



Home Office

**Karen Abdel-Hady**  
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**Croydon CR9 2EF**

Malcolm Alexander  
Chair  
Healthwatch and Public Involvement  
Association

By email

Our reference: TO211399 & 468

10 November 2014

Dear Mr Alexander,

Thank you for your letter of 16 July (and email of 12 August) to the Home Secretary about the role of Local Healthwatch (LHW) in the context of immigration removal centres (IRC) and seeking assurances that Home Office staff and staff at IRCs are aware of LHW's statutory role.

I am sorry that there has been a delay in sending you a substantive response following the initial acknowledgement of your correspondence.

The responsibility for the commissioning of healthcare in IRCs transferred to NHS England earlier this year and as of 1 September NHS commissioned healthcare providers have taken over the provision of healthcare in all centres in England with the exception of Campsfield House which is due to transfer in April 2015.

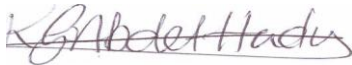
We have therefore been liaising with officials in NHS England and the Department of Health to reach an understanding of the remit of LHW in an IRC setting and how this might be facilitated in practical terms.

IRC's have already been instructed to display information and contact details for the local provider of complaints advocacy, which in some cases may be the local Healthwatch where it has been commissioned to provide this service.

Separate instructions are in the process of being prepared to raise awareness of LHW and their statutory function of meeting with people – including those in IRCs – to obtain their experiences of care services. It is of course the case that there is no specific expectation on local Healthwatch to carry out work in relation to IRCs, as local Healthwatch will determine their own priorities.

While our advice suggests that LHW does not have a right to enter premises to meet with individuals in an IRC without the IRC's consent; with appropriate notice such consent would usually be forthcoming as we are committed to assisting LHW with carrying out their statutory function.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'K. Abdel-Hady', written in dark ink.

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