



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

13th July 2018

Jew Constituent,

RE: RELOCATION OF UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN FROM EUROPE.

Thank you for contacting me recently about the relocation of unaccompanied children from Europe; your comments upon which I read with great interest.

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 the 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 was 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.

While the primary responsibility for unaccompanied children in Europe lies with the State in which they are present, an expert has been seconded to Greece in addition to the long-standing secondee in Italy to support efforts to identify children who may qualify for transfer to the UK. A £10 million Refugee Children Fund has been established for Europe to support the needs of vulnerable refugee and migrant children arriving. Since October 2015, the Department for International Development has been supporting child refugees in Greece with assistance, such as food, clean water, and safe shelter, as well as access to protection and psychosocial care, and in Italy, the Department has provided assistance to unaccompanied minors and supported the deployment of child protection experts.



The issue of child refugees is one I have previously raised in the House of Commons. During a recent debate on refugees and human rights, I highlighted the fact that we should as part of our holistic approach, where appropriate, bring the most vulnerable of refugees, particularly children, to the United Kingdom, which is exactly what we have done, and all of this ties in with the remarkable charitable effort we have seen in this country – examples of which we have seen in every constituency around the country – including my own, such as in Oundle, and for which we are all rightly proud. As a country, we have a long history of standing up, being counted and doing the right thing. I believe that our response to this crisis lives up to the expectations and obligations upon us.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

with best wishes

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**