report](#) published by John Vine, then Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration and relate to approximately 400,000-450,000 unresolved legacy records which were still being dealt with by the UK Border Agency in 2010.

In addition, you may be aware that the Home Affairs Select Committee, chaired by the then Labour Member for Leicester East, published a [report](#)¹ stating that 'during the late 1990s and early 2000s the Home Office built up a backlog of between 400,000 and 450,000 unresolved asylum cases.

I am grateful for having the opportunity to clarify this matter. I very much agree on the importance of accurate and appropriate use of evidence and statistics and would strongly endorse the comments made by Sir Matthew Rycroft, Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, in his [recent response](#) to the UK Statistics Authority's Director General for Regulation on this issue. As Sir Matthew says, the department already publishes a very large number of statistics on the operation of our Immigration system and is making great efforts to ensure that this information is being clearly communicated to the public and will continue to do so.

As regarding the present backlog of cases in the asylum system, we are taking urgent action to accelerate decision-making and speed up processing times. We are simplifying and modernising our system, including introducing shorter, more focused interviews; making guidance more accessible; dealing with cases more swiftly where they can be certified as manifestly unfounded; recruiting extra decision makers; and allocating dedicated resources for specific nationalities.

As a result of the measures we are taking, it is expected we will clear the legacy asylum backlog by the end of 2023. This work is already bearing fruit and progress in this regard will be reported each quarter in [Home Office statistics](#), the next update will be published on 25 May.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-report-of-legacy-asylum-and-migration-cases-november-2012>

I am also ensuring that a copy of this letter is placed in the library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister of State for Immigration