

## TERMS OF REFERENCE:

### REFUGEES WELCOME? EXPERIENCES OF NEW REFUGEES IN THE UK

#### INTRODUCTION

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Refugees has launched an inquiry into the experiences of new refugees in the UK. The inquiry will consider the experiences of refugees who have claimed asylum in the UK, as well as those of refugees who have arrived in the UK through other paths, such as resettlement. In particular, the inquiry will focus on the integration of new refugees, including success in finding employment, securing accommodation and, where appropriate, help with English language skills.

The inquiry, which was launched on 19 July 2016, is led by a cross-party committee of MPs and peers, chaired by Thangam Debbonaire MP. Secretariat support is being provided by the Refugee Council.

#### BACKGROUND TO THE INQUIRY

In 2015, 11,419 people were granted refugee status or another form of protection after applying for asylum in the United Kingdom. In addition, 1,864 people were resettled in the UK, while 3,234 people successfully appealed a negative decision on their asylum application.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the world is facing what has been called the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War. According to the UN's Refugee Agency, one in every 113 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum.<sup>2</sup>

In the face of the scale of the global refugee crisis, much focus within and outside of Parliament has been on how the UK should respond, both in terms of the number of refugees provided with protection in the UK and the support provided to countries hosting large numbers of refugees. However, less focus has been given to the experiences of new refugees in the UK. This will be the focus of this inquiry.

Refugees living in the UK will generally either have made an application for asylum after arriving in the UK and then had a decision made on that application, or have come to the UK under a resettlement scheme:

#### The Asylum System

It is not possible to claim asylum in the United Kingdom without being physically present in the country. An individual who has made an application for asylum is generally not allowed to work while their application is outstanding.<sup>3</sup> The majority of asylum seekers receive financial assistance and accommodation from the Home Office under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office Immigration Statistics, January-March 2016

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015

<http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/country/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>

<sup>3</sup> Individuals who have been waiting longer than 12 months for an initial decision on their asylum application can apply for permission to work. If they are granted permission to work, individuals may only take up an employment offer if it is on the shortage occupation list.

1999 while awaiting a decision. If the Home Office decides to grant refugee status following the consideration of an asylum application, the applicant remains eligible for Home Office support for a further 28 days.<sup>4</sup> This 28 day period is sometimes referred to as the “move-on” period, as it is during this time that newly recognised refugees are expected to “move-on” from Home Office support to other forms of financial and housing provision. This may involve moving into employment or making a claim for welfare benefits and seeking accommodation either from the private or social sectors. People granted refugee status or humanitarian protection after going through the asylum system are given five years limited leave to remain.

### **Resettled Refugees**

The UK works with the UNHCR and other agencies to resettle refugees from around the world. The UK currently runs a number of resettlement programmes including the two largest schemes; the Gateway Protection Programme, which resettles around 750 refugees from around the world each year and The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, which is due to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by the end of the current Parliament plus a further 3,000 children at risk and their families from the Middle East and North Africa.

The UNHCR identifies refugees across the world who are in need of resettlement. These are refugees for who there is no sustainable future in the region. Many of the refugees resettled to the UK will have been living in refugee camps for several years. According to their latest figures, worldwide UNHCR has identified over 1 million refugees in need of resettlement.<sup>5</sup> UNHCR works in partnership with the UK Government to decide which refugees will be resettled to the UK through the Gateway Protection Programme and the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. Refugees who come through the resettlement programmes arriving in the UK with immigration status, and so do not need to go through the asylum system. People resettled to the UK through the Gateway Protection Programme receive refugee status and indefinite leave to remain upon arrival. Those refugees resettled through the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme are granted Humanitarian Protection and five years limited leave (rather than refugee status).

### **INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The inquiry will explore the experiences of refugees who have either been recently recognised as refugees after making an application for asylum in the UK or who have been resettled to the UK. In particular, the inquiry will examine the support available, both from statutory bodies and civil society, and how this helps refugees to feel welcome and integrate in the UK. This includes, but is not limited to consideration of:

- the effectiveness of any Government refugee integration strategy
- the support available to refugees to help them gain access to the job market and other services

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<sup>4</sup> See regulation 2(2) of The Asylum Support Regulations 2000, as amended by The Asylum Support (Amendment) Regulations 2002 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/472/regulation/3/made>

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Trends 2015, <http://www.unhcr.org/559e43ac9.html>

- what impact, if any, the type of immigration leave granted to refugees in the UK has on their integration
- what differences there are in the support available to refugees who have arrived in the UK after being resettled compared to those who have gone through the UK asylum system
- what barriers, if any, there are to refugees integrating in the UK
- whether there are particular barriers to integration faced by different groups of refugees, for example by women or LGBTI refugees

The panel will also look at what measures are in place to support communities who are providing a home to refugees and what more could be done to support those communities.

### **INQUIRY PANEL**

- Thangam Debbonaire MP (Chair)
- David Burrowes MP
- Ruth Cadbury MP
- Lord Dubs
- Paul Butler, Bishop of Durham
- Baroness Lister
- Jeremy Lefroy MP
- Caroline Lucas MP
- Helen Whately MP
- Baroness Janke

### **SUBMITTING EVIDENCE**

The inquiry panel invites written evidence from a broad range of stakeholders, including government representatives and civil servants, local authorities, charities, researchers, and voluntary organisations working with refugees and refugees themselves. Evidence from people who have direct personal experience of the support systems for newly arrived and newly recognised refugees in the UK is particularly welcome.

For people who have experience of being a refugee in the UK, the panel would welcome evidence about:

- What were your experiences of being a newly resettled or newly recognised refugee in the UK?
- Did you/do you have any support from any organisations to help you access services, such as doctors' appointments or housing?
- Were there/are there any services that were easier to access? Were there/are there any services that were more difficult to access?

For organisations and people who work with/support refugees in the UK, the panel would welcome evidence regarding:

- How far does current UK policy and legislation allow newly resettled and newly recognised refugees to integrate and rebuild their lives here?
- Are there any particular barriers that newly resettled and newly recognised refugees face?
- Are there any areas of good practice where refugees are being supported successfully? Are there any differences in support in the different regions of the UK?
- Is support provided to vulnerable refugees, including those who are disabled or who have been victims of torture, adequate?
- Do particular groups of new refugees, such as LGBTI refugees or refugee women, face any specific barriers to experiencing a welcome in Britain?
- What support is available to local communities who are accommodating refugees? What more could be done to support local communities who may be impacted by refugees?

We understand that many of the organisations working with refugees are small and/or may only work on specific issues within this inquiry may be unable to provide comprehensive evidence on all points. We would welcome your views on the basis of the experiences and expertise that you have. If you work directly with a small organisation and want help with facilitating a session to gather evidence, we may be able to put you in touch with someone who can help with that. Please see the contact details below.

**The deadline for submitting written evidence is 1 October 2016.** Ideally, submissions should not be longer than 3,000 words, and previously published evidence may be submitted for this inquiry. Please be aware that submissions may be published unless exemption is requested. If an organisation or person request that their evidence be published anonymously it will be published but without naming the submitter (i.e. under the title 'anonymous').

The Refugee Council provide the secretariat to the APPG on Refugees, and evidence will be submitted via them.

#### **EMAIL**

Please send electronic evidence to [jonathan.featonby@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.featonby@refugeecouncil.org.uk). Electronic evidence should be submitted in Word (or equivalent) format.

#### **POST**

You can send a hard copy of your evidence to: Jonathan Featonby, Refugee Council, PO Box 68614, London, E15 9DQ.

#### **ORAL EVIDENCE**

The panel will hold oral evidence sessions during October and November 2016. If you would be willing to provide oral evidence, please indicate this in your written submission.

#### **INQUIRY TIMELINE**

#### **ACTIVITY**

19 July 2016	Inquiry opens with call for evidence
1 October 2016	Deadline for written evidence
October and November 2016	Oral Evidence sessions
Early 2017	Report published

### **ANY QUESTIONS?**

For updates on the progress of the inquiry please visit

[http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/refugees\\_welcome\\_inquiry](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/refugees_welcome_inquiry)

Or follow the inquiry on twitter using the twitter handle [@APPGRefugees](https://twitter.com/APPGRefugees)

For questions or to add your name to the mailing list please contact Jonathan Featonby at [jonathan.featonby@refugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.featonby@refugeecouncil.org.uk)

### **ABOUT THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON REFUGEES**

All-Party Groups are informal groups of Members of both House with a common interest in particular issues. **The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees** works to provide a forum for the discussion of issues relating to refugees, both in the UK and abroad, and to promote the welfare of refugees. Through regular meetings, cross-party discussions and inquiries, the group seeks to explore, discuss and debate any key issues connected to refugees. The group aims to be a powerful voice in the promotion of the welfare of refugees.