



Ms Rachel Griffiths, Mr Richard Williams and Reverend Michael John
Citizens UK
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By email to jonathan.cox@citizensuk.org

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13 August 2020

Dear Ms Griffiths, Mr Williams and Reverend John,

Thank you for your joint letter of 23 July about the resumption of refugee resettlement and community sponsorship.

May I express my sincere gratitude to the Community Sponsorship Groups listed in your letter for the significant passion, energy and care they have demonstrated in welcoming vulnerable refugee families into their communities through the Community Sponsorship scheme. It is heartening to know that in spite of the challenging backdrop of the worldwide pandemic, the passion and desire to create future placements for refugee families continues unabated.

As I am sure you will understand, due to the current worldwide restrictions it is not possible to undertake resettlement activity at this time. However, my officials are working on detailed plans to recommence resettlement arrivals as soon as it is safe and operationally viable to do so.

The resumption of resettlement is dependent on a number of factors including:

- restarting flights from refugee host countries
- the lifting of restrictions imposed by the governments of those countries and in the UK
- the ability of our international partners to operate
- the reopening of the UK's visa application centres
- local authority and central government capacity in light of COVID-19; and
- recovery of the asylum system from the impact of COVID-19.

Domestically, both local authorities and community sponsors also need to be able – and willing – to receive resettled refugees and have in place suitable measures compliant with government health advice to protect the wellbeing of refugees and their local communities. I am heartened that your letter shows the ability and willingness of community groups to continue to take on this role.

Due to these intricate and complex dependencies, coupled with the continuing uncertainty surrounding future international and domestic coronavirus restrictions, I would not want to prematurely raise expectations by committing to a restart date at this time, which we later have to revise. I appreciate that this makes planning for future arrivals challenging and I am sympathetic to the issues you detail in your letter. However, notwithstanding this, I will say that it is my sincere hope that we will be able to resume resettlement activity in the weeks and months ahead.

My officials and I continue to closely monitor the situation and remain in regular dialogue with our international and domestic stakeholders.

We are proud to hold a global leadership role in resettlement and I am absolutely clear that we will resume the delivery of our humanitarian commitments as soon as circumstances allow.

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

Chris Philp MP