



Jane Hunt MP  
House of Commons

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020

Dear local resident,

Thank you to those who have contacted me about asylum seekers and refugee resettlement.

I would like to refer you to my letter of 10<sup>th</sup> January which set out my position on this and the reasons why I could not support the House of Lords amendment to the *EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill* today. As you may be aware, the amendment was subsequently defeated by 342 votes to 254.

You may also be interested to read the Fact Sheet produced by the Home Office which discusses some of the misleading information published in recent weeks and reiterates the Government's commitment to seeking a reciprocal agreement with the EU for the family reunion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. I enclose a copy of this below.

I hope that this provides clarification and reassurance on the matter. If you have any further concerns about this, or anything else, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Hunt MP  
(Encl.)

## **Home Office Fact Sheet - January 2020**

There has been misleading reporting over the past week, claiming that the Government is turning its back on vulnerable refugees, in particular unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

However, the UK Government has a strong and proud record of helping vulnerable children and this will not change.

### **The UK is a European leader in resettling unaccompanied asylum seeking children**

The Government is doing more than most EU countries to help vulnerable unaccompanied children. In 2018, the UK had the third-highest intake of all asylum claims from unaccompanied children in the EU, receiving 15% of all claims from unaccompanied children across Europe.

The UK has granted protection to 41,000 children since 2010. In the last year alone we granted protection or other forms of leave to over 7,500 children.

### **The Government does not need primary legislation to honour its commitment**

We remain absolutely committed to seeking a reciprocal agreement with the EU for the family reunion of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and we do not require the Withdrawal Agreement Bill to achieve this.

The purpose of the Withdrawal Agreement Bill is to put the Withdrawal Agreement, which the Government has agreed with the EU, into law. It is not about our future relationship with the EU.

An agreement on family reunion for unaccompanied children is a matter for negotiations with the EU and isn't solely in the gift of the UK. That is why the Home Secretary proactively wrote to the European Commission on 22nd October to commence negotiation on this issue. Clause 37 of the Bill amends our statutory obligation to negotiate to an obligation to make a policy statement to Parliament, in light of this fact.

### **The UK's safe and legal routes**

The UK is a world leader in global resettlement and our flagship Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme has resettled over 18,000 since 2014. Over half of those resettled under this scheme are children, again demonstrating our commitment to giving vulnerable children the chance to rebuild their lives in safety.

In fact, in 2018 the UK resettled more refugees than any other EU member state. The Government also remains fully committed to relocating the specified number of 480 unaccompanied children to the UK under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 – also

referred to as 'the Dubs Amendment' – as soon as possible, and we are making good progress in doing so.

Section 67 is not about family reunification. Delivering section 67 is not affected by the change being proposed in the Withdrawal Agreement Bill nor by our exit from the EU. We are also absolutely committed to the family reunion of refugee families and have reunited over 27,000 family members with refugees in the UK in the last five years.

Our priority is always making sure vulnerable children can get protection, which is why in the last year alone we issued over 3,000 refugee family reunion visas to children.

### **The UK's role in global resettlement**

We have a proud record of helping vulnerable children in this country and this will remain our priority after we leave the EU. This includes working with our European neighbours, which is why we have already written to the EU Commission to commence negotiations on family reunion for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Beyond this, the UK will continue to play a leading role on the world stage in providing international protection to the most vulnerable.

That is why from later this year, we will start our new global resettlement scheme which will help thousands more people fleeing conflict and persecution, including children, to build a new life in the UK. The UK will resettle in the region of 5,000 of the world's most vulnerable refugees in the first year of the new scheme – with around half of these expected to be children.

This new programme will broaden the geographical focus beyond the Middle East and North Africa, making sure we can provide protection to those most in need from across the globe.

### **The UK's support upstream**

The Government continues to offer support aimed at alleviating pressure on the Greek islands and to lead to sustainable improvements within the Greek migration system. That is why we have contributed £500,000 towards urgent and humanitarian support in the Greek reception centres and we have also deployed interpreters to the Greek islands.