

Immigration detention reform

The immigration detention estate is around 40% smaller than it was in 2015, the Immigration Minister announced today (Tuesday 23 July).

This is a key aspect of the series of reforms the government is making across the detention system in response to Stephen Shaw's second review into the welfare of vulnerable people in detention, published a year ago.

The reforms include promoting and encouraging voluntary return and introducing a pilot to support vulnerable women outside detention while their cases are resolved. Practical changes have also been made to Immigration Removal Centres, such as reducing the number of beds and rolling out the use of Skype.

The reforms have meant that there is a higher ratio of staff to detainees in removal centres and there has been a more than 30% reduction in the number of people in detention.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

I am committed to going further and faster in reforming immigration detention.

Over the past year we have reduced the number of detainees, improved detention decision-making and bolstered the safeguards in place to protect the vulnerable.

We have put in place the foundations that will enable us to continue the changes Stephen Shaw envisaged last year and I will continue to ensure that the health and wellbeing of detainees is the number one priority.

I know there is more to do and I'm committed to making real change so we have detention and removal policies which are fair and humane for everyone.

In addition, we are piloting automatic bail referral of detainees to the First-Tier Tribunal of the Immigration and Asylum Chamber after 2 months in detention. The pilot is due to conclude in August.

We have also increased face-to-face engagement with detainees. There are new engagement teams in the removal centres improving induction and links between detainees and their caseworkers. This also supports the management of detainees' wellbeing and the identification of any signs of mental or physical deterioration.

Last July, the former Prisons and Probation Ombudsman for England and Wales, Stephen Shaw, published a report which assessed government progress in

responding to his 2016 review on the welfare of vulnerable individual in detention. The Home Secretary welcomed his report and committed to a series of reforms in response.