

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

March 2017

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the relocation of unaccompanied children from Europe.

Britain has a proud record of helping the most vulnerable children who are fleeing conflict and danger, and I know this Government is committed to upholding this fine tradition. That is why its response to the migrant crisis has been to establish resettlement schemes from the refugee camps in the region. This allows support to be targeted to the most vulnerable people affected by the crisis, while not creating a strong incentive for refugees to undertake the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean.

In full accordance with section 67 of the Immigration Act, the Government has announced it will transfer the specified number of 350 children, who reasonably meet the intention and spirit behind the provision. This number includes over 200 children already transferred under section 67 from France. It does not however include children transferred to UK where they have close family here.

The Dubs amendment was never meant to be an open ended scheme. The legislation obliged the Government to consult local authorities on their capacity to care for and support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children before arriving at this number. Local authorities informed the Government that they had capacity for around 400 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children until the end of this financial year. Similarly the Government estimated that at least 50 of the family reunion cases transferred from France as part of the Calais clearance will require a local authority placement in cases where the family reunion does not work out.

The UK will continue to work closely with our European partners to meet its obligations under the Dublin regulation and accept responsibility for processing asylum claims where the UK is determined to be the responsible member state, ensuring that it is in their best interests to come here. But if the Dubs scheme is continued into the next financial year the Government would be creating a semi-permanent scheme that would create an additional pull factor that will lead to more children taking the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean and put more children in the hands of unscrupulous people traffickers.



While the primary responsibility for unaccompanied children in Europe lies with the State in which they are present, an expert has been seconded to Greece in addition to the long-standing secondee in Italy to support efforts to identify children who may qualify for transfer to the UK. A £10 million Refugee Children Fund has been established for Europe to support the needs of vulnerable refugee and migrant children arriving. Since October 2015 the Department for International Development has been supporting child refugees in Greece with assistance such as food, clean water and safe shelter, as well as access to protection and psychosocial care, and in Italy the Department has provided assistance to unaccompanied minors and supported the deployment of child protection experts.

Once again, thank you for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY