

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 9NA

Sent via email to: pubaccom@parliament.uk

Dear Chair,

RE: MANAGING CROSS BORDER TRAVEL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Following my letter of 19 December 2022, I am writing to you to provide an update on the outstanding financial matters associated with the Managed Quarantine Service (MQS).

Please see below the latest figures which provide information relating to debts (defined in detail in previous correspondence) from 'hardship' and 'chargebacks' from the start of MQS operation in February 2021 up to 10 February 2023.

	Hardship	Chargebacks
Debt at MQS Programme End (31/03/22)	£54.21m	£20.71m
Payments Received	£11.68m	£0.90m
Value of debt on Repayment Plans	£6.44m	£0.42m
Debt Outstanding	£36.08m	£19.40m

Debt Outstanding

The debt outstanding figure can fluctuate as this is made up of the total debt minus both the repayments received and the amount on repayment plans still to be collected.

When a customer on a repayment plan makes a payment, this reduces both the overall balance on payment plans and the debt outstanding figure.

Where a customer breaks from their repayment plan for a period of time, and then collection activity recommences, the amount outstanding is removed from the value of the payment plans and re-added to the outstanding debt.

Hardship

MQS operated a 'hardship' scheme for individuals who were unable to pay for their MQS stay or mandatory testing packages in advance of travel, or where immediate payment would cause severe financial hardship. Hardship arrangements were only available to those who could demonstrate that their travel was essential. Eligible individuals were granted repayment plans enabling them to repay the costs associated with their travel in instalments. In exceptional circumstances, individuals' fees were reduced or waived. Waivers or reductions were only granted following an assessment process which assessed various criteria designed to balance fairness to the taxpayer with fairness to travellers who had travelled for essential purposes.

Chargeback debt

Chargeback debt was incurred where the credit card payment used to make a booking was cancelled (either by the traveller or a third party) and the recipient received a full refund without permission from MQS.

I will update the Committee further in summer 2023.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Jennifer Harries".

Professor Dame Jennifer Harries DBE

Chief Executive Officer

UK Health Security Agency