



Home Office

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS)

Guidance for local authorities and partners

July 2017



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General background

- Through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), we are working closely with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify those most at risk and bring them to the UK.
- The scheme was launched in January 2014 and has helped those in the greatest need, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk.
- The scheme was intended to provide sanctuary to several hundred vulnerable Syrians over three years and with 216 cases resettled as of June 2015, we were on track to do that.
- The then Prime Minister announced on 7 September 2015 that the scheme would be expanded to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection during this Parliament. In July 2017 we took the decision to expand the scope of the scheme to include other refugees who have fled the conflict in Syria but do not have Syrian nationality.
- This is in addition to those we resettle under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, Gateway and Mandate and the thousands who receive protection in the UK under normal asylum procedures.
- Local authorities and partners have played a vital role in helping those arriving here to settle into a new life in the UK. We welcome offers of support from any local authority which is able to assist.

When will the 20,000 arrive?

- Our prime concern is the safety and protection of these very vulnerable people as they arrive in this country.
- As of March 2017, 7,307 people had been resettled under the VPRS, half of whom are children. The decision to relocate is a difficult and complicated one for the vulnerable people involved, often taken after having remained in their home region for as long as possible.
- The numbers resettled in a particular period will depend on a number of factors including the availability of suitable accommodation and care packages in the UK.
- We continue to work closely with all local government associations and a number of NGOs and partner organisations 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 response to the crisis. On 4 February 2016, the then Prime Minister announced that the UK would more than double our total pledge to the Syria crisis from £1.12 billion to over £2.3 billion. This is our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis and means that the UK is one of the largest donors to the Syria crisis.
- UK support has reached hundreds of thousands of people. By August 2016, UK support in the region (Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt) had provided over 5.2 million food rations, each of which feeds one person for one month; 4.9 million vaccinations; over 1 million health consultations, and close to 1 million relief packages. In addition, in 2015/2016 alone, UK support provided the following in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey: access to clean water for 317,000 people; improved sanitation and hygiene support for 234,000 people; specialist support including medical support to 143,000 victims of sexual and gender based violence; psychosocial support for 30,000 people; primary education for 143,000 children and non-formal education for 19,000 children.
- Approximately half of UK assistance is targeted towards the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. By meeting basic humanitarian needs and helping to create new opportunities we aim to help Syrians to build a life in neighbouring countries.
- In addition to the £2.3 billion the UK has pledged to the humanitarian crisis, we have committed at least £1 billion to support the reconstruction of Syria once a new and legitimate Syrian Government emerges.

How do you choose who comes to the UK?

- We work closely with the UNHCR to identify the people that they deem in need of resettlement. The UNHCR have developed rigorous criteria to identify those most in need of support and we apply these criteria to determine who would benefit most from our assistance.
- The people coming to the UK under the VPRS 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.

Questions

How does the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement 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.
- Eligibility is then confirmed and IOM start the visa application process. UK Visas and Immigration 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' Refugee Leave.

Is this voluntary for local authorities?

- Yes, this is a national and voluntary scheme. If a local authority is interested in participating they should contact their Regional Strategic Migration Partnership.

What funding arrangements are in place?

- The first 12 months of a refugee's resettlement costs are fully funded by central government using the overseas aid budget. The Government has also provided an additional £10m ESOL funding to enhance the English language skills of adults to improve their resettlement and integration experience and employability.
- For years 2-5 of the scheme there is £129m of funding available to assist with costs incurred by local authorities providing support to refugees under the VPRS. This is allocated on a tariff basis over four years, tapering from £5,000 per person in their second year in the UK, to £1,000 per person in year five. There is also an exceptional cases fund to assist the most vulnerable refugees. This is a substantial level of funding which enables local authorities to support these vulnerable people as they rebuild their lives in safe and secure surroundings, among supportive communities in the UK.

What if an area is new to resettlement?

- Before committing to offer resettlement places a local authority should think about whether they have, or are able to put in place, the infrastructure and support needed to ensure the appropriate care and resettlement of people in need of our help. It is worthwhile to speak to existing resettlement areas to learn best practice. Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships can help to link new and experienced areas together.

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.

Is the 20,000 on top of existing schemes?

- The 20,000 is in addition to the 3,000 we have pledged to resettle under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme, which helps at-risk children and their families in the Middle East and North Africa region. It is also 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 allocated fairly and in a way that manages the impacts on local communities and services?

- Our 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 responsibility. We are working closely with local authorities to ensure that this remains the case.
- We are working closely with local authorities across the UK to ensure that resettlement capacity is identified and the impact on those taking new allocations 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>

- DFID fact sheet on UK aid to Syria:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>