



Home Office

Lord Richard Harrington
Minister for Refugees



Department for Levelling Up,
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**Home Office and Department for Levelling
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Dear Chief Executive,

Resettlement Pledges for 2022/23

I am writing with regards to the UK's commitment to Afghanistan. Since I became the Minister for Refugees earlier this year I have had the pleasure of meeting and working with many of you to discuss the Ukraine situation. I continue to be hugely grateful and impressed with the work, engagement and leadership Local Authorities have played in delivering the Homes for Ukraine scheme, as you also did with those fleeing from Syria and more recently, in welcoming Afghan families to the UK.

Earlier this month I laid out in Parliament that in line with the Government's standing commitment to resettle those fleeing Afghanistan, that we will shortly be opening new pathways to resettle more of the most vulnerable people to a safe life in the UK. We are all aware of the importance of settling and integrating those arriving under this scheme as quickly as possible and accordingly, we need to increase the number of pledges and offers of accommodation.

I am determined to move both existing and new arrivals out of bridging accommodation as quickly as possible to help people integrate most successfully into their new lives in the UK. As such, I am asking all councils to again help through bringing forward the most generous number of pledges possible for placements for the year ahead. In addition to our Afghan schemes, I am committed to resettling refugees under the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and I also seek your support and pledges for UKRS. To register your pledges, I would be very grateful if you could contact your regional strategic migration partnership (details provided in the attached Annex) so we can ensure coordination at a regional level.

As you consider what you are able to pledge, I thought it might be helpful to give you a sense of the challenge over the coming year, issues I know that many councils are all too familiar with:

- There are c.12,000 Afghans in bridging hotels, with c.10,500 requiring accommodation. We require more than 2,000 additional properties to move these families out of bridging and into settled accommodation. With 68% of the population being larger families, we need over 500 4-bedroom houses. We welcome offers of closely co-located smaller properties, for larger families to be split where the makeup of the family allows.
- As of week commencing 13 June 2022, we have fewer than 100 properties available to us to match to families.
- Arrivals under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) are forecast to continue, at a rate of up to 500 per month.
- We expect 2,000 referrals from the UNHCR this year under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) pathway 2.
- We could see up to 1,500 arrivals under ACRS pathway 3.

The annex to this letter sets out some of the basic information about the schemes, including the grant funding packages, an indication of the accommodation and integration support needed and information about the matching process. More information is available from your strategic migration partnership.

I am acutely aware that this ask comes at a time when we are asking a lot of you in our support for Ukraine and at a time when the private rented sector is particularly challenging. I understand the pressures that this puts on you; the collective challenge for us is significant.

We have a number of initiatives underway to support with this challenge. We plan to make it easier for you to access the £25.5m Housing Costs fund, to help you meet the costs of housing. We are working with councils to develop the Find Your Own Accommodation Pathway (via the private rented sector) and have provided flexibility in our funding instructions, allowing councils to receive funding for families moving to properties in this way. We are reaching out to landlords, property developers and the wider private rented sector, including Rightmove, to encourage further offers of properties, either directly to local authorities or through our housing portal, which was set up to allow people to submit offers of housing support for people arriving from Afghanistan. We are also working with education establishments on the conversion of properties that we hope can be used as long-term accommodation for families.

I am keen to discuss other ways that we can collectively address this very real challenge. I hope to continue to speak to colleagues over the following weeks and months and always welcome any opportunity to discuss your thoughts and ideas. I would be grateful if you shared this letter with your local authority elected leaders.

Should you wish to speak with me directly, please do not hesitate to get in contact. I firmly believe that working together we can get there; the reward is seeing lives of thousands of people – mothers, fathers, children – transformed.

Yours sincerely,

Richard

Lord Harrington

Minister of State for Refugees