



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT: THE FACTS

Since David Cameron announced that the [UK will be resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees](#) over the next 5 years, just 8,500 have been accepted under the UNHCR scheme. LD4SOS has been asked lots of questions. What is refugee resettlement? How does it work? Who are the people coming to the UK? What happens when they get here?

Refugees: the global context

The world is facing the greatest global refugee crisis since the Second World War.

By the end of 2015, over 65 million people had been forced to leave their homes. Some 22 million people were refugees.

The biggest refugee producing countries (55%) are Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan. The majority of the world's refugees, over 80%, are hosted by developing countries with Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon being the current top recipients of refugees – each hosting over a million. There are an estimated **118,995 refugees** living in the UK. That's just **0.18 per cent** of the total population (65.1 million people). There are more facts and figures here <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/59364f887>

What is refugee resettlement?

Refugees are fleeing persecution, violence and conflict and are often unable to travel far beyond the borders of their home country. They often live in refugee camps for years; many children have lived their entire lives in such camps. One of the ways in which the UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR) helps such refugees is to offer resettlement to another country.

Refugee resettlement involves the selection and transfer of refugees from a country in which they have sought protection – usually somewhere with a large number of refugees who are living in camps - to a third country which has agreed to admit them as refugees and where they can rebuild their lives.

Who is resettled?

Refugees are resettled if their life is at risk or they have specific additional needs and there is no hope of them ever returning home. Many refugees who are resettled are survivors of torture or other forms of violence.

For the past five years, the main beneficiaries of resettlement have been refugees from Myanmar, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Bhutan.

In 2013, the UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR) issued a specific appeal for resettlement places for Syrian refugees as the conflict in Syria escalated.

Where are people resettled?

Sadly, only a small number of countries accept resettled refugees. The United States is the world's top resettlement country; it was accepting around 70,000 refugees a year, while Australia and Canada also take sizeable numbers of refugees through resettlement programs.

Unfortunately, Europe generally accepts very few refugees for resettlement.

How many refugees are resettled in Britain?

Since 2004, Britain has been resettling around 750 refugees every year through the Gateway Protection Programme which helps resettle refugees from all over the world.

The first group of refugees to arrive for resettlement under the Gateway Programme was a group of Liberian refugees, who arrived in Sheffield on 19 March 2004. Since then, the UK has offered places via this programme to people fleeing states well known for conflict or poor human rights records, including Somalia, Myanmar, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

However, during times of crisis, Britain has operated specific resettlement programmes to help offer protection to people on a larger scale; giving homes to thousands of Vietnamese refugees, Ugandan Asians and refugees fleeing the Balkans' wars.

Following a campaign led by the Refugee Council and considerable public pressure, the Government announced in January 2014 that it would set up a special resettlement scheme to help Syrian refugees. For the first 18 months of its operation, this scheme was pitifully small in scale, resettling just over 200 refugees.

In September 2015, the Prime Minister announced the scheme would be significantly expanded to resettle 20,000 refugees by 2020.

How does resettlement in Britain work?

The UN's Refugee Agency UNHCR identifies refugees in need of resettlement in the region. They then submit these candidates to the British Government who decide which cases to accept.

Refugees who are to be resettled to Britain receive health assessments and cultural orientations prior to arrival and the International Organisation for Migration ensures their safe arrival into Britain.

A great deal of planning happens before resettled refugees arrive in Britain; local councils, service providers and charities like the Refugee Council all work together to ensure that everything is in place to ensure a smooth transition.

Resettled refugees are always met at the airport by organisations such as the Refugee Council. They are taken to their new homes – usually private lets – and they are helped to adapt to their new surroundings.

Organisations like the Refugee Council support refugees throughout their first year in the country: we offer personalised support and help people access the job market, education, healthcare and mainstream services.

Once they are settled, resettled refugees are able to begin the process of rebuilding their lives in safety; richly contributing to our country in a variety of ways. Refugees who have been resettled in Britain include people who have gone on to work in our NHS, teach our children, and open their own businesses.

How long do resettled refugees stay?

Refugees being resettled through Britain's Gateway programme arrive with indefinite leave to remain. That means they can stay forever, in acknowledgment that the only reason they are coming to the UK is because the UN's Refugee Agency has decided it's not safe for them to keep living in a refugee camp and there is no hope of them ever returning home.

Syrian refugees arriving through the Government's Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme are granted five years' Humanitarian Protection. Unlike refugees from other countries who are resettled through the Gateway Programme, Syrians have been displaced for a relatively short period of time and the British Government hopes that in the future they will be able to return to Syria.

Of course, almost all refugees dream of going home one day when it's safe to do so.

What rights do resettled refugees have?

All refugees, including those who are resettled through both the Gateway Protection Programme and the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Relocation Scheme are able to work and access mainstream services. However, Humanitarian Protection means the Syrians resettled here have slightly different entitlements e.g. to higher education. Additionally, unless they become British citizens, refugees are not able to vote.

How is resettlement different to asylum?

Fundamentally, there is little difference between resettled refugees and refugees who are granted asylum: they are often fleeing exactly the same conflicts, exactly the same persecution though their journeys to safety are very different.

Refugee resettlement and different countries' asylum systems are separate processes.

Refugees who are resettled are usually identified as refugees in camps near to their country of origin, before being flown to the country where they are being resettled. In Britain, people who are resettled here are already recognised as refugees prior to their arrival in the country, and they do not go through the asylum system.

Under international law, anyone has the ability to claim asylum in Britain. However, as with most other European countries, a refugee has to have already arrived in Britain before they are able to make a claim for asylum.

Britain offers no 'asylum visa' – this means there are no safe, legal ways for a refugee to reach Britain in order to claim asylum. Unlike resettled refugees, refugees who claim asylum in Britain have often undertaken a perilous journey at the hands of smugglers before arriving here.

Britain's asylum system is tough and complex and refugee protection is only granted to asylum seekers who can show the Government that they have a well founded fear of persecution in their home country. There are many flaws in the Government's decision making process, and many people have to appeal to the courts in order to be recognised as refugees. [You can read more about the asylum system and how it works here.](#) People who are granted asylum receive five years' refugee protection, after which they can apply for indefinite leave to remain.

The other main difference between refugees who are resettled here and refugees who are granted asylum is the support they receive once they have been recognised as a refugee.

As you have read, resettled refugees are provided with housing and receive a year of specialist support to help them access the job market and mainstream services.

None of this support is available for refugees who have been granted asylum and they are left to fend for themselves. Many newly granted refugees find themselves homeless and destitute precisely at the point when the British Government accepts they need protection. [Read more about the problems new refugees face here.](#)

What is Community Sponsorship ?

The [Syrian community sponsorship scheme](#) was launched earlier this year, enabling community groups including charities and faith groups to take on the role of supporting resettled refugees in the UK. Sponsors are responsible for supporting the resettled family integrate into their life in the UK. They are responsible for supporting the resettled family from their moment of arrival: they meet them at the airport, provide housing, arrange English language tuition, help them access medical and social services and support them towards employment and self-sufficiency. Sponsoring organisations must have status as either a registered charity or community interest company, the consent of the local authority in which they wish to operate, and a comprehensive plan for resettlement.

Although sponsored refugees are eligible for state benefits, sponsors must have ring-fenced funds of £9,000 and access to housing for two years in order to apply for the scheme.

What more could Britain be doing?

Britain has a proud tradition of protecting refugees but given the scale of the global refugee crisis facing the world, we could be doing much more to help.

[Read about some of the things we're calling for Britain to do here.](#) (Refugee Council briefing 2015)

Updates September 2017, but please note some of the figures relate to reports in 2015 and 2016.