July 2020

Thank you for contacting me about immigration detention.

Recent figures show that as of the week commencing the 23rd March 2020, there were 736 people in detention and I can confirm that the vast majority of those are foreign national offenders. My constituents, quite rightly, expect the Government to keep the public safe and maintain the lawful detention of high-harm individuals.

I would like to assure you that there is a general presumption of liberty for all and if detention is used as circumstances change, detention is reviewed, and release may then be the appropriate response.

The main rationale put forward in support of a time limit is that, in the absence of one, individuals are detained indefinitely.  This is simply not the case - the law does not permit indefinite detention. The Government is committed to using immigration detention sparingly and only when necessary. In order forthe detention of an individual to be lawful, there must be a realistic prospect of theirremoval within a reasonabletimescale. We are held to account on this by the courts and by a series of safeguards that ensure proper scrutiny of decisions to detain, and on-going detention. A time limit is not only unnecessary, but it would also severely limit the Government’s ability to use detention as an effective means of maintaining lawful immigration control.

I hope we can agree that lawful immigration detention is necessary to keep the public safe and I will work to hold the Government to account on this issue and ensure the system remains fair and humane.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me.



Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**