

#CloseTheBarracks Day of Action: Supporter Pack

The papers have covered it. Thousands of us have spoken out. People power is working. Public outrage secured an inspection of the barracks and now many people have been moved out. But there's still people trapped there in unsafe conditions and the government refuses to commit not to house people like this in the future.

So hundreds of us are coming together to meet our MPs to put an end to this once and for all. We're calling for the barracks to be closed and for a commitment from the Home Office that they will house asylum seekers within communities. As voters, our MPs have to listen to what we think and they're more likely to act on it if we do it united, together in our hundreds.

People from all over the UK will be joining in. Don't miss out on being a part of this day of action. **Sign up here** to meet your MP on 19 March.

4 simple steps to meet your MP

1. Email your MP using **our online tool**
2. If you don't hear back, call their office!
3. Let us know when you've secured your meeting by emailing us on **campaigns@freedomfromtorture.org.uk**
4. Read our tips if you'd like to feel prepared on what to say - but don't worry, you don't need to be an expert. You just need to show you care.
5. Report back - tell us how it went and together we'll discuss our next steps

Preparing for your meeting

- Make sure you've got a Zoom link from the MPs' office or created one yourself. You can create a Zoom account for free <https://zoom.us/freesignup/>
- Think about where you want to have your meeting, ideally somewhere you won't be disturbed by others. Set up your computer somewhere and test out the camera.
- Do some research on your MP. Google them and find out what they're interests are.
- Look at the talking points we've included below so you feel up to date on the issue
- If you're doing it as a team, perhaps think about who will cover what in the meeting

- If your MP can't meet on 19th March, try to get them to commit to meet you earlier that week instead.

Tips for your meeting

MPs are people like us, so you should remember that they will often be moved by powerful stories. Remember also they have a duty to represent constituents like you who voted them into power and who they represent in Parliament. Here are some things you could talk about.

- You could break the ice by talking about where you live in your constituency or asking them how they and their staff have been finding the lockdown
- Tell them your personal story - why do you care? Was it something you read, someone you met or maybe just a belief you hold? If you can make it something they'll relate to, even better.
- If you're an organisation or group who has been working with people in contingency accommodation, tell your MP about the issues people have been facing in their constituency.
- Ask what they think about the issue or what they've heard about it to engage them in the topic and find out their thoughts
- Ask for a commitment that they'll write to the Home Secretary, Priti Patel about this issue
- If you don't know the answer or how to respond, tell your MP you will get them further information and follow up afterwards
- Not all MPs will support us, but be polite and don't argue - just explain why you care and try to listen to them.
- After the meeting, send them a thank you email as that may make them remember your discussion even more, you can include extra information if you like
- Make notes so you can report back!

Talking points

We've put together a **briefing pack** for MPs with all the information in but here's some key talking points for you to discuss with your MP if you'd like.

The barracks

- A [report](#) into the Napier Barracks by CgMs Consulting in 2014 found that the blocks, built at the end of the 19th century, "were never intended for long-term use" and should be demolished.
- The barracks do not offer access to adequate and appropriate healthcare services or space to self isolate.
- 197 residents of Napier barracks have contracted Covid.

- Most asylum seekers have experienced torture and trauma – often in militarised settings. Housing them in former army barracks is retraumatising and degrading.

The system

- This is a bigger, long-term problem. 12,000 people are currently living in forms of large full-board accommodation, including hotels and other emergency facilities.
- This type of accommodation inflicts serious harm on people seeking asylum. Despite warnings from health experts, clinicians, parliamentarians, residents and others, the Home Office has refused to close the barracks and move people to safe housing in the community.
- Government policy is to house asylum seekers within communities whilst waiting for a decision on their claim, and this is the correct approach - but they are not following this.
- Since the process of privatising asylum dispersal began in the early 2000s, the Home Office has failed to invest in the system. This government needs to reform its approach to the contracting of accommodation services, and listen closely to the local authorities who have been trying to explain the barriers to offering more spaces within their regions.

The solution

We are calling on the government to:

- Immediately close the barracks and cease any plans to open further similar accommodation. Reliance on other forms of emergency accommodation, such as hotels, should be significantly decreased and strict time limits on people's stays there should be introduced.
- Make a full commitment to housing people seeking asylum in communities, by urgently addressing the long-standing structural issues in the management and monitoring of contracted provision, and by significantly investing in improvements to the current stock of dispersal housing.
- Commit to a vision of a fair and efficient asylum system that allows those who seek sanctuary to safely rebuild their lives as part of our communities

We're asking MPs to write to Priti Patel outlining these demands.

Tell us what happens

- Fill out **this form** to tell us how your event went
- Get in touch with us on **campaigns@freedomfromtorture.org.uk**