



May 2022

Dear Constituent,

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

The United Kingdom has a proud history of supporting those in need of protection; our resettlement programmes have provided safe and legal routes to better futures for hundreds of thousands of people from across the globe. Since 2015, over 185,000 men, women and children seeking refuge have been offered a place in this country, which is more than any other similar resettlement scheme in Europe. This includes almost 100,000 British Nationals Overseas threatened by draconian security laws in Hong Kong, 20,000 through the Syrian scheme, 13,000 from Afghanistan, and around 50,000 Ukrainians.

I am aware that a number of constituents have written to me calling on the Government to introduce a specific commitment to resettle a set number of refugees each year. While I sympathise with the sentiment behind this suggestion, I do not think imposing a numerical target is the best method of aiding those in need. Instead, I believe the number of refugees settled each year should be based on the UK's capacity and the Government's assessment of the international situation. Operating in this way has already effectively enabled the UK to respond to both protracted and emerging humanitarian crises.

For example, I would like to point out the UK is doing to support those fleeing Afghanistan by providing resettlement of up to 20,000 people in need of protection. In addition, the Government's launch of two uncapped pathways in response to the crisis in Ukraine is continued evidence of the UK's willingness to adapt to respond to international crises and support higher numbers of refugees and people in need of protection on a bespoke basis.

Since 2015, the UK has resettled over 27,000 refugees through safe and legal routes directly from areas of conflict and instability. Furthermore, the refugee family route, which enables the spouse or partner and children of a refugee sponsor who are under 18 years of age to join their family member in the UK, has provided more than 39,500 family reunion visas from the same year.

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

The UK has a proud record of offering sanctuary to those who need it. In accordance with its international obligations, the UK considers each claim for asylum on its individual merits. I know that the Government takes its international responsibilities seriously and will grant protection to those in genuine need.



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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.

To address the unacceptable cost to the taxpayer from housing migrants in hotels (including those who have arrived through resettlement programmes), a new, nationwide dispersal system will be introduced so asylum pressures are more equally spread across local authorities. This will be accompanied by the opening of a new, bespoke, asylum reception centre in Linton-on-Ouse.

The Nationality and Borders Act brings a new, comprehensive, fair but firm long-term plan which addresses the challenge of illegal migration head on, and to take down the serious organised criminals exploiting people and profiting from human misery. Only by tackling illegal immigration can we effectively help those most in need. I am encouraged that the Government's Equality Impact Assessment for the Act included considerations of possible impacts on women who have been subject to sex-based violence and/or trafficked for a sexual purpose, and outlined the work the Government, including through training and working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, will undertake to protect such individuals.

Rest assured that the Nationality and Borders Act allows the UK to continue to resettle genuine refugees directly from places of danger and to offer refugee family reunions. It improves support for refugees to help them build their life in the UK, integrate and become self-sufficient members of society. The legislation also introduces 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.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY