

Windrush Lessons Learned Review

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the long awaited [Windrush Lessons Learned Review](#).

I dedicate this statement today to the Windrush generation.

I have personally been deeply moved reading the report.

Given the national significance of this issue, I have published this review immediately.

And I want to thank Wendy Williams and her team for the important work they have undertaken.

Mr Speaker, the Windrush Lessons Learned Review gives voice to members of the Windrush generation who arrived legally to the UK to help rebuild post-war Britain.

These are the men and women who built their lives and their home in Britain.

These are the people who have done so much for this country, from staffing the NHS to rebuilding Britain, these are the very people who worked hard, paid their taxes and had every right to be in this country.

They contributed to our communities, culture and society – helping our public services and economy to thrive.

They made our country stronger, more vibrant and more successful as a nation.

Which is why we were all shocked to discover, that they and their families were subject to such insensitive treatment by the very country that they called home.

Mr Speaker, as this review makes clear, some members of this generation suffered terrible injustices spurred by institutional failings spanning successive governments over several decades.

Including “ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the race and the history of the Windrush generation”.

Today’s publication is part of an ongoing mission to put this right and ensure events like this can never happen again as there were far too many victims of Windrush.

Paulette Wilson was detained in an immigration removal centre and warned she faced removal after living in the UK for 50 years.

She spent decades contributing to the UK – working for a time in this very House – and yet she was treated like a second-class citizen.

Junior Green had been in the UK for more than 60 years, raising children and

grandchildren here.

But after a holiday to Jamaica he was refused re-entry despite holding a passport confirming his right to be in the UK.

The injustice that he suffered was compounded when, because of this action, he missed his mother's funeral.

Lives were ruined and families were torn apart.

And now, an independent review has suggested that the Home Office's "institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of race and the history of the Windrush generation" contributed to this.

This is simply unacceptable.

Mr Speaker, I have heard people speak of 'decision making' as a process that grinds people down to the extent that it makes you want to give up.

I have heard people speak of being dismissed, labelled as a group of people who just didn't matter and whose voice on this issue was irrelevant.

People have spoken to me about the indignity and inhumanity they still feel today by the experience of being made to feel unwelcome in their own country.

They have described their experiences as unthinkable and unimaginable.

However, Mr Speaker, there are people across the UK, and even some members of this House – including myself and the Shadow Home Secretary – for whom this is unfortunately all too relatable.

There are lessons to learn for the Home Office.

But also, society as a whole.

Despite the diverse and open nature of our country, too many people still feel that they may be treated differently because of who they are or where their parents came from.

And today's report – which suggests that in the Home Office there was an "institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of race and the history of the Windrush generation" is worrying for us all.

In her report, Wendy Williams is clear that lessons must be learned at all levels and by all political parties.

She describes a set of measures that evolved under Labour, Coalition and Conservative governments. These measures cover decades.

She states that ministers did not sufficiently question unintended consequences.

And, that officials should and could have done more.

But we must all look to ourselves.

We must all do better at walking in other people's shoes.

We must all take responsibility for the failings that led to the unimaginable suffering of this generation.

Let me be clear, Mr Speaker.

There is nothing that I can say today which will undo the pain, the suffering and the misery inflicted on the Windrush generation.

What I can do, is say that on behalf of this and successive governments.

I. Am. Truly. Sorry.

For the actions that spanned decades.

I am sorry that people's trust has been betrayed.

And we will continue to do everything possible to ensure that the Home Office protects, supports and listens to every single part of the community it serves.

Mr Speaker, action has already begun.

In recent months I have met and listened to people whose lives were shattered.

Since 2018, we have launched measures to put right the wrongs caused to individual members of the Windrush generation.

We have taken action through practical measures to give those who were affected the assistance, certainty, reassurance and support that they need.

The Commonwealth Citizens Taskforce goes into communities to help and support people secure their legal status.

Over 11,700 people have been granted a form of documentation that confirms their right to remain in the UK and guarantee their access to public services

Our Vulnerable Persons Team has provided support to nearly 1,400 people, with around 120 people still receiving support.

The Team has supported over 360 people to secure access to benefits.

And to go some way in addressing the hardship suffered, the Home Office launched the Windrush Compensation Scheme.

This scheme was designed in close consultation with members of the community and Martin Forde QC.

Collectively, they have developed a compensation scheme that is straightforward to use, addresses the bespoke and personal circumstances and

needs of every applicant, with dedicated caseworkers assessing claims as quickly as possible.

There is no cap on payments, dozens of which have already been made, and we encourage more applications.

Those who are eligible will receive full compensation.

Over 100 community engagement events have taken place so far. This includes more than 30 Compensation Scheme events across the country – from Southampton to Glasgow, Cardiff to Coventry.

But there are still people out there in need of our help who we have not yet reached.

That is why in February, I extended the length of the compensation scheme by a further two years so that claims can be submitted until April 2023.

I set up the Windrush Stakeholder Advisory Group to rebuild links with communities to ensure that they are supported through compensation but also to rebuild the trust that has been broken.

Today, I can confirm we will launch an expanded cross-government Windrush working group to develop programmes to improve the lives of those affected.

That may be through employment support programmes, dedicated mental health support and specialist education and training schemes.

And to make sure people know about the Taskforce and the Windrush Compensation Scheme, we will have a dedicated new communications campaign promoting the scheme.

We will also open a £500k fund for grass roots organisations to promote these schemes including provisions for specialist advice services.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to Martin Forde QC for his support with the creation of the scheme.

Mr Speaker, I also want to put on the record my thanks to my predecessors – my Rt Hon Friends, the Members for Bromsgrove and Maidenhead and the former member for Hastings and Rye – who worked hard to understand and undo the suffering when these issues first came to light.

And to other members of this House, including the members for Tottenham and Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford who shone a necessary light on this injustice.

I also want to thank the thousands of civil servants at the Home Office and across government who work tirelessly every single day in challenging and demanding jobs to keep the public and our country safe.

Whether on the frontline or working to develop policies for the future, their commitment to create a safer country for us all is commendable.

Since these injustices were brought to light, civil servants have used every endeavour to right the wrongs.

Giving people their correct status and supporting them in their financial compensation claims.

However, it would be wrong for the department to ignore Wendy Williams's finding that the Home Office's "institutional ignorance and thoughtlessness towards the issue of race and the history of the Windrush generation" contributed to this.

This is not something that can be resolved with an apology or compensation.

I will review the recommendations Wendy Williams makes in relation to the way the Home Office operates as an organisation. I will continue to look closely at its leadership, culture, practices and the way it views the communities it serves.

Over the coming months, myself and Matthew Rycroft – the new Permanent Secretary – will work together with our dedicated staff, at all levels to review and reflect on the recommendations.

Including those relating to compliant environment policies and cultural change.

Fundamentally I want to make the Home Office a better place to work.

This will include a clarification of the Department's purpose, mission and values – putting at its heart fairness, dignity and respect.

We will put people before process.

Mr Speaker,

The publication of this Review is a small but vital step towards ensuring the Home Office is trusted by all of the people it serves.

I would encourage anyone who thinks they have been affected by the Windrush scandal or requires support or assistance to come forward.

I will bring forward a detailed formal response, in the next six months, as Wendy Williams has recommended, representing a new chapter for the Home Office.

Let me assure this House that everyone at the Home Office will be asking the difficult questions needed to ensure that these circumstances can never arise again.

I commend this statement to the House.