

# Afghan citizens resettlement scheme to open in January

Ministers have today (Thursday 23 December) confirmed the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme (ACRS) will open in January, providing up to 20,000 Afghan women, children, and others most at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK.

The ACRS is one of the most ambitious schemes of its kind in the world. It will build upon the UK's continuing efforts to support those at risk, alongside the relocation of British nationals, and those who heroically supported our armed forces through the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). The UK is taking a leading role in the international response to supporting at-risk Afghan citizens and has made one of the largest commitments to resettlement of any country.

The ACRS will prioritise:

- those who have assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for our values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech and rule of law
- extremely vulnerable people such as women and girls at risk and members of minority groups

Delivering the ACRS is evidence of the government's New Plan for Immigration in action, offering a safe and legal pathway to the UK for some of the most vulnerable while breaking the business model of illegal migration. Every person who comes to the UK will be subject to the same strict security checks as those resettled through other schemes.

Minister for Afghan Resettlement, Victoria Atkins, said:

We are committed to supporting everyone we have evacuated from Afghanistan to make a success of their new life in the UK. I'm very grateful to everyone who has stepped forward to help.

The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme provides a safe and legal way for the most vulnerable and at-risk people from Afghanistan to come to the United Kingdom and rebuild their lives, as part of the New Plan for Immigration.

Operation Warm Welcome is a huge national effort which could not succeed without the compassion and determination of our partners in local government, the private sector, voluntary organisations and the great British public. Every single one of them should be very proud.

The Minister for Afghan Resettlement, Victoria Atkins MP, will set out

further detail on how the ACRS will operate in an update to Parliament in January.

Earlier this year, the UK government undertook the biggest and fastest emergency evacuation in recent history, helping over 15,000 people to safety from Afghanistan. We have continued to bring people to the UK, with around 1,500 people helped to enter the UK since the evacuation. Some of those already evacuated, including women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, will be the first to be resettled under the ACRS. All those resettled under the ACRS will be granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK, which includes the right to work and study.

People will be referred onto the ACRS through 1 of 3 referral pathways. This will enable the UK to respond to the unprecedented circumstances in Afghanistan and ensure those already in the UK are supported to secure permanent homes and rebuild their lives in the UK. The government will also honour its commitments to those British Council workers, GardaWorld employees and Chevening alumni who are at risk and these groups will be considered for resettlement under the ACRS.

The ACRS is part of the New Plan for Immigration, supporting the world's most vulnerable to come here legally whilst passing new laws to maintain control of our borders and deter people from entering our country illegally. The plan ensures that the UK's resettlement programmes respond to international crises so that vulnerable people do not fall prey to people smugglers or criminal gangs. It operates alongside the government's other safe and legal resettlement routes, which have provided tens of thousands of at-risk people with the chance to start a new life in the UK.

Since 2015, the UK has helped more people through resettlement schemes than any other country in Europe. As part of 'Operation Warm Welcome', the government is ensuring children can attend school, that families can access healthcare including mental health support, and that people can begin their integration into UK society by securing employment opportunities.

Local authorities have been given integration funding to support those starting a new life in the UK, with £20,520 per person provided over 3 years. They will also receive additional funding for children entering education, to cover English language provision, and to cover healthcare. So far, over 300 local authorities have pledged to support Afghan families resettling in the UK.