March 2022

Dear Constituent,

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

The United Kingdom has a proud record of helping those fleeing persecution, oppression or tyranny from around the world. Alongside providing £10 billion a year to support people through our overseas aid, the UK is a global leader in refugee resettlement. Between 2016 and 2019 our country resettled more refugees from outside Europe than any member state of the EU.

In 2015, the Government committed to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees to flee the conflict in Syria through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). I am sure you will join me in welcoming the fact that the Government has since met that commitment.

In total across the full range of our resettlement schemes, the UK has now resettled more than 25,000 vulnerable refugees over the past six years, with around half children. Importantly, these refugees are resettled directly from regions of conflict and instability, not from safe European countries. I believe that it is most important to prioritise those refugees in dangerous situations, not those already in Europe.

The Government provides safe and legal routes for people needing protection or seeking to reunite with their families. In the year ending December 2020, over 5,400 refugee family reunion visas were issued to partners and children of those previously granted asylum or humanitarian protection in the UK. Over 29,000 family reunion visas have been issued in the last five years.

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.

It is also the case that refugees in the UK need to have the freedom to succeed as they settle. This means ensuring refugees have access to the tools required to become fully independent and provide for themselves and their families, which is why I welcome the Home Secretary's announcement that £14 million of funding will support newly granted refugees to learn English, move into work, access housing and build links in their local communities. This will allow refugees to be in a position to contribute and integrate into the economic and cultural life of the UK.

Rest assured that the Nationality and Borders Bill will allow the UK to continue to resettle genuine refugees directly from places of danger and to offer refugee family reunions. It will improve support for refugees to help them build their life in the UK, integrate and become self-sufficient members of society. The Bill also seeks to introduce 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.

As you mention, in 2016 Parliament agreed to relocate a specified number of children from Europe to the UK – later settled at 480 following a consultation with local authorities. In July 2020, the Government confirmed that it had completed the transfers of 480 children from France, Greece and Italy and therefore

completed the commitment you have referred to. It should also be noted that the UK also received the largest number of asylum applications from unaccompanied children in Europe in 2019. The New Plan for Immigration consultation has provided the opportunity to contribute views on the Government's future approach on safe and legal routes to the UK including on family reunion for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY