

Mr James Thorburn
Managing Director, Home Affairs Section
Serco UK Central Government
Cardinal Place
80 Victoria Street
LONDON, SW1E 5JL

11 December 2014

Dear Mr Thorburn,

I am writing to you as Chair of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Immigration Detention currently being held by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees and the All Party Parliamentary Group on Migration. The inquiry is examining the use of detention in the UK immigration and asylum systems, with a particular focus on the conditions within detention centres, the impact on individual detainees and their families, the wider financial and social consequences, and the future role of detention within the immigration system.

As part of the inquiry, the panel have received written and oral evidence from a range of individuals and organisations, including from many individuals who have a direct experience of being detainees in the detention estate. The panel will produce a report in the New Year, and to help inform that report the panel I would be extremely grateful if could answer a number of questions that have arisen in the course of the inquiry. Please find these questions as follows:

1. The UK is currently the only country in the European Union that doesn't have a maximum-time limit on immigration detention. Does this pose any significant managerial challenges?
2. What training is given to staff regarding the immigration system, i.e. are staff able to understand the particular circumstances of detainees?
3. What training is given to staff relating to the National Referral Mechanism and recognising signs that an individual may have been trafficked? What training is given to staff relating to the management of mental health illness? Is this training given to all staff? Is training gender specific?

Whilst Sarah Teather MP will treat as confidential any personal information that you may pass on, she will allow authorised persons to see the information if this is needed to help and advise you. She may pass some or all of this information to agencies such as the DWP, Home Office or a local authority if it is necessary to help with your case. She may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed of related issues that you may find of interest. Please let her know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

Sarah Teather MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
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4. Given that the detainees at Yarl's Wood are almost all female, what assessment have you made of the suitability of the current male/female staff ratio? How successful have Serco been at retaining staff at Yarl's Wood?
5. In what circumstances is segregation used to manage issues of behaviour? What safeguards and support are there for mentally disordered detainees who are held in segregation?
6. What systems are in place to allow detainees to feed back to centre management about facilities and staff at Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre? Are detainees able to contact individuals and organisations outside of the IRC and independent from the management in private? Do Serco have any system in place to make operations at Yarl's Wood IRC transparent and have any attempts to increase transparency ever been blocked by the Home Office?
7. Serco also manages facilities within the prison system. What are the managerial differences between the criminal justice system and the immigration detention system?
8. Do Serco have any concerns regarding the search regime at the IRC? Have Serco ever requested a lightening of the search regime or other changes to the management of detainees? If so, what was the Home Office response?
9. The panel has received a number of submissions criticising the current health provision for detainees. What improvements would Serco like to see and what impact has the transfer of responsibility for commissioning services to NHS England had? Additionally, what is your perception of how rule 35 operates? Could it be improved in any way?
10. The panel will be publishing a report with a number of recommendations regarding the way in which the detention system operations in the UK. Are there any recommendations that Serco would like to see included in the report?

Thank you in advance for your engagement with the inquiry. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Jonathan Featonby in my office on 020 7219 8147 or via jonathan.featonby@parliament.uk.

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Yours sincerely,

Sarah Teather MP

Member of Parliament for Brent Centre and Chair of the Parliamentary Inquiry into
Immigration Detention

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