



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Chair of the Women and Equalities Select
Committee
House of Commons
London
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Kemi Badenoch MP
*Minister of State for Equalities and Levelling
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31 March 2022

Dear Caroline,

At the recent Women and Equalities Select Committee evidence session, I agreed to write to you outlining more detailed information about integration efforts to support Afghan refugees settling into local communities from bridging hotels.

Work is underway across Government to ensure the Afghans who stood side by side with us in conflict, their families and those at highest risk who have been evacuated, are supported as they now rebuild their lives in the UK. A total of 19,742 Afghans have arrived in the UK to date. 4,200 have currently been moved into permanent accommodation. There are 12,576 people in bridging accommodation. 1,547 of those have been matched to a property.

Accommodation

The government has been working with councils to find families settled homes as quickly as possible. It is right that we take time to ensure that families are provided with suitable homes that support their integration and access to education and employment.

A £25.5m Housing Costs fund is available to local authorities to help meet the costs of housing. This includes for larger families. For example, it can be used to provide a top up payment where it is needed to meet the gap between market rent and the Local Housing Allowance, or to help meet the shortfalls which impact on a family's ability to cover their rent. This additional housing support is being provided to enable local authorities to come forward with offers of accommodation as soon as possible. We are looking at ways to make more suitable homes available in the private rented sector.

Our recently improved Housing Portal allows property owners and organisations to submit offers of housing for people who have arrived from Afghanistan. We are also engaging with landlords, letting agencies and industry bodies to promote the portal and encourage participation in the resettlement programme. In addition, we are working with Rightmove to identify potential properties available in the private rented sector. This provides councils with additional information to source appropriate properties.

Working with councils

We are encouraging all councils to work alongside us to provide accommodation and support for Afghans in need of our compassion and support to rebuild their lives in the UK.

We are conscious of pressures on the housing market across the country. That said, we think by working closely with councils we can work effectively to continue to support moves into settled accommodation.

We continue to encourage councils that have not yet made offers or those that can perhaps offer more housing to do so. This is a national effort. We are all determined to give Afghan people a warm welcome in this country. DLUHC has set up a bespoke local engagement team within the Afghan Resettlement team, with named points of contact for each region in England and in the Devolved Countries, to improve better understanding of local concerns and issues. The monthly Afghan Resettlement Local Authority Network facilitates best practice and knowledge-sharing across councils, to encourage council participation in the programme, accelerate accommodation offers and develop local integration initiatives.

Cultural orientation

We recently launched a series of cultural orientation materials for councils to share with Afghan families. The resources include advice and support on a range of topics including education, employment support, parenting, gender equality, and the law, to help give people the best start to life in the UK. We also created bespoke resources for women and girls with a specific focus on issues such as health and personal safety, women's rights and domestic violence.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kemi Badenoch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

KEMI BADENOCH MP