



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA**

1 March 2017

Dear Colleague,

Re: the Dubs amendment and protecting vulnerable children

I wanted to further set out the work of the Government in this area as I know it is important to many Colleagues. This Government is committed to supporting, protecting and caring for the most vulnerable asylum-seeking and refugee children. We are doing more than ever before to support those affected by this crisis. Our resettlement programme – which will bring 23,000 vulnerable people to the UK to start new lives by the end of this Parliament, is one of the biggest in Europe.

The Government wants to resettle the most vulnerable refugees directly from the camps in and around Syria; this is how we stop traffickers and smugglers from exploiting vulnerable people and children affected by conflict and prevent them from embarking on perilous journeys across the Mediterranean. By the end of this Parliament, we will have resettled 20,000 vulnerable Syrian nationals and a further 3,000 of the most vulnerable children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa.

I have been to the refugee camps in Jordan and witnessed the fantastic work to identify those children and families most in need of resettlement to the UK and I am in no doubt that our approach is the right one. These are the most vulnerable children, not those who have made the crossing to Europe. Our work in Calais showed this; fewer than 10 of the 750 children we brought to the UK were Syrian. Crucially, our resettlement schemes help ensure that children do not become unaccompanied. They allow children to be resettled with their family members – without ever needing to make those dangerous journeys seeking to get to Europe's shores.

These safe and legal routes help combat trafficking; as does the aid that we provide in the region. As colleagues will be aware, we have pledged over £2.3 billion in aid in response to the events in Syria and the region - our largest ever humanitarian response to a single crisis, and we are one of the few EU countries to meet our commitment to spending 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income on overseas aid. We have also committed over £100m of humanitarian support to help alleviate the Mediterranean migration crisis in Europe and North Africa.

We should be proud of the very real difference that our aid spending is making to the lives of children in the conflict zone and the surrounding countries – including Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. By prioritising our resources there we are able to reach more children; to provide them with education, with healthcare, with support. Last year we were able to provide this help to over 800,000 children in Syria and the surrounding countries for the same investment that it would take to support 3,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children under 16 in the UK for one year.

In 2016 we relocated almost as many children from within Europe to the UK as the entire of the EU's relocation scheme. This was because of our efforts to support the camp clearance in Calais where we took over 750 unaccompanied children. 200 of those children from Calais were brought to the UK under the Dubs amendment and we have committed to take a further 150 'Dubs' children from France, Italy and Greece.

The Dubs amendment required us to consult Local Authorities on how many additional children they can manage. Each year 3,000 children arrive in the UK and claim asylum and we are taking approximately 2,000 – 3,000 each year through resettlements schemes. All of these children need support and protection – as do the British children in our care system. It is right that the Dubs

amendment requires us to ask Local authorities how many more children they could safely accept - and that is exactly what we did.

If Local Authorities do come forward with any further spare capacity then we welcome those places to support the unaccompanied children already being cared for in the UK and those who continue to arrive and claim asylum. Some Local authorities are currently taking a disproportionate share of this burden; they are struggling to place the children in their care and have to pay for children to be supported in other Local Authority areas. We cannot allow a situation where councils chose to prioritise certain children over others and our National Transfer Scheme is intended to support a fairer distribution of vulnerable refugee and asylum seeking children across the UK.

The Dubs amendment was never intended to be an open ended scheme. If we were to continue the scheme indefinitely then that would create an additional pull factor – children sent alone, from danger into danger, because of their belief that if they make it to Europe, then they just might get to come to the UK. It is right that we acted in this way but it is also right that we now prioritise our efforts on those children caught up in the conflict in Syria and the surrounding area - so that they can come to the UK safely and directly and with their families.

Rest assured that this Government takes its responsibilities seriously and will continue to work to protect those children most at risk.

Best wishes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by several loops and a final flourish.

Robert Goodwill MP
Minister of State for Immigration