



**Craig Whittaker MP**

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## **Refugees (Family Reunion)**

Thank you for contacting me about the EU Withdrawal Bill and New Clause 53.

I know that the Government strongly supports the principle of family unity, and there are already legal routes for families to be reunited safely. Currently, family reunion policy allows a spouse or partner and children under the age of 18 of those granted protection in the UK to join them in the United Kingdom, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. Under this policy, over 24,000 family reunion visas have been granted over the last five years. They will remain in force when the UK leaves the European Union and are not affected by Brexit. Furthermore, children recognised by UNHCR as refugees can join close family members here in the UK through the Mandate resettlement scheme. In addition, the Immigration Rules provide for family reunion and allow extended family members to sponsor children where there are serious and compelling circumstances.

Unaccompanied children cannot make applications for family reunification under the Dublin Regulation. The Dublin Regulation is a mechanism to determine the Member State responsible for the consideration of an asylum claim; it is not, and never has been, a family reunification route in itself. The Immigration Rules are entirely separate from the Dublin Regulation, and will remain in force when the UK leaves the European Union.

On the issue of the future of the Dublin Regulation, I do expect cooperation on asylum and migration with our European partners to continue after the UK leaves the EU, and I will follow discussions on the exact nature of this cooperation in the negotiations with great interest.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP