



Rachel Griffiths, Richard Williams and Rev. Michael John
Citizens UK
136 Cavell Street
London
E1 2JA

Dear Rachel, Richard and Rev. Michael,

Thank you for your joint letter of 12 October 2020 about the resumption of refugee resettlement and community sponsorship. I am replying as the Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying.

Resumption of resettlement and community sponsorship

Over the past few months, my officials and I have been working closely with our domestic and international stakeholders on plans to safely resume UK resettlements and the community sponsorship scheme against the backdrop of unprecedented restrictions and pressures caused by the pandemic.

As a result of this work, I am delighted to confirm that, as announced by Baroness Williams of Trafford in the House of Lords on 9 November, the UK will shortly restart UK resettlements to fulfil our commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees affected by the conflict in Syria under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS).

Due to the lead times for refugee arrivals – particularly the time required to secure necessary exit permissions from international authorities – it is likely that we will see the majority of these arrivals early in the new year.

Following Baroness Williams' announcement, the Deputy Directors for Resettlement wrote to Strategic Migration Partnerships and the Resettlement Strategic Engagement Group about our plans to resume resettlement activity and my officials operating the community sponsorship scheme are contacting sponsor groups in light of this positive development. We are also encouraging sponsor groups to visit the Reset website at www.resetuk.org, which will provide the latest information and further guidance.

The future of funding for resettlement activity beyond the VPRS, including the operation of the community sponsorship scheme, will be considered as part of the upcoming spending review.

Rental costs in exceptional cases

We have carefully considered your request that we relax the restriction on reimbursement of rental costs for groups who had been approved to resettle a family.

Given the unavoidable ongoing delays to restarting resettlement we have decided, exceptionally, to allow groups who have been fully approved, and acquired a property, but because of the pandemic have not been able to welcome a family, to make a claim for rental void costs.

We will consider these claims carefully on a case-by-case basis depending on the individual circumstances and the evidence supplied by each group, but there is no guarantee that costs will be paid.

Refugees Still Welcome Assembly

I am grateful for the kind invitation to attend this event by Zoom, which I gladly accept. My officials have already contacted Jonathan under separate cover to arrange the finer details and logistics.

I look forward to participating in what sounds to be a vibrant celebration of the UK's collective efforts to date in safeguarding some of the world's most vulnerable people.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Philp', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Philp MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Immigration Compliance and the Courts