



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Chris Bryant MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

25 April 2023

Dear Sir Chris,

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2023.

I have always taken my responsibilities to the House incredibly seriously, and I continue to do so.

I clarified my remarks on the floor of the House in the debate on Illegal Migration Bill on 27 March and, following your letter, I expanded on that clarification in writing to you and placed this letter in the library of the House.

The Labour Party seem to have misremembered the very well documented systemic problems within the asylum system that existed under the last Labour Government. As the then-Home Secretary Lord Reid said in 2006, nine years into Labour's time in office, the immigration and asylum system were 'not fit for purpose'.¹ I therefore thought I would take this opportunity to remind you of the situation that Labour oversaw.

With regards to the backlog of 450,000 asylum cases – this is the assessment of the then-Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration², as reported by the *BBC*³ and the *Guardian*⁴. I therefore believe it is a perfectly legitimate figure to quote, as then-Home Secretary John Reid did in the House of Commons on 19 July 2006.⁵

This figure is an estimate from when Labour was in office. In the interest of full transparency I will once again place this letter in the House of Commons Library to ensure there is clarity around this statistic and its source for the benefit of the House.

Additionally, as I made clear in my last letter, this figure was also cited by Home Affairs Select Committee in their report into the work of the UK Border Agency⁶. I assume that you stand by the judgment of that committee and its then-Chair, not

¹ Hansard, *Select Committee on Home Affairs Minutes of Evidence*, 23 May 2006, [link](#).

² *An inspection of the UK Border Agency's handling of legacy asylum and migration cases*, March-July 2012, [link](#).

³ BBC, *Asylum seekers 'granted amnesty' by UK Border Agency*, 2 June 2011, [link](#).

⁴ *Guardian*, *160,000 asylum seekers granted amnesty by the backdoor, say MPs*, 2 June 2011, [link](#).

⁵ Hansard, 19 July 2006, [link](#).

⁶ Hansard, *The work of the UK Border Agency (November 2010-March 2011)*, [link](#).

From the Member of Parliament for the Newark Constituency

including Balderton, Bingham, Collingham, East Bridgford, East Markham, Lowdham, Newark, Southwell and Tuxford.

least because the Leader of the Opposition proudly quoted his assessment on a different matter of considerable debate at Prime Minister's Questions on 19 April 2023.

If you would like further details on the number of cases in the asylum backlog, they can be found at: [Asylum and resettlement datasets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/datasets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets) (table Asy_D03).

I hope this addresses your concerns.

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