

# **The Syrian Refugee Crisis: a resettlement programme that meets the needs of the most vulnerable**

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# About the Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) aims to put social justice at the heart of British society.

Our policy development is rooted in the wisdom of those working to tackle Britain's deepest social problems and the experience of those whose lives have been affected by poverty. Our Working Groups are non-partisan, comprising prominent academics, practitioners and policy makers who have expertise in the relevant fields. We consult both nationally and internationally, especially with charities and social enterprises, who are the champions of the welfare society.

In addition to policy development, the CSJ has built an alliance of poverty fighting organisations that reverse social breakdown and transform communities.

We believe that the surest way the Government can reverse social breakdown and poverty is to enable such individuals, communities and voluntary groups to help themselves.

The CSJ was founded by Iain Duncan Smith in 2004, as the fulfilment of a promise made to Janice Dobbie, whose son had recently died from a drug overdose just after he was released from prison.

# About the author

## ***Dr Barney Gilbert***

A former research fellow and Kennedy Scholar at Harvard University, Barney is an academic medical doctor with research expertise in economics and social policy. Having interned at the Centre for Social Justice in 2012, he has returned as a research fellow to lead the CSJ's work on the Syrian refugee crisis.

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# Executive Summary

The human cost of the Syrian civil war has been immense: more than 250,000 Syrians have died and more than 4.8 million have fled Syria as refugees, with a further 6.5 million internally displaced.<sup>1</sup> The Syrian refugee crisis marks arguably the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War. Predominantly, the UK Government has sought to deal with the crisis in the region, aiding efforts towards political transition and providing over £2.3 billion to support Syrian refugees.<sup>2</sup> Domestically, the Government has established the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) programme to provide a route for up to 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees to be resettled in the UK by 2020.<sup>3</sup> By June 2016, 2,898 Syrian refugees had been resettled in the UK under this scheme.<sup>4</sup>

This report provides an initial appraisal of the VPR programme, focusing particularly on barriers to access and effectiveness of implementation across the following sectors: housing, employment and life chances, community integration, education, and healthcare. The British response to the Syrian refugee crisis is of interest to the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) because of its ties to our established work on pathways to poverty, life chances, asylum matters, modern slavery, mental health, and community cohesion.

## How the VPR programme works

Candidates for resettlement are selected through vulnerability assessments conducted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>5</sup> For local authorities, participation in the scheme is voluntary. Any local authority wanting to participate in the scheme must satisfy the Home Office post-arrival requirements statement, which includes initial reception arrangements, housing provision and furnishing, registration with health and education services, safety briefings, and orientation support. By March 2016, the Government had confirmed offers of participation from 70 local authorities across the UK.<sup>40</sup>

## A need for focus on the extra-vulnerable

The VPR programme prioritises refugees who cannot be supported effectively in the Syrian region, including women and children at risk, the elderly, those in severe need of medical care, victims of torture and sexual violence, and the disabled.<sup>6</sup> Evidence that all groups living outside of refugee camps have equal access to UNHCR registration remains mixed. This report looks at three ‘extra-vulnerable’ groups facing particular difficulty in accessing the scheme:<sup>7</sup> women and girls, children, and ethno-religious minorities.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Data, Syria Regional Refugee Response [accessed via: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>]

<sup>2</sup> Department for International Development, Syria Crisis Response Summary, 29 April 2016 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/520574/DFID\\_Syria\\_Crisis\\_Response\\_Summary\\_29\\_04\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/520574/DFID_Syria_Crisis_Response_Summary_29_04_2016.pdf)]

<sup>3</sup> House of Commons Library, Syria: Refugees and Counter-terrorism, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, 7 September 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150907/debtext/150907-0001.htm>]

<sup>4</sup> GOV.UK, National Statistics: Immigration statistics, April to June 2016 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2016/summary>]

<sup>5</sup> House of Commons Library, Refugees: Syria, London: House of Commons Library, 2015; Written question - 15714, 10 November 2015 [accessed via: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06805>]

<sup>6</sup> House of Commons Library, Syrian refugees and the UK, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Research briefing, 11 March 2016 [accessed via: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06805>]

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, Syrian Refugee Crisis, First Report of Session 2015-16 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmintdev/463/463.pdf>]

## Recommendations

- The Government should monitor UNHCR referrals according to location, individual demographics, ethno-religious status, sexuality, and disability status. This data should be fed back to the UNHCR to identify under-represented groups.

### On women and girls:

- Targeted health services and counselling should be delivered to women and girls who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Civil society organisations should look to provide practical and emotional support to women who have encountered sexual and gender-based violence.
- The Istanbul Convention, which covers all forms of violence against women and girls,<sup>8</sup> should be ratified as soon as possible.

### On children:

Our recommendations pertain to two specific schemes for resettlement of at-risk children, beyond the VPR programme: resettling 3,000 children at risk from the Middle East and North Africa and an as-yet unspecified number of children at risk across Europe following the break-up of the Calais 'Jungle'.<sup>9,10</sup> In rolling out these schemes, the Government should consider:

- Developing a scheme to match unaccompanied children with families and/or foster parents, which are preferable to care homes.
- Working with the UNHCR to improve methods for registering unaccompanied children in the Syrian region and across Europe.

### On ethno-religious minorities:

- The Government should analyse sufficient UNHCR registration data to state definitively whether there is under-referral of Syrian Christians and Yazidis to the VPR programme.

## Housing

Local authorities are expected to provide self-contained accommodation for refugees on the VPR scheme, either in the private rental sector or, where available, in social housing. Pressure on both the private rental sector and social housing is significant; to date, finding appropriate housing has frequently been a rate-limiting step in resettlement. In particular, the shortage of available housing in London and the South-East is preventing local authorities from subscribing to the programme.

## Recommendations

- Members of the public who are keen to find housing for refugees can help to identify letting agents and private landlords with available accommodation.
- The Government should consider an option for local authorities in London and the South-East, which lack housing capacity at present, to fund the resettlement of refugees in other regions of the UK, as is the case in Britain's asylum programme.

## Employment and life chances

While the majority of refugees have arrived in family units, all have included people of working age (16-65 years).<sup>11</sup> Rapid integration into work is the key to reducing the initial

<sup>8</sup> House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights, Violence against women and girls, 19 February 2015 [accessed via:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201415/jtselect/jtrights/106/106.pdf>]

<sup>9</sup> House of Commons Library, Asylum: Syria, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, Written question – 25352, 5 February 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-02-02/25352/>]

<sup>10</sup> BBC News, Calais migrants: 'Several hundred' more child refugees to arrive in UK, 24 October 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37752193>]

<sup>11</sup> Home Office, Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme – Funding Update, 26 November 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Syrian-Refugee-Resettlement-Programme-%E2%80%93-Funding-Update.pdf>]

fiscal cost associated with a refugee influx. At the core of this is the need for refugees to learn English language skills.

### *Recommendations*

- The Government should establish a national employment strategy for all refugees. This would dramatically lower lifetime cost of the scheme. Key components of this strategy should include:
  - (i) A scheme for matching refugees to local authorities with the capacity and specialisms to support their employment needs. Refugees should be matched to regions where labour demand is high and where their specific skills are sought after. This may be best led by a commercial sponsor.
  - (ii) A volunteer-led mentoring scheme to empower refugees to gain recognition for skills and qualifications, assisting with interview preparation, CV writing, and arranging work experience and apprenticeships.<sup>12</sup> This would help to mediate concerns about refugees down-skilling or displacing low-skilled sections of the labour force.
- The Government should create a fund specifically to support refugees learning ESOL. In support of Refugee Action, the CSJ would like all refugees to access 600 hours of ESOL over the first two years of their resettlement. In light of new ESOL funding granted to local authorities, we urge the Home Office to make this a mandatory funding stream for local authorities receiving additional funds.

## **Community integration**

Integration is more likely to succeed where central government, local government and civil society are working together.

### *Recommendations*

- The Government should develop sustainable community action plans and a community-based private sponsorship scheme to ensure that all individuals and groups who have made generous offers to help, can help, whether through mentorship and community programmes, or direct financial support. It will be important to include the diverse Syrian diaspora in this process.
- Local authorities should engage with arms of civil society that can assist local delivery. It may be helpful to run equality impact assessments to see how the programme meets the local vision for equality.
- The Government should work closely with the National Refugee Welcome Board (NRWB), established by Citizens UK, which has persuaded at least 25 councils to join the VPR scheme.<sup>13</sup>
- Local authorities should take heed of the NRW's ideas for improved integration, including after school groups, community choirs and refugee football teams.<sup>14</sup>

## **Education**

There is an urgent need for young Syrians arriving in the UK under the VPR scheme to return to full-time education. Evidence suggests that the earlier children can be transferred into the education system, the better their long-term education and employment outcomes.<sup>15,16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Refugees Welcome, Community Welcome Plan [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Community-Welcome-Plan.pdf>]

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/the-board/>

<sup>14</sup> Refugees Welcome, Community Welcome Plan [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Community-Welcome-Plan.pdf>]

<sup>15</sup> Madeleine Arnot & Halelli Pinson, The Education of Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Children, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, July 2005 [accessed via: <https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/arnot/AsylumReportFinal.pdf>]

<sup>16</sup> Paloma Bourgonje, Education for refugee and asylum seeking children in OECD countries: Case studies from Australia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom, March 2010 [accessed via: [http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EIResearch\\_Paloma\\_Eng\\_final\\_med.pdf](http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EIResearch_Paloma_Eng_final_med.pdf)]



### *Recommendations*

- The Government should provide access to higher education for refugees who were forced to abandon higher learning or for those requiring further education to activate skills or gain equivalent professional qualifications.

## **Healthcare**

A deeper understanding of the health issues faced by those selected for the VPR scheme, in the appropriate cultural context, will enable GPs and other UK health professionals to prepare more adequately for their arrival.

### *Recommendations*

- Psychosocial assessments should be conducted during a refugee's first primary care consultation in the UK.
- Mental health professionals should receive extra training in dealing with the psychological trauma of prolonged war and displacement.

## **Need for a learning culture**

### *Defining objectives clearly*

- The Government should seek out clear objectives for the VPR programme. In our view, these objectives should be two-fold: (i) to help rebuild the lives of 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees; (ii) to build a first-class resettlement model that engages sensitively with local government and civil society, and can be used as a springboard for future resettlement schemes.

### *Improving quality of support*

- The Government should continue to consult those involved in the implementation and critique of the UK's longstanding resettlement programmes, namely Gateway and Mandate.
- Local authorities with specialisms in particular resettlement domains should train other participating councils in how to develop that domain.

Amid the turmoil of the Syrian civil war and its impact on Syria, the surrounding region and across Europe, we would do well to celebrate small successes in the British response. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has described Britain's response as "*effective and smooth*".<sup>17</sup> If the recommendations of the present report are adhered to, the UK can seek to deliver a world-class resettlement programme to 20,000 of the world's most vulnerable people.

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<sup>17</sup> YouTube: BBC Newsnight, Kofi Annan on Syria, 20 January 2016 [accessed via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBNeIezjYTM>]

# Introduction

In 2011, the Arab Spring reached Syria, triggering a brutal and complex civil war. Fighting between the Assad regime, moderate opposition groups and extremist groups led to widespread international involvement.<sup>18</sup> In terms of both deaths and displacement, the human cost of the Syrian conflict has been immense: more than 250,000 Syrians have died and more than 4.8 million have fled Syria as refugees, with a further 6.5 million internally displaced.<sup>18,19</sup> With almost 60 million displaced persons globally,<sup>20</sup> the world is in the grip of arguably the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War.

The response of countries in the Syrian region has been generous, hosting more than 85% of Syrian refugees. Presently, the numbers of Syrian refugees in the region are as follows: Turkey (2,748,367), Lebanon (1,048,275), Jordan (651,114), Iraq (246,589), and Egypt (120,491).<sup>19</sup> In Lebanon, a country that was already home to 450,000 Palestinian refugees, approximately one in four people is now a Syrian refugee.<sup>21</sup>

By comparison, the response in Europe has been divided. Ongoing war in Syria has been the core driver of migration. In 2015, more than 350,000 Syrians applied for asylum in the European Union (EU) for the first time.<sup>22</sup> In the UK, Syrian nationals were the fourth largest group of asylum applicants in 2015 (2,609 main applicants), with 85% of initial decisions granting permission to remain in the UK.<sup>22</sup> Violence in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq – alongside desperate poverty in Kosovo and Albania – have driven thousands of others to leave their countries in search of a better life elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

Within the EU, divisions have arisen over how best to manage the resettlement process, with states of southern Europe – especially Greece and Italy – receiving a higher proportion of asylum seekers than those further north.<sup>22</sup> This is principally due to the Dublin Regulation, which dictates that the first country an asylum seeker arrives in is responsible for processing their application and resettling them.<sup>24</sup> In a bid for a more equitable system, in June 2015, European leaders agreed on a voluntary system for sharing part of the migrant burden across the EU.<sup>25</sup>

In September 2015, public opinion shifted when images of Alan Kurdi, a three year-old Syrian boy who drowned during an Aegean dinghy crossing, were published around the world.<sup>26</sup> German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged to Syrians that Germany's basic right to

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<sup>18</sup> BBC News, Syria: The story of the conflict, 11 March 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-26116868>]

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR Data, Syria Regional Refugee Response [accessed via: <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>]

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase, 18 June 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>]

<sup>21</sup> BBC News, Lebanon: One in four a refugee, 22 December 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-35163273>]

<sup>22</sup> European Commission, Asylum statistics, 20 April 2016 [accessed via: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics)]

<sup>23</sup> BBC News, Migrant crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts, 4 March 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34131911>]

<sup>24</sup> Citizens Information, Dublin III Regulation [accessed via: [http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving\\_country/asylum\\_seekers\\_and\\_refugees/the\\_asylum\\_process\\_in\\_ireland/dublin\\_convention.html](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving_country/asylum_seekers_and_refugees/the_asylum_process_in_ireland/dublin_convention.html)]

<sup>25</sup> BBC News, EU leaders agree to relocate 40,000 migrants, 26 June 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-33276443>]

<sup>26</sup> TIME, Alan Kurdi's Story: Behind The Most Heartbreaking Photo of 2015, 29 December 2015 [accessed via: <http://time.com/4162306/alan-kurdi-syria-drowned-boy-refugee-crisis/>]

asylum had “no upper limits”.<sup>27</sup> However, with no EU-wide solution in place and tens of thousands of asylum applications in Germany each day, Merkel backtracked, announcing new border controls for “urgent security reasons”.<sup>28</sup> Across the EU, countries such as Austria and Denmark renounced commitments to the Schengen agreement, which permits free movement of people across Europe’s borderless Schengen Area, in favour of national border controls.<sup>29</sup>

In March 2016, the EU-Turkey deal was announced, centring around a ‘one in – one out’ policy whereby, for each economic migrant returned from Greece to Turkey, one Syrian refugee would be admitted into Europe. By April 2016, the flow of sea travellers across the Aegean had slowed significantly.<sup>30</sup>

So what about the response in Britain? Britain has a track record of protecting vulnerable refugees, offering a safe haven to the French Huguenots in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to the Kindertransport children before the Second World War, to Hungarians during the 1956 uprising, to Ugandan Asians fleeing Idi Amin in the 1970s, and to many fleeing ethnic violence in Kosovo in the 1990s.<sup>31,32</sup>

The philosophy behind the Government’s current response is that dealing with the crisis must account for its causes as well as its symptoms, seeking solutions to the Syrian conflict whilst dealing compassionately with the displaced. David Miliband, President of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), describes this as a need to work “*across the arc of crisis*”.<sup>33</sup> As well as aiding efforts towards political transition in Syria, the UK has focused on humanitarian relief and a domestic resettlement programme.

The Government’s overarching intention is to deal with the crisis as much as possible in the region. This has been praised by the House of Commons International Development Committee on the grounds that it is cost-effective, that it acts in the best interests of most refugees to remain closer to home, and that it reduces the likelihood of refugees making dangerous trips into mainland Europe.<sup>34</sup>

As the second largest bilateral donor supporting Syrian refugees, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has provided more than £2.3 billion in international aid to the Syrian region since 2012.<sup>35</sup> By June 2015, UK aid had provided approximately 20 million food rations, 2.5 million people with access to clean water, 400,000 shelters, 4.5 million relief packages, 600,000 agricultural interventions, 2.5 million medical consultations and 1 million psychosocial interventions to children, adults and victims of sexual or gender-based violence.<sup>18</sup> An additional £9.5 million from the UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund has

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<sup>27</sup> Spiegel Online, Quiet Capitulation: Merkel Slowly Changes Tune on Refugee Issue, 20 November 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/angela-merkel-changes-her-stance-on-refugee-limits-a-1063773.html>]

<sup>28</sup> Vox, Why Germany just closed its borders to refugees, 14 September 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.vox.com/2015/9/13/9319741/germany-borders-merkel>]

<sup>29</sup> International Policy Digest, The Refugee Crisis and the EU’s Future, 27 February 2016 [accessed via: <http://intpolicydigest.org/2016/02/27/the-refugee-crisis-and-the-eu-s-future/>]

<sup>30</sup> BBC News, Migrant crisis: EU-Turkey deal is ‘working’, 24 April 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36121083>]

<sup>31</sup> Refugee Week, The Heritage and Contributions of Refugees to the UK – Credit to the Nation [accessed via: <http://refugeeweek.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/HistoryofContributions.pdf>]

<sup>32</sup> House of Commons Library, Syrian Refugees: Resettlement, London: House of Commons Library, 2014; Hansard, 27 January 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm160127/halltext/160127h0001.htm>]

<sup>33</sup> The Economist, The Economist asks: David Miliband, Syria and the humanitarian response [accessed via: <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21688945-anne-mcelvoy-speaks-president-international-rescue-committee-evaluate-how-world?zid=309&ah=80dcf288b8561b012f603b9fd9577f0e>]

<sup>34</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, Syrian Refugee Crisis, First Report of Session 2015-16 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmintdev/463/463.pdf>]

<sup>35</sup> Department for International Development, Syria Crisis Response Summary, 29 April 2016 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/520574/DFID\\_Syria\\_Crisis\\_Response\\_Summary\\_29\\_04\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/520574/DFID_Syria_Crisis_Response_Summary_29_04_2016.pdf)]

been allocated by DFID to support local capacity and build stability in the region.<sup>36</sup> As well as co-hosting a successful 'Supporting Syria and the Region' conference in February 2016, during which more than 11 billion USD was pledged in support, the largest amount ever raised in a single day for a humanitarian crisis, the UK has allocated 75 border officials to Greece and has played a leading maritime role.<sup>37</sup>

Domestically, the UK has opted out of EU plans for a quota system for resettlement, believing this will *"do nothing to address the underlying issues that the EU is facing and simply move the problem around Europe"*.<sup>38</sup> Instead, the Government has pursued a Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) programme for Syrian refugees. In September 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron announced that, in addition to those admitted to the UK through existing asylum and family reunification schemes, the UK would accept up to 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020.<sup>39</sup>

The VPR programme prioritises refugees who cannot be supported effectively in the Syrian region, including women and children at risk, those in severe need of medical care and survivors of torture, among others. The Government was congratulated for meeting its Phase I target of resettling more than 1,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2015.<sup>40</sup> By June 2016, 2,898 Syrian refugees had been resettled in the UK under the VPR programme.<sup>40</sup>

The programme exists in addition to the established Gateway and Mandate programmes for resettling refugees; neither is nationality-specific, although both rely on recognition of refugee status by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>41</sup>

In addition, after consistent pressure from groups such as Save the Children, the Government has agreed to resettle 3,000 children at risk from the Middle East and North Africa region, in the *"exceptional cases where it is in the child's best interests to do so"*.<sup>42</sup> The Government has also agreed to provide refuge for an as-yet unspecified number of refugee children following the break-up of the Calais "Jungle".<sup>43</sup>

The British response to the Syrian refugee crisis is of interest to the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) for two main reasons. Firstly, as a domestic-facing organisation, the CSJ is well positioned to cast insight on the VPR programme from a social justice perspective. There are close ties with our established work on pathways to poverty (especially worklessness and dependency, educational failure and family breakdown), life chances, asylum matters, modern slavery, mental health, and community cohesion.

Secondly, as Liz Roberts, MP for Dwyfor Meirionnydd has said, *"This is the most serious challenge of our time—it is a moral, practical and political challenge. It is deceptively simple in*

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<sup>36</sup> Syria refugees: UK government response, 4 September 2015 [accessed via: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-uk-government-response>]

<sup>37</sup> House of Commons Library, Refugees and Resettlement, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, Written statement – HCWS687, 21 April 2016 [accessed via: <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-04-21/HCWS687/>]

<sup>38</sup> House of Commons Library, Refugees, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, Oral Answers to Questions, 11 April 2016 [accessed via: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-04-11/debates/1604111000011/Refugees>]

<sup>39</sup> House of Commons Library, Syria: Refugees and Counter-terrorism, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, 7 September 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150907/debtext/150907-0001.htm>]

<sup>40</sup> GOV.UK, National Statistics: Immigration statistics, April to June 2016 [accessed via:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-april-to-june-2016/summary>]

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR, Country Chapters - Resettlement Handbook: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland [accessed via: <http://www.unhcr.org/40ee6fc04.pdf>]

<sup>42</sup> House of Commons Library, Asylum: Syria, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, Written question – 25352, 5 February 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-02-02/25352/>]

<sup>43</sup> BBC News, Calais migrants: 'Several hundred' more child refugees to arrive in UK, 24 October 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37752193>]

*debate but it is immense in its implications for those millions of people who have been cast adrift.”<sup>44</sup> Alistair Carmichael, MP for Orkney and Shetland, adds, “Looking at how these sectarian conflicts have developed in other parts of the world, it will be at least 20 to 25 years before we see anything like stability in Syria. We should not think that it will be a problem this year and next year, and then we will be able to move on; we may have to deal with it for a generation.”<sup>27</sup>*

While, numerically, the VPR scheme accounts for only a small proportion of the displaced Syrians in the region, its successful rollout would signal the implementation of equitable resettlement policy to the rest of Europe and to the United States. We are determined that the British response is not only compassionate, but competent too.

The specific aims of this report are three-fold:

1. To deepen understanding on the barriers limiting access to the scheme for the most vulnerable.
2. To evaluate how effectively the VPR programme has been implemented to date.
3. To draw attention to specific learning issues through case studies.

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<sup>44</sup> House of Commons Library, UNHCR: Admission Pathways for Syrian Refugees, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, 16 Mar 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm160316/halltext/160316h0001.htm>]

# How the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme works

*“There is no point bringing people away from the middle east, across Europe and far from their homes, their extended family and their friends, to a different culture and a very different climate in the UK unless we can offer them something better than the life they were leading in those countries in the region.”*

– Helen Whately MP

In January 2014, the Coalition Government established the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) Programme to provide a route for the most vulnerable Syrian refugees to be resettled in the UK.<sup>45</sup> Although, initially, there was no fixed quota, the Government expected that several hundred refugees would be admitted to the UK through the scheme over three years.<sup>45</sup> In September 2015, following effective lobbying by groups such as Citizens UK and cross-party calls to expand the scheme, the Prime Minister announced that the Government would resettle up to 20,000 Syrians by 2020.<sup>45</sup> By the end of 2015, 1,337 Syrian refugees in the region, more than half of whom were children, had been resettled in the UK under the scheme.<sup>44</sup> The Government intends to resettle approximately 4,000 more refugees by the end of 2016.<sup>44</sup>

While there are no plans to frontload the programme, there are no set monthly quotas either. The former Minister for Syrian Refugees, Richard Harrington, stressed the need to “deal with refugees as human beings”, while wanting the scheme to be “as efficient and expedient as possible”.<sup>46</sup>

The VPR programme prioritises refugees who cannot be supported effectively in the Syrian region: women and children at risk, the elderly, those in severe need of medical care, victims of torture and sexual violence, and the disabled.<sup>47</sup> While the Government acknowledges that many of the most vulnerable displaced persons remain in Syria, the programme selects resettlement candidates only from the neighbouring region due to the operational challenges associated with access into Syria. Matthew Wyatt, DFID Deputy Director for the Middle East, has described the operational challenges associated with access: “The problem in reaching the most vulnerable is when they are in those areas where there is either active conflict or where parties to the conflict, particularly ISIL [Daesh], just make it impossible to work.”<sup>34</sup>

So how does the scheme work? First, based on a vulnerability assessment in the host country, the UNHCR identifies and submits potential cases to the Home Office for consideration (Figure 1).<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the Home Office conducts visa checks and searches for an appropriate place to resettle the refugee and his or her family in a registered

<sup>45</sup> House of Commons Library, Syrian refugees and the UK, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Briefing Paper Number 06805, 25 January 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/pdf/Syrian%20Refugees%20and%20The%20UK.pdf>]

<sup>46</sup> Commons Select Committee, Minister questioned on resettlement of Syrian refugees in UK, 23 November 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/international-development-committee/news-parliament-2015/1/syria-evidence-3rd-oral-evidence-15-16/>]

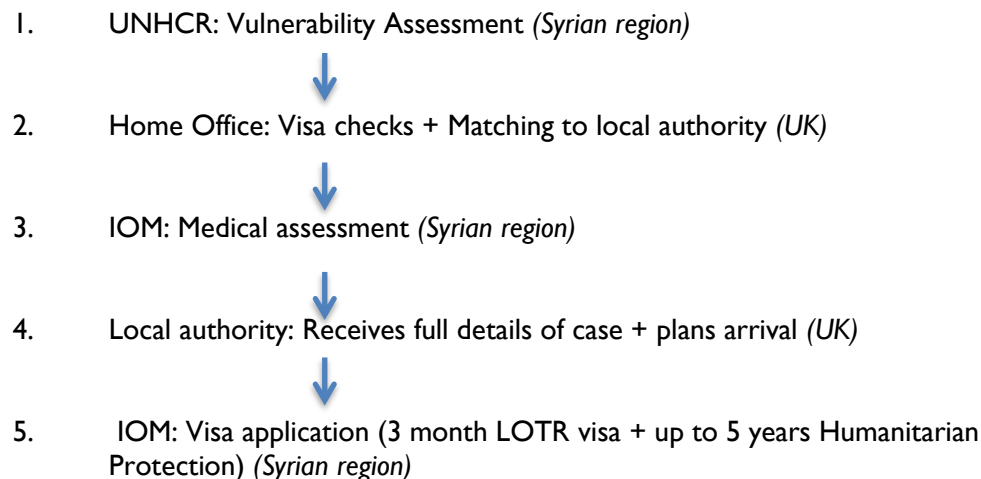
<sup>47</sup> House of Commons Library, Syrian refugees and the UK, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Research briefing, 11 March 2016 [accessed via: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06805>]

<sup>48</sup> House of Commons Library, Refugees: Syria, London: House of Commons Library, 2015; Written question - 15714, 10 November 2015 [accessed via: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06805>]

local authority.<sup>49</sup> Once the screening process is complete, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) conducts a full medical assessment in the host country.<sup>49</sup> The local authority is then sent full details of the case and medical history in order to allocate suitable accommodation and care locally, and to detail estimated costs. When eligibility is confirmed, the IOM start the visa application process. A 3-month leave outside the Rules (LOTR) visa is granted in advance of arrival, with arrangements made for Biometric Residence Permits to be issued with five years' humanitarian protection.<sup>49</sup>

**Figure 1.**

How the VPR programme works



During this period of humanitarian protection, resettled refugees have the same rights and benefits as refugees, including the immediate rights to work, to access welfare benefits and statutory services such as health and education, and to family reunification.<sup>50</sup> This is a major advantage of resettlement over the asylum programme.

After the five-year period, those resettled under the programme can apply to settle permanently in the UK by attaining Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) and applying for citizenship. Alternatively, depending on the situation in Syria, they may choose to return.

Resettlement under the VPR programme is offered to Syrian refugees in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Refugees already in Europe may seek asylum, but are not eligible for the resettlement programme. To date, selection for resettlement has occurred primarily in Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>46</sup>

## Vulnerability criteria

All refugees, by definition, are vulnerable. The principal challenge in assessment for a resettlement programme lies in categorising the 'extra-vulnerable'.

A 2015 report by the International Development Committee stated, *"The challenge for the Government and its partners, chiefly UNHCR ... lies in ensuring that the processes for identifying and assisting the most vulnerable refugees are robust enough to reach those most in need. The risks faced by anyone that has been forced to flee their home are substantial. However, in the context of*

<sup>49</sup> Home Office, Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme: Guidance for local authorities and partners, 28 October 2015 [accessed via: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/472020/Syrian\\_Resettlement\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_gov\\_uk.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472020/Syrian_Resettlement_Fact_Sheet_gov_uk.pdf)]

<sup>50</sup> European Resettlement Network, First Syrians arrive in the UK under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) [accessed via: <http://www.resettlement.eu/news/first-syrians-arrive-uk-under-vulnerable-persons-relocation-scheme-vprs>]

*the Syrian crisis, certain groups are affected in ways that heighten their vulnerability. For these people resettlement is an appropriate and durable solution. We commend the UNHCR and their commitment to ensuring that processes for identifying the vulnerable are robust in an extremely complex environment with significant operational challenges.”<sup>54</sup>*

The UNHCR reports that approximately 90% of Syrian refugees across the region reside outside of camps in urban and rural settings.<sup>34</sup> The majority of the most vulnerable refugees also live outside of the camps.<sup>34</sup> According to the former Minister for Syrian Refugees, UNHCR assistance has had to “encompass support outside the camps, resulting in significant availability of and access to, registration and other services here too.”<sup>33</sup>

The Government recognises that “for reasons of stigma or fear of repercussion, some groups may be less willing to identify and/or disclose their status and/or go through the in-depth screening process needed for resettlement. Others may subsist in remote areas where partners are fewer, or in areas where security limits access for the provision of assistance ... There are some groups ... including some minority groups, who may not see a need to register either due to their own resources or due to reliance on community or social networks.”<sup>51</sup>

According to Sanjayan Srikanthan, Director of Humanitarian Policy at the IRC, refugees often choose to live in non-camp settings where they are less visible in order to maintain “dignity ... to return to some sort of normality as they had before the conflict.”<sup>51</sup>

However, a range of unique challenges have been identified outside of the camps, including: the need to pay rent, which in Lebanon can cost up to 90% of a working refugee’s monthly income; severe water shortages, especially in Jordan; and public health risks, including risks of polio or cholera epidemics.<sup>34</sup> Evidently, there is a need to categorise the vulnerability of refugees both inside and outside the camps.

But how do the vulnerability assessments work? Presently, at least two interviews are conducted by the UNHCR. The first focuses on general aspects: why the refugee left Syria and what life is like currently. This is followed by at least one in-depth interview in which the refugee is assessed according to specific vulnerability criteria for resettlement, alongside potential criminal elements and security threats.<sup>52</sup> As of November 2015, around 200 refugees were interviewed daily at the UNHCR resettlement office in Jordan.<sup>53</sup> The interview process is accompanied by the collection of documentary evidence and biometric data.<sup>51</sup> The programme intends to keep families together at all cost, requiring one family member to meet the vulnerability criteria in order for the family to be resettled in the UK.

The UNHCR criteria used to recruit for the VPR programme collate in depth information across the following domains:<sup>51,52,53</sup>

- **Household composition** – number of children <5 years; number of elderly +60 years; single caregiver households; households with more than 6 members; households with a member describing themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).
- **Children** – children <2 years; children at risk (child labour, sexual and gender-based violence); unaccompanied minors; child carers; child spouses; pregnant teens; children with special educational needs or not attending school.
- **Women** – female-headed households; women at risk of sexual and gender-based violence; pregnant women and nursing mothers; widows; divorcees or women separated from their husband.

<sup>51</sup> UNHCR Data, Introducing the Vulnerability Assessment Framework, December 2014.

<sup>52</sup> UNHCR, Syrian Refugee Response: Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees in Lebanon, 8 August 2014 [accessed via: <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/LebanonInter-agencyUpdate-VASyR8August2014Final.pdf>]

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR Data, Vulnerability Criteria being used by Cash Assistance Partners in Jordan, 25 August 2013.



- **Elderly** – single older person; older person with children; older person unable to care for self.
- **Health** – critical medical condition; severe or chronic medical condition requiring ongoing treatment; disability (including physical disability, blindness and deafness); malnutrition; mental disorders and trauma-related disorders, including psychological and/or physical impairment due to torture or witness of violence to other.
- **Housing** – access to durable shelter; threats related to place of residence; documented risk of eviction.
- **Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WaSH).**
- **Household income** (for adults aged 18-59 years), **assets, expenditure and indebtedness.**
- **Coping strategies** – including sending children to work instead of school, begging and borrowing money.
- **Assistance** received from UNHCR/NGOs - including cash assistance, food vouchers and hygiene kits.
- **Registration status** with UNHCR – unregistered and no appointment in next 2 months.
- **Family unity** (tracing required).

Home Office minister Lord Bates has stated that the UNHCR's vulnerability criteria are "sufficiently broad to include all those who require a durable solution outside the region, including those whose religion or ethnicity makes them vulnerable."<sup>54</sup>

Overall, the evidence that all groups outside of the camps have equal access to UNHCR registration, and thus eligibility for resettlement, remains mixed. In 2015, 98.9% of UNHCR submissions for resettlement came from outside camps, implying that the registration and referral process has extended successfully beyond the camps and into host communities.<sup>51</sup> The UNHCR have stated that the "location of the refugee does not come as a prime criterion"; rather, the UNHCR resettlement criteria focus on vulnerability.<sup>51</sup>

However, in the report of the International Development Committee, "evidence indicated non-registration by certain vulnerable groups, who prefer to stay outside official UN camps."<sup>17</sup> Despite access to UNHCR officials in non-camp regions, under-registration remains a problem: in Lebanon alone, reports suggest that there may be up to 400,000 unregistered Syrian refugees.<sup>51</sup> Evidence from Lebanon suggests that under-registration has arisen due to confusion and distrust of the registration process among certain groups, alongside practical barriers to access, including a lack of documentation and problems with transport and mobility.<sup>17</sup>

It appears that these barriers affect certain groups disproportionately.<sup>55</sup> While the UNHCR emphasise a "strictly needs-based and non-discriminatory approach",<sup>17</sup> vulnerability is not evenly spread across all groups. The selection process itself should centre on an individual needs-based approach, but it is important that vulnerable groups are recognised and given equal access to the resettlement referral system.

## Local authority participation

A central tenet of the VPR programme is that participation is voluntary for local authorities. The Government considered that the imposition of regional resettlement quotas would result in less positive experiences for refugees and might engender local resentment.<sup>32</sup> Under the present system, local authorities can consider carefully whether they have the

<sup>54</sup> Catholic Herald, British Government accessed of disregarding plight of Syrian Christians, 15 January 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/01/15/british-government-accused-of-disregarding-plight-of-syrian-christians/>]

<sup>55</sup> HelpAge International/Handicap International, hidden victims of the Syrian crisis: disabled, injured and older refugees, April 2014.

appropriate infrastructure, support networks and budgets to ensure effective resettlement. Handing ownership of the scheme to local authorities has generally proved popular; those among the first to resettle refugees feel “*proud to be at the forefront of the effort*”.<sup>32</sup>

Local authorities function within Regional Strategic Migrations Partnerships (RSMPs), which interact across the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to coordinate and provide advice, support and services for migrants.<sup>56</sup> Any local authority that wants to participate in the VPR programme must satisfy the Home Office post-arrival requirements statement, which includes initial reception arrangements, housing provision and furnishing, registration with health and education services, health and safety briefings, and orientation support (see *Appendix Item 1* for full details).

Local authorities may find it helpful to run equality impact assessments (EqIA) to see how the programme meets their local vision for equality. In doing this, Reading Borough Council recognised that their offer to accept families rather than single people, due to housing constraints, “*could be seen to impact negatively on single people and on refugees who have been prioritised at risk due to homosexuality as they may be less likely to be in a family group*”.<sup>57</sup>

As of March 2016, the Government had confirmed offers from 70 local authorities spanning across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.<sup>58,59</sup> Local authorities resettling most refugees on the VPR programme were Coventry City Council (105), Nottingham City Council (81) and Renfrewshire Council (68). There remains, however, a deficit of local authorities subscribed to the programme in London and the South-East, with only twelve local authorities subscribed in the South-East and four in London as of March 2016.<sup>59</sup> This is, in large part, because of the housing shortage (see *4.1 Housing*).<sup>32</sup> For full details on resettlement numbers as of March 2016, see Appendix Tables 1-4.<sup>59</sup>

The Government are keen to recruit local authorities that have partnered previously with the Gateway and Mandate programmes, as well as local authorities delivering a resettlement service for the first time. The former Minister for Syrian Refugees has said, “*For a small community, taking two or three families can be pretty good. Other communities, such as Bradford, are very much used to taking in refugees ... They have done that for many years, and they have the set-up to do so. We need both*”.<sup>46</sup>

Persuading more local authorities to join the programme must form a key part of the ongoing approach. To do this, the Government must understand local authorities’ motivations for subscribing. The leaders of Reading Borough Council signed up because they saw how directly the scheme contributed to four of its core strategic aims:<sup>57</sup>

1. Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
2. Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living;
3. Providing homes for those in most need;
4. Promoting equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

The Government should continue to provide local authorities with support and guidance, including detailed information on the cohorts arriving and advice regarding their cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

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<sup>56</sup> Local Government Association, Refugees and unaccompanied children [accessed via: <http://www.local.gov.uk/refugees> ]

<sup>57</sup> Reading Borough Council, Committee Report Template, 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/4475/item14/pdf/item14.pdf>]

<sup>58</sup> House of Commons Library, Refugees: Syria, London: House of Commons Library, Written question – 20487, 9 March 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2015-12-16/20487>]

<sup>59</sup> GOV.UK, National Statistics: Immigration statistics, January to March 2016: data tables, Asylum data tables immigration statistics January to March 2016 volume 4 [accessed via: <http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-january-to-march-2016-data-tables>]

The Government should work closely with the National Refugee Welcome Board (NRWB), established by Citizens UK, which has persuaded at least 25 local authorities to join the VPR scheme and has built templates to empower citizens to motion to their local authorities to join the scheme.

## Financing the programme

After consulting the Local Government Association (LGA) and local authorities with experience in resettlement, the Government decided to provide financial support to cover the full five-year period during which resettled refugees will receive humanitarian protection.<sup>60</sup> Resettlement is funded by central government through contracts with local authorities and contracted providers, including housing associations and charities.<sup>45</sup>

In year 1, DFID will fund the full costs of resettled refugees through the official development assistance budget. Nationally, this is estimated to cost a local authority, on average, £8,500 per person, to cover management of the programme, housing, social care and cultural integration including English language provision.<sup>32,45,61</sup> Cases where social care costs cannot be accommodated within this figure will be topped up separately. To fund the programme, more than £460 million of the international aid budget has been allocated across the statutory sector by 2019-20.<sup>45</sup> Benefit costs are paid directly to the Department for Work and Pensions and healthcare costs are paid directly to the respective Clinical Commissioning Group. Healthcare costs are split into GP registration costs and secondary care costs, for those with more severe medical needs. Costs are also allocated for special educational needs (SEN) assessments, with specific needs topped up separately.

In years 2-5, funding will be allocated on a tariff basis, tapering from £5,000 per person in year 2 to £1,000 per person in year 5.<sup>61</sup> For this purpose, an additional £129 million will be provided to local authorities by 2019-20 to contribute to ongoing incurred costs.<sup>60</sup> The primary focus during this period is on social care, as many refugees will have significant ongoing care needs. A 'special cases' fund has been allocated for this period to assist with high cost cases, alongside extra support for integration such as additional English language training.<sup>61</sup> Local authority feedback suggests that proposed funding for years 2-5 will meet the likely known costs and provide for additional unknown support and integration costs.<sup>32,61</sup>

Funding will be subject to repeated review. The LGA is calling on the Government to commit to reviewing costs after 18 months of running the programme.<sup>34</sup>

There are concerns, however, that the support provided tapers significantly and suddenly after year 1.<sup>60</sup> The Government is yet to publish specific guidance on helping people transition successfully into year 2 funding. The plan may be too optimistic in forecasting the rate of change from dependency to employment and independence. While most local authorities are satisfied with the funding proposals, some are concerned that they will be left to "pick up the tab" for excess costs in years 2-5, which may prove difficult or impossible during a time of sustained austerity in local government.<sup>60</sup>

Additionally, the Government has not fully considered how funding flows will be affected if refugees move away from their initial region of resettlement. While funding follows the refugees, costs incurred by the local authority for commissioned services or leases will continue.

<sup>60</sup> House of Commons Library, Syrian Refugee, London: House of Commons Library, Oral Answers to Questions, 8 February 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2016-02-08c.1296.1>]

<sup>61</sup> Home Office, Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme – Funding Update, 26 November 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Syrian-Refugee-Resettlement-Programme-%E2%80%93-Funding-Update.pdf>]

Finally, there is concern about regional variation in housing availability and costs affecting demand for the programme from different local authorities.<sup>58</sup> This is most likely to be a problem in the South-East, where by March 2016, only 12 local authorities had received refugees. This explains why forecasted costs are higher in the South-East, compared to the £8,500 national average for year 1. For Reading Borough Council, the budgeted costs for year 1 are as follows:<sup>57</sup>

- Children under age of 3	£10,750
- Children aged 3-4	£13,970
- Children aged 5-18	£16,220
- Adult in receipt of mainstream benefits	£23,420
- Other adults	£10,720

The Government should provide greater clarity on how the transition phase from year 1 to year 2 will be financed. It may be necessary to increase the size of the 'special cases' fund for years 2-5, or to increase the gross funding for this period (currently £129 million). There should be a degree of flexibility in the 'special cases' fund for refugees who decide to move away from their initial region of resettlement.

The financing plan currently focuses on short- and medium-term needs among the resettled. It will be important to consider where and how to scale community support as local authority engagement declines to ensure successful long-term integration.

## Macroeconomic considerations

In January 2016, an open letter to the Prime Minister supported by 120 leading economists stressed the economic indicators and arguments for welcoming refugees to the UK.<sup>62</sup> The letter stated, "Refugees should be taken in because they are morally and legally entitled to international protection, not because of the economic advantages they may bring. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the economic contribution of refugees and their descendants to the UK has been high."<sup>63</sup> Professor Guy Standing of the School of African and Oriental Studies added that welcoming more refugees would be a "sound economic policy, not just because many of the refugees will prove energetic, innovative and resourceful, but because they will help revive the image of Britain in the world, so that people will be more inclined to 'buy British' and invest in Britain."<sup>64</sup>

In the same month, the International Monetary Fund published a report showing that the movement of refugees into Europe would deliver a long-term economic boost to the EU, providing they are well integrated into the labour market.<sup>63</sup> Economists estimate that asylum seekers will increase GDP in the EU by approximately 0.2% over 5 years, assuming their integration into the labour market occurs successfully during this period.<sup>64</sup>

In the short-term, the authors argue, the macroeconomic impact of the refugee influx is likely to be a modest rise in GDP, which reflects both fiscal expansion associated with increasing welfare payments and expansion in labour supply as refugees begin to enter the workforce.<sup>63</sup> This effect has been noted in the European countries receiving most asylum seekers in the current crisis, including Germany, Austria and Sweden.<sup>63</sup>

In the medium- and long-term, growth depends on the effectiveness of integration into the labour market. Rapid integration into work is the key to reducing the initial fiscal cost

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/01/economists-david-cameron-open-letter-refugee-crisis-response-morally-unacceptable>

<sup>63</sup> International Monetary Fund, Refugee Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges, January 2016 [accessed via: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf>]

<sup>64</sup> OECD Migration Policy Debates, How will the refugee surge affect the European economy, November 2015 [accessed via: <https://www.oecd.org/migration/How-will-the-refugee-surge-affect-the-European-economy.pdf>]

associated with a refugee influx. Sooner employment means that refugees will sooner pay income tax and national insurance contributions, move away from welfare payments, and counter some of the fiscal impact of an ageing population.

Countering any factors that restrict access to the labour market is essential to ensure that these adverse effects are temporary and limited. Such factors include a lack of language skills, other barriers to job search (including internet connectivity), a lack of transferable qualifications, high entry wages, and 'welfare traps' created by the interaction of the benefits and tax systems.<sup>63</sup>

Notably, the legal constraints on work faced by asylum seekers do not apply to refugees in formal resettlement programmes. However, there are selection benefits present in the asylum system that are not present when selecting for a resettlement programme based on vulnerability. The asylum seeker who has made it to Britain successfully is more likely to be young, motivated and healthy, with the majority of first-time asylum applications taking place in the 18-34 year age group.<sup>22</sup> Given the limited evidence base for the economic benefits of a refugee resettlement programme, caution is appropriate.

Evidence from studies of economic migrants suggests that migrants have lower employment rates and wages than natives, although these differences decrease over time.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, refugees are more likely to be reliant on welfare payments than economic migrants.<sup>65</sup> One study in Australia found that it can take twenty years for refugees to contribute more in tax than they receive in benefits.<sup>66</sup> Even if Syrian refugees arriving in Europe were shown to be younger and more highly skilled than average, the long-term macroeconomic implications must be carefully considered, especially given that refugees resettled under the VPR programme are unlikely to return safely to Syria in the short- to medium-term.

Active labour market policies can expedite refugees' pathway into employment. Wage subsidies – or temporary exemptions from minimum or entry-level wages – as well as initiatives to facilitate routes into self-employment (such as access to credit) and to enable skill recognition are all important.<sup>63</sup> As a lower middle income country (LMIC),<sup>67</sup> many Syrian refugees are highly skilled. It will be important to match refugees to regions where labour demand is high and where their specific skills are sought after (see 4.2 *Employment and life chances*).

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<sup>65</sup> The Economist, The economic impact of refugees: For good or ill, 23 January 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.economist.com/news/finance-and-economics/21688938-europes-new-arrivals-will-probably-dent-public-finances-not-wages-good-or>]

<sup>66</sup> Cully M. More than Additions to Population: The Economic and Fiscal Impact of Immigration. Australian Economic Review. Sept 2012;45(3):344-349.

<sup>67</sup> World Bank, Data: Syrian Arab Republic [accessed via: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/syrian-arab-republic>]

# A need for focus on the extra-vulnerable

The reports of a range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the International Development Committee have identified that the following groups in Syria and the region face discrimination in terms of not being able to enter camps safely or to return to their country of origin:<sup>64</sup>

- Women
- Children
- Religious minorities
- People with disabilities
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community

In the present report, we will focus on the plight of women and girls, children, and ethno-religious minorities. For people with disabilities and for the LGBTI community, it appears that the UNHCR and various national governments, including the United States Government, are making very significant efforts to ensure registration and prioritisation on resettlement programmes.<sup>5368,69</sup>

## Women and girls

*“Individual voices, particularly women’s voices, are drowned out in the cacophony of war.”*  
– Liz Roberts MP

Women and girls account for slightly more than half of all Syrian refugees.<sup>70</sup> It is estimated that millions of Syrian women and girls have encountered gender-based violence, either prior to seeking refuge or with the changing role and status that being a refugee brings. As Phoebe Greenwood wrote in *The Guardian*, “*The conflict has been distinguished by a brutal targeting of women. The United Nations has gathered evidence of systematic sexual assault of women and girls by combatants in Syria, and describes rape as “a weapon of war”. Outside the conflict, in sprawling camps and overloaded host communities, aid workers report a soaring number of incidents of domestic violence and rampant sexual exploitation.*”<sup>71</sup>

According to the Women’s Refugee Commission, 1 in 3 Syrian women and girls feel ‘too afraid or overwhelmed’ to leave their homes for fear of sexual exploitation.<sup>72</sup> Forced marriage has become a reality for many Syrian girls in refugee camps: 1 in 5 such marriages involve girls aged under-18.<sup>72</sup> Parents frequently marry off their daughters for protection and

<sup>68</sup> Scott Portman and Daniel Weyl, LGBT refugee resettlement in the US: emerging best practices, Forced Migration Review [accessed via: <http://www.fmreview.org/sogi/portman-weyl.html>]

<sup>69</sup> Women’s Refugee Commission, Disability Inclusion in the Syrian Refugee Response in Lebanon, July 2013 [accessed via: [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Disability Inclusion in the Syrian Refugee Response in Lebanon.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Disability%20Inclusion%20in%20the%20Syrian%20Refugee%20Response%20in%20Lebanon.pdf)]

<sup>70</sup> Goleen Samari, The Response to Syrian Refugee Women’s Health Needs in Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan and Recommendations for Improved Practice, Article: “Knowledge & Action,” Humanity in Action, 2015.

<sup>71</sup> The Guardian, Rape and domestic violence follow Syrian women into refugee camps, 25 July 2013 [accessed via: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jul/25/rape-violence-syria-women-refugee-camp>]

<sup>72</sup> MercyCorps, Violence and child marriage: The many risks refugee girls face, 7 October 2015 [accessed via: <https://www.mercycorps.org.uk/articles/violence-and-child-marriage-many-risks-refugee-girls-face>]

economic security.<sup>73</sup> The resulting marriages are more vulnerable to domestic violence and poor maternal health.

For many young Syrian women, lack of access to income has meant that ‘survival sex’ has become the only means by which to provide economic support to themselves and their families.<sup>74</sup> This results in the spread of sexually transmitted infections, unwarranted pregnancies, and severe psychological trauma. It can also lead to rape and exclusion from the community.<sup>75</sup>

According to Dr Manal Tahtamouni, Director of the Institute for Family Health, “most women will not admit to being raped”.<sup>71</sup> The Institute for Family Health was among the first NGOs to set up a women’s clinic in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Of the roughly 300 women who attend the clinic daily, approximately 100 are victims of domestic or sexual violence. “Only after a long process of building trust through one-on-one counselling sessions might a rape survivor talk.” Within this “deeply conservative society... the endemic violence suffered by Syrian women and girls is hidden under a cultural blanket of fear, shame and silence that even international aid workers are loth to lift.”<sup>71</sup>

In addition to sexual and domestic violence, women and girl refugees are less likely than men and boys to have access to basic rights including food, healthcare, shelter, nationality and documentation.<sup>76</sup> They are discriminated against in legal systems, schools, health centres and access to work permits. Particular groups of women – including unaccompanied girls, single women, widows, divorcees, pregnant women, nursing mothers, female-headed households, disabled women, LGBTI women and elderly women– are at particular risk of exploitation. It is important that these groups continue to be picked up by UNHCR vulnerability assessments and are referred for resettlement.

In both camp and non-camp contexts, UNHCR workers should seek to make vulnerable women and girls aware of support groups, clinics and safe spaces. At the same time, during vulnerability assessments, women and girls should be encouraged to feel safe informing assessors about encounters of sexual or domestic violence. Frequently, women are silent because they feel it is too difficult or risky to prove the violence they are subjected to. While UNHCR assessors have been trained to spot vulnerability, the notion that gender-based violence will have affected many women they are interviewing should never be far away. Further training may be necessary.

There is a need at all stages of the VPR programme to recognise the vulnerability of women facing gender-specific violence. The most powerful message of the UNHCR’s ‘Survivors, Protectors, Providers’ dialogues with refugee women was that refugee women “wanted immigration officials, service providers, and members of the community to understand their experiences of flight, loss and trauma ... They want them to understand the survival of conflict, torture and sexual abuse that are part of the experience of many refugee women ... how it affects their ability to build new lives, learn a new language, familiarize themselves with a new social system, and have confidence in a new future.”<sup>76</sup>

In the region, we recommend, in line with the IRC, that “women and girls should have safe ... access to individual registration, in both camp and urban settings. When women are not registered

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<sup>73</sup> The Milla Project, Early/Child Marriage in Syrian Refugee Communities, 24 July 2014 [accessed via: <http://millaproject.org/earlychild-marriage-in-syrian-refugee-communities/>]

<sup>74</sup> Sky News, Refugee Children Resorting To ‘Survival Sex’, 23 October 2015 [accessed via: <http://news.sky.com/story/1575244/refugee-children-resorting-to-survival-sex>]

<sup>75</sup> Forced Migration, Refugee reproductive and sexual health [accessed via: <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/reproductive-health/refugee-reproductive-and-sexual-health>]

<sup>76</sup> UNHCR, Refugee Women – “Survivors, Protectors, Providers”, November 2011 [accessed via: <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/resources/monthly-updates/november-2011-update/refugee-women-survivors-protectors-providers.html>]

*or are only registered under the male head of the household, certain risks are increased and women may experience difficulties in overcoming barriers to the services they require. For example, being registered means women are eligible for services such as health care and cash assistance ... UNHCR has made positive steps in this regard and more needs to be done to make this consistent across the region.”<sup>77</sup>*

In the UK, the programme should seek to mount an effective and integrated long-term response. A major component of this response will be to deliver targeted health services and counselling to women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence (see 4.5 *Healthcare*).

Civil society organisations should look to provide practical and emotional support to women who have encountered gender-based violence, while continuing long-term advocacy work to promote women’s rights. NGOs such as Asfar are playing a leading role in this work.

Finally, we recommend that the Government should ratify the Istanbul Convention as soon as possible. The Convention came into force in August 2014 following calls by the UNHCR for countries to do more, together, to prevent and combat violence against refugee women.<sup>78</sup> The Convention covers all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, marital rape, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and domestic abuse.

The British Government signed the Convention in June 2012, but is yet to ratify it.<sup>61</sup> One of the major challenges in ratifying the Convention is the tension between fulfilling international obligations and devolution. While the UK Government is responsible for ratifying and implementing the Convention, devolved administrations, local authorities and other bodies are currently responsible for certain aspects of law and policy that it covers. According to the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act (2010), the Government must make necessary changes to law or practice before ratifying the treaty, to ensure that the UK complies fully with the treaty.<sup>61</sup> Thus, the Government must identify any terms of the treaty that it feels are incompatible with domestic law. In doing so, it should consult closely the recommendations of the Human Rights Joint Committee on the changes to policy and practice that should be made in order to fulfil the Convention’s positive obligations.<sup>61</sup>

## Children

With almost 80% of Syria’s child population in need of humanitarian assistance, Syrian children have consistently been marked out as an extra-vulnerable group.<sup>34</sup> Specific threats to children’s safety include limited access to education and the risks of trafficking, sexual abuse, prostitution, and child labour.<sup>34</sup> Within the UNHCR vulnerability criteria, particular attention is paid to children less than two years old, children at risk of child labour or sexual and gender-based violence, unaccompanied minors, child carers, child spouses, pregnant teens, and children with special educational needs or not attending school.

Presently, there is a major issue around legal status; many children lack the necessary documents to register with UNHCR.<sup>34</sup> Of the 42,000 children born to Syrian refugee parents in Lebanon between March 2011 and September 2014, 70% lack official birth certificates, rendering them stateless.<sup>34</sup> As has been noted among stateless Rohingya children in Myanmar, statelessness “*exacerbates disadvantage as the impact of malnutrition, illiteracy, lack of access to labour markets and healthcare, vulnerability to violence and abuse, insecurity and risk of*

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<sup>77</sup> International Rescue Committee, *Are We Listening? Acting on our commitments to women and girls affected by the Syrian conflict*, September 2014 [accessed via: [https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/IRC\\_WomenInSyria\\_Report\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/resource-file/IRC_WomenInSyria_Report_WEB.pdf)]

<sup>78</sup> House of Lords/House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights, *Violence against women and girls*, 19 February 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201415/jtselect/jtrights/106/106.pdf>]



*forced migration, becomes greater.”*<sup>79</sup> Given Britain’s commitment to the No Lost Generation Initiative,<sup>80</sup> the current prevalence of stateless children should be taken very seriously; the Government should work with UNHCR officials to ensure that this extra-vulnerable group are formally registered.

James Brokenshire, the former Minister for Immigration, has said, *“We firmly believe that we can make the biggest difference and add most value by supporting children and their families in the conflict region whilst providing a route to the UK for the minority of vulnerable or at risk cases where resettlement is judged by the UNHCR to be in the child’s best interests.”*<sup>37</sup>

To date, more than half of those arriving in the UK under the VPR programme have been children.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the UK will accept 3,000 children at risk from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region<sup>42</sup> and an as-yet unspecified number from Europe following the break-up of the Calais “jungle”.<sup>43</sup> Here, the term ‘at risk’ encompasses unaccompanied and separated children of all nationalities (not explicitly Syrian), alongside child carers, those facing the risk of child labour, child marriage or other forms of neglect, abuse or exploitation. Finally, DFID has provided a £10 million Refugee Children Fund to support vulnerable refugee children in Europe, identifying vulnerable children, providing immediate support, referring them to specialist care, and helping in family reunification.<sup>37</sup> It will be important to ensure harmonisation of these pathways with the VPR programme.

Opposition to accepting child refugees within the asylum system stems principally from two camps: first, to avoid creating dangerous routes for trafficking; second, to avoid creating ‘anchor children’, who arrive with the intention of claiming asylum for their family through family reunification, as has been noted in Scandinavia.<sup>81</sup> Both problems can be averted through formal resettlement schemes from the MENA region and in Europe.

The Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland, appointed following the Modern Slavery Act (2015), has reported that approximately 80% of unaccompanied children are known in camps in the Syrian region and 20% are missing.<sup>37</sup> Once children have made the journey into Europe, that statistic switches around: only 20% are known and 80% are missing. According to Europol, more than 10,000 refugee and migrant children have gone missing in Europe.<sup>82</sup> Children journeying alone across Europe have, unsurprisingly, become a target for traffickers. According to Save the Children, *“From the moment children leave their country of origin or refugee camp, throughout their journey to Europe, their situation is one of ongoing vulnerability.”*<sup>34</sup>

David Burrowes, MP for Enfield Southgate and Vice-Chair of the APPG on Refugees, speaks powerfully on trafficking: *“There is a widespread scheme that leads to the deliberate relocation of thousands of migrants and refugees. It involves thousands of adults and hundreds of children. The arrangements are made for relocation, and the promise is a home in the United Kingdom, where it is safe ... It is not operated by the UNHCR, by the Government’s VPR scheme or by the European Union; it is run by people smugglers and it is exploited by traffickers ... As Europe puts up its fences and borders, the migrants and refugees get more desperate, their journeys get more irregular, and their price for being smuggled goes up ... Those who find their way to Calais or Dunkirk will try and hold out for the smugglers to get them into the UK before they eventually claim asylum. We really must do better than that.”*<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Equal Rights Trust, *Equal Only in Name: The Human Rights of Stateless Rohingya in Thailand*, October 2014 [accessed via: <http://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Equal%20Only%20in%20Name%20-%20Thailand%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>]

<sup>80</sup> <http://nolostgeneration.org/>

<sup>81</sup> The Telegraph, *Sweden is a perfect example of how not to handle the Great Migration*, 28 January 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/sweden/12128598/Sweden-is-a-perfect-example-of-how-not-to-handle-the-Great-Migration.html>]

<sup>82</sup> European Council on Refugees and Exiles, *Europol estimates 10,000 underage refugee children have gone missing*, 5 February 2016 [accessed via: <http://ecre.org/component/content/article/70-weekly-bulletin-articles/1372-europol-estimates-10000-underage-refugee-children-have-gone-missing.html>]

Here, our recommendations pertain primarily to the specific schemes for resettlement of at-risk children, beyond the VPR programme. In rolling out these schemes – one from the MENA region and the other from Europe – the Government should consider the following:

- Developing a scheme to match unaccompanied children with families and/or foster parents, which are preferable to care homes.
- Working with the UNHCR to improve methods for registering unaccompanied children in the Syrian region and across Europe. A key player in this work will be the Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

## Ethno-religious minorities

*“There has been a general belief that our system of taking people from the UNHCR, using the vulnerability criteria, is all well and good, but that some people—particularly Christians, but also other minorities—have been left out. I am determined that that will not happen.”*

– Richard Harrington, Minister for Syrian Refugees (September 2015 – July 2016)

Although the VPR programme does not distinguish on the basis of religion, there is evidence to suggest that a number of ethno-religious minorities are avoiding refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. As such, neither camp nor non-camp populations serve as a microcosm of Syrian society as it existed before the crisis.<sup>44</sup> The reasons for this trend are complex. Most simply, some refugees fear direct persecution in the refugee camps; others fear that the persecution they faced in Syria will soon spread to other parts of the surrounding region.<sup>44</sup>

Here, we identify two groups commonly cited as being under-represented in the UNHCR registration scheme:

### 1. Christians

With at least 600,000 Syrian Christians displaced since the beginning of the crisis, many groups are concerned that Christian refugees are not consistently registering with the UNHCR.<sup>31</sup> As David Burrowes MP has said, *“Christians ... seek refuge through churches and other communities and are dispersed. They are not being registered, and we need to recognise that they ... are the most vulnerable ... We need to ensure that the relocation programme involves Christians as well.”*<sup>32</sup>

According to the Barnabas Fund, in previous regional conflicts, militant groups have dominated and controlled refugee camps and created widespread fear among Syrian Christians.<sup>34</sup>

Open Doors UK have sought to understand why Christians may be reticent to register with the UNHCR in camps, stating, *“Syrian society, whilst it was rightly celebrated for its pluralism, was also quite structured and there were quite a lot of conflicts between the different groups in society ... The UNHCR camps generally have a Sunni majority, so they tend to dictate the culture of the camps, which is not a bad thing per se, but if your culture is different then you stand out and you are more easily a target, which makes you nervous to go there.”*<sup>34</sup>

At present, however, these accounts are predominantly anecdotal. The former Minister for Syrian Refugees maintained that refugees can only be fairly selected for the VPR programme based on the formalised vulnerability criteria; this is a point on which the Government has *“every right to be inflexible”*.<sup>32</sup>

Working with a wide number of different agencies in the region, the Minister for Syrian Refugees has sought evidence on places where pockets of unregistered refugees remain.

DFID are providing funds to the UNHCR to enable direct outreach to register these vulnerable groups and to fund individual cases, where recognised. To date, such pockets have not been clearly identified.

The Government has decided not to pursue the resettlement policies of countries such as Hungary and Poland, which offer preferential treatment to Christians.<sup>44</sup> However, the Government does not object to churches and communities providing support to organisations such as the Barnabas Fund and Operation Safe Havens, which are working with churches in the region to provide relocation for vulnerable Christians.<sup>44</sup> However, the impact that such organisations are having in supporting Christians is unclear.

Presently, we recommend that the Government should gather and analyse sufficient UNHCR registration data to state definitively whether there is under-referral of Syrian Christians to the VPR programme. If found to be an issue, the Government should provide further funding to ensure that vulnerable Christians in the region are registered and assessed according to the vulnerability criteria.

## 2. Yazidis

A significant proportion of Syria's more than 50,000-strong Yazidi population has suffered brutal treatment by Daesh forces.<sup>44</sup> When Daesh invaded the Shingal region, Yazidis were given the option of converting to Islam, or being killed (if male) or sold as 'chattel' or sex slaves (if female).<sup>44</sup>

A number of British parliamentarians were deeply moved when they met and heard the account of a young Yazidi woman in Parliament.<sup>44</sup> Caroline Spelman, MP for Meriden, recalls, *"We could not see any of the physical scars on the Yazidi woman who told her story ... but we could feel the emotional scars."*<sup>44</sup>

To date, UK aid has funded the establishment of three centres for psychosocial and legal support for Yazidis in Iraq, which has a Yazidi population of over 500,000, but has not launched a specific effort for Syrian Yazidis.<sup>44</sup>

Yazidi leaders have approached the British Government with a proposal to gain international recognition at the UN level for the 'genocide' that the Yazidis have suffered in Syria.<sup>44</sup>

While bringing the perpetrators to justice for their war crimes is essential, it is perhaps too idealistic at present. It would be better for the Government to focus on a specific response to Syrian Yazidis both in the region and through the VPR programme. Again, the Government should work closely with UNHCR officials to ensure that there is fair Yazidi representation among the VPR scheme referrals.

## Improving UNHCR registration among vulnerable groups

The Government is in regular dialogue with the UNHCR about the identification and assessment processes for resettlement. The Government is also providing financial support to scale up UNHCR resettlement personnel and operations, including community outreach, with further funding earmarked for future years.<sup>83</sup>

Both the UK and the United States have considered using other assessing agencies, but have not found an agency with anywhere near the reach and professionalism of the UNHCR.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> House of Commons Library, Syrian Refugees, London: House of Commons Library, 7 March 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmintdev/902/90204.htm>]

The former Minister for Syrian Refugees adds, *“The network of field workers know what is going on. It [UNHCR] is a most impressive organisation.”*<sup>46</sup>

At the same time, the Government believes that partner outreach is critical in supporting UNHCR to identify the most vulnerable cases, so is working with UNHCR and NGO partners *“to improve outreach to all communities and ensure that all those in need of support feel able to register where the Government permits.”*<sup>83</sup>

Currently, UK officials receive a daily report from UNHCR of referrals to the VPR scheme, which details the specific vulnerability criteria identified in each case.<sup>34</sup> Going forwards, the Government should carefully monitor cases referred to the VPR scheme, documenting the location of referral, whether this was within an official UN camp or not, as well as individual demographics, sexuality, religion and disability status. This data should regularly be fed back to the UNHCR to identify under-represented groups and plan appropriate changes to the recruitment process.

A major ongoing concern is the Lebanese government’s decision, since May 2015, to ban the UNHCR from registering Syrian refugees.<sup>34</sup> With more than 1 million Syrian refugees in the country, Lebanese authorities claim that capacity has been reached and have suspended UNHCR processes until a new mechanism for registration is established. This means that, formally, Syrian refugees in Lebanon neither receive international assistance and protection, nor are eligible for resettlement. This heightens their vulnerability and the potential for discrimination. Since the ban, the number of Syrian refugees registered in the region has fallen by over 100,000. We recommend, in line with the International Development Committee, that DFID should consult the Lebanese government to identify objections to the registration process and to find solutions so that registration can continue as soon as possible.

# Assessing the programme's major components

## Housing

*Councils should ask themselves and their communities not “Can we accommodate refugees?” but “How can we accommodate them?”*  
– Helen Whately MP

Although the scope of the VPR programme is far broader than providing housing – a mistake made previously in British resettlement programmes – it is essential that local authorities get the housing bit right.

Local authorities are expected to provide self-contained accommodation for refugees on the VPR scheme, either in the private rental sector or, where available, in social housing. Local authorities will be required to have this accommodation ready for refugees to move into immediately on arrival.

Pressure on both the private rental sector and social housing is significant. Many local authorities in London and the South-East, in particular, are concerned by the shortage of available, affordable housing. According to Citizens UK, London has taken only 3% of all Syrian refugees admitted to the UK since 2014, primarily because of the chronic shortage of affordable housing.<sup>84</sup> Private rents are high and many people are already waiting years for social housing, with only some private rental housing available through housing benefit.<sup>15</sup> Local authorities will frequently need to place refugees in accommodation with rent above the local housing allowance (LHA) rate. This cost will need to be sourced by the local authority or met through forecasted management costs.

In resettlement cases to date, finding appropriate housing has frequently been a rate-limiting step. Many members of the public are concerned that local authorities are not taking up generous offers of accommodation from private individuals and groups. In Ashford and in Tunbridge Wells, for example, churches have offered accommodation specifically for Syrian refugees.<sup>32</sup> Kingston upon Thames is encouraging those with empty properties, including those with elderly relatives in care, to rent them out to Syrian families, which has led to several homes becoming available.<sup>32</sup> The Government is cautious because of the need for those offering private property to commit to a long-term offer of support. The Government should look closely at reports of more than 7,000 empty council-owned houses in London:<sup>85</sup> in some cases, there may be good reason for non-occupancy (e.g. buildings undergoing renovation or demolition), but where housing is available, it should be used.

By locating properties not on the rental market, local authorities reduce competition for scarce market properties. However, the Government stress that such offers should not be

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<sup>84</sup> LocalGov, Only 43 Syrian refugees have been resettled in London, charity reveals, 26 April 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.localgov.co.uk/Only-43-Syrian-refugees-have-been-resettled-in-London,-charity-reveals/40750>]

<sup>85</sup> Evening Standard, Scandal of 7,500 council homes lying empty in London, 25 May 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/shocking-waste-of-7500-council-homes-lying-empty-in-london-a3256401.html>]

taken up unless available for a minimum of 14 months, but ideally longer to provide resettled refugees with stability.<sup>86</sup> The former Minister for Syrian refugees has said, “Our programme is intended to settle people where they will live, if not permanently, for the foreseeable future. However, that does not mean that we are not using all those offers of help.”<sup>82</sup> The Government now intends to support community action plans and a community-based private sponsorship scheme to ensure that all individuals and groups who have made generous offers to help, can help, whether through mentorship and community programmes or direct financial support (see 4.3 Community integration).

Currently, although thousands of offers of spare rooms for resettling vulnerable refugees are not being accepted by the government-run resettlement programmes, these offers can be taken up by asylum seekers who do not have the right to work and often have no housing. This process can be facilitated by charities like NACCOM, which “promotes best practice in and supports the establishment of accommodation projects that reduce homelessness amongst asylum seekers and migrants with no recourse to public funds, and refugees facing barriers to accessing affordable housing.”<sup>87</sup>

Members of the public who are keen to help can find letting agents and private landlords with appropriate accommodation available. In Luton, dozens of available properties were located in several hours when members of the public emailed or phoned letting agents to encourage them to contact all the landlords on their books.<sup>70</sup> Private landlords identified in this way should be signed up to private landlord registers to guarantee social responsibility.

In London, specifically, the irony of the present situation was summed up by Bishop Peter Hill of Barking, who said, “Londoners want to respond to this historic crisis. Groups across the capital stand ready to welcome Syrian refugees, and we urge the authorities to do more to enable London to do its fair share.”<sup>84</sup> We support the call of Citizens UK for the creation of a Deputy Mayor for Citizenship and Integration, who “will be personally charged with making sure at least 10 Syrian families are resettled per borough per year”.<sup>84</sup> This work will focus on finding innovative methods to navigate the housing shortage, such as social investment projects.

## Employment and life chances

*“To secure a future in Britain, refugees need to work. In a refugee camp in Turkey, I saw for myself the frustration and demoralisation of refugees who are unable to work.”*  
– Helen Whately MP

Once housing has been identified and secured, perhaps the greatest threat for refugees on the VPR scheme is worklessness. Evidence from camps in the region suggests that many refugees want to work, but legal restrictions mean they are forced to rely on humanitarian assistance or to find work in the informal sector.<sup>34</sup> Evidence from the VPR scheme to date suggests that, while the majority of refugees have arrived in family units, all have included people of working age (16-65 years).<sup>61</sup> Working will yield both a personal sense of purpose and wider macroeconomic benefit as a refugee transitions from dependency to independence.

So what are the main challenges to a refugee finding employment?

### *Lack of relevant employment opportunities*

It is important to resettle refugees in regions where jobs in an appropriate sector are available. A refugee of working age with specific skills – in farming, for instance – should be

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/calling-landlords/>

<sup>87</sup> <http://naccom.org.uk/about/>

matched to an appropriate local authority with available jobs in this sector. Matching refugees to regions with an appropriate employment structure, in line with local skills demand, is also important to avoid harbouring resentment from British people over competition for scarce jobs.<sup>32</sup> Getting into work quickly also gives refugees a better chance of successful integration in the long run (see 2.4 *Macroeconomic considerations*).<sup>62</sup>

Local authorities should work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure the process of finding work is as fluid as possible.

If a refugee's skills are unlikely to be recognised on arrival, the refugee should be matched to a region with strong infrastructural and service support for job-seeking (e.g. a job centre, good transport links) to facilitate the process of skill recognition and/or interim work in another sector.

### *Qualification and skills recognition*

Recently arrived Syrian nationals appear to be more highly skilled than other current refugee and asylum groups or those who arrived in the UK during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s.<sup>88</sup> The proportion of Syrians with a post-secondary diploma is significantly higher.<sup>88</sup> In Sweden, more than 40% of Syrians have attained at least upper-secondary education, versus 20% of those from Afghanistan and 10% of those from Eritrea.<sup>71</sup>

Qualification and skills recognition is an immediate challenge. A 2015 OECD report suggested that integration of refugees into the labour market requires a three-step approach to make optimal use of their skills:<sup>88</sup>

1. Taking stock of refugees' qualifications and skills prior to departure.
2. Providing supplementary education to bring them up to the standard required in the host country – this 'bridging' is important as many refugees have good skills and qualifications, but these were acquired in education systems and labour markets very different from those in the UK. Many need to up-skill in their new setting, particularly in language skills.
3. Activating the skills – this may involve re-training schemes if refugees have been inactive for a number of years, as well as steps to combat employer prejudices.

The agency responsible for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills in the UK is UK National Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC).<sup>89</sup> UK NARIC is working with NOKUT, its Norwegian equivalent, to develop a common European recognition toolkit to handle applications from refugees.<sup>90</sup> However, this toolkit is not being piloted until 2017; the majority of their work remains with economic migrants. It is in large part down to civil society to expedite this process.

Citizens UK is at the forefront of this effort, providing useful advice to individuals and groups interested in mentoring refugees.<sup>91</sup> Their three primary areas for intervention are as follows (*key questions in italics*):

-Helping refugees to find employment through networks

*Which employers do you have relationships with that you think may be interested to see if they could hire one of the new refugees?*

*Which employers could you reach out to for an introduction?*

-Assisting with drawing up CVs and with interview preparation

<sup>88</sup> OECD Migration Policy Debates, *Is this humanitarian migration crisis different*, September 2015 [accessed via: <https://www.oecd.org/migration/ls-this-refugee-crisis-different.pdf>]

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.naric.org.uk/naric/News%20Story.aspx?NewsID=582>

<sup>91</sup> Refugees Welcome, *Community Welcome Plan* [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Community-Welcome-Plan.pdf>]



*CV workshop: How can you help to interpret their experience into what would be useful in the UK?*

*Interview and assessment preparation: can you help coach them for an interview, or lend them a smart suit to wear?*

-Arranging work experience and apprenticeships

*Which companies/organisations could offer work experience or apprenticeships?*

Citizens UK also make suggestions for navigating the complex processes at job centres:<sup>91</sup>

- Ensure that job centres are approached prior to refugees arriving.
- Accompany refugees to appointments.
- Try to ensure translation support is available.
- In case of difficulty, connect refugees with the local Citizens Advice Bureau.

In our view, a mentoring scheme would be useful for the many refugees who need to navigate the lengthy process of gaining recognition for skills and qualifications. Such a scheme would also help to mediate concerns about refugees down-skilling and potentially displacing low-skilled sections of the workforce.<sup>32</sup>

### *English language skills*

Learning to speak English will facilitate the integration of refugees both into communities and into work; it is the gateway to a wealth of positive outcomes.

As stated in Refugee Action's 2016 *Let Refugees Learn* report, "the primary way for refugees to access English language learning is through classes for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)."<sup>92</sup> Local authorities participating in the VPR scheme are required to provide refugees with ESOL training for 12 months.<sup>34</sup> Although the current financing package includes funding for these 12 months, some local authorities are concerned by national cuts to ESOL funding.<sup>34</sup> ESOL funding has fallen by 55% since 2009, from £212 million per annum to £95 million per annum, with a one-off funding boost of £20 million in 2016.<sup>75</sup>

To date, refugees accepted onto the scheme have not been taught English prior to arrival in the UK. The Government is, however, exploring an electronic programme for teaching English language skills in the region.<sup>46</sup> Several commercial sponsors have offered assistance in designing a specific electronic ESOL learning kit.<sup>46</sup>

Typically, for families resettled under the scheme that did not speak English prior to their arrival, it is the children who learn English most quickly.<sup>28</sup> At an age where their capacity for learning language is optimal, they are immersed in the English language at school. Often, it becomes their role to teach and interpret for their parents.<sup>46</sup>

Research by Refugee Action demonstrates that refugees commonly face significant barriers to learning and accessing an English language course. These barriers include long waiting lists, inconvenient learning hours, distance of classes from the home, and being assigned to the wrong class (because the more suitable class was at capacity).<sup>75</sup>

In our view, the Government should create a fund specifically to support refugees learning English. A refugee language fund would "enable all refugees that require English lessons to have free, accessible ESOL for their first two years in England ... This would cost around £1600 per refugee per year ... The cost ... is effectively fully reimbursed to the taxpayer following an individual's first eight months of employment at the national average wage; and within 15 months at the lower wage of £18,000 per year."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Refugee Action, *Let Refugees Learn: Challenges and opportunities to improve language provision to refugees in England*, May 2016 [accessed via: [http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/support\\_us/campaign/join\\_a\\_campaign/let\\_refugees\\_learn/our\\_report](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/support_us/campaign/join_a_campaign/let_refugees_learn/our_report)]



In support of the work of Refugee Action, the CSJ would like to see all refugees accessing 600 hours of ESOL over the first two years of their resettlement, as part of a national ESOL strategy for all refugees. In light of new ESOL funding granted to local authorities, we urge the Home Office to make this a mandatory funding stream for local authorities receiving additional funding.

## Community integration

*“They say it takes a whole village to raise a child; I think it takes a whole community to integrate a refugee.”*

– Helen Pidd, The Guardian

*“Many of those who are resettled will be extremely vulnerable. They will need opportunities to find support in the long term and chances to integrate and build relationships with others in a safe way.”*

– National Refugee Welcome Board

Given the protracted and calamitous nature of the Syrian conflict, it is likely that many refugees will remain and become citizens. Thus, community integration can be viewed as a long-term cultural and financial investment, and one that does not require immediate pay-off. In the short-term, processing and supporting those on the VPR scheme will be costly. The long-term impact will depend primarily on the success of integrating refugees into communities. Community integration is essential not only as a means for social cohesion, but for the fiscal benefit that it offers: refugees transition more quickly to economic independence when successfully integrated in communities.<sup>63</sup>

This process of integration encompasses many of the aspects already described: early and intensive efforts to provide good housing, employment opportunities and language training, as well as access to schools and health and social services. The earlier refugees get labour market access, the better are their long-term chances of integration.<sup>63</sup> As Citizens UK have stated, *“strong community welcome and integration efforts can significantly reduce the costs of resettlement by helping people recover, find work and become self-sufficient.”*<sup>93</sup>

This process will not be easy: refugees are selected on grounds of vulnerability, not on their potential to integrate.

Integration is more likely to succeed where local government and civil society are working together, especially when civil society is identifying and filling in the gaps in the local government programme.

Following the news images of a Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, found dead on a Turkish beach in September 2015, there was a dramatic upsurge globally in people wanting to help Syrian refugees, including in the UK.<sup>94,95</sup> The challenge has been in channelling such offers of practical help; some councils and charities have struggled to coordinate large numbers of people offering their time, financial resources, or properties to aid the resettlement effort.

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<sup>93</sup> Refugees Welcome, Meeting your MP – A Guide [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Meeting-your-MP-A-Guide-.pdf>]

<sup>94</sup> The Guardian, Stories of 2015: how Alan Kurdi's death changed the world, 31 December 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/31/alan-kurdi-death-canada-refugee-policy-syria-boy-beach-turkey-photo>]

<sup>95</sup> BBC Trending, Alan Kurdi: Has one picture shifted our view of refugees, 3 September 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-34142804>]

For this purpose, Citizens UK created the National Refugee Welcome Board (NRWB), which aimed to “bring together major civic society institutions and groups across the UK to mobilise their resources to support the government, local authorities and specialist providers”.<sup>96</sup>

### *Community action plans*

Eager to harness the goodwill of the British people, the Government have endorsed the creation of community action plans to expedite and improve the integration of refugees under the VPR programme. The view of the NRW is that, while the VPR scheme is “modelled on international best practice and provides refugees with a comparatively strong package of support ... for one year ... refugees report that one year is too little time and more widely the support has several common limitations which civil society groups ... are well positioned to address.”<sup>94</sup>

To ensure that the rollout of the scheme is locally sensitive, interested individuals and groups are encouraged to set up a local Refugee Welcome Board to work alongside their local authority in creating a Local Community Welcome Plan.<sup>91</sup> The plan, run by a local committee, would “focus on voluntary contributions of welcome that complement the activities of local statutory agencies and any of their contracted partners. Its focus is on the coproduction of refugee welcome between local councils, any contracted providers, and the host community.”<sup>91</sup> The outlook should be long-term, with an emphasis “on what civil society does well, and the importance of relationships and neighbourliness rather than bureaucratic programmes.”<sup>91</sup>

Community action plans should seek to match refugees sensitively to volunteers. A commercial sponsor would ideally provide appropriate matching technology to facilitate this process.

Volunteers will need to learn what is considered culturally appropriate and to ensure they continually allow resettled refugees to inform their input.

It will be important to include the diverse Syrian diaspora in this process. Local authorities participating in the scheme should establish networks of willing members of the Syrian diaspora to introduce to each Syrian family. In this, there will be a need for sensitivity and understanding of the cultural and ethnic nuances within Syrian society. To avoid potential resentment, volunteers within the Syrian diaspora should be informed of the background details of arriving Syrian refugees prior to their meeting.

Below are some of the NRW’s brightest ideas for successful integration.

Key questions for residents and community organisations to ask are:<sup>91</sup>

- Has the local council committed to resettling Syrian refugees?
- Are they committed to doing it in house or via contracted providers?
- What local groups already exist to support refugees in the local area and what are they planning that is appropriate?
- What elements of the resettlement plan have the council or local provider already undertaken to deliver, and which elements can best be provided by individuals and civil society?

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<sup>96</sup> <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/the-board/>

- How can we contact the relevant case-worker to discuss working together to optimise the refugees' experience? *This is important as many local authorities have assigned families case-workers to provide 'wrap around' support for the first year.*

Providing a warm welcome may include:

- Providing a welcome pack with essential goods (including household items like washing-up liquid and soap, and dry products such as salt, sugar, tea and coffee).
- Putting on low-key, friendly welcome events that aim to connect new arrivals to local services. Such events might include welcome meals in a local community centre or someone's home, neighbourhood walks that point out local services such as libraries and GP surgeries, or games-centred events for children. Large public events with media presence are often overwhelming and should be avoided.

Planning longer-term community support is likely to involve support in:

- **Orientation with local services** – including local transport, shops, banks, leisure facilities, and places of worship. It is also essential to ensure registration with a General Practitioner and dentist, and to enrol children in school.
- **Befriending and mentoring** – this is essential for refugees who are likely to find resettlement disorientating and confusing. According to the NRW, befriending “offers a way to help someone feel welcome, get to know their local area, find out about essential services and begin to feel at home.”<sup>94</sup> Mentoring “supports refugees who are isolated or need help to build confidence, access services and develop new skills so they can build happier lives in the UK.”<sup>94</sup> For more on mentoring, see 4.2 Employment and life chances. Many such projects are available through ‘Befriending Networks’ and the ‘Mentoring and Befriending Foundation’.
- **Helping with language issues** – acting as or finding interpreters, accessing English lessons, helping refugees to practise English, and finding support wherever possible from qualified ESOL teachers. Local mosques and universities may be rich in Arabic or Kurdish speakers who can assist in these matters.

Other integration ideas from the NRW include:<sup>91</sup>

- After school groups
- Prayer groups
- Community choirs
- Football teams

### *Community-based private sponsorship*

The NRW set up a public register in December 2015 listing individuals, charities, faith groups, churches and businesses with an interest in becoming a private or community sponsor of refugees (see *Appendix Item 2 for founding signatories of the register*).<sup>97</sup>

Following the establishment of the register, the Government has announced plans to work alongside the NRW to develop a scheme of community-based private sponsorship.<sup>94</sup>

The scheme would allow individuals, charities, faith groups, community groups, NGOs and businesses to pay or part-pay to take on a refugee referred by the scheme, or known to them directly. It will exist as a complementary resettlement scheme, in addition to the VPR programme, although the identification and recruitment protocols would overlap significantly. If a success, this scheme would provide a safe and legal means of expanding the UK's resettlement commitment.

A successful application would need to meet the following criteria:

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<sup>97</sup> <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/sponsorship/>

- Ability to raise sufficient funds to provide all the financial and material needs of a refugee or refugee family for 12 months. This is estimated to cost between £10,000-12,000 for an individual and between £12,000-20,000 for a family, depending on size. Sponsors would have to demonstrate that they could provide this level of support either through direct cash support or in kind (e.g. providing free accommodation). This support will cover accommodation, household utilities, food, clothing, furniture, and other day-to-day living expenses. It assumes dependency on the sponsor, with the refugee not entitled to receive any benefits or tax credits during their first 12 months in the UK. The projected costs may be lower than expected if the privately sponsored refugee finds employment within 12 months.
- Willingness to provide considerable non-financial support to the sponsored refugee(s) for at least the 12 months of sponsorship; this includes welcoming, orientation, befriending and mentoring.
- Willingness to commit significant time to training and preparation schemes, and to undergo appropriate background checks.

While much of this planning is currently hypothetical, similar models exist in Canada and Australia.<sup>98</sup> In Canada, more than 250,000 refugees have been resettled since the private sponsorship scheme began in 1978 following the Indochina refugee crisis.<sup>81</sup> In the first two years, 30,000 refugees were resettled in Canada through private sponsorship. The numbers are now more settled, with between 3,000-4,000 resettlements per year since 1998, recently rising to 6,000 (not including the emergency Syria response).<sup>81</sup> The scheme has become an established part of the ongoing resettlement effort, representing approximately half of Canada's total resettlement programme. It functions through a national Matching Centre, which works closely with regional and local offices to decide where a refugee's needs will best be met, based on medical needs, language ability, location of family and friends, and ethnic, cultural and religious communities in the area.<sup>99</sup>

One popular element of the scheme is the principle of 'naming', whereby private sponsors can selectively identify the refugees that they wish to sponsor, assuming they meet all necessary legal criteria.<sup>82</sup> This allows Canadians to respond to individuals that they may know directly, or from a particular region or ethno-religious group with which they wish to show solidarity. This may be an effective means of offering resettlement to persecuted groups not coming through the existing programme (see 3.3 *Ethno-religious minorities*).

Citizens UK cite the benefits of a private sponsorship scheme as follows:<sup>81</sup>

- A greater number and diversity of refugees coming to the UK through resettlement.
- An additional pathway to reunite refugee families.
- Significant personal, emotional and spiritual rewards for sponsoring groups and individuals.
- Raises positive refugee awareness in communities where privately sponsored refugees settle.

What are the potential challenges of private sponsorship?

- Bureaucratic delays – *a waiting time in excess of 1 year is not uncommon in the Canadian scheme for full processing of applications. This can cause sponsors to become frustrated and lose enthusiasm.*
- Refusals – *sponsors may get frustrated when their applications are refused. Often, this is because a selected refugee does not meet criteria for acceptance; detailed, early information sharing could help mitigate this.*
- Breakdown of sponsorship – *although rare in the Canadian system, this is potentially very serious; hence, there must be a commitment for lead sponsoring organisations (e.g. church dioceses,*

<sup>98</sup> Refugees Welcome, A Citizens' guide to private sponsorship of refugees, 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Citizensguide-to-private-sponsorship-in-the-UK.pdf>]

<sup>99</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, The Matching Centre [accessed via: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/centre.asp>]

*national faith bodies, or establish NGOs) to step in or for refugees in such circumstances to be transferred into the government-funded VPR programme.*

- Costs – potential sponsors are deterred beyond a certain cost. In Australia, high charges for visa applications have put off many sponsors. There should be no charge for applications.
- Biased selection – by selecting refugees from particular groups, there may be less stringent vulnerability criteria than within the VPR programme.

Full details of the Government's plans have not yet been released. In the meantime, the NRW has proposed an organisational structure for the scheme (see *Appendix Item 3*). The NRW is also putting individuals and groups who have signed the register of interest on a 'pathway to sponsorship', ensuring that sponsors are well prepared for the launch of the scheme.<sup>81</sup> They are approaching individuals and groups who have indicated a 'desire to help' in practical ways (e.g. offering a room or fostering children) to see if they would be willing to become private sponsors.<sup>81</sup>

The view of Refugee Action is that the Home Office should expedite the pathway to private sponsorship by creating a formal registration and screening process. Those interested in privately sponsoring refugees would formally register and the Home Office could then screen registrants, prioritising training for those who best fulfil criteria for private sponsorship and best understand the challenges facing Syrian refugees.

One area for clarification will be what happens to refugees after 12 months if private sponsorship does not continue; it cannot be assumed that full integration has occurred after one year. Evidence from Canada suggests that the majority of sponsored refugees are able to support themselves independently through work after one year.<sup>81</sup> If this was not the case for a sponsored refugee in the UK – and if sponsorship arrangements were not extended – it should be clarified whether they would be eligible for the same support package as refugees on the VPR scheme.

## Education

*"It is part of our moral responsibility to ensure that Syrian refugees who are resettled in the United Kingdom receive appropriate support, especially those young children who take refuge here."*  
– Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP (former Secretary of State for Education)

After spending months or years with poor access to education as refugees, there is an urgent need for young Syrians arriving in the UK under the VPR scheme to return to full-time education. This is an essential part of rebuilding their lives: evidence suggests that the earlier children can be transferred into the education system, the better their long-term education and employment outcomes.<sup>100,101</sup> Early English language training is also crucial to this, especially for children under five years.

The value of schooling has been conveyed powerfully by Helen Whately, MP for Faversham and Mid Kent: *"Syrian refugees arriving in Britain are asking three questions in particular: when can I learn English; when can I work; and when can my child go to school? A family who arrived in Kent in December already has an answer to the third of those questions. Their six-year-old daughter has now been at school in Ashford for four days. She proudly says that she has made a friend and learned how to write 'dog' and 'cat'. Her parents only wish that her sister could be at school, too, but her sister died last year in a refugee camp."*<sup>32</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Madeleine Arnot & Haleli Pinson, *The Education of Asylum-Seeker and Refugee Children*, University of Cambridge Faculty of Education, July 2005 [accessed via: <https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/people/staff/arnot/AsylumReportFinal.pdf>]

<sup>101</sup> Paloma Bourgonje, *Education for refugee and asylum seeking children in OECD countries: Case studies from Australia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom*, March 2010 [accessed via: [http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EIResearch\\_Paloma\\_Eng\\_final\\_med.pdf](http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/EIResearch_Paloma_Eng_final_med.pdf)]

Prior to the arrival of Syrian children on the VPR scheme, school places must be organised. For certain councils, including Reading Borough Council, constraints on school places has been a limiting factor in signing up to the VPR programme; Reading Borough Council has now restricted its offer to families with children over 8 years old.<sup>57</sup>

Children must also be assessed for special educational needs – currently this is conducted by the IOM prior to arrival.<sup>49</sup> By responding to this pre-arrival information, schools can deliver specialist support for children with special educational needs, as well as those requiring additional language support. A cross-Government taskforce has been set up to ensure that resettled child refugees get that support.<sup>83</sup>

The NRW is encouraging schools to become ‘Refugees Welcome’ schools.<sup>102</sup> This means committing to the following:

- Preparing local students for the arrival of refugees.
- Welcoming refugee students warmly.
- Smoothing the integration process through targeted English language programmes.
- Engaging with the community to promote resettlement.

Measures should also be taken to provide access to higher education for refugees who were forced to abandon higher learning or for those requiring further education to activate skills or gain equivalent professional qualifications. In the long-term, the Government and civil society should seek out opportunities to give all resettled refugees access to further education, to develop their employment prospects and enable flourishing and a full contribution to society. However, without access to student loans, many refugees are in a quandary. Presently, the NRW is working with 26 universities to make progress on this issue, focusing on two major objectives:<sup>103</sup>

- Classification of refugees as home students, to enable access to student loans.
- Offering at least 10 scholarships and bursaries per institution to cover the full costs of study.

To date, more than a dozen universities have offered a combined sum of over £3.5 million in scholarships for refugees; the University of East London has created 10 spaces worth more than £120,000 for this purpose.<sup>103, 104</sup> We wholeheartedly support the NRW in this work.

## Healthcare

While a large number of studies have been conducted looking at migrant health in the West, particularly in Norway and Australia,<sup>105, 106, 107, 108</sup> it is unclear at present whether these lessons can be applied to refugee populations. In the UK, studies on migrant health have

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<sup>102</sup> <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/schools/>

<sup>103</sup> <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/universities/>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.uel.ac.uk/news>

<sup>105</sup> Diaz E, Kumar BN, Gimeno-Feliu LA, Calderon-Larranaga A, Poblador-Pou B et al. Multimorbidity among registered immigrants in Norway: the role of reason for migration and length of stay. *Trop Med Int Health*. Dec 2015;20(12):1805-14.

<sup>106</sup> Naimy Z, Grytten J, Monkerud L, Eskild A. Perinatal mortality in non-western migrants in Norway as compared to their countries of birth and to Norwegian women. *BMC Public Health*. Jan 2013;13:37.

<sup>107</sup> Crawford G, Lobo R, Brown G, Maycock B. The influence of population mobility on changing patterns of HIV acquisition: lessons for and from Australia. *Health Promot J Austr*. Apr 2016. Doi: 10.1071/HE15042.

<sup>108</sup> Straiton M, Grant JF, Winefield HR, Taylor A. Mental health in immigrant men and women in Australia: the North West Adelaide Health Study. *BMC Public Health*. Oct 2014;14:1111.

focused on specific health domains such as mental disorders and infectious disease, as well as barriers to access.<sup>109,110,111</sup>

Among economic migrants, there exists a well-cited ‘healthy immigrant’ effect, whereby immigrants arrive in better health than native-born citizens but lose this health advantage over time.<sup>112</sup> This phenomenon has been highlighted in numerous populations; immigrant populations in the United States, for example, have shown BMI convergence within 15 years of arrival.<sup>113</sup> Such changes are related principally to changes in dietary habits and occupation.

Compared to economic migrants, refugees are more likely to have experienced traumatic events affecting health, including physical violence, sexual and gender-based violence, torture, and various other physical and mental health disorders. Newly arrived child refugees in the United States have been shown to have higher rates of hepatitis B, tuberculosis and anaemia than their native-born counterparts.<sup>114</sup> African refugee populations attending general practitioner (GP) clinics in Australia commonly arrive with nutritional deficiencies, insufficient vaccinations and a wide range of infectious diseases and dental disease.<sup>115</sup> In the current crisis, the principal health problems identified among refugees in Jordan and Lebanon are viral infections, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, opiate addiction, complications of pregnancy, and trauma secondary to war.<sup>116</sup> With a funding deficit in regional camps – and the necessary prioritisation of food, shelter and emergency care – it is often women’s health that suffers.<sup>70</sup>

Refugees are also less likely than economic migrants to have seen a healthcare professional regularly in the preceding period,<sup>117</sup> meaning that they are liable to a range of chronic health problems unrelated to their reason for seeking refuge.

Within refugee populations, the evidence base is primarily derived from former asylum seekers, rather than resettled refugees. The selection pressures facing these two populations differ. Among asylum seekers who make it across international borders, only the healthiest succeed in making the journey. By contrast, resettlement programmes select the most vulnerable refugees from within the region, with poor health ubiquitously included in vulnerability assessments. Thus, at best, we must be cautious in interpreting available data. However, an ‘unhealthy immigrant’ effect – whereby the health outcomes of refugees and native-born citizens diverge, rather than converge, over time – is certainly plausible in the case of resettled refugees.

In terms of barriers to access, there is much overlap between refugee populations and economic migrants. For both groups, barriers include inadequate information provision, inadequate language and translator support, and transport issues, especially outside of urban

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<sup>109</sup> Hatch SL, Gizard B, Williams DR, Frissa S, Goodwin L et al. Discrimination and common mental disorder among migrant and ethnic groups: findings from a South East London Community sample. *Soc Psychiatry Psychiatr Epidemiol*. May 2016;51(5):689-701.

<sup>110</sup> Cochrane A, Evlampidou I, Irish C, Ingle SM, Hickman M. Hepatitis B infection prevalence by country of birth in migrant populations in a large UK city. *J Clin Virol*. Jul 2015;68:79-82.

<sup>111</sup> Tesfaye HT, Day J. Health visitors’ perceptions of barriers to health and wellbeing in European migrant families. *Community Pract*. Jan 2015;88(1):22-5.

<sup>112</sup> Ro A, Flesicher NL, Blebu B. An examination of health selection among U.S. immigrants using multi-national data. *Soc Sci Med*. Jun 2016;158:114-21.

<sup>113</sup> Antecol H, Bedard K. Unhealth assimilation: why do immigrants converge to American health status levels? *Demography*. May 2006;43(2):337-60.

<sup>114</sup> McBride D. Large study of health issues for newly arrived child refugees. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*. 2016;31(2):222-223.

<sup>115</sup> Tiong AC, Patel MS, Gardiner J, Ryan R, Linton KS et al. Health issues in newly arrived African refugees attending general practice clinics in Melbourne. *Med J Aust*. Dec 2006;185(11-12):602-6.

<sup>116</sup> Lecture at Oxford Student Conference on Refugee Health, Green Templeton College, Oxford, 23 April 2016.

<sup>117</sup> Morris MD, Popper ST, Rodwell TC, Brodine SK, Brouwer KC. Health barriers of refugees post-resettlement. *J Community Health*. Dec 2009;34(6):529-538.

settings.<sup>100,118</sup> For refugee populations, mental illness and stigma-related concerns, as well as complex healthcare needs, represent further common barriers.<sup>100,101</sup>

The number one priority for a migrant or refugee wanting to access UK health services is to register with a GP surgery. While GP registration is free, some refugees report difficulties in registering. Some report being turned away, despite not legally needing to pay or to give proof of address.<sup>116</sup> On the parts of both refugees and those registering them, better information may be required.

If the VPR scheme is to be a success, good mental healthcare must take precedence. The prevalence of mental illness in refugee populations is estimated at 9 percent, significantly higher than in host populations.<sup>119</sup> Particularly common are anxiety disorders, depression and stress-related illnesses, including post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>119</sup>

It will be important to provide targeted health services and counselling to women and girls who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence. This will require improved understanding of the ways in which sexual violence and sexuality, pregnancy and gender power relations affect how Syrian refugees interact with health services in the UK.

In our view, psychosocial assessments should be conducted during a refugee's first primary care consultation in the UK. As well as improving their long-term mental health, this will increase the likelihood of refugee women seeking help for other health issues. To deliver these services sensitively, it will be important to ensure availability of female health professionals. It may also be necessary to give extra training to mental health professionals in dealing with the psychological trauma of prolonged war and displacement.<sup>120</sup> The UK might learn from Germany, where the state of Baden-Württemberg is providing a two-year mental health programme for victims of Daesh abuse.<sup>44</sup>

In Oxford, several established migrant health projects demonstrate the power of local initiatives and their capacity for wider partnerships. The Oxford School Refugee Project provides a mental health service for refugee and asylum-seeking children across four schools in Oxfordshire.<sup>116</sup> The programme is run at schools on the basis that schools are a safe environment that all children attend regularly. Through weekly meetings between a link teacher and a mental health professional, each child of concern is discussed. The mental health professional then advises the teacher on possible strategies and local resources that might be of assistance, which can be relayed back to the child and their family at an appropriate time. Common clinical issues include trauma and grief reactions and self-harm. Such has been its success that the programme has now become the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services' 'InReach' programme across the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. The major learning point here is that running an effective local service can serve as a template for wider scale intervention and reducing pressure on primary and secondary care.

Oxford University is also running a migrant health initiative that aims to provide a holistic health service to vulnerable migrants, to build lasting relationships between patients and volunteer health advocates, and to connect and refer patients to other health services in the community.<sup>116</sup> Inspired by the Doctors of the World programme in London, these clinics are led by teams of volunteer medical and nursing students, supervised by GPs and medical consultants. This means that appointments can be longer and more flexible, with ongoing follow-up possible. The initiative launched in late 2015 in response to over 1,000 migrants arriving in Oxford that year; GPs were struggling to see all of these patients and many lacked

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<sup>118</sup> Cheng I, Drillich A, Schattner P. Refugee experiences of general practice in countries of resettlement: a literature review. *Br J Gen Pract.* Mar 2015;65(632):e171-e176.

<sup>119</sup> Bhugra D, Craig T, Bhui K. *Mental Health of Refugees and Asylum Seekers.* Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>120</sup> El-Khani A, Ulph F, Redmond AD, Calam R. Ethical issues in research into conflict and displacement. *Lancet.* 2013;382(9894):764-765.



formal medical records. With families now arriving in Oxford under the VPR scheme, programmes such as the Oxford Migrant Health Initiative should be encouraged to expand their services to Syrian refugees.

Overall, healthcare – particularly access and quality – has been one of the least discussed aspects of the resettlement programme. This is an area for significant further work; at present, much of the commentary is speculative. A deeper understanding of the health issues faced by those selected for the VPR scheme, in the appropriate cultural context, will enable GPs and other UK health professionals to prepare more adequately for their arrival.

Particular areas for Clinical Commissioning Groups to focus on are as follows:

- Barriers to healthcare access among refugees on the VPR programme, especially in the area of translation services.
- Sharing of data on health status of refugees on the VPR programme to enable tracking over time in a longitudinal study. Combined with data on birthplace and ethnic groups, these data will deepen understanding on variables affecting refugee health.
- Using healthcare outcomes in the resettled population as a measure of integration.

# Case studies

Case studies of success are a powerful tool in persuading other local authorities to join the scheme; we hope that the cases included here may do the same.

## 1. Inverclyde Council

Inverclyde Council has made an initial commitment to support ten Syrian families through the VPR scheme.<sup>32</sup> The first three families (14 refugees in total) were resettled by the end of 2015.

Ronnie Cowan, MP for Inverclyde, recalls:

*“On arriving in Scotland, they were met at the airport by council staff and transported to Inverclyde, where they temporarily stayed in a hotel, before moving to permanent accommodation. Housing was provided by locally registered social landlords, and the three families now live within walking distance of each other. In placing the families in accommodation, the local authority felt that it was best to cluster them together, but not to concentrate them too much. That allows them to live within a comfortable distance of each other, but it also ensures that they can integrate more effectively with their neighbours.*

*Inverclyde Council has assisted the families by helping them to establish bank accounts and by registering them with local GPs and dental practices. I am pleased to report that, throughout the entire settlement process, there have been no major incidents or problems, and the Syrian families continue to settle into their new community. I am proud of the people of Inverclyde, who have shown such generosity in offering clothing, food, cash and their time to support their new neighbours.*

*Inverclyde council’s previous experience in participating in the Afghan resettlement scheme has been invaluable in taking forward the practicalities of the Syrian resettlement. In that programme, Afghans fleeing persecution, including former British Army interpreters, have found a new home in Inverclyde.*

*Despite the warm welcome offered by local residents and the range of services available from Inverclyde Council, however, challenges remain for the incoming Syrian families. Most notably, refugees may experience difficulties in seeking work, because of language difficulties or because their professional qualifications are not recognised in the UK. Furthermore, if refugees have been victims of torture, we must ensure that local authorities continue to have the necessary physical and mental health support services to enable them to settle and thrive.”<sup>32</sup>*

## 2. Renfrewshire Council

By March 2016, Renfrewshire Council had resettled 68 refugees, including 43 in the final quarter of 2015 and 25 in the first quarter of 2016.

Gavin Newlands, MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire North, states:

*“I am immensely proud that my constituents welcomed the refugees with open arms. People in Paisley and Renfrewshire collected donations, opened shops, travelled to Calais and did anything and everything in their power to help those in need. The first refugees arrived in my constituency in November, landing at Glasgow airport. It may have been an all-too-typical cold and wet night, but the response that our new friends received would have shown them the warmth of Scotland —and the UK. Our new Syrian friends are living in local authority areas throughout Scotland and well over 3,000 individuals have signed up to help them resettle, through the “Scotland Welcomes Refugees” website.*

*My local town of Paisley has helped to resettle 50 refugees. The Sunday Herald asked one of the new families whether they were happy in Paisley. They responded: “It feels like we never left our families back in Syria because of the warm welcome we received in Scotland. We are among our families again.”*

*It should be noted that a lot of work has been done to ensure the smooth resettlement of our new Syrian neighbours. My office is part of a working group in Renfrewshire, which came together to ensure that the refugees’ arrival, introduction to, and integration with, Renfrewshire was as smooth as possible. That all-party and cross-sector group is attended by religious leaders, council officers, elected members from all levels of government and other important local stakeholders, and we have all worked to make sure that our new Paisley “buddies” settle into the area as smoothly as possible.*

*Renfrewshire has been opening its doors, but in turn our Syrian neighbours have opened theirs. They have been sharing Syrian food and culture with local people. They have appreciated the beauty of Scotland and we too appreciate their humility and hope. Despite all they have suffered, which is more than any of us can imagine, they look ahead to a new life.*

*Overwhelmingly, the families who have come to Renfrewshire have met a warm response; however, there is still a small vocal section of the population who are not so welcoming. My local paper, the Paisley Daily Express, ran a story with the headline “Shame on You”, which highlighted, exposed and shamed locals who posted nasty and bigoted messages on social media. I salute my local paper for shooting down those bigots and racists, but the story is a reminder that there still exists a section of the population that we have not won over.”<sup>32</sup>*

## 3. Reading Borough Council

Reading Borough Council has structured its programme according to pre-acceptance, pre-arrival and post-arrival criteria to give the greatest chance of successful integration into the Reading community.<sup>57</sup> The details are as follows:

*Pre-acceptance:*

- Individual cases are reviewed to ensure Reading is sufficiently equipped to accommodate all needs.

*Pre-arrival:*

- Cases which may need additional funding are identified; each refugee is given a unique VPR number to allow the local authority to track costing across the public sector.

- Housing is found and furnished prior to arrival to ensure a sense of security and quick settling for refugees. A property pack containing information around tenant responsibility (e.g. advice on paying utility bills) is prepared.
- Each case is assessed for specific healthcare needs and facilities.
- School places are found and schools are briefed prior to arrival, to give schools adequate time to prepare.
- A welcome pack is prepared containing information around locations of doctors, libraries, civic and information centres. Language needs are identified, in case translation of all welcome materials into Arabic or Kurdish is required.
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are booked.
- Arrangements are made for refugees to access support within their faith group.
- Logistics of travel into the UK are decided, including airport collection.

*Post-arrival:*

- A high level of case-worker and community support is provided for the first two weeks to allow the family to begin to integrate.
- Care is taken to protect individuals from media intrusion and adverse public attention.
- Review meetings are frequently conducted over the initial 12 months. The aim is for full integration into life in the UK by the time of the 4<sup>th</sup> review meeting at 1 year.

# Criticisms of the programme

## Capping capacity at 20,000

*“Twenty-thousand refugees should just be a starting point. There has to be much more urgency: the crisis is happening now; people are risking their lives now; the need for safety is now.”*

– Caroline Lucas MP

In considering whether to expand the VPR scheme, the Government faces a difficult trade off between resettling a higher number and ensuring that an optimal job is done to set up a safe and fulfilling life for those arriving on the programme. Helen Whately describes this as follows: *“After all the focus, particularly last year, on the number of refugees whom we should accept – people are still calling for more – it is time to talk about the practicalities of resettling our 20,000 refugees, to ensure that we are doing a good job with them. Have those who have already arrived settled in well? Are the children in school? Are the adults learning English? Are they in decent accommodation? How have they been received by their host communities? Are we on track to take 20,000? Will we manage that, or might we overshoot?”*<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, given that the UK has the second highest GDP in Europe<sup>121</sup> and relatively low rates of asylum applications per 100,000 of the population,<sup>22,122</sup> many leading figures in the Opposition and political commentariat consider 20,000 too conservative a figure. Helen Whately adds, *“If each of the UK’s 391 local authorities took just 51 individuals over the five years – that is about 10 families each – we would achieve the 20,000 target, and some are already planning to take five times that number.”*<sup>32</sup> Refugees Welcome use different figures to make the same point: *“The UK have agreed to take in 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020 – that’s 0.03% of the UK population and only 0.05% of all Syrian refugees.”*<sup>91</sup>

Having pledged to accept up to 20,000 refugees, the Government will rightly be held to account on that number. The former Minister for Syrian Refugees has described this as a two-edged sword: *“We have been both complimented and criticised about what we are doing ... It is quite normal that people have their views and that they lobby. The shadow Minister said that what the Government have done is because of pressure from the Opposition and other groups, but to some extent that is how Governments work. The Government get criticised for not listening to what the Opposition and lobby groups say, or it is regarded as weakness if they do listen.”*<sup>123</sup>

The Prime Minister has said, *“Some countries that made pledges to resettle Syrian refugees have taken one, two, or, in some cases, none. We are doing far more than other countries. Our system is working.”*<sup>124</sup> The Government is eager to reiterate that the VPR scheme is only one aspect of a multidimensional and generous response to the crisis in Syria, one that focuses primarily on the region itself. It should also be stressed that the 3,000 children at risk who are to be given refuge from the MENA region, as well as the as yet unspecified number from across Europe, will arrive in addition to those accepted on the VPR scheme.

<sup>121</sup> World Bank, Data: GDP ranking [accessed via: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table>]

<sup>122</sup> UNHCR, The Facts: Asylum in the UK [accessed via: <http://www.unhcr.org.uk/about-us/the-uk-and-asylum.html>]

<sup>123</sup> House of Commons Library, Refugees: UK Government Policy, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, 10 Feb 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm160210/halltext/160210h0003.htm>]

<sup>124</sup> House of Commons Library, European Council, London: House of Commons Library, 2016; Hansard, 21 Mar 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm160321/debtext/160321-0002.htm>]

The Government is aware that there will always be pressure to accept more refugees. After meeting its initial goal – to resettle 30,000 Syrian refugees in other countries by the end of 2014,<sup>125</sup> with a focus on the most vulnerable – the UNHCR has sought places for an additional 100,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016.<sup>126</sup> The UNHCR now estimates that 10% of the Syrian refugee population – almost 500,000 people – are very vulnerable and will need resettlement outside of neighbouring countries.<sup>126</sup>

Putting the numbers in context, the Kindertransport offered refuge in the UK to more than 60,000 Jewish refugees before the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.<sup>127</sup> In the winter of 1956, Britain provided refuge for 20,000 Hungarians in the wake of the Hungarian revolution.<sup>128</sup>

In light of such figures, Citizens UK argue that the UK should increase the number resettled from 20,000 to 50,000 by 2020 to bring the UK's contribution closer in line with that of countries like Germany and Sweden, where formal resettlement programmes are smaller but many more Syrian asylum seekers are being accepted.<sup>129</sup> This proposal has been supported by MPs responsible for successful VPR schemes in their own constituencies. Gavin Newlands of Paisley and Renfrewshire said, *"We need to reassess whether accepting 20,000 Syrian refugees is the limit of our compassion, capability and capacity"* having resettled *"a far smaller number than the EU, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, many in Parliament, the Scottish Government and the country demanded."*<sup>32</sup> He added that formal and direct British military intervention in Syria adds to our moral responsibility to accept more Syrian families, who are *"now fleeing not only Daesh and Assad but bombs dropped from American, Saudi, French, Australian, Turkish, Jordanian and British bombers ... As we are now very much one of the push factors involved in the mass migration, we owe it to those in flight to offer refuge for a lot more than 20,000."*<sup>32</sup>

Others have called for front-loading of the programme. Liberal Democrat Alistair Carmichael said, *"Twenty thousand over five years is not to be sneezed at, but it can only be seen as a start. If nothing else, it ... needs to be front-loaded, because the crisis is in the here and now. Trying to guess where it will all need to go in five years' time and limiting the options is unrealistic and unworthy."*<sup>44</sup> Here, the insinuation is that the Government's position on programme capacity should be reviewed regularly, rather than through a one-off five-year commitment, which does not fit with the nature of the Syrian conflict.

On the point of flexibility, David Burrowes says, *"In many ways, I see the number of 20,000 as a minimum. We need to be ready to have that flexibility, and to respond to people's vulnerability in this tragic situation."*<sup>32</sup> Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh, MP for Ochil and South Perthshire, added, *"Other European countries are revising the number of refugees that they are taking in. Just what will it take for the Government to revise upwards the figure of 20,000 refugees that we have agreed to take? We have a moral obligation, surely, to look after the most vulnerable in society."*<sup>123</sup>

While swift action is desirable, the Government understands that resettlement should not be rushed, especially given the vulnerabilities of refugees.<sup>34</sup> However, given mounting pressure on limited humanitarian resources in the region, the Government should be prepared for the possibility that the speed of resettlements may take on greater urgency.

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<sup>125</sup> UNHCR, 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Strategic Overview, 2014 [accessed via: <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/docs/Syria-rrp6-full-report.pdf>]

<sup>126</sup> UNHCR, Governments at Geneva meeting agree to take in 100,000 Syrian refugees, 9 December 2014 [accessed via: <http://www.unhcr.org/548737926.html>]

<sup>127</sup> Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, The Kindertransport [accessed via: <http://hmd.org.uk/genocides/kindertransport-refugees>]

<sup>128</sup> UNHCR, Fiftieth Anniversary of the Hungarian uprising and refugee crisis, 23 October 2006 [accessed via: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2006/10/453c7adb2/fiftieth-anniversary-hungarian-uprising-refugee-crisis.html>]

<sup>129</sup> <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/lobby/>

In changing immigration policy, where decisions are extremely difficult to reverse, it is reasonable for policymakers to adopt a cautious and gradual approach. This has been a central learning of the EU Eastern Europe enlargement.<sup>130</sup>

Fixing a cap on the VPR scheme in 2015 was a bold – albeit necessary – move. Understanding that this is primarily a moral issue, with supporters on all sides of the Commons and the Lords, the Government must have the humility to revisit this figure and consider revising it in due course.

While the Government will continue to face pressure on the numbers of refugees accepted onto the programme, current focus should remain on the quality of the domestic programme, rather than its expansion. Britain should first prove that it can deliver a world-class resettlement programme for up to 20,000 Syrian refugees before seeking to expand the programme.

## Distribution and clustering

*“If the 20,000 Syrian refugees are housed around the country in the same way as those who currently seek asylum are, the north-west will have almost 5,000 and the west midlands will have almost 3,000, while the south-east, the south-west and the east of England will house just 1,200 between them ... The impact of our response to this crisis should be spread much more evenly across the country.”*  
– Ian Austin MP

Due primarily to a shortage of available housing, few refugees have been resettled in London and the South-East. While an uneven resettlement distribution may be an inevitability of a voluntary sign-up scheme, much can be learnt from Britain’s asylum programme. Here, local authorities in north London are paying for accommodation for asylum seekers in the West Midlands, where there is more available housing.<sup>32</sup> This could be rationalised by understanding that the economic benefits of migration are focused primarily in London, where the majority of wealthier economic migrants live. Some MPs, including Ian Austin, have called for a redistribution of this wealth, to improve services and infrastructure in northern councils that are hosting the majority of asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>32</sup>

In parts of the UK, refugees have become clustered. In Greater Manchester, for example, the majority of asylum seekers have been dispersed in Bolton and Rochdale, which together host more asylum seekers than *“the whole of the south put together.”*<sup>32</sup> Ian Austin says, *“The way people have been dispersed and then concentrated in localised areas puts added pressure on public services such as housing, schools and the NHS, which are already under great strain. It may also be unfair on the refugees themselves, who are moved to communities without sufficient Government support.”*<sup>32</sup> Clustering should also be carefully considered in terms of the many cultural and ethnic differences that exist between Syrian refugees.

A further challenge is the potential for free movement of refugees once resettled. Any plans for a particular geographical distribution are likely to be inaccurate. To counter this, as stated above, refugees should be matched to regions where their skills are most likely to flourish and where appropriate health and education services already exist.

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<sup>130</sup> Carlos Vargas-Silva, Seven Years after the Eastern European Enlargement, 13 September 2011 [accessed via: <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2011/seven-years-after-the-eastern-european-enlargement/>]

## Public concerns about migration

In the wake of the referendum vote for Britain to leave the European Union in June 2016, it is important to consider the rise in popularity of anti-immigration political parties across Europe, such as the UK Independence Party (UKIP), Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). Concerns about security, burden on services and social systems, crime rates and demographic change have led to growing anti-immigration sentiment.<sup>131,132</sup>

Refugees Welcome have stated, *“Much of the British public is extremely concerned about the levels of immigration in the UK. Particularly following the attacks in Paris many people will be concerned about resettlement, even though many of those seeking protection are fleeing exactly the same type of violence seen recently in France. It is important both for communities and refugees that we proactively engage to help people understand both the urgent need for and the benefits of welcoming refugees.”*<sup>91</sup> In the US, national security experts have reiterated to Congress that *“refugees are victims, not perpetrators, of terrorism”*.<sup>133</sup>

It should be stressed that refugees entering the UK are subject to rigorous security checks, both by the UN and the Home Office. The two-stage vetting process includes the taking of biometric data, interviews and other documentary evidence.<sup>91</sup> The Home Office also ‘retains the right to reject on security, war crimes or other grounds’.<sup>48</sup> Notably, security is regarded as a continual process that does not stop once a refugee enters the UK.

Richard Arkless, MP for Dumfries and Galloway, has highlighted the issue around benefits and welfare payments succinctly: *“The benefit-chasing myth ... should be dismantled here and now. These are human beings fleeing terror and likely death. They want to work in an environment where their families are safe and can be provided with a good life—that is it. These are values that we all share as human beings and I say that we should approach this problem, first and foremost, in our capacity as human beings ... Do we honestly believe that people fleeing for their lives have logged on to the Department for Work and Pensions website, analysed our benefits system and said to themselves, ‘Do you know what? The UK will do for me?’ To suggest so is to misunderstand completely the situation that these people find themselves in.”*<sup>123</sup>

When considering that local crime rates may deteriorate following Syrian resettlement, three points should be conveyed to concerned members of the public: (i) that the numbers of Syrians resettled per local authority are small; (ii) that, in each case, a thorough vetting process is carried out concerning former criminal activity; and (iii) that the chances of crime can be minimised by promoting early transition to employment. For those concerned about demographic changes and potential gender imbalance, it is important to stress the comparatively small numbers of refugees being accepted onto the programme: taking 20,000 refugees by 2020 would account for 0.03% of the current UK total population.<sup>134</sup> There may be some confusion between demographic changes with migration, asylum seeking and refugee resettlement – the gender imbalance noted in Sweden, for example, where there are

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<sup>131</sup> Scott Blinder, UK Public Opinion toward Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Level of Concern, The Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford, August 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-immigration-overall-attitudes-and-level-concern>]

<sup>132</sup> Journalist's Resource, France, Islam, terrorism and the challenges of integration: Research roundup, 16 November 2016 [accessed via: <http://journalistsresource.org/studies/international/conflicts/france-muslims-terrorism-integration-research-roundup>]

<sup>133</sup> Human Rights First, National security leaders call on Congress to reject proposals to halt the resettlement of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in the United States, 1 December 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/press-release/national-security-leaders-call-congress-reject-proposals-halt-resettlement-syrian-and-iraqi-refugees-in-the-united-states>]

<sup>134</sup> The National Archives, Main comparisons: Population and Migration [accessed via: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/compendiums/compendium-of-uk-statistics/population-and-migration/index.html>]



now 123 boys for every 100 girls in the 16-17 age group, follows massive influxes through the asylum programme.<sup>135</sup>

Besides making the case for why resettlement is important, public statements of welcome by local institutions – including schools, universities, faith and voluntary organisations – can impact local community attitudes and the local council significantly. Similarly, civil society pledges that local services will not be damaged are important. In this, we wholeheartedly support the work of Citizens UK and Refugees Welcome.

## Need for a learning culture

As the VPR programme continues to take shape, there is a need for sharing of expertise and transparency between central government, local government and civil society. Mistakes should be quickly detected and addressed, and lessons shared widely to ensure they are not repeated elsewhere.

Much can be learned from other resettlement programmes, both in the UK and further afield. The former Minister for Syrian refugees has said, *“We are consulting international partners to understand how their schemes work, and with partners in the UK to make sure we design a scheme which works well here.”*<sup>46</sup>

For well over a decade, the Gateway and Mandate programmes have been highly regarded nationally and internationally. The Gateway Protection programme resettles approximately 750 refugees per year who have been displaced for more than five years across a small number of targeted locations. On a smaller scale, Mandate resettles refugees from anywhere in the world with close family members in the UK who are willing to accommodate them. The Government should continue to consult those involved in the implementation and critique of these programmes.

At the local level, local authorities with specialisms in particular resettlement domains should train other participating local authorities in how to develop that domain. Bradford, for example, which has housed many Syrian refugees through the Gateway scheme, has a particularly effective housing association and healthcare scheme for refugees, both of which have been *“in this business for years”*.<sup>46</sup>

By the end of 2016, the Government hopes to see specific matching of refugees to local authorities meeting their specific needs.<sup>46</sup> In Kent, Swale Borough Council has committed to taking two Syrian families per year under the VPR scheme.<sup>15</sup> Having previously resettled two Afghan interpreters, the council is now aware of the challenges of resettling refugees in the rural villages of Kent. By contrast, Maidstone Borough Council, with a shortage of family accommodation, plans to resettle six single men by 2020.<sup>32</sup> Although imperfect, these examples suggest that more careful matching is becoming the norm.

## Other countries’ resettlement programmes for Syrian refugees

Globally, more than 130,000 resettlement places for Syrian refugees had been offered by November 2015.<sup>136</sup> This includes schemes in the UK, United States, Canada, Australia and the Nordic countries. Here, we will focus on the United States’ model for resettlement.

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<sup>135</sup> BBC News, Why does Sweden have more boys than girls? 30 January 2016 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35444173>]

<sup>136</sup> BBC News, What one Syrian family thinks about coming to the UK, 19 November 2015 [accessed via: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-34844107>]

The US has agreed to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in 2016 as part of the US Refugee Admissions Programme (USRAP), which has resettled more than 3 million refugees since its establishment in the 1970s.<sup>137,138</sup> The British VPR scheme was developed closely in line with this model. Both involve extensive background, security and health screening prior to entry; in the case of the US scheme, these checks are conducted by the UNHCR and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).<sup>139</sup> The programme is delivered in conjunction with nine NGOs, which accept cases based on their own capacity and specialisms.<sup>138</sup> Refugees are matched to locations where they have personal or family connections, employment opportunities and access to appropriate education and healthcare services. Resettled families are not clustered, but must all be located within one hour of a refugee centre via public transport. In terms of delivery, case-workers form the backbone of the programme, each looking after 10-20 families. Since 2011, Syrian refugees have been resettled in 138 cities in 36 states.<sup>139</sup>

David Miliband states, *“The US model where you get a job, your kids get an education, you learn the language, and you’re put on the path to citizenship with all the legal elements that that involves, that’s a pretty well proven model and it’s one that needs to be applied in a very clear-headed way in Europe as well.”*<sup>33</sup>

The focus of the scheme is in finding employment as soon as possible. Resettlement agencies assist refugees throughout the skill recognition and job application process. Frequently, refugees begin in low-skilled jobs, such as factory line work or hotel services. The expectation is that, within 1-2 decades, with appropriate further training and education, resettled Syrian refugees will be able to practise the jobs they formerly practised in Syria.

A major drawback of the US programme is that the vetting process can take 18 months or more.<sup>140</sup> The philosophy is that acquiring more information prior to arrival improves the effectiveness and sensitivity of the programme by ensuring, for example, that Syrians of different ethnicities are not housed next door to one another. The programme is also considered by some to be too tough. Once they have begun working, refugees must pay back the cost of their flights.<sup>122</sup> They do not receive long-term subsidised housing, but rather a housing stipend of around \$1,000 to cover their first 3 months in the US, after which they pay rent as normal tenants would.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> USCIS, The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) Consultation & Worldwide Processing Priorities [accessed via: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum/refugees/united-states-refugee-admissions-program-usrap-consultation-worldwide-processing-priorities>]

<sup>138</sup> US Department of State, Refugee Admissions [accessed via: <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/ra/>]

<sup>139</sup> US News, 8 Facts About the US Program to Resettle Syrian Refugees [accessed via: <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/11/20/8-facts-about-the-us-program-to-resettle-syrian-refugees>]

# Summary and recommendations

Amid the turmoil of the Syrian civil war and its impact on Syria, the surrounding region and across Europe, we would do well to celebrate small successes in the British response. As well as being the second largest donor to refugees in and around Syria, Britain has launched the VPR programme, which will provide up to 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees with a second chance in life. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has described Britain's response as *"effective and smooth"*.<sup>140</sup> Amid all the tragedy, we should *"celebrate the councils and communities that are stepping up to take refugees and the charities and the volunteers who are helping, while encouraging all those who are reluctant or sceptical to support this thoughtful strategy. Britain rightly has a reputation as a compassionate country of opportunity that welcomes people from around the world. Some have doubted us recently, but we should make that a reality for 20,000 Syrians."*<sup>32</sup>

Rarely does an issue unite political parties in the way that the Syrian refugee crisis has done in Britain. The former Minister for Syrian Refugees described the VPR programme as *"probably the least politically contentious part of Government"*.<sup>123</sup>

We recommend the following:

## Defining objectives clearly

- The Government should seek out clear objectives for the VPR programme. In our view, these objectives should be two-fold: (i) to help rebuild the lives of 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees; (ii) to build a first-class resettlement model that engages sensitively with local government and civil society, and can be used as a springboard for future resettlement schemes.

## Improving quality of support

- To improve the quality of support given to local authorities, charities and other private contractors, the Government should monitor the progress of resettled Syrian refugees according to a clear set of outcome measures. This will require transition from a focus on gaining local authority participation, to a set of qualitative and quantitative targets (e.g. how settled refugees are feeling on a scale of 1-10, time taken to access English language classes, to gain school registration for children, or to gain part-time or full-time employment). To devise and meet these targets, it will be helpful to regularly consult the heads of the Refugee Council and Refugee Action.

## A need for focus on the extra-vulnerable

- The Government should carefully monitor UNHCR referrals according to location of referral and individual demographics, ethno-religious status, sexuality, and disability status. This data should be fed back to the UNHCR to identify under-represented groups and plan appropriate changes to the referral process.
- DFID should consult the Lebanese government to identify objections to the registration process in Lebanon and to find solutions so that the registration process can continue as soon as possible.

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<sup>140</sup> YouTube: BBC Newsnight, Kofi Annan on Syria, 20 January 2016 [accessed via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBNeIezjYTM>]

### *On women and girls:*

- In the UK, targeted health services and counselling should be delivered to women and girls who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Civil society organisations should look to provide practical and emotional support to women who have encountered sexual and gender-based violence, while continuing long-term advocacy work to promote women's rights.
- The Istanbul Convention, which covers all forms of violence against women and girls, should be ratified as soon as possible.

### *On children:*

Our recommendations on children pertain primarily to the specific schemes for resettlement of at-risk children, beyond the VPR programme. In rolling out these schemes, the Government should consider the following:

- Developing a scheme to match unaccompanied children with families and/or foster parents, which are preferable to care homes.
- Working with the UNHCR to improve methods for registering unaccompanied children in the Syrian region and across Europe. A key player in this work will be the Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

### *On ethno-religious minorities:*

- The Government should analyse sufficient UNHCR registration data to state definitively whether there is under-referral of Syrian Christians and Yazidis to the VPR programme.
- If found to be an issue, the Government should provide further funding to ensure that vulnerable Christians and Yazidis in the region are registered and assessed according to vulnerability criteria.

## Financing the programme

- The Government should provide greater clarity on how the transition phase from year 1 to year 2 will be financed. It may be necessary to increase the size of the 'special cases' fund for years 2-5, or to increase the gross funding for this period (currently £129 million).
- There should be flexibility in the 'special cases' fund for refugees who decide to move away from their initial region of resettlement.

## Housing

- Members of the public who are keen to assist in finding housing for refugees can help to identify letting agents and private landlords with available accommodation.
- City Hall should consider the call of Citizens UK for the creation of a Deputy Mayor of London responsible for Citizenship and Integration, whose work would centre around finding innovative methods to navigate the housing shortage for refugees.

## Employment and life chances

- The Government should establish a national employment strategy for all refugees. This is both essential for refugees and in the public interest, dramatically lowering lifetime cost of the scheme. Key components of this strategy should include:
  - i) A scheme for matching refugees to local authorities with the capacity and specialisms to support their employment needs. Refugees should be matched to regions where labour demand is high and where their specific skills are sought after. This may be done best through a commercial sponsor.

- ii) A volunteer-led mentoring scheme to empower refugees to gain recognition for skills and qualifications. This would help to mediate concerns about refugees down-skilling or displacing low-skilled sections of the labour force. This scheme should focus on helping refugees to find employment through networks, assisting with drawing up CVs and with interview preparation, and arranging work experience and apprenticeships.<sup>141</sup>

### *English language skills*

- iii) The Government should create a fund specifically to support refugees learning ESOL. The CSJ would like to see all refugees accessing 600 hours of ESOL over the first two years of their resettlement, as part of a national ESOL strategy for all refugees. In light of new ESOL funding granted to local authorities, we urge the Home Office to make this a mandatory funding stream for local authorities receiving additional funding.

## Community integration

There is a need for central government, local government and civil society to work together.

Key priorities are as follows:

- The Government should continue to develop sustainable schemes for community action plans and community-based private sponsorship to ensure that all individuals and groups who have made generous offers to help, can help, whether through mentorship and community programmes, or direct financial support. It will be important to include the diverse Syrian diaspora in this process.
- Local authorities subscribed to the scheme should liaise with arms of civil society that can assist local delivery. Local authorities may also find it helpful to run equality impact assessments (EqIA) to see how the programme meets their local vision for equality.
- The Government should work closely with the National Refugee Welcome Board (NRWB), established by Citizens UK, which has persuaded at least 25 councils to join the VPR scheme.
- Local authorities should take heed of the NRW's ideas for improved integration, which include after school groups, community choirs and refugee football teams.

## Education

- The Government should provide access to higher education for refugees who were forced to abandon higher learning or for those requiring further education to activate skills or gain equivalent professional qualifications.

## Healthcare

- Psychosocial assessments should be conducted during a refugee's first primary care consultation in the UK.
- Mental health professionals should receive extra training in dealing with the psychological trauma of prolonged war and displacement.
- Targeted health services and counselling should be delivered to women and girls who are victims of sexual and gender-based violence. To deliver this service sensitively, it will be important to ensure availability of female health professionals.

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<sup>141</sup> Refugees Welcome, Community Welcome Plan [accessed via: <http://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Community-Welcome-Plan.pdf>]

## Countering criticisms of the programme

### *On distribution and clustering:*

- The Government should consider an option for local authorities in London and the South-East, which lack housing capacity at present, to fund the resettlement of refugees in other regions of the UK, as is the case in Britain's asylum programme.
- In creating housing plans for refugees, local authorities should carefully consider the cultural and ethnic differences that exist between Syrian refugees and seek to avoid clustering.

### *On public concerns about migration:*

- The Government should encourage public statements of welcome by local institutions – including schools, universities, faith and voluntary organisations – which can impact local community attitudes and the local council significantly.
- Local authorities should seek civil society pledges that local services will not be significantly affected.

## Need for a learning culture

A learning culture should be engendered at the local, national and international levels. This will require an open and transparent approach, with clear communication channels for feedback from local to central government.

- The Government should continue to consult those involved in the implementation and critique of the UK's Gateway and Mandate resettlement programmes.
- Local authorities with specialisms in particular resettlement domains should train other participating local authorities in how to develop that domain.

# Appendix

## Item 1.

### Home Office statement for local authorities – post-arrival requirements

- The Recipient will meet and greet arriving Beneficiaries from the relevant airport and escort them to their properties briefing them on how to use the amenities.
- The Recipient will arrange accommodation for the arriving Beneficiaries which meets local authority standards and which will be available on their arrival and is affordable and sustainable.
- The Recipient will ensure that the accommodation is furnished appropriately. The furniture package should not include luxury items. This means that food storage, cooking and washing facilities can be provided but the facilities should not include the provision of other white goods or brown goods, i.e. TV's, DVD players or any other electrical entertainment appliances.
- The Recipient will ensure that the Beneficiaries are registered with utility companies and ensure that arrangements for payments are put in place (no pre pay/card accounts).
- The Recipient will provide briefings on the accommodation and health and safety issues for all new arrivals including the provision of an emergency contact point.
- The Recipient will provide briefings on the accommodation and health and safety issues for all new arrivals including the provision of an emergency contact point.
- The Recipient will ensure that Beneficiaries are provided with a welcome pack of groceries on their arrival.
- The Recipient will provide a cash/ clothing allowances for each Beneficiary of £200 – this is to ensure they have sufficient funds to live on while their claim for benefits is being processed.
- The Recipient will provide advice and assistance with registering for mainstream benefits and services and signposting to other advice and information giving agencies – this support includes: Assisting with registration for and collection of Biometric Residence Permits following arrival; Registering with local schools, English language and literacy classes; Attending local Job Centre Plus appointments for benefit assessments; Registering with a local GP; Advice around and referral to appropriate mental health services and to specialist services for victims of torture as appropriate; Providing assistance with access to employment.
- The Recipient shall put in place a support plan for each family or individual for the 12 month period of their support to facilitate their orientation into their new home/area.
- The Recipient shall put in place arrangements for the provision of English language classes which Beneficiaries should be able to access within one month of arrival. This should be provided following an assessment to determine the appropriate level of provision. This provision should be delivered by an accredited English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provider. This ESOL provision should be made available until such time as suitable mainstream provision becomes available or until 12 months after arrival (whichever is sooner). The purpose of the language tuition is to ensure that Beneficiaries are able to carry out basic transactions within the communities in which they have been placed. Throughout the period of resettlement support the Recipient will ensure interpreting services are available.

- The above services will be provided through a combination of office based appointments, drop in sessions, outreach surgeries and home visits. Requirements for Beneficiaries with special needs/assessed community care needs.
- Where Beneficiaries are identified as potentially having special needs/community care needs the Authority will ensure, as far as possible that these needs are clearly identified and communicated to the Recipient 6 weeks prior to the arrival of the Beneficiaries.
- Where special needs/community care needs are identified only after arrival in the UK, the Recipient will use its best endeavours to ensure that care is provided by the appropriate mainstream services as quickly as possible.

## Item 2.

Founding signatories of the NRW register for community-based private sponsorship

- Amer Masri
- Bishop of Barking and Diocese of Chelmsford
- Lily Cole & Kwame Ferreira
- Sir Bob Geldorf
- Liberal Judaism
- Masorti Judaism
- Methodist Church of Great Britain
- Methodist District Birmingham
- Muslim Council of Britain
- Razan Alakraa & Tim Finch
- Reform Judaism
- Yasmine Nahlawi & Amaf Yousef
- Sonia Khoury & Zein Aji

## Item 3.

Proposed organisational structure of community-based private sponsorship scheme

- Lead sponsoring organisations – institutions like national faith bodies, church dioceses, established NGOs which sign agreements with the government department running sponsorship (see below) and which both sponsor some refugees themselves and provide guidance and support to smaller sponsoring groups
- Community sponsors – community organisations, local groups etc who maybe only sponsor one refugee family a year and who raise the money and provide the person to person support but who themselves are supported by a lead sponsoring organisation
- Groups of individuals – most likely a particular family or collection of families (perhaps with back-up from friends and neighbours) sponsoring a particular refugee or refugee family, probably on a oneoff basis, and probably because they are family members or known to them. Again they register with and are supported by a lead sponsoring organisation

In addition there would probably be a national and regional infrastructure something like the following:

- Refugee Sponsorship Training programme – Probably funded by the Government and operated by Lead Sponsoring Organisations (who would jointly devise the programme) this would provide training and ongoing information on all aspects of private sponsorship through workshops, videos, webinars etc



- Joint Home Office and Lead Sponsorship Organisation Committee which would be a forum for management and an exchange of information. (Because privately sponsored refugees would be using public services in local authority areas from day one and after 12 months might become eligible for local housing etc relevant local authorities or the LGA would also have to be represented on this body so their views were taken into account)

**Table 1.**

Refugees resettled on Britain's three resettlement programmes (2014 Q1 – 2016 Q1)

Time period	VPR scheme	Gateway Protection Programme	Mandate Scheme
2014 Q1	13	53	7
2014 Q2	37	130	6
2014 Q3	40	261	0
2014 Q4	53	186	1
2015 Q1	44	176	0
2015 Q2	29	17	2
2015 Q3	36	225	7
2015 Q4	1085	234	9
2016 Q1	517	280	0

**Table 2.**

VPR programme resettlement within Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships (2015 Q4 – 2016 Q1)

RSMPs	2015 Q4	2016 Q1
East Midlands	96	0
East of England	36	18
London	24	9
North East	90	26
North West	0	0
Northern Ireland	51	0
Scotland	393	217
South East	72	41
South West	54	67
Wales	45	33
West Midlands	72	87
Yorkshire and The Humber	152	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,085</b>	<b>517</b>

Table 3.

Refugees resettled under the VPR programme by subscribed local authorities (2015 Q4 – 2016 Q1)

Local authorities	2015 Q4	2016 Q1
Aberdeen	0	30
Aberdeenshire	0	32
Angus	15	6
Argyll and Bute	35	23
Ashford	14	8
Barnet	0	6
Bath and North East Somerset	7	18
Bedford	5	0
Belfast	51	0
Birmingham	9	35
Bradford	50	2
Brighton and Hove	9	4
Bristol	0	14
Caerphilly	3	4
Calderdale	9	0
Cambridge	14	0
Camden	14	0
Ceredigion	10	0
Clackmannshire	12	0
Colchester	17	5
Cornwall	0	8
Coventry	63	42
Crawley	0	4
Dundee	14	0
East Ayrshire	8	4
East Lothian	0	9
East Renfrewshire	18	0
Edinburgh	50	3
Fife	13	5
Gateshead	50	12
Glasgow	41	10
Gloucester	10	5
Inverclyde	14	0
Islington	10	0
Kingston upon Hull	5	3
Kirklees	11	0
Leeds	50	0
Leicester	15	0

Mid Sussex	0	3
Midlothian	0	10
Moray	0	15
Neath Port Talbot	22	5
Newcastle upon Tyne	40	14
North Ayrshire	12	11
North Lanarkshire	35	8
Nottingham	81	0
Oxford	9	0
Perth and Kinross	25	0
Plymouth	10	4
Portsmouth	0	5
Renfrewshire	43	25
Scottish Borders	0	11
Sheffield	27	17
South Lanarkshire	9	0
South Somerset	0	18
Southampton	6	0
Stafford	0	10
Stevenage	0	5
Stirling	0	8
Suffolk Coastal	0	8
Swansea	0	24
Torfaen	10	0
Tunbridge Wells	9	0
West Berkshire	0	6
West Dunbartonshire	49	0
West Lothian	0	7
West Oxfordshire	10	0
Wiltshire	27	0
Winchester	6	0
Woking	9	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1085</b>	<b>517</b>

Table 4.

Refugees resettled under the VPR programme in (A) South-East (2015 Q4 – 2016 Q1) and (B) London (2015 Q4 – 2016 Q1)

**A.**

South-East	2015 Q4	2016 Q1
Ashford	14	8
Brighton and Hove	9	4
Crawley	0	4
Mid Sussex	0	3
Oxford	9	0
Portsmouth	0	5
Southampton	6	0
Tunbridge Wells	9	0
West Berkshire	0	6
West Oxfordshire	10	0
Winchester	6	0
Woking	9	11
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>41</b>

**B.**

London	2015 Q4	2016 Q1
Barnet	0	6
Camden	14	0
Islington	10	0
Kingston upon Thames	0	3

### Methods used in this report

1. Review of academic and grey literature, including Hansard.
2. Freedom of Information requests to the Home Office.
3. Semi-structured interviews with councillors, MPs and civil society organisations involved in the VPR programme.

