



Home Office

Home Secretary

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House of Commons
London
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16th April 2018

Dear Colleague

What the Government is doing to help former Commonwealth citizens evidence their rights in the UK

Commonwealth citizens, like the Windrush generation, are a unique group who came to this country in the 1960s and 1970s. They built their life here and have contributed enormously to our country. I do not want anyone to be in any doubt about their right to remain here.

When these people came to the UK they were deemed to be settled in the UK under our legislation at the time. This meant some did not get, nor need, documentation to prove their right to be here. While the vast majority who came before 1973 will have now got documentation that proves their right to be in the UK, we have recently seen some cases where people have not obtained the necessary documentation and have struggled to access public services.

This issue has come to light because of measures introduced in recent years to make sure only those with a legal right to live here can access things like NHS treatment and rented accommodation. This has resulted in some people now needing to evidence their immigration status to access certain services.

To ensure this can happen as easily and smoothly as possible, the Home Office is setting up a new dedicated team that will work across Government to help individuals identify and gather evidence to confirm their existing right to be in the UK. The team will include a dedicated contact point and aim to resolve cases within 2 weeks once the evidence has been put together.

We recognise that some of these people may struggle to evidence when they arrived and how long they have been in the UK, so this dedicated team will work with HMRC, DWP, DH, DfE and any other relevant bodies to help people provide the evidence they need. They won't need to just rely on formal records. Any information they can provide, from schools they attended to

places of work, family or former addresses will help build this picture. My intention is that no one should be left out of pocket as they go through this process, so the government will not make anyone pay for this documentation. Above all I want this process to be simple and quick to provide people with the reassurance they need.

There have been a very small number of cases of former Commonwealth citizens who have the right to be here being subject to removal action and detention. This is not acceptable and my Department has changed its processes so this cannot happen again. We're not aware of any evidence that anyone has been wrongly deported, but we will look at any cases urgently should they emerge.

My department is already engaging with charities and high commissions to ensure people are made aware of this new service. Tomorrow the Prime Minister will meet with Heads of Government to hear directly their concerns and ensure we are doing everything we can to ensure people are offered the right support and solutions. I will also be meeting with High Commissioners later this week to discuss this crucial issue.

If you would like any more information or have a case you like to raise please do not hesitate to contact me or the Immigration Minister.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amber Rudd'.

Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP