



Craig Whittaker MP

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Torture and Asylum

Thank you for contacting me about asylum for torture survivors.

The UK unreservedly condemns the use of torture or inhuman treatment, and works with its international partners to eradicate this abhorrent practice. Preventing torture and tackling impunity for those who torture are essential components of safeguarding this country's security and are integral to the rule of law. The UK abides by its commitments under international law and expects all countries to comply with their international legal obligations, and I can tell you that the Government, including the intelligence and security agencies, never uses torture for any purpose.

You are right that granting protection to those who genuinely need it and refusing it to those who do not, in as efficient, sensitive and effective a way as possible, is crucial.

I have been assured that all members of staff who make asylum decisions receive a comprehensive course of training. This includes a dedicated five-week Foundation Training Programme that includes instruction in international and domestic law and safeguarding issues, which is supplemented by a mentoring programme with an experienced decision maker that lasts from three to six months. More specifically, the Foundation Training Programme includes a detailed section which covers torture claims involving medico-legal reports.

The course is explicit that decision makers must not make clinical judgements and must properly consider evidence and give appropriate weight to all evidence presented in order to reach an informed decision, only rejecting claims when there is a significant reason to do so. It includes practice in the analysis and interpretation of medico-legal reports as part of a range of practical exercises.

Following training, there is a robust quality assurance process in place involving technical specialists embedded within each team, senior caseworkers within each unit and a national internal quality audit team who ensure that all policies are followed when decisions are made.

I should also highlight the fact that Asylum Operations recently received funding from the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund to review and redevelop its training prospectus. As part of that work, Asylum Operations is liaising with a range of external stakeholders, including charities and non-governmental organisations, to ensure that there is robust and effective safeguarding training.

The cases of those who have been abused who claim asylum in the UK must be processed quickly and efficiently, and I am assured the procedures are in place to do so.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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