



Home Office

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Minister of State for Immigration

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Juliet Lyon CBE
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24 February 2023

Dear Ms Lyon,

Thank you for your letters of 28 October and 22 November 2022 about conditions at the migrant processing centre at Manston. I apologise for the delay in my reply.

The death of Mr Ahmed, having recently been accommodated at Manston, is currently under investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman which is due to report at the beginning of March. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time, except to express my sadness at Mr Ahmed's passing. The post-mortem has taken place and the cause of death has been established. An inquest was opened on 5 December 2022 and has been adjourned until 30 May 2023. Mr Ahmed's next of kin have been notified and a family liaison officer has been appointed. His body has been repatriated to Iraq, and the Home Office has expressed its condolences to the family. I will write to you again with further details once the investigative process has completed.

As you have noted, Manston is currently unoccupied, and this is a regular occurrence when there have been no recent Channel crossings. Staff have also moved at pace to improve the onward accommodation position so that we are able to permit people to leave Manston sooner and so spend less time at the centre whenever possible. Manston is a short-term holding facility (STHF), which is designed to process arriving people quickly and get them into a position where they can be moved to onward accommodation within 24 hours. This has been challenging due to the irregular pattern of arrivals, where we have seen some days with over 1,000 arrivals. While the Home Office has a duty to ensure that people are not detained for an excessive period in a STHF, it also has a statutory duty to ensure that arriving people are not left destitute.

Manston is properly equipped with a medical centre, which has recently been augmented by the onsite presence of two Emergency Department Consultants between 8am and 10pm (together with full 24/7 paramedic support onsite) and welfare provision.

You have raised concerns about communicable disease in your letters. I can confirm that there is a Senior Response Group for Manston with representatives from both the UKHSA and the NHS and the Home Office is working closely with those agencies to manage these cases and ensure that any infectious people are identified, and that any outbreak of communicable disease is swiftly contained.

Since 24 October 2022, there have been 19 positive diphtheria cases among people being processed through Western Jetfoil and Manston. All cases of communicable diseases have been dealt with in conjunction with the UKHSA local Health Protection Team. This has included creating a pathway for the safe dispersal of persons with communicable disease from the site into dedicated isolation facilities ensuring all relevant parties are informed prior to the dispersal. All decisions taken have been made in liaison with UKHSA and local NHS partners. The Home Office has also been running a diphtheria vaccination programme at Manston, which has been offered to all new arrivals. This was briefly paused during a period of low arrivals while a new vaccine provider was sourced; the programme recommenced on 3 February.

You asked several questions in your letter of 28 October 2022 regarding the safety and security of detainees at Manston. I list these for reference, together with our responses:

What urgent actions are being taken to ensure individuals at the facility are being supervised by staff with proper powers and appropriate training to ensure individuals are kept safe?

Individuals detained within STHFs are supervised by trained and accredited Detention Custodian Officers (DCOs). The number of DCOs on site continues to increase and Manston remains well equipped and resourced to deal with arrivals.

What fire safety measures are in place to protect the lives of detainees in the event of an accident?

All areas in which detainees are held have been fully risk assessed and actions planned for completion, each building has full automatic fire detection with standalone alarms within the marquees for early warning, in addition all areas are observed 24/7 by staff. All staff responsible for detainees are fully trained in evacuation measures which is tested via live evacuation drills and tabletop exercises. We hold frequent visits from Kent Fire and Rescue taking onboard concerns, comments and recommendations to safeguard the lives of detainees.

What contingency plans are in place to protect detainees were serious disorder or fires to break out, including in the event of an evacuation?

Manston has a number of critical incident Standard Operating Procedures to ensure that it can respond quickly and effectively in response to any serious incidents on site.

With increased instability in the facility, and the lack of appropriate supervision, what additional measures are in place to safeguard individuals' mental health, particularly those who may be vulnerable as a result of past trauma and/or at risk of self-harm?

Manston remains well equipped and resourced to supervise all arrivals. Staff are trained to identify vulnerabilities and where persons are not suitable for detention at Manston, they will be prioritised for alternative accommodation.

I trust that this answers the concerns that you had about Manston and reassures you that the health, safety, and welfare of all for whom the Home Office has a duty of care is its utmost priority.

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.

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