



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities



Home Office

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Dear colleagues,

### **Afghan resettlement update and request for additional offers of support**

We wrote to you on 8 December 2021 with an update on the policy for British nationals and funding instructions. We are grateful for your feedback and positive engagement with us. We continue to make progress and would like to express our thanks to all councils for your hard work and the vital role you continue to play in resettling families across the UK. We are grateful for the 1491 properties (as of 25 March) that have already been offered by councils to support the resettlement and relocation of Afghan citizens and their families.

We appreciate the additional pressures facing councils from the devastating events in Ukraine, but we are also committed to continue fully supporting the resettlement of Afghan citizens and their families. We are therefore now making a further call for your support for the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). We would also like to use this opportunity to give you a further update on accommodation pledges, the development of our housing offers policy, the integrated tariff and Welcome Resources.

### **Offers of support for Afghan families and accommodation pledges**

We are extremely grateful for the pledges of accommodation that have already been made by councils. We recognise that many of these offers were made under ARAP. Whilst councils will receive the same funding package for the ARAP and ACRS schemes and for British nationals, we are aware that many councils need to agree additional support offers for the schemes in advance with council leaders to secure future commitment and resources.

There remains a considerable number of people in bridging accommodation, as well as people continuing to arrive from third countries to resettle in the UK. The matching process is improving, and there are currently fewer than 150 properties available to us for matching to families in bridging accommodation, meaning there is an urgent need for more housing.

We remain committed to finding settled homes for Afghan arrivals. Therefore, we would like to request formally your support for Afghan families and individuals being resettled under ACRS and for British nationals as well as ARAP (where not already provided), and for more offers of housing, where you can do so.

The ACRS was formally opened on 6 January 2022 and will provide up to 20,000 Afghan citizens with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK in the coming years. The first to be resettled under the ACRS will be those already evacuated and in the UK (approximately 6,500 people). They include women's rights activists, journalists, and prosecutors, as well as the Afghan families of British nationals. The success of Operation Pitting and our continuing evacuation efforts means we have been able to increase the number of people who can resettle in its first year, from 5,000 to 7,500.

The commitment to resettle 20,000 people under the ACRS is in addition to ARAP and to evacuated British nationals. More information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>

There is a real shortage now of properties of all sizes. We require a significant increase in the rate of larger properties being offered, particularly 4, 5 and 6 beds. We would also ask you to consider offering smaller properties which are near one another, as they may be offered to extended families.

We are asking that accommodation offers are of a suitable standard. This means property offers that are:

- in a condition that meets all relevant health and safety requirements (including having current gas and electricity safety checks)
- located within a reasonable distance of, and with access to, essential services
- In matching households to accommodation, we will be seeking to ensure that offers are the appropriate size and affordable for the household, considering the financial resource available to them, including any government support for which they are eligible
- can be adapted for any access needs of family members with a disability that require such adaptation once a match has been confirmed.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has offered a total of 550 service family accommodation (SFA) properties for ARAP families. Although most of them are 2- and 3-beds, they have also offered 67 4-bed properties in some areas. The MoD can be flexible on the length of the leases, and we would encourage councils to continue to engage with the MoD to secure the use of SFA properties.

In summary, we are asking for more pledges for ACRS and British nationals, and we are ideally looking for offers of properties that can be used across all the family types (ACRS, British nationals and ARAP).

## **Matching policy**

We have listened to councils' feedback about the matching process. Since we last wrote we have:

- significantly increased capacity within the matching team
- set up local matching pilots in a small number of regions. These are currently being evaluated; and

- are exploring options to make more homes available through the private rented sector.

We are continuing to make further improvements to the matching process. We have increased the family triage process so that we are confident we have all the information needed about a family's circumstances to enable us to make an appropriate offer of accommodation.

We will continue to work closely with councils to match families to properties you offer and welcome your involvement in that process, particularly if you identify families in local bridging who are suitable for the properties you have available.

However, we recognise that there are a growing number of households refusing accommodation offers for a range of reasons. Reasons for refusal are often complex but include issues such as: families wanting to live in a specific location where they have a connection; limited knowledge of the accommodation and location offered; or the accommodation offer not meeting needs.

Alongside this, we also acknowledge the importance of providing clear information to families on the housing process so that families are making informed decisions at the point of refusal.

In response, we are considering a change in the matching process to address the number of refusals while seeking to minimise new pressures elsewhere in the system, e.g., homelessness and funding. This will include building on ongoing work to inform and educate families about the matching process in advance and provide context for UK housing and different areas of the country (via the Welcome Resources recently shared with councils).

We will write with more detail on this new approach ahead of implementation. In developing the policy, we have talked through the proposed change with councils, strategic migration partners and devolved governments to understand where there might be unintended pressures, how best to mitigate and ensure we are providing the right information to families so that the process is well understood.

### **Integrated Tariff**

A number of councils provided feedback that they would welcome the ability to use the integrated support tariff more flexibly, for private rented sector procurement and start-up costs. This has been agreed. Flexible use of the funding to enable private rented sector procurement may include but is not limited to: deposits; landlord incentives; letting fees; and necessary furnishings.

### **Welcome Resources**

In February, we shared Welcome Resources designed for supporting arrivals to increase their cultural awareness through accessing the documents directly or through 'workshops.' We encourage councils to continue to share their feedback on the resources and the delivery of the sessions themselves. We will also invite councils to share good practice through the Afghan Resettlement Local Authority Network (ARLAN).

As a reminder, the resources can be accessed via Knowledge Hub. Councils will need to register and request membership of the Welcome Workshop Resources 'group.' A

framework document and Q&A pack for councils is also available in the 'supporting documents' folder.

A Welcome Pack will be sent out to families shortly.

Resources: <https://khub.net/web/welcome-workshops-resources>

If you have any questions, please contact your local engagement lead from the Home Office or the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Once again, thank you for your continued patience, engagement, and commitment to the resettlement schemes.

Yours sincerely,



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