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02 JUL 2019

Dear Jo

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 June to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about reuniting refugee families. I am replying as the Minister of State for Immigration.

This Government's family reunion policy provides a safe and legal route to bring families together. This allows a partner and children under 18 of those granted protection in the UK to join them here, if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. Under this policy, we have granted visas to over 26,000 partners and children of those granted protection in the UK in the last five years – that is over 5,000 a year.

We are concerned that allowing children to sponsor close family would create incentives for more children to be encouraged, or even forced, to leave their family and risk hazardous journeys to the UK in order to sponsor relatives at a later date. This plays into the hands of criminal gangs who exploit vulnerable people and goes against our safeguarding responsibilities.

Refugees can sponsor adult dependent relatives living overseas to join them where, due to age, illness or disability, that person requires long-term personal care that can only be provided by relatives in the UK.

There are separate provisions in the Rules to allow extended family to sponsor children to come here where there are serious and compelling circumstances.

Our policy also makes clear that there is discretion to grant visas outside the Immigration Rules, which caters for extended family members in exceptional circumstances – including young adult sons or daughters who are dependent on family here and living in dangerous situations.

I hope that this clarifies the Government's position and addresses your constituents' concerns.

*Your ever
Caroline*

**Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Minister of State for Immigration**