



Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

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2 August 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 7 July to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of constituents about the Nationality and Borders Bill. I am replying as the Minister for Immigration Compliance and Justice.

The Bill is the cornerstone of our New Plan for Immigration, delivering the most comprehensive reform in decades to fix the broken asylum system. The principles behind the Bill are simple. Access to the UK's asylum system should be based on need, not on the ability to pay people smugglers: Illegal migration should be prevented and those with no right to be in the UK should be removed, while those in genuine need will be protected.

Your constituents raise three main points:

**1. The two tier system:**

Our policy proposal of pursuing differential treatment of those who do not come directly, claim without delay, or show good cause for their illegal entry/presence in the UK is aimed at deterring dangerous journeys and upholding the first safe country principle. Too many people make unnecessary and dangerous journeys to the UK to claim asylum, having already reached safe countries which can and do offer protection to those who need it. In order to stop people dying, we must stop people leaving safe European countries sending a clear message that those who come here illegally will find it harder to remain in the UK. The Government's long-term plan will fix the system, ensure it is firm and fair, and prioritise bringing over the most vulnerable people currently living in refugee camps around the world.

The principle that those fleeing persecution should claim asylum in the first safe country they reach is lawful and compatible with the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to Refugees. It is a longstanding principle, applied across the world. The United Kingdom has applied this principle, working with EU partners (primarily, but not exclusively through the Dublin Regulation) and other safe countries. Although the UK is no longer part of the Dublin Regulation, that does not mean that it is no longer lawful, appropriate or possible for us to apply these principles.

## **2. Accommodation Centres:**

The Government has a statutory obligation to provide accommodation to asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute. We will introduce reception centres for asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers who require support (to replace hotels) so that they have simple, safe and secure accommodation to stay in while their claims and returns are being processed. Providing support in accommodation centres will enable caseworkers and voluntary sector staff to be located on site, which in turn enables faster and more effective information gathering, particularly in regard to matters such as travel document interviews. These efficiencies are intended to lead to faster resolution of asylum claims and reduced support costs. Individuals will, however, have the opportunity to disclose information and supporting evidence as to why they should not be housed in accommodation centres.

## **3. Safe and Legal Routes:**

The UK is a world leader in refugee resettlement. From 2015 to 2019, we resettled almost 25,000 men, women and children seeking refuge from cruel circumstances across the world - more than any other European country. We will continue to resettle refugees in the UK through our UK Resettlement Scheme, broadening the reach of our resettlement programme to help those most in need, including persecuted minorities and working with international organisations to provide safe and legal routes for people fleeing persecution in their home countries, enabling them to start new lives in the UK. We will also work to ensure more refugees can enter the UK through community sponsorship, encouraging stronger partnerships between local government and community groups in refugee resettlement and will provide more certainty to those resettled, granting them with indefinite leave to remain when they arrive in the UK.

The Government committed to review safe and legal routes to the UK and had a statutory duty to conduct a public consultation on family reunion for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the EU. We have now completed the consultation on these issues as well as consulting on the refugee family reunion routes available to refugees who have arrived in the UK through safe and legal routes as part of the wider consultation on the New Plan for Immigration. We are carefully considering the responses and will lay a report in Parliament in due course on the outcome of our review of safe and legal routes.

I hope that this response has clarified our proposals. We stand by our moral and legal obligations to help innocent people fleeing cruelty around the world. Once again, thank you for writing and sharing your constituents' concerns regarding this important matter.



**Chris Philp MP**