



December 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about asylum seekers and refugee resettlement.

The United Kingdom has a proud record of helping those fleeing persecution, oppression or tyranny from around the world. Alongside providing £10 billion a year to support people through our overseas aid, the UK is a global leader in refugee resettlement. As a country, between 2016 and 2019 we resettled more refugees from outside Europe than any member state of the EU.

In 2015, the Government committed to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees who fled the conflict in Syria through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). I am sure you will join me in welcoming the fact that the Government has now met that commitment.

In total across all of our resettlement schemes, the UK has now resettled more than 25,000 vulnerable refugees in need of protection over the past 6 years, with around half being children. These refugees are resettled directly from regions of conflict and instability rather than from safe European countries. I believe that it is most important to prioritise those refugees in dangerous situations, not those already in Europe.

The Government already provides safe and legal routes for people needing protection or seeking to reunite with their families. In the year ending December 2020, over 5,400 refugee family reunion visas were issued to partners and children of those previously granted asylum or humanitarian protection in the UK. Over 29,000 family reunion visas have been issued in the last 5 years.

Let me assure you that the new Nationality and Borders Bill will allow the UK to continue to resettle genuine refugees directly from places of danger and offer refugee family reunions. It will improve support for refugees to help them build their life in the UK, integrate and become self-sufficient members of society. The Bill also seeks to introduce a new temporary protection status for those who do not come directly to the UK or claim asylum without delay once here but who have, in any event, been recognised as requiring protection.

I have always believed that resettlement is vital as a safe and legal pathway to protection for vulnerable refugees fleeing persecution. It is right that the Government continues to offer safe pathways for those in need, and I will continue to ensure that this is the case. The launch of a new global UK Resettlement Scheme will now build on the success of previous schemes and continue our proud record of resettling refugees who need our help from around the world.

Refugees in the UK need to have the freedom to succeed as they settle. This means ensuring refugees have access to the tools required to become fully independent and provide for themselves and their families. This will allow refugees to be in a position to contribute and integrate into the economic and cultural life of the UK.



Chris Heaton-Harris

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It is therefore good news that the Home Secretary has announced £14 million of funding to help newly granted refugees to integrate in the UK. This fund will pilot new approaches across the country to support newly granted refugees to learn English, move into work, access housing and build links in their local communities. Lessons learned from these pilots will inform future support available to all refugees.

I would like to reassure you that the proposals in the New Plan for Immigration and the Nationality and Borders Bill fully comply with the UK's global obligations including commitments to the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Refugee Convention. As you will be aware, through the Bill, whether people enter the UK legally or illegally may also have an impact on how their asylum claim progresses, and on their status in the UK if that claim is successful. After looking into this, the UN Refugee Convention does allow for different treatment where, for example, refugees have not come directly from a country of persecution. For example, if someone enters the UK via a safe country, where they could have claimed asylum, they are not seeking refuge from imminent peril. Therefore, returning them to a safe third country is not inconsistent with the UN Refugee Convention.

In order to make the system fairer and more effective, the Government plans to introduce new asylum reception centres, to replace hotels. I understand that the reception centre model is used in many European countries including Switzerland and Denmark. These will provide simple, safe and secure accommodation to stay in while their claims and returns are being processed.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY