



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

November 2018

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about family reunion.

I support the principle of family unity and I am glad that there already is a comprehensive framework for refugees and their families to be safely reunited in the UK. The present refugee family reunion policy allows immediate family members of those granted protection in the UK to reunite with them here. The family provisions in the immigration rules provide for relatives with protection in the UK to sponsor children when there are serious and compelling circumstances.

The policy is also clear that where an application fails under the rules, the Government will consider whether there are exceptional reasons to grant leave outside the rules. In addition, refugees with family members in the UK may be eligible for resettlement under the Mandate and Gateway Scheme.

The family reunion policy is designed to provide a safe and legal route for close, dependent family members to join their refugee family in the UK. This avoids the need for family members to make dangerous journeys in order to seek protection.

I am immensely proud that under the existing family reunion policy, over 24,000 family reunion visas have been granted over the last five years. It is crucial that our efforts are concentrated on ensuring that existing resettlement schemes are used to full effect, and that the current rules work properly and effectively. This way we can help those who need it most.

In October 2017 the Lord Chancellor announced the start of a review of legal aid reforms, which will include an assessment of the changes to the scope of legal aid for immigration cases, and will report later in 2018.

The Government has said it is reflecting on the thoughtful debate around this complex issue. It will be following the passage of the Bill closely and will continue productive discussions in this area. I have always been clear that I support the principle of family unity, however I also believe that we must not create perverse incentives for people,



particularly children, to leave their families and risk dangerous journeys hoping relatives can join them later.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris".

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**