



Home Office

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Shabana Mahmood MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

30 November 2010

Dear Shabana

Further to the debate of 10 November on the Immigration (Biometric Registration) (Amendment) Regulations 2010, I am writing to answer a question you asked that was not answered during the course of the debate.

You asked about the reduction in illegal workers since the biometric residence permit system was introduced.

As illegal working is a clandestine activity, the number of illegal migrant workers in the UK is unknown so I cannot provide a like-for-like correlation between an increase in the number of biometric residence permits issued and a decrease in the incidence of illegal working. I can however confirm that partners have confirmed that biometric residence permits provide them with a secure document through which they can evidence a migrant's status and right to work. We are tackling illegal working in many ways and the biometric residence permit is an important tool for employers and an integral part of that approach.

The biometric residence permits application process helps to identify those here illegally. By checking fingerprints against our centrally held records on application we can find out if we have seen a person before with a different identity and/or nationality, perhaps as a failed asylum seeker who has now returned to the UK and is passing themselves off as a migrant worker from a different country. This enables the UK Border Agency to identify fraudulent applications and ensure that enforcement action is undertaken swiftly. This also helps to prevent illegal migrants working illegally.

There have been a number of removals and prosecutions brought against those attempting to circumvent immigration controls through fraudulent applications identified as a direct result of the biometric residence permits application process.

We are committed to continuing to streamline documents that establish right to work in the UK. Feedback from partners confirms that employers support the change as they view the previous arrangements as complicated and onerous. With more than 300,000 biometric residence permits now issued, employers are increasingly familiar with them but the impact of the biometric residence permit in terms of simplifying checks for employers will be greater towards the end of the rollout when the number in circulation will be even greater.

I hope this fully addresses the question you raised. I have sent a copy of this letter to the Chair of the Committee and those who attended and arranged for a copy to be placed in the library of the House of Commons.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damian', written in a cursive style.

Damian Green