



Home Office

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Rt Hon George Howarth MP
House of Commons
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 Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 13 February to the Home Secretary on behalf of your constituents about unaccompanied refugee children. I am replying as the Minister for Immigration. I am sorry for the delay.

The Government takes the welfare of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children extremely seriously, and the UK has a proud history of providing protection for those in need, including some of the most vulnerable children affected by the migration crisis. The Government's strategy is to support international efforts to find a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the refugee crisis; we must deal with its root causes, as well as respond to the consequences.

The UK has pledged over £2.3 billion in aid in response to the events in Syria and the region - our largest ever humanitarian response to a single crisis. We are also one of the few EU countries to meet our commitment to spending 0.7% of Gross National Income on overseas aid. Within Europe, the UK has also established a £10 million Refugee Children's Fund to support the needs of vulnerable refugee and migrant children arriving in Europe. The fund includes targeted support to meet the specific needs of unaccompanied and separated children.

The UK has contributed significantly to hosting, supporting and protecting the most vulnerable children affected by the migration crisis. In the year ending September 2016, the UK granted asylum or another form of leave to over 8,000 children. By the end of this Parliament, we will have resettled 20,000 Syrian nationals through our Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and a further 3,000 of the most vulnerable children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa region under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme. According to EU figures, in 2016 the UK resettled the highest number of refugees of any EU country.

In 2016, we transferred over 900 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to the UK from Europe. This included more than 750 from France as part of the UK's support for the Calais camp clearance. Many have been reunited with family members already in the UK, while others are being cared for by local authorities across the UK. The remaining children are in the care of the French authorities.

On 8 February, the Government announced that we will transfer the specified number of 350 children to the UK under section 67 of the Immigration Act following consultation with local authorities on capacity. This includes the more than 200 children already transferred under section 67 from France as part of the UK's support for the Calais camp clearance. We will announce in due course the basis on which further children will be transferred from Europe to the UK under section 67 of the Immigration Act to the specified number.

The care and support that the UK provides for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children does not end when the children arrive in the UK; time, resources and professional support are all put in place to ensure these children receive the care and compassion they need. We are grateful for the way in which local authorities have stepped up to provide places and look after these young people.

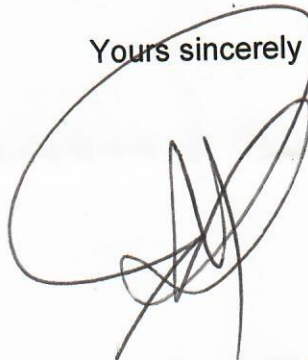
In addition, the Government considers the timely and efficient operation of the Dublin Regulation to be central to our work on unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children in Europe and we continue to work with our European partners to ensure that those children with close family members in the UK can be brought here to have their asylum claims assessed.

As announced on 1 November 2016, the Government will also deliver a safeguarding strategy for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This strategy will complement and build on existing safeguarding guidance and procedures, in recognition of the increased numbers and specific needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children already in the UK, unaccompanied children who we transfer to the UK from Europe, and unaccompanied children who we resettle directly from outside Europe.

The Government has taken significant steps to improve an already comprehensive approach to supporting asylum-seeking and refugee children. Our work on unaccompanied children in Europe further underlines the Government's commitment to playing its part in the global migration crisis. The UK can be proud of its overall contribution.

I trust this clarifies the Government's response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, positioned below the text 'Yours sincerely'.

Robert Goodwill MP