

COVID-19 – Impact on Resettlement Programme

25 March 2020

Responses to Questions raised

1. Is Resettlement going ahead as planned or will it be suspended during the projected peak of the pandemic in the UK?

All resettlement arrivals to the UK between now and the 20 April 2020 have now been cancelled. All those local authorities expecting arrivals up to this date should now have been informed/are in the process of being informed. We are keeping the position going forward under regular review. For the time being we will not be allocating any cases to new property offers received. Given the longer lead in times, arrangements for charters and bulk arrivals (planned for June and July) will continue as planned until further notice.

2. What is the expected length of delays to flights?

We are monitoring the situation closely and hope to resume resettlement arrivals when conditions allow.

3. Have screening for COVID-19 processes now changed pre-departure?

Pre-embarkation checks have been strengthened to include observations for the symptoms of infection with COVID 19 and this will continue when arrivals resume.

4. How long are LAs expected to hold properties for the postponed arrivals?

All arrivals have now been cancelled up to and including 20 April. We are in touch with the local authorities concerned regarding the properties for these arrivals. If a LA is unable to hold a property they should let us know as soon as possible.

5. What happens if LAs do not have the resources to deliver Resettlement for new arrivals?

If LAs believe they will not be able to support planned arrivals, they should withdraw the properties and we will cancel their flights.

6. Will void costs be paid for all cancelled arrivals?

Funding will be available for those incurring costs (e.g. for void and set up) for cancelled arrivals. Further information is being provided to the local authorities affected.

7. Will void costs be extended and if so, will there be a maximum?

As there is no tariff payable in these circumstances, the Home Office will accept claims for void costs for the property/ies concerned. Void costs will be payable from the date that you became liable for the rental of the property/ies in relation to this resettlement, to the date of this email, or in cases where you have already advised us that you could no longer hold the property/ies, void costs will be paid to the date of that notification.

8. Where LAs have offered a property but had not yet been allocated a case will the Home Office reimburse them for void costs already accumulated?

We are holding on to a small number of properties where a family/case has yet to be allocated. We will make a decision soon about whether to return these offers to the local authority concerned. In these cases, we will pay void costs from the date the property was offered until the date that we return the property.

9. Will LAs be reimbursed with costs incurred in furnishing the property if the family do not arrive; or storage costs to retain furniture for an alternative property?

In recognition of the fact that you may have incurred other set up costs, as detailed in the statement of outcomes for Year 1, we will cover this expenditure subject to the provision of evidence. However please bear in mind that as this is public money, where possible for example, furniture should be retained for future arrivals and efforts should be made to recoup costs before an approach to the Home Office is made. We will not cover storage costs.

10. Given the current situation it may not be possible for claims to be submitted on time. Will the payments team accept late funding claims?

Yes.

11. Where healthcare partners/providers have withdrawn support and will no longer be able to conduct initial medical assessments are there funds in place to make other provisions?

No additional funding is available. CCGs and Health Boards are required to register patients, we would not want local authorities to accept refugees for resettlement unless the appropriate infrastructure was in place.

12. How do LAs enforce government advised social distancing when managing new arrivals core integration?

Those LAs supporting refugees that have already arrived should follow the advice of the government in their interaction with those refugees.

13. Is there any flexibility from the Home Office regarding the statement of outcomes in the funding instructions due to reduced social contact advised by the government?

Those LAs supporting refugee that have already arrived should follow the advice of public health bodies in their interaction with those refugees. This will mean that support will obviously need to be delivered in a different way (e.g. by phone rather than face to face): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

14. How do LAs support families who are self-isolating?

Those LAs supporting refugees that have already arrived should follow the advice of the government in their interaction with those refugees and use other channels such as phone, email, skype and other messaging services to contact families.

15. Are there additional funds available to cover the costs of supporting families who are self-isolating?

No. Those LAs supporting refugees that have already arrived should follow the advice of the government in their interaction with those refugees.

16. With the closure of ESOL classes can families receive laptops, broadband connection and other equipment from the tariff to assist their continued learning?

This is a decision to be made by LAs about how to use the tariff payment to support the integration of resettled families.

17. When does the funding for UKRS start?

The start of the UKRS has been delayed. We will review the position on the start of the scheme when resettlement arrivals resume.

18. As the programme is funded for a year if arrivals do not begin again until June, for example, does that mean the LAs will only get funding for the months that are left out of the 12 months?

Funding will start on the date of arrival and be available for the full 5 years.

19. Where LAs/support providers have staff in place to provide support for new arrivals that do not arrive, is there funding available to help keep the staff until the families start to arrive again?

There is no provision in our funding arrangements to do this.

20. ILR applications: where refugees cannot get to legal appointments, travel to BRP appointments and/or get the documentation they need either through illness from COVID-19 or the impact of COVID-19, how will this be handled by the HO?

Current advice regarding attending biometric appointments can be found here (for applications relating to UK born children):

<https://www.gov.uk/visas-and-immigration-service-and-support-centres>

and here (for applications relating to ILR):

<https://www.ukvcas.co.uk/flash-message-detail?flashmessageId=56249>

Information will be kept regularly updated on both websites.

21. Are the HO able to continue to process ILR applications if their workforce is depleted/working from home?

ILR casework is still being progressed. However, we will provide any updates to this as soon as we are informed.

22. How is this affecting Community Sponsorship?

All in person Pre-Approval Visits and Monitoring Visits are suspended until further notice and have been replaced by the Home Office teleconferencing facility. All groups with pre booked visits have been informed of this change. All new groups who apply will be advised of these changes. Reset have also provided advice and information to groups and also have guidance available on their website.

Given the current circumstances, we are advising groups who are in the process of becoming a community sponsor but have not yet secured a property, to hold off from securing accommodation for the time being. We have suspended the allocation of families for newly approved groups and have informed groups who are eligible to claim void costs. We will keep all groups with active applications up to date as the current situation changes.