

Resettling Refugee Children from Europe to the UK: A campaign guide

Introduction

On May 4th David Cameron confirmed that the government would support the Dubs amendment, brought by Lord Alf Dubs who himself had been brought to Britain as a child fleeing Nazi persecution. Specifically the government agreed to a) speed up family reunion for refugee children in Europe with family connections to the UK, and b) to consult with local government and then decide how many minors without family connections to relocate from within Europe to the Britain, and that this programme will only apply to minors who arrived before the deal with Turkey on the 30th of March, and will prioritise those most at risk of trafficking.

Citizens UK established the Safe Passage project to support the group of children in group a). Since winning a ground breaking court case in January Safe Passage has now reunited 25 Calais minors safely and legally with their families. The project is working on over 150 cases currently in Calais, and beginning to explore operations in Greece and Italy. This work is going well, if you'd like to support it the real need is for qualified interpreters and funding – [please see here](#). The rest of this guide focuses on the children potentially affected by b). There is a real risk that with little funding available very few councils will step up to welcome these children and that the project will move so slowly many of the children who stand to benefit disappear into the trafficking networks of Europe.

We need to:

1. Target MPs to ask them to ensure that the deal offered councils is real and that the first 300 children are relocated in time to start school this September (one tenth of the total proposed by Lord Dubs)
2. Challenge local authorities to sign up to resettle at least 5 children each over the next year (which would mean 3,000 country wide), while offering to support them to make it viable by: a) recruiting potential foster carers, b) identifying potential language coaches and mentors, c) identifying schools, GP practices, and support services willing to help as per the [Community Welcome Plan](#), and d) by demonstrating strong levels of public support

Background information

This isn't the first time the government has asked local authorities to take refugee children. Over the past year there have been 950 minors in Kent in need of support, with local children's services stretched to breaking point.

The Home Office, Department for Education and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) wrote to Council Leaders on 24 November 2015 to request that more unaccompanied children were transferred from Kent under a voluntary system. Local Authorities who took children in the financial year 2015/16 were allocated a day rate of £114 for children under 16 and £91 for those who were 16 or 17. The leaving care rate was paid at £200 per week for those children who turn 18 and are granted leave for remain, with the payments for a limited time only. It is likely that the levels of financial assistance for local councils will closely match these figures.

In this previous attempt 29 local authorities signed up to resettle 87 children between them: Wiltshire, Brent, Camden, Ealing, Greenwich, Sutton, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Richmond, Hartlepool, Derbyshire, Islington, Surrey, Suffolk, Brighton and Hove, Leeds, Hull, Solihull, Calderdale, South Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Bath and North East Somerset, Sheffield, Staffordshire, Bournemouth, Croydon, Essex, Lambeth. Some councils offered to take children but didn't have their offers taken up: Barnet, Durham, Bromley and Lancashire.

Steps to take action!

The steps we lay out here are designed to work together in parallel. There is no right order, they complement one another:

- **Get your MP on the case**

This effort to resettle refugee children from across Europe must happen fast and will only succeed if local councils are given the financial assistance they need to support these children. We must push central government to offer a generous financial package and underline the urgency of the situation. Teams and individuals should try to get their MP signed up explicitly to help a) lobby the Prime Minister to ensure the financial package is one that makes the programme viable (it must be more generous than the offer listed above which was insufficient to meet council's needs), b) agree to back our call for the first 300 children to be resettled in time to start school this September. Please report any results to Daniel.Mackintosh@citizensuk.org. Much of this will overlap helpfully with the #4families campaign you might try:

- a) Emailing your MP, you can do so [here](#)
- b) Calling their constituency office to raise the issue. Typically MPs receive very few calls so getting 5, 10, 20 people to do this is very effective. In a good call you introduce yourself as their constituent and ask to speak to the MP if they're available, and one of their case workers if not and ask them to respond to you in writing about our two requests
- c) Meeting with your MP on your own, or ideally as a group. Please use the relevant advice sections [here](#) on how to approach the meeting and contact us if you'd like more support
- d) Take public action. These actions might include: a special church or interfaith service for unaccompanied minors, a demonstration in the town centre or an open meeting all of which you can invite the MP to address; or something more creative for example packing five school bags and placing them on the constituency office or town hall steps to symbolise the call for 5 children to be protected by your community
- e) Or start a petition using <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/>

- **Build your offer of support**

Work within your local refugee welcome team and conduct a scoping exercise about local services. Please refer to the elements of the Community Welcome Plan listed here, in addition you might:

- a) Establish whether there is a shortage of foster carers locally and if so then seek to recruit potential volunteers. Becoming a foster carer is a very serious commitment, those

considering it should consult Coram's advice [here](#) and Home for Good's [here](#). People should be encouraged to look online at these sources, then form part of a cohort who can together explore becoming foster carers through the local authority

- b) To drum up potential foster carers you might seek to engage local congregations and civic networks, host an event with a guest speaker from Coram or Home for Good to explain what fostering involves, and put word out through local and social media
- c) Survey what youth services are already on offer within the local community and which ones would be willing to play a role in supporting these children. Do this to supplement the provisions already contained in the [Community Welcome Plan](#) around schools and GPs

• Campaign to get your council signed up

Getting your council signed up to play a part is your major objective. To do this build a compelling offer and then:

- a) Start a petition using <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/>
- b) Emailing your councillors and your council leader, you can do so [here](#)
- c) Meeting with your council leader or the cabinet member for children's services as a group. Please use the relevant advice sections [here](#) on how to approach the meeting and contact us if you'd like more support
- d) Take public action. These actions might include: a special church or interfaith service for unaccompanied minors, a demonstration in the town centre or an open meeting all of which you can invite the council leader or cabinet member to address; or something more creative for example packing five school bags and placing them on the town hall steps to symbolise the call for 5 children to be protected by your community

Local authorities are under extreme financial pressure. It's important that as you approach them you explain your desire to work with them to lobby central government to achieve a good financial settlement. They might be willing to issue a joint public statement with you calling on government to make the funds needed available.