

Local Authority Chief Executives and
Leaders

2 October 2015

Dear colleagues,

SYRIAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

Thank you for all the support you have offered so far which reflects the overwhelmingly generous support of the British public. I know that funding is important for your planning and there is work to do to develop the details. My team and I are looking forward to working with you further on this point.

We all want to bring refugees from the Syrian conflict to the UK as quickly as possible. We share the desire to see things happen rapidly and want to harness the support and goodwill emanating from across the United Kingdom at every level of society. We remain extremely grateful for all expressions of interest and pledges of places from local authorities on this national and voluntary scheme with which we have made genuine progress in a short period of time. Last week we welcomed the first group of refugees since the Prime Minister's announcement that we would take 20,000 more people during the course of this Parliament. Further new arrivals are due in the UK in the coming weeks.

We have been working closely with UNHCR which has resulted in them referring more cases to us. A team of officials were at the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva last Friday and will return this Friday to discuss expansion plans in detail. The first phase of our programme is to build on the fact that we have been operating resettlement schemes for many years and have established effective networks to accommodate and support resettled people. In the short term, we may contact individual local authorities or Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships directly about possible participation in the current resettlement scheme with a view to many more refugees arriving before the end of the year.

However, we recognise that the increase in numbers will require an expansion of current capacity. The second phase of our programme will therefore involve working together to build systems that can meet the needs of more people, more quickly whilst minimising the impact on local communities. Our programme will utilise

strategic and operational expertise encouraging innovative practice from all levels of government, NGOs and the civil society.

The expansion of the scheme needs careful planning. As I mention above, local authorities will play a vital role as we turn the strong offers of support and assistance from across the UK into long-lasting and life-changing guarantees.

The first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs are fully funded by central government using the overseas aid budget. To ensure that local authorities can plan ahead and continue to respond to the overwhelmingly generous response of the British people, we will also provide additional funding to assist with costs incurred in future years. These arrangements will be applied to all cases since the 20,000 expansion was announced. We understand that Councils need certainty about the financing of the scheme in order to enter into contracts and commit resources. We will be working closely with local government to develop the process for drawing down the funding in order that this certainty can be given, including to those councils offering help under the existing scheme

I attach an updated factsheet and we will continue to work with you and local authorities to provide further updates as quickly as possible as the process for phase two develops. I welcome your ongoing support and commitment and look forward to continue working with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Harrington". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

RICHARD HARRINGTON, THE MINISTER FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES