

Child detention – is there an end to it?

Minister for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop, has written to the UK Immigration Minister asking him to reaffirm the UK Government's commitment to end the detention of the children of asylum seekers after appearing to back-track on the commitment yesterday.

In the House of Commons, Damian Green expressed the UK Government's intention to "minimise" the number of children held in detention centres in the UK.

Following representations from MSP Anne McLaughlin, Ms Hyslop has now written to Mr Green asking for clarification of his remarks.

Ms Hyslop said:-"UK Ministers have repeatedly claimed to be committed to ending the abhorrent practice of child detention. Indeed, the Deputy Prime Minister once described this practice as 'state-sponsored cruelty'.

"We were therefore pleased when the Home Office said in May that it would immediately end the detention of children for immigration purposes at Dungavel.

"As we have repeatedly made clear, we believe the detention of children at Dungavel is a stain on Scotland's reputation.

"Now, it looks as if the UK Government is back-tracking on its commitment. This is a very worrying sign from a Government which identified the ending of child detention as one of its early priorities. By now, we expected to see real progress on this issue, not a u-turn.

"I have written to Damian Green highlighting the cross-party support in the Scottish Parliament for the ending of child

detention. I have asked Mr Green to clarify exactly what his Government's position is on this important issue and for him to confirm his commitment to ending the practice of child detention.

"In answering, Mr Green should remember that the coalition Government's respect agenda will be measured in deeds and actions. We expect them to keep their word and end child detention."