



Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Home Secretary  
Home Office  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

19 October 2020

Dear Home Secretary,

We write once more in our capacity as Chair and Members of the APPG on Immigration Detention. As you will know, the group comprises over 35 parliamentarians from across the political spectrum who share concerns about the use of immigration detention in the UK.

We were extremely alarmed to read reports earlier this week of an outbreak of Covid-19 at Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre (IRC). In addition to this, our Chair has received an unverified but worrying account of a positive Covid-19 case at Brook House IRC. If true, both situations exemplify the unnecessary risks created by the Home Office's decision to continue detaining people for administrative purposes during a pandemic - risks we have highlighted in several previous letters to you.

With Covid-19 infection rates rising rapidly across the country, it is more important than ever for all parts of the Home Office to be prioritising public health aims above all else. Yet there are indications of numbers in detention rising in recent months, and transfers of detainees around the estate are continuing. We have also heard worrying reports from NGOs of Covid-19 measures in IRCs not being implemented correctly.

We reiterate our concern for all those who remain in detention at this time, and particularly for the many vulnerable people your department has continued to detain, including those with Covid-19 comorbidities. The Home Office's approach seems entirely out of step with wider efforts to control the virus and we fear it will result in further Covid-19 cases in detention, placing detainees, staff and the wider community at yet more risk.

In light of this we urge you to take decisive steps now to change course, and make immediate arrangements for the release of all those still held in detention, ensuring that anyone who lacks adequate accommodation is provided with safe housing and financial support.

With regards the reports of Covid-19 cases referenced above, we ask that you confirm:

- How many detainees and staff at a) Dungavel IRC and b) Brook House IRC have tested positive for Covid-19 in the past 30 days?



- How many transfers in and out of each of these centres have occurred so far in the 14 day period after these positive test(s)?

In regard to the detention estate as a whole, we ask you to provide the following information:

- How many people are currently detained under immigration powers - both at IRCs and in prisons?
- Of these, how many people have been advised to shield in their cells, and how many are actually shielding?
- How many people have a) entered detention and b) been released from detention in the past 30 days?
- How many transfers of people a) from a prison to an IRC and b) from one IRC to another have taken place in the past 30 days?
- How many Covid-19 tests have been administered to detainees in the past 30 days?
- How many Covid-19 tests have been administered to IRC staff in the past 30 days?
- Of these, how many tests have been positive, and in which centres have these positive tests occurred?
- When a positive test does occur, what measures are being taken to protect both detainees and staff, including those who are particularly vulnerable?

On a related point, we are disappointed not to have received answers to two previous letters - one dated 30 July signed by 15 members of the APPG and the other dated 24 August from our Chair.

We look forward to receiving your responses to both of those letters and to the issues raised here as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

**Alison Thewliss MP** – SNP; Chair, APPG on Immigration Detention

**Christine Jardine MP** – Liberal Democrat; Vice-Chair, APPG on Immigration Detention

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP** – Labour; Vice-Chair, APPG on Immigration Detention

**Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle** – Green Party



**Baroness Hamwee** – Liberal Democrat

**Baroness Lister of Burtersett** – Labour

**Caroline Lucas MP** – Green Party

**Stuart C. McDonald MP** – SNP

**Anne McLaughlin MP** – SNP

**Carol Monaghan MP** – SNP

**Mohammad Yasin MP** – Labour