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Relocation of Unaccompanied Children from Europe

Thank you for contacting me about the relocation of unaccompanied children from Europe.

Britain has a proud record of helping the most vulnerable children who are fleeing conflict and danger, and I know the Government is committed to upholding this fine tradition. That is why its response to the migrant crisis has been to establish resettlement schemes from the refugee camps in the region. This allows support to be targeted to the most vulnerable people affected by the crisis, while not creating a strong incentive for refugees to undertake the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean. The UK has granted asylum or another form of leave to over 9,000 children in the past year, and over 42,000 since 2010.

In full accordance with section 67 of the Immigration Act, the Government has announced it will transfer the specified number of 480 children, who reasonably meet the intention and spirit behind the provision. This number includes over 200 children already transferred under section 67 from France. It does not however include children transferred to UK where they have close family here.

The Dubs amendment was never meant to be an open ended scheme. The legislation obliged the Government to consult local authorities on their capacity to care for and support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children before arriving at this number. Local authorities informed the Government that they had capacity for around 530 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children until the end of this financial year. Similarly the Government estimated that at least 50 of the family reunion cases transferred from France as part of the Calais clearance will require a local authority placement in cases where the family reunion does not work out.

The UK will continue to work closely with our European partners to meet its obligations under the Dublin regulation and accept responsibility for processing asylum claims where the UK is determined to be the responsible member state, ensuring that it is in their best interests to come here. But if the Dubs scheme is continued indefinitely the Government would be creating a semi-permanent scheme that would create an additional pull factor that will lead to more children taking the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean and put more children in the hands of unscrupulous people traffickers.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP