



Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
Alicia Kearns MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

30 March 2023

Dear Dame Diana,

Thank you for your letter of 24th January, regarding Afghans seeking sanctuary in the UK.

I am grateful for your keen interest in making sure that people we have resettled and relocated from Afghanistan and Ukraine are successfully integrated into UK life.

Please find my response to each of your questions set out below.

1. In November 2021, Minister Victoria Atkins informed the Home Affairs Committee that 4,000 individuals had either moved into a settled home or were awaiting a move-in date. Over a year later, that number now stands at 8,351. Do you expect to find settled homes for double last year's figure, 9,000 individuals, in 2023 how many new homes are becoming available each month?

We do not wish to see resettled Afghans in hotel accommodation for any longer than necessary. Our officials are continuing to work at pace to support them into homes of their own, so that they can settle into their local communities and start rebuilding their lives. This is contingent on local authorities' capacity to identify suitable accommodation.

2. How many councils have offered accommodation? Which local councils have not provided any accommodation for resettlement?

The Government continues to work with around 350 local authorities across the UK, to meet the demand for housing resettled Afghans as quickly as possible and we hope that they will continue to step-up this support.

The information requested on councils that have not provided accommodation is not in the public domain and we do not usually disclose it, as this can be detrimental to relationships and future participation by LAs.

3. What is the a) average length of stay and b) the longest length of stay for Afghans being housed in hotels, or other forms of temporary accommodation?

Based on internal management information, the average length of stay is 413 days, and the longest length of stay is 623 days for bridging hotels (at 16 March). N.B. this data has not yet been assured to the standard of official statistics.

4. On what basis does the Government make prioritisation decisions for the limited housing resource which is made available to Afghans, Ukrainians and asylum seekers from all other routes?

Housing support is provided to Afghans and Ukrainians arriving in the UK in different ways.

When we are matching resettled Afghans to properties offered by Local Authorities, we take into consideration a number of factors such as family size, age, health and educational needs, size of properties we have available and resource available to the Local Authority to support the family.

For Ukrainians, initial housing for those entering under the Homes for Ukraine scheme is normally with the sponsors, who are required to host for at least 6 months.

We have a legal obligation, under section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, to provide support to destitute asylum seekers.

All local authority areas in England, Scotland and Wales became an asylum dispersal area by default on 13 April 2022. This shift to 'Full Dispersal' will increase the number of suitable properties that can be procured for destitute asylum seekers across the UK which should reduce the number of hotels in use.

5. The Government website states that the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office is contacting applicants to confirm whether they are being referred for resettlement under Pathway 3 of the ACRS 3. How many staff are working through the 11,400 expressions of interest for Pathway 3 of the ACRS?

For all of our resettlement schemes, the Government is committed to ensuring operational teams have the resources they need to run an efficient and effective system, and we actively monitor workflows to ensure sufficient resources are in place to meet demand. The FCDO currently has over 35 UK-based staff working on Afghan relocation and resettlement. This includes approximately 20 people working to deliver Pathway 3 of the ACRS, including a dedicated team of caseworkers. The FCDO remains committed to the resettlement of eligible people in the UK under the first year of Pathway 3, and the Department's share of this effort is constantly under review.

6. How many of the 11,400 people who have expressed an interest in ACRS Pathway 3 have not received any response? What is the average waiting time for an initial response?

Under Pathway 3 of the ACRS, up to 1,500 eligible at-risk British Council and GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni will be offered resettlement in the first year. The FCDO received over 11,400 Expressions of Interest (EOI) during the online window in summer 2022. The FCDO is carefully assessing eligibility, notifying people of the outcome, sending names to the Home Office for initial security checks and providing advice on next steps. Some groups have been prioritised because the role they performed or the project they worked on mean they are particularly at risk, or because there are exceptionally compelling circumstances.

We are pleased to have now allocated over 1,000 of the 1,500 available places on Pathway 3 in its first year, subject to individuals passing security checks. The FCDO's dedicated caseworking team is continuing to work at pace to allocate the remaining places

under Pathway 3, and notify those who have not yet received a response to their EOI as quickly as they can. We will update Parliament once we have completed processing all EOIs, have notified all those who submitted EOIs of the outcome and have assured data to share.

7. How many Afghans have been brought to the UK via the UNHCR under ACRS Pathway 2? How do you expect this number to change in the next 6- months?

We are pleased to have now welcomed the first arrivals to the UK under ACRS Pathway 2. We anticipate receiving up to 2,000 referrals of refugees, from UNHCR, during the first year of this pathway, although this number will be kept under review. We will continue to receive UNHCR referrals to the scheme in coming years. Statistics on arrivals will continue to be published as part of the immigration statistics. The next publication is on 25th May.

8. The Government has announced a new £500 million fund for councils in England to acquire housing stock for those fleeing conflict (including from Ukraine and Afghanistan) which is expected to provide up to 4,000 homes by 2024. On what criteria will these homes be allocated? Will this funding be used to address the shortage ?

The new £500 million Local Authority Housing Fund will provide capital funding directly to English councils in areas that are facing the most significant housing pressures as a result of recent Ukrainian arrivals and is expected to provide up to 4,000 homes by 2024, including up to 500 homes for Afghan families who are currently in bridging hotels. This fund will allow councils to address immediate homelessness pressures as well as build a sustainable stock of affordable housing for local communities.

Those eligible for the housing are those who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or who live in unsuitable temporary / bridging accommodation. They must also be on one of the following schemes:

- Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (including eligible British Nationals under this scheme) (ACRS)
- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)
- Ukraine Family Scheme (UFS)
- Homes for Ukraine (HFU)
- Ukraine Extension Scheme (UES)

It will be up to local authorities to decide how to deliver and manage this fund locally, including how to allocate homes.

This fund aims to create a lasting supply of affordable housing for the general population. We expect this stock to become available to support wider local authority general housing and homelessness responsibilities, after the immediate needs of eligible cohorts have been addressed.

This fund in isolation will not fully address the shortage of homes required for Ukrainian and Afghan families. However, we will continue to work closely with local authorities, to make sure that appropriate long-term accommodation continues to be stood-up, as well as engaging with landlords, property developers and the wider private rented sector to encourage further offers of homes.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write to me.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Suella Braverman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Rt Hon Suella Braverman KC MP