



18 August 2021

To: All MPs and Peers

Dear Colleague,

AFGHAN CITIZENS' RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

Today, the Prime Minister set out the Government's plans to support the resettlement of thousands of Afghans via the Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme (ACRS). As a result of this action, thousands of Afghan women, children and others most in need will be welcomed to the UK under one of the most generous resettlement schemes in our country's history. Those who have been forced to flee their home or face threats of persecution from the Taliban will be offered a route to set up home in the UK permanently.

The UK Government's ambition is for the resettlement of up to 5,000 Afghan nationals who are at risk due to the current crisis, in its first year. Priority will be given to women and girls, and religious and other minorities, who are most at risk of human rights abuses and dehumanising treatment by the Taliban.

This resettlement scheme will be kept under further review for future years, with up to a total of 20,000 in the long-term. The ambition to provide protection to thousands of people fleeing Afghanistan and the complex picture on the ground means there will be significant challenges delivering the scheme, but the Government is working at speed to address these obstacles.

The Government will work with stakeholders, including devolved administrations and local councils, to ensure that Afghans who will be rebuilding their lives in the UK have the support they need.

This new route is modelled on the successful Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, which resettled 20,000 Syrian refugees over a seven-year period from 2014 to 2021. The UK is working with international partners to develop a system to identify those most at risk and resettle them, ensuring help goes to those that need it.

The new route is separate from, and in addition to, the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which offers any current or former locally employed staff who are assessed to be under serious threat to life priority relocation to the UK. So far under this programme, 2,052 people have already been relocated to the UK, with a further 2,000 Afghan applications completed and many more being processed.

The Government is clear that the new route will not compromise on national security and any person arriving on the route will have to pass the same strict security checks as those resettled through other schemes.

The speed and flexibility of delivering the new route demonstrates the Government's New Plan for Immigration in action, which seeks to make the system fairer by protecting and supporting those in genuine need of asylum.

The Government has also already provided thousands of Afghans with asylum in the UK, and many Afghan nationals have come to the UK to work and study under the Points-Based Immigration system.

Further detail about when and how to access the ACRS, including eligibility criteria, will be available on the Home Office website in due course. The Defence Secretary is writing separately with more details on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy, and the Foreign Secretary has already written on the Consular Support for British Nationals.

With all your wishes
Priti Patel

Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary