



Home Office

Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme

Guidance for local authorities and partners

28 October 2015

General background

How many additional people will you resettle?

- The UK is at the forefront of the response to the crisis in Syria. We want to help refugees in the region as far as we possibly can, but recognise that for some vulnerable people the only solution is to bring them to countries like the UK.
- The Government is therefore expanding the existing Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Scheme and intends to resettle up to 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament.

How will the arrival of 20,000 be spread out?

- Our prime concern is the safety and protection of these very vulnerable people as they arrive in this country.
- The expansion of the scheme needs careful and meticulous planning to ensure we get it right. We are looking to harness the strong offers of support and assistance we have received to resettle people who are in desperate need of our help.
- We are working closely with all local government associations and a number of NGOs and partner organisations, and will continue to do so, to enable local authorities to plan ahead.

How else is the Government supporting Syrians in need of protection?

- Our priority is to continue to provide humanitarian aid to those most in need in the region, while actively seeking an end to the crisis. We believe this approach is the best way to ensure that the UK's help has the greatest impact for the majority of refugees who remain in the region and their host countries.
- The UK has been at the forefront of the international response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria. We are providing more than £1.12 billion in humanitarian aid - more than any other country in the world except the United States.
- The UK is the only major country in the world that has kept its promise of spending 0.7% of our national income on aid and we should be proud of this. By the end of March 2015, UK support had delivered over 20 million food rations, each of which feeds one person for one month, provided access to clean water for 1.6 million people (peak month), and over 2.4 million medical consultations in Syria and the region.
- We have also taken in more than 5,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Syria since 2011.

The expanded scheme

How will the expansion of the programme operate?

- We have significant experience of resettling vulnerable people and our existing domestic resettlement mechanisms provide a basis for expanding the scheme. We are working with partners in the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and local authorities to ensure that we can begin to increase numbers as quickly as possible.
- We are expanding the scheme in two phases. Phase one has the task of immediately scaling up the existing resettlement programme and phase two will work towards transforming our resettlement and protection offer including developing ideas for community sponsorship as per the Home Secretary's commitment.

- Over the coming weeks and months, we will work with local authorities, the UNHCR and others to put in place the structures to ensure we can scale up the current arrangements so that we can meet the aim of bringing up to 20,000 Syrians over the course of this Parliament.

How long will the expansion take?

- Although we have simplified the process as much as we can, the UNHCR must still assess each individual case before referring them to the Home Office. The Home Office must conduct visa checks and at the same time a place must be found in a local authority.
- We do all of this already, but it is important we get it right and scaling up a system like this in a way that protects the interests of all concerned, including local communities, will take time.

How do you choose who comes to the UK?

- The people coming to the UK under the Syrian VPR scheme are in desperate need of assistance and many have significant needs. It prioritises those who cannot be supported effectively in their region of origin: women and children at risk, people in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture and violence amongst others.
- We work closely with the UNHCR to identify cases that they deem in need of resettlement and we will continue this work to ensure we deliver our commitment to provided refuge to 20,000 Syrians over the course of this Parliament.

Questions

How does the current Syrian Vulnerable Persons Scheme work?

- The UK sets the criteria and then UNHCR identifies and submits potential cases for our consideration. Cases are screened and considered by us and we retain the right to reject on security, war crimes or other grounds.
- Once the screening process has been completed a full medical assessment is conducted by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in the host country. Full details of the case and medical history are sent to the local authority for assessment of need, including whether suitable accommodation and care are available locally. The local authority then provides details of the estimated costs.
- Eligibility is then confirmed and IOM start the visa application process. UK Visas and Immigration International issue UK visas (3 months Leave Outside of the Rules) and on arrival, arrangements are made for Biometric Residence Permits to be issued with 5 years' humanitarian protection.

Is this voluntary for local authorities?

Yes, this a national and voluntary scheme.

What funding arrangements are in place?

- The first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs, excluding economic integration are fully funded by central government using the overseas aid budget, in accordance with international guidelines and practice. 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 local authorities 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

- We are working with Treasury and local government associations to consider issues such as:
 - Arrangements for high cost cases
 - Regional and devolved administration issues
 - Support for unaccompanied children, where relevant
 - Movement between local authorities post arrival
 - Housing costs and processes

What if an area is new to resettlement?

- Local authorities will need to think carefully about whether they have the infrastructure and support networks needed to ensure the appropriate care and resettlement of people in need of our help. It would be worth speaking to existing resettlement areas to learn best practice. Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships can put you in touch.

How can local authorities find out more about the profiles and needs of the refugees they will be hosting?

- The UNHCR identifies suitable cases that meet criteria and then refer them to the Home Office. As soon as a local authority wants to participate, we will send these referrals that give detailed information on the individual cases.

Will the 20,000 be on top of existing schemes?

- The Government will expand the existing Syrian VPR Scheme and we expect to resettle up to 20,000 vulnerable Syrians during this Parliament. This is in addition to those we resettle under Gateway and Mandate and the thousands who receive protection in the UK under normal asylum procedures.

How will you ensure refugees are dispersed fairly and in a way that manages the impacts on local communities and services?

- Our existing dispersal policy is aimed at ensuring an equitable distribution of refugees across the country so that no individual local authority bears a disproportionate share of the burden.
- That is why we will be talking to local authorities and other partners over the coming weeks to ensure that capacity can be identified and the impact on those taking new cases can be managed in a fair and controlled way.

How can the public help now?

- For further information refer to the Government release on the GOV.UK website <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2>
Or call The British Red Cross Crisis Helpline on 0800 107 8727 that triages calls to appropriate organisations.

Key facts and statistics on resettlement

- Home Office quarterly immigration statistics, including asylum and refugee figures - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-statistics-quarterly-release>
- Information on claiming asylum in the UK: <https://www.gov.uk/claim-asylum>
- Information for organisations working with vulnerable refugees about the Gateway Protection Programme for resettlement in the UK -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gateway-protection-programme-information-for-organisations>

Information on aid to Syria DFID fact sheet on UK aid to Syria

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>

Further information

More detailed information is being prepared by the Department for Communities and Local Government and will be sent to local authorities who are interested in being part of the scheme.