

Funding boost for councils as new Afghan resettlement plans set out

Local authorities will receive a generous funding package to support the resettlement of families who have come to the UK having been at risk in Afghanistan.

Funding boost for councils as new Afghan resettlement plans set out

Councils who support people through the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme will receive £20,520 per person, over 3 years, for resettlement and integration costs. This is based on the previous Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, but over 3 rather than 5 years, with more money provided in the crucial early period to help people settle and become part of their new communities.

Local councils and health partners who resettle families will also receive up to £4,500 per child for education, £850 to cover English language provision for adults requiring this support and £2,600 to cover healthcare.

A further £20 million of flexible funding will be made available to support local authorities with higher cost bases with any additional costs in the provision of services. In addition, the previously announced Afghan Housing Costs Fund will increase from £5 million to £17 million and run for 2 extra years to help local authorities provide housing and give certainty that funding will be available in the future.

In a letter to all local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland and to Northern Ireland Executive representatives, the Home Secretary and Communities Secretary have asked more local authorities to now step up and offer places for people coming from Afghanistan. The funding offer is for councils across the UK.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The UK is a proud democratic country, so it is unimaginable for many of us to live in fear of being ourselves or not having access to even the most basic rights. That is why we are providing a safe haven in the UK for people at risk, including women and girls and minority groups, so they can rebuild their lives safely in the UK.

The funding we've announced will help new arrivals to integrate into British society, while giving councils offering support the

certainty they need.

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

I am incredibly impressed by the positive response we've received from councils so far, with a large number already pledging their support.

However, we urgently need more offers of accommodation to welcome Afghan families who have remained firm allies of the UK, working with our troops and our country so bravely in recent years.

With this extra funding in place, I'm asking all councils who have not yet come forward to contact us with a firm offer of support to help these families secure the best possible start to their new lives.

Under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, the government has committed to resettling up to 20,000 Afghans, of which 5,000 will be resettled in the scheme's first year. This is in addition to the ARAP scheme, which has already resettled thousands of Afghans who have worked with the UK government, and their families.

Today's [policy statement](#) sets out that the ACRS will prioritise those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for the values we share such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech and the rule of law, as well as other vulnerable people, including women, girls and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT).

Some of those who arrived in the UK under the Op PITTING evacuation programme, which included individuals who were considered to be at particular risk, will be resettled under the ACRS. People who were notified by the government that they had been called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, but were not able to board flights, will also be offered a place if they subsequently come to the UK.

Further to this, to help identify those most at risk and vulnerable, the government is working closely with the UN's Refugee Agency, UNHCR, to identify and resettle refugees who have fled Afghanistan based on their protection and humanitarian need.

The government is also working with international partners and NGOs in the region to implement a referral process for people inside Afghanistan, where safe passage can be arranged, and for those that have recently fled to other countries in the region.

Other details released today include:

- while it is expected the vast majority of people resettled under the

Scheme will be Afghan, nationals of other countries, for example in mixed nationality families, will be eligible

- spouses, partners and dependent children under 18 years of eligible individuals will be eligible for the route. Other family members may be resettled in exceptional circumstances
- unaccompanied children will be accepted where resettlement in the UK is in their best interest, for example if they cannot be reunited with family in the region

Afghan Resettlement Minister Victoria Atkins said:

I'm proud of the mammoth effort taking place across the whole of the UK to welcome people from Afghanistan. Our resettlement scheme will help to build a bright future for thousands of people who have helped us.

As part of ongoing, government-wide efforts to help Afghan arrivals to rebuild their lives, the Department for Work and Pensions is launching surgeries across the country, run by experienced work coaches with translators, to help those arriving with any questions they may have about employment or benefits. These surgeries, combined with access to benefits, will allow new arrivals to receive individual tailored support to help them become self-sufficient more quickly and find work as they get settled in the UK.

The government is also legislating this week to take forward our 'Operation Warm Welcome' commitments. This includes ensuring that all those arriving in both schemes are eligible for social housing and homelessness support after arriving and will be able to claim benefits such as Universal Credit from day one. This is matched by the immediate right to work upon entry.

[Promotional material: COVID-19 vaccination: resources for children and young people](#)

Information for eligible children and young people on COVID-19 vaccination.

Guidance: Women's health: migrant health guide

Advice and guidance on the health needs of migrant patients for healthcare practitioners.

The drive to improve motorway journeys for disabled people in the South West

National Highways has partnered with AccessAble, the UK's leading provider of detailed accessibility information, to help motorists plan where to stop for a break at any one of the 114 motorway service areas across England, including 15 services across the South West.

Lifestyle and disability blogger, Ross Lannon visited the Moto services on the M5 at Exeter to test out the guides. Ross, from Truro in Cornwall, has a condition called Spinal Muscular Atrophy and is a fulltime wheelchair user. He loves driving his adapted vehicle as it gives him so much freedom to work, socialise and travel but says that in the past he has been an anxious traveller, particularly on longer journeys, due to uncertainty about facilities on route.

Ross explained:

There's nothing more stressful and embarrassing than getting to a location and there's poor access, not having information in advance can be a very worrying time.

The access guides have been incredible, having detailed information takes away the anxiety. The information has been tried and tested by a genuine person who has spent time keeping the details up to date – from toilets to parking and width of doorways it covers all the information you need.

For many years, disabled people and carers using AccessAble have said how much they would value having access guides for motorway services, and what a difference comprehensive accessibility information would make to planning a trip.

The new guides, available online or via the free AccessAble app, are 100 per cent facts, figures, and photographs to help motorists plan their visit to

the services. They cover key areas including parking, toilets, petrol stations, shops, and restaurants, with detailed information on everything from parking and hearing loops, to walking distances and accessible toilets.

In addition, National Highways and AccessAble have worked together to create virtual route guides for the services. This new type of guide, which uses 360-degree imagery, will enable visitors to 'virtually' explore routes to key facilities like accessible toilets and Changing Places, so they can find out exactly what to expect when they arrive.

Ross added:

The virtual walkthroughs have been a game changer, being able to see the layout in advance, see where you have to go and the facilities available makes the journey so much more relaxing. Virtual routes are the future, such a simple way to improve accessibility.

National Highways Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, Julian Horsler said:

We're committed to ensuring our disabled customers can travel safely on our roads. That's why we're introducing new services to break down barriers and help people reliably plan and feel confident about their journeys.

Whatever the nature of your disability, the access guides for motorway service areas take the guesswork out of journey planning, giving you the information you need about facilities along your route.

Moto Hospitality Chief Operating Officer, Nick Tatum said:

Our vision is to transform the UK's rest stop experience, this starts with giving our customers the ability to plan their journey in advance of their trip.

The National Highways and AccessAble guides for motorway services give disabled people and carers the ability to plan their journey with confidence.

From the insight we gained working with National Highways and AccessAble, we've also adapted our website to allow customers to plan their journey via facility ie Changing Places.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact

centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.