

News story: Over 10,000 refugees resettled in the UK under flagship scheme

The latest quarterly Home Office immigration statistics today (22 February) show that 10,538 refugees have been resettled on the VPRS, one of the largest global resettlement programmes, since it began.

The VPRS is just one of the routes by which the UK is helping to resettle refugees. In 2017, a total of 6,212 people were resettled in the UK – a 19% increase on 2016 – with 4,832 of these people coming through the VPRS. 539 people arrived under the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) which will resettle up to 3,000 at-risk children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa region by 2020.

The latest figures take the total number of children that the UK has provided asylum or an alternative form of protection to since the start of 2010 to 28,000.

Earlier this week, the Home Secretary Amber Rudd visited a refugee camp in Lebanon, meeting families who have fled the war in Syria and speaking to officials from the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, who work closely with the Home Office to resettle families to the UK.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

As a country we can be proud that we are over half way towards honouring our commitment of resettling 20,000 of the most vulnerable refugees who have fled Syria by 2020 so they can rebuild their lives here in safety. Nearly half are children and more people are arriving every month.

This week I went to Lebanon to see for myself the human impact of the Syrian conflict and talk to refugees about the challenges they face. I met a family who is due to be resettled in the UK and heard first hand how important the resettlement scheme is and how it helps individuals, who have fled danger and conflict, to rebuild their lives.

We are welcoming and supporting some of the most vulnerable refugees and I am grateful to all of the local authorities, charities and other organisations that have made it possible.

The VPRS is a joint scheme between the Home Office, the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The UK works closely with UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the UN Migration Agency and partners on the VPRS to provide life-saving solutions for the refugees most in need of protection, including people requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk.

Gonzalo Vargas Llosa, UNHCR's UK Representative said:

The UK has embarked on an impressive upscaling of the VPRS in a short period, setting in place structures to welcome highly vulnerable refugees and allowing them to gradually stand on their own feet again.

Collaboration between the central Government, local and devolved authorities and service providers has been commendable. I've been up and down the country meeting refugee families and local communities, and the strong support for this programme and refugee integration generally is something the UK should be proud of.

IOM facilitates the pre-departure health assessments, cultural orientation and the travel for refugees to the UK. IOM also supports national and local governments to develop integration programmes as part of a holistic migration management strategy.

Dipti Pardeshi, IOM UK Chief of Mission said:

The UK has achieved a significant milestone for the VPRS by resettling over half of the 20,000 committed to be resettled by 2020. The generosity and welcome shown by the UK government and the British people to those resettled is commendable.

Today, less than one per cent of refugees worldwide have been resettled and the need continues to be dire. Resettlement cannot be viewed as a one-off effort. Countries must step up to resettle more refugees and to view this as part of a holistic process to help vulnerable refugees rebuild their lives.

The UK's resettlement schemes are just one of the ways the Government is supporting vulnerable children and adults who have fled danger and conflict. The UK remains the second largest donor in humanitarian assistance and has pledged £2.46 billion in UK aid to Syria and the neighbouring countries, its largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis.

Since 2012, across Syria and the region, the UK has provided over 26 million food rations, over 9.8 million relief packages and over 10.3 million medical consultations and over 8.3 million vaccines.

News story: VMD web and switchboard services will be unavailable from 16:00, 23 February to 8:00, 26 February



The following online application services will be unavailable:

- Special Import Certificates
- Special Treatment Certificates

You should obtain an import certificate in advance if you think you will need to import/use an imported medicine during this period. In urgent cases you may purchase and use an imported veterinary medicine prior to obtaining a certificate from the VMD. This is a special dispensation which only applies to the VMD online system during this maintenance period. You should obtain an import certificate retrospectively as soon as possible.

- Research Import Certificates
- Export Certificates
- Microchip Adverse Event Reporting
- Animal Adverse Reaction Reporting
- Human Adverse Reaction Reporting

The following online information service will be unavailable:

- Product Information Database

Also, we will not be able to receive phone calls through the switchboard or via direct dial.

The systems should be operational again on from 8:00 Monday 26 February.

The VMD apologises for any inconvenience.

[News story: Women in innovation: award holders celebrate global success](#)

2016 Women in Innovation competition winners.

Some of the UK's top female innovators are seeing their ideas and aspirations come to life following their participation in Innovate UK's [women in innovation competition](#).

This awarded 15 female entrepreneurs £50,000 each and a tailored package of mentoring and business support. It is part of our effort to boost the support available for women in business.

Since receiving the funding and guidance, the female entrepreneurs have enjoyed a successful year.

Forbes highlights up-and-coming talent

Natwilai Utoomprukporn, founder of [GetTriK](#), was named on this year's [Forbes Europe Industry list](#), which recognises young entrepreneurs developing the most innovative products, methods and materials.

GetTriK's Natwilai Utoomprukporn, shot for the Women in Innovation awards publication.

Natwilai describes GetTriK as 'Google Maps for large structure inspection'. It uses drones to create 3D models of structures, reducing construction time and cost.

Since the Innovate UK award, GetTriK has hired 3 additional team members and secured a further £300,000 of funding through us.

Aeropowder's Elena Dieckmann pictured for the Women in Innovation photography book.

Also on the Forbes list was Elena Dieckmann, as one of the 30 notable social entrepreneurs under 30 years old. Elena co-founded [Aeropowder](#), which is developing new, innovative uses for waste feathers produced by the poultry industry.

Global recognition for Shakardokht Jafari

Shakardokht Jafari received a scientific award for successful women of Afghanistan this year.

Shakar is the founder of [Trueinvivo](#), which has just finished research for a system that uses glass beads to measure radiation levels in cancer patients. The research was published in the European Journal of Medical Physics, Physica Medica.

Trueinvivo also attracted its first investor and hired 4 additional staff.

Trueinvivo's Shakardokht Jafari. This picture was taken for the Women in Innovation photography book.

Continued support for women in business

Innovate UK is committed to supporting diversity in innovation.

Ahead of International Women's Day, on 7 March 2018 we will hold a showcase event in London to inspire and encourage even more women in business.

Women in innovation award holders will participate in a panel discussion, plus there will be networking opportunities and a product showcase.

[Press release: PM hosts Chinese New Year reception at Downing Street](#)

Theresa May has hosted a Chinese New Year reception at Downing Street to celebrate the enormous contribution of the Chinese community to British life and a 'Golden Era' for UK-China relations.

On Wednesday (21 February) the Prime Minister welcomed a number of Chinese students in Britain who are involved in higher education and language learning exchanges. She highlighted the academic achievements of the community and the talent they bring to our educational institutions, and pointed to the huge learning benefits to both countries through partnerships such as the UK-China mathematics teacher exchange, which has been extended for a further two years to 2020.

Building on her recent trip to China alongside 50 businesses and organisations from across the country, the Prime Minister also welcomed guests from a range of sectors with trade links to China.

British nursery provider Busy Bees, who secured a significant early years education deal with the Oriental Cambridge Education Group during the Prime

Minister's visit to China, were also in attendance. The partnership between these two businesses will generate £75m in exports in the next five years and deploy 20 British teachers to China each year.

Andrew Wong, Head Chef and owner of Michelin star restaurant A. Wong in London's Victoria, was the guest chef for the reception.

The Prime Minister also presented James Wong, Chair of the Birmingham Chinese Festival Committee, with a Point of Light Award in recognition of his inspiring work to attract thousands of visitors to the city, creating the UK's largest Chinese New Year festival. His restaurant also gives hundreds of free meals to elderly people in the local community.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

It was great to welcome people from all parts of the United Kingdom to Downing Street to celebrate Chinese New Year, the vibrancy of the Chinese community in Britain, and the deepening ties between our two countries. I was delighted to take a 50-strong business delegation with me on my recent trip to China, and found a real enthusiasm for the links between us and the opportunities we share.

But the ties that bind our country are of course about more than just business – they're about people.

James Wong's huge contribution to life in Birmingham is one shining example of someone who has helped broaden and deepen our cultural ties and I was pleased to award him a Point of Light.

I would like to extend my best wishes to everyone celebrating this special day, as we mark the Year of the Dog and a golden era of UK-China relations.

James Wong, Chair of Birmingham Chinese Festival Committee, said:

I'm fiercely passionate about raising awareness of Chinese culture and supporting the Chinese community.

Birmingham is a fantastic, multicultural city that endorses diversity and I feel fortunate to have had the backing of so many wonderful friends and colleagues on the 'Chinese Festival Committee' and beyond. I look forward to seeing our great city continue to work closely and hopefully welcome more investment from China in years to come.

Andrew Wong, Head Chef at A. Wong and guest chef at the reception, said:

Chinese New Year is the biggest celebration for my family and for the whole of China, and it's a time of year where family time is

truly celebrated.

It's wonderful that Downing Street takes the time out to celebrate this event and to celebrate the diversity of London – and obviously the Chinese community is a big part of that diversity.

Press release: Hospitals, prisons and Jobcentres to refer people at risk of homelessness

For the first time, prisons, probation services, Jobcentres and NHS Trusts will be among the organisations that have a duty to help those at risk of becoming homeless and refer them to a housing authority, Minister for Homelessness Heather Wheeler confirmed today (22 February 2018).

The [Homelessness Reduction Act](#) – the most ambitious legislative reform for decades – places new legal duties on English councils to intervene at an earlier stage to prevent homelessness.

Councils will now be required to ensure the advice and information they provide is designed to meet the needs of particular at risk groups including care leavers, people leaving prison, people who have left the armed forces, survivors of domestic abuse and those suffering from a mental illness.

In addition to new duties to refer those at risk of homelessness, the reforms will include:

- providing free information and advice on preventing homelessness and the rights of homeless people, to all residents, including information tailored to the needs of particularly vulnerable groups
- a new duty for those who are already homeless so that that local authorities will work with them for 56 days to help secure accommodation

Minister for Homelessness Heather Wheeler said:

Everyone should have a home to call their own and we have put in place strong protections to guard families and individuals against the threat of homelessness.

Our reforms – putting prevention at the heart of everything we do –

are designed for lasting change and to back this up we're investing almost £1 billion over the next 4 years to break the homelessness cycle once and for all.

The government has backed the Act with £72.7 million of funding to help councils to deliver these changes. In time, it is expected that the increased preventative work brought about by the Act will lead to substantial savings for councils.

The confirmation of which public bodies have a duty to refer is part of a wider package of regulations made ahead of the roll-out of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April.

Alongside the new duty to refer, the government is continuing to work closely with key sector organisations to identify different ways services can contribute to preventing homelessness and supporting the successful implementation of the Act.

In particular, the department is working with the National Housing Federation to explore how housing associations can support the Act, including by making referrals, and working with the National Police Chiefs' Council to develop a 'test and learn' project in Brighton & Hove focusing on homelessness prevention.

The government is already taking significant action to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping through:

- providing £315 million to local authorities for their work on homelessness, and an additional £402 million in Flexible Homelessness Support Grant funding, which local authorities can use to work more strategically to prevent and tackle homelessness pressures in their areas
- announcing £28 million for 3 Housing First pilots in Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands to support long-term rough sleepers off the streets and help them to end their homelessness. Individuals will be provided with stable, affordable accommodation and intensive wrap-around support. This will help them recover from complex health issues, for example substance abuse and mental health difficulties and sustain their tenancies
- investing £9 billion to build more social housing, including council homes

Case study: Southwark council

Southwark council receives the third largest numbers of homelessness applications in England. MHCLG funded Southwark to be an 'early adopter' of

the act and implement measures that mirror key elements of the new legislation, including assessments and personalised housing plans and delivering bespoke prevention and relief services to households regardless of whether they are in priority need.

The latest statistics from Southwark show that from the 1 April 2017 until 31 January 2018 the number of households accepted as owed the main housing duty had decreased by 49% compared to the same period the previous year (April 2016 to January 2017), from 789 to 405. In addition, Southwark has eliminated its use of bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families.

The council also report that they have successfully trained staff to focus on the prevention of homelessness. This is reflected by a marked increase in positive feedback from families and a decline in the number of reviews requested by applicants. Southwark have been actively sharing their learning with over 250 other authorities across the country.

The government supported the Homelessness Reduction Bill which was introduced to the House of Commons in summer 2016 by Bob Blackman MP, and progressed through Parliament with cross party support. The Act received Royal Assent on Thursday 27th April 2017.

The government worked with a group made up of local authority and charity representatives, as well as specialists relevant to particular issues, to inform the review of the code of guidance. The new code brings together and updates existing guidance, as well as providing new guidance to cover the duties brought in by the Act. An 8 week [consultation](#) was launched on 16 October 2017 and closed on 11 December 2017.

The [Homelessness code of guidance](#) provides direction on how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions and apply the law in practice. It also applies to local housing and social services authorities, who are required by law to have regard to this guidance when exercising their functions relating to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. to have regard to the guidance in exercising their functions in relation to homelessness.

The duty to refer is one element of a wider package of regulations required to enable the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The regulations also set out the procedure to be followed by housing authorities when carrying out reviews of homelessness decisions, and issuing notices to applicants who deliberately and unreasonably refuse to co-operate with them. See [factsheets on the regulations](#).

How the duty to refer works in practice will be determined in each local area. For example, housing authorities may want to develop standard referral mechanisms, and public bodies may want to undertake training to support their staff in identifying people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.