



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

### **Penally Training Camp – Information update from the Home Office**

**The Home Office (HO) has described the use of the site as a ‘temporary measure.’ Can you provide a clear definition of what that means?**

This will be a temporary arrangement, with the Home Office able to use the site for up to 12 months.

**Who was involved in the consultation process?**

The emergency situation required that the Home Office took urgent action and so were regrettably not able to consult in the usual manner. This site was selected because it met the required needs following an assessment by the MOD of potentially suitable and available sites.

**Are other Welsh sites under consideration?**

At present no further additional accommodation has been identified in Wales, but we continue to examine the potential need for further contingency options across the United Kingdom. If any in Wales are suggested we will of course be in touch with you immediately.

**What will the security arrangements be on the site and what will be the policing arrangements around the local area?**

The HO will provide onsite security, however these people are not being detained so they are able to leave the site if they wish. We will be providing all of their meals and wellbeing services onsite so we would anticipate they have limited need to leave the site. In the event that they do leave there will be a checking in and out system to monitor.

**What will be the funding arrangements for this? Will the Home Office be covering any additional costs accrued by Pembrokeshire County Council, Hywel Dda University Health Board, or Dyfed-Powys Police that result directly from the decision to use the site in this way?**

The HO does not provide direct additional funding in connection with any of the accommodation provided for an asylum seeker. However, council taxes will be paid to the Local Authority, and the police are able to apply for special grant funding to cover their costs, which I understand they intend to do. The HO will be providing onsite medical services, ensuring the site is not reliant on local healthcare resources.

**How many people are expected to be on the site at any one time and what is the anticipated gender balance??**

With current Covid-19 measures in place and the need to maintain social distancing, the site will be operating to a maximum of 250 persons. The facility will only be used for single, adult males. It will not be used for families, women, children or vulnerable males.

**Will occupants of the site, including the staff working there, have up-to-date COVID-19 testing? How will ongoing access to this testing be managed?**

All residents and staff will have already been in the UK for more than 14 days so will not present a quarantine risk. If somebody onsite becomes symptomatic, they will be taken to an isolation unit in London with transport provided by the local team. We are in the process of introducing testing regime, the precise form this will take is not yet confirmed.

### **How will occupants travel between the site and the location of any hearings?**

Whilst processing individual claims for asylum, there may be requirements for claimants to attend interviews. In these cases, transport or remote access to those services will be organised by the HO.

## **Background**

### **What is the difference between an asylum seeker and an economic migrant?**

An asylum seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection on the basis of having been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. An economic migrant on the other hand is not a legal classification, but rather an umbrella term for people who move from one country to another to improve their economic prospects.

### **How are applications processed?**

As a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention outlining the rights of refugees, as well as the legal obligations of states to protect them, the UK fully considers all asylum claims lodged in the UK. Each claim for asylum is carefully considered on its individual merit, and is made against the background of the latest available country of origin information and any relevant case law.

### **What are the U.K's legal obligations?**

The UK has a statutory obligation to provide destitute asylum seekers with temporary accommodation and transportation whilst their application for asylum is being considered. This is in accordance with the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999, the Asylum Support Regulations 2000 and the EC Reception Conditions Directive 2003/9/EC.

### **Why can't the camp be used for homeless veterans?**

Unfortunately a small minority of veterans become homeless. In England, the Secretary of State for Defence is required to refer members of the Armed Forces to a local housing authority within 56 days, if they believe they may be homeless or threatened with homelessness. However, this matter is devolved in Wales and therefore decisions are taken by the Welsh Government.