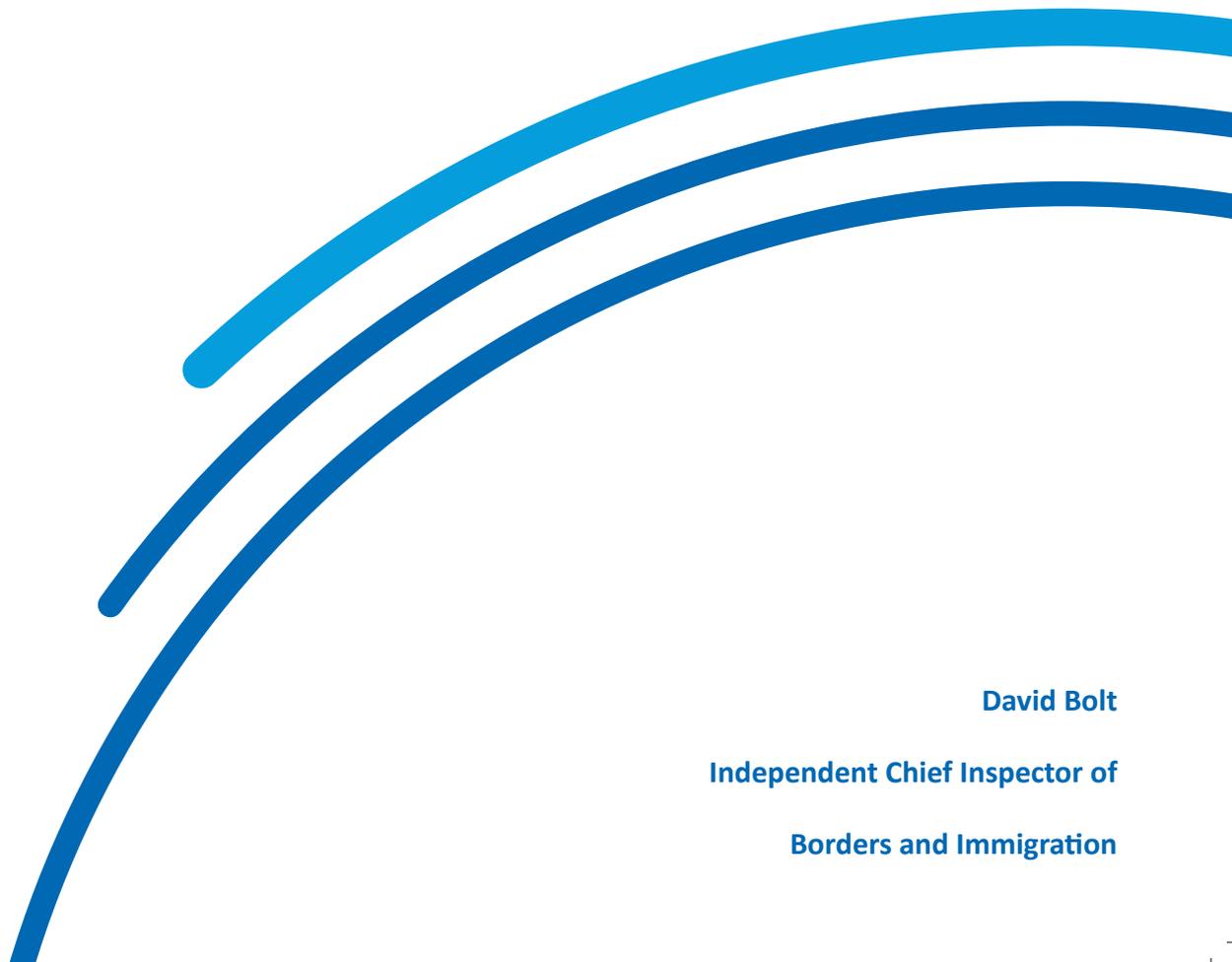




# An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme

August 2017 – January 2018



David Bolt

Independent Chief Inspector of  
Borders and Immigration



# **An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme**

**August 2017 – January 2018**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 50 (2) of the UK Borders Act 2007

May 2018



© Crown copyright 2018

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

Independent Chief Inspector  
of Borders and Immigration,  
5th Floor, Globe House,  
89 Eccleston Square,  
London, SW1V 1PN  
United Kingdom

ISBN 978-1-5286-0347-8  
CCS0418492496 05/18

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by the APS Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

## **Our purpose**

To help improve the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office's border and immigration functions through unfettered, impartial and evidence-based inspection.

All Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration inspection reports can be found at [www.gov.uk/ICIBI](http://www.gov.uk/ICIBI)

**Email us:** [chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:chiefinspector@icinspector.gsi.gov.uk)

**Write to us:** Independent Chief Inspector  
of Borders and Immigration  
5th Floor, Globe House  
89 Eccleston Square  
London, SW1V 1PN  
United Kingdom



# Contents

Foreword	2
1. Purpose and scope	3
2. Methodology	4
3. Summary of conclusions	6
4. Recommendations	12
5. Background	14
6. Inspection findings – delivering “the 20,000”	21
7. Inspection findings – resettling “the most vulnerable”	40
8. Inspection findings – integration	50
Annex A: Criteria used in this inspection	63
Annex B: Role and remit of the Independent Chief Inspector	64
Acknowledgements	66

# Foreword

In September 2015, the Prime Minister committed the UK to resettling 20,000 refugees from the conflict in Syria by 2020. The Department for International Development (DfID), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)<sup>1</sup> and the Home Office became jointly responsible for meeting this commitment, with the Home Office retaining primary responsibility for the policy and operational delivery of the scheme.

The 20,000 target represented a huge increase in resettlements and required a major and rapid upscaling of effort from all those involved, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as the key partner agencies on the ground, and UK local authorities and their integration delivery partners. Everyone deserves enormous credit for what they have managed to achieve to date, and in particular for the resettlement of over half of the target 20,000 refugees by the end of 2017.

This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (the Scheme), looking at the dependencies and risks to successful delivery of the 20,000 target. It found that the processes on which the Scheme relied were essentially effective. Identification of “the most vulnerable” refugees was delegated to UNHCR; consideration of referrals and matching of refugees to firm offers of accommodation and support was managed by the Home Office; the relocation of refugees to the UK was organised by IOM; and their reception, accommodation and initial support was led by the receiving local authorities. As a result, there is every reason to believe that the Scheme will achieve its 20,000 target by the government’s deadline of May 2020.

Given that the Scheme is delivering what it set out to achieve, it may seem ‘nit-picking’ to focus on where it could do better. Nonetheless, subject to making necessary improvements to its data collection and management, the Home Office could do more to analyse and evaluate the various stages of the resettlement process, with a view to sharing ‘best practice’ and achieving greater consistency of treatment and outcomes. In particular, while it may be too soon to assess whether those already resettled via the Scheme have been successfully integrated in the UK, and while the Home Office is taking sensible steps to study this over the longer-term, there may be lessons for the pre-departure period and first years in the UK that if they were identified sooner could benefit those still in the early stages of the process.

Furthermore, while delivering the 20,000 on schedule is the Home Office’s overriding objective, it needs to be alive to the effects on others of gearing its processes to ensure it can achieve this, especially on those refugees told they have been selected for resettlement but who have to wait months for further news. The fact that UK resettlement process is quick by comparison to other international schemes does not fully answer this concern.

The report makes 7 recommendations. It was sent to the Home Secretary on 7 March 2018.

**David Bolt**

**Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration**

---

<sup>1</sup> Formerly the Department for Communities and Local Government.

# 1. Purpose and scope

- 1.1 This inspection examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme ('the Scheme'), specifically:
  - the progress made towards delivering the government's target of resettling 20,000 refugees in the UK by 2020
  - the processes for selecting refugees for resettlement via the Scheme, and
  - efforts to integrate refugees prior to their departure for the UK and once they have been resettled
- 1.2 The inspection looked at the dependencies and risks to the successful delivery of the 20,000 target, focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of the accommodation matching process and the Home Office's work with local authorities, directly and through Strategic Management Partnerships, plus the use made to date of the Community Sponsorship Scheme.
- 1.3 The inspection also looked at how the Scheme's commitment to resettle "the most vulnerable" was being met, focusing on the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 'host' countries to identify and refer refugees to the Home Office, the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) role in health screening, and the Home Office's involvement in these processes and in accepting refugees for resettlement.
- 1.4 Under integration, the inspection looked at the 'cultural orientation' work done by IOM on behalf of the Home Office pre-departure, and at the work done by local authorities and their delivery partners after the refugees have arrived in the UK. It also looked at what the Home Office had done to assist with and evaluate these integration efforts.
- 1.5 The following topics were excluded from scope:
  - direct comparison with other international resettlement schemes: the National Audit Office report<sup>2</sup> included a comparison with schemes in Germany and Canada
  - Other resettlement schemes such as Mandate, Gateway and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> National Audit Office, 'the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme', accessed at

<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Syrian-Vulnerable-Persons-Resettlement-programme.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Gateway Protection Programme aims to resettle up to 750 refugees referred by UNHCR each year. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gateway-protection-programme-information-for-organisations/gateway-protection-programme>; Mandate Refugee Scheme resettles refugees (in the low 10's each year) from around the world who have a close family tie in the UK who can accommodate them; VCRS was launched on 21 April 2016 to resettle 3,000 vulnerable children and their families from the Middle East and North Africa by 2020. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-scheme-launched-to-resettle-children-at-risk>

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Inspectors:

- held a stakeholder meeting on 17 August 2017, attended by 8 third sector organisations to assist with the scoping of the inspection
- called for written submissions from stakeholders and invited local authorities (LAs) and Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) to complete an online survey
- researched and reviewed open-source information and Home Office guidance, internal documents, and data, relating to the Scheme
- visited Home Office teams in Sheffield and Croydon for a walkthrough of casework, allocations, arrivals, payments and video interviews processes<sup>4</sup>
- observed a charter flight arrival of 60 refugees at Birmingham International Airport in October 2017, including their collection by 8 local authorities
- examined 154 Home Office case records:
  - 33 cases where the UNHCR resettlement referral had been rejected by the Home Office on the grounds that the eligibility criteria had not been met
  - 50 cases where the referral was withdrawn
  - 71 cases that had remained in the work in progress (WiP) queue for 6 months or more and did not have a confirmed flight<sup>5</sup>
- interviewed Home Office managers and staff involved with the Scheme
- visited local authorities, SMPs and integration delivery partners:
  - 1 in England and 1 in Scotland with experience of immigration and resettling refugees
  - 1 in England with limited experience of immigration and no previous involvement in resettling refugees
- interviewed 9 refugees who had been resettled in the UK via the Scheme, 3 in each of the local authority areas visited by inspectors
- visited Amman, Jordan to observe the selection, referral, and pre-arrival 'cultural orientation' processes, including:
  - visits to the UNHCR refugee facility to interview staff and observe resettlement interviews and the refugee registration process
  - meetings with senior representatives at UNHCR's Middle East and North Africa (MENA) headquarters
  - visits to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) facility used for cultural

---

<sup>4</sup> Inspectors observed 2 video interviews: 1 in Sheffield on 7 September 2017, and another in Amman on 8 November 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Case records selected from those created between 7 September 2015 and 29 August 2017.

orientation courses and to the IOM medical clinic, and interviews with managers and staff with flight logistics, cultural orientation and Migration Health Assessments (MHA)

- a visit to the UNHCR refugee camp at Za'atari in northern Jordan and to meet a refugee family living in an urban dwelling in Amman
- meetings with the UK's Refugee Resettlement Coordinator, based at the British Embassy, and with Australian and Canadian officials responsible for their respective resettlement schemes

## 3. Summary of conclusions

- 3.1 Between January 2014 and September 2015, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme ('the Scheme') resettled 239 refugees. In the next 3½ months, following the Prime Minister's commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees by 2020 and the first 1,000 of these by Christmas 2015, the Scheme resettled a further 1,085 individuals.
- 3.2 This was a considerable achievement. But, it required the Home Office to operate at a pace that was not sustainable, and in early 2016 the priority shifted to consolidating the learning and putting processes in place that would support the Scheme through its lifetime. Nonetheless, apart from Q1 of 2016 and Q3 of 2017, throughout 2016 and 2017 the Scheme resettled more than 1,000 refugees each quarter, and by the end of 2017 over half (10,299) of the target 20,000 had been resettled.
- 3.3 By the end of 2017, including those resettled, 16,981 refugees had been referred to the Home Office by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and senior managers expected that between Q2 and Q3 2018 the Home Office would have enough referrals in its pipeline to meet the 20,000 target by May 2020 (the deadline set by ministers), allowing for a percentage (10%) of withdrawals and rejections and giving it time in the final months to resettle any particularly difficult cases.
- 3.4 While creating a 'front-loaded' pipeline of referrals was a way of guaranteeing the target would be met, there were 'upstream' consequences. For UNHCR, in the absence of any UK commitments to continue resettling refugees from the Syrian conflict beyond 2020, planning and resourcing for operations in the region beyond mid-2018 is a challenge. For most refugees, it means a long wait between being identified for resettlement in the UK and actually being resettled. In both cases, the problem is the uncertainty, and both call for more regular and more explicit communication from the Home Office.
- 3.5 From 1 April 2016, the Home Office revised the resettlement process, extending the timescale from referral by UNHCR to resettlement in the UK from 8 to 13 weeks, reasoning that this would allow refugees longer to prepare for their departure. It described this new timescale as "indicative" and the minimum time required. In fact, most resettlements take significantly longer. In the first quarter after its introduction the average was 19 weeks, and by Q3 of 2017 this had reached 35 weeks, where it remained throughout the second half of 2017.
- 3.6 While the new process allowed 2 weeks for the matching of refugee families to accommodation and support in the UK, in practice this was taking most time. The number of refugees accepted for resettlement but yet to be matched to suitable accommodation (the Allocations Work in Progress (WiP) queue) peaked at the end of Q3 2017 at 2,451, before reducing to just over 2,000 at the end of the year. However, this reduction coincided with a reduced throughput of accepted cases from the Casework Team, because of "teething problems" with a new IT tool, and the Allocations WiP was expected to grow substantially as the Casework Team cleared its build-up of referrals (2,771 at the end of December 2017).

- 3.7 Although the business of matching refugees to suitable accommodation and support is by no means straightforward, the inability of the Home Office to resource the casework and allocations functions with enough sufficiently experienced staff meant that neither was as efficient as it could be.
- 3.8 The Scheme is almost entirely reliant on local authorities for accommodation and support for refugees. A Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) was launched on 19 July 2016, “to empower and enable community groups to take on the challenging but rewarding role of welcoming and supporting a resettled family in the UK”. However, in its first 14 months fewer than 20 sponsors had been approved, and the CSS had resettled just 53 refugees, though this did include some larger families (6+ persons).
- 3.9 Reasonably enough, the Home Office had introduced a rigorous application process for the CSS, designed to ensure that sponsors had the means and commitment to support refugees as required. The CSS had long-term potential, beyond the current Scheme, in the manner of the Canadian model from which the CSS had taken its inspiration, and which had a history of successful community resettlements dating back 40 years. Even so, CSS take-up looked set to fall well short of the Home Office’s relatively modest “internal ambition” for the year to July 2018. The Home Office needed to have had staff in place earlier to capitalise on the initial enthusiasm for CSS, and was now having to try to rekindle this.
- 3.10 The picture for local authority participation in the Scheme, which is voluntary, was more encouraging. By the end of 2017, the Home Office had received ‘pledges’ from local authorities to resettle a total of 22,716 refugees, and some 275 local authorities (roughly two-thirds of the UK total) had already resettled refugees via the Scheme.
- 3.11 Not all local authority pledges translated into ‘firm offers’, and some firm offers were subsequently withdrawn because of delays or difficulties in matching a refugee family with what the local authority could provide, not just in terms of accommodation but also essential support, especially where refugees had particular health, “mobility” or other needs.
- 3.12 The Home Office had recognised the need for additional measures to facilitate these ‘complex’ cases. Where a local authority had agreed to resettle a ‘batch’ of refugees at one time, the Home Office had included a quota of ‘complex’ cases. However, some regions did not accept refugees in ‘batches’, leaving those that did feeling that they were resettling a disproportionate number of ‘complex’ cases.
- 3.13 The Home Office had also budgeted £36 million for ‘exceptional costs’ for the duration of the Scheme, which local authorities could use to pay for property adaptations where refugees had additional mobility needs.<sup>6</sup> However, as at 31 December 2017, just £2.4 million of this had been claimed (against a budget to date of £17 million). The Home Office thought this was due to local authorities not being clear about what could be claimed. This was borne out by the inspection’s online survey, where a quarter of the local authorities and Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs) that responded felt that the Scheme’s Funding Instructions were not clear, and that greater clarity and assurances about funding levels at the referral stage would encourage local authorities to accept higher numbers of complex cases.
- 3.14 The Home Office Risk Register highlighted that “insufficient accommodation availability to match the profile of refugee cases, particularly if there is a high proportion of complex cases” could cause the Scheme to fail to meet the ‘20,000 by 2020’ target. Local authorities and SMPs also reported that “sourcing suitable and affordable accommodation” was their single greatest challenge.

---

<sup>6</sup> The £36m ‘exceptional costs’ budget was also to cover exceptional medical costs and other exceptional needs.

- 3.15 On 11 November 2015, recognising the shortage of larger properties, the Home Office issued an instruction to UNHCR to stop referring families with more than 6 members. UNHCR sympathised with the Home Office’s position, but considered there was a “direct correlation between family size and vulnerability”, with larger families more likely to be vulnerable due to the number of children to support and the greater likelihood of health issues. Inspectors saw limited evidence of discretion being applied, or of the Home Office checking with UNHCR if the family was “content to be split across two properties”, as set out in Home Office guidance.
- 3.16 Changes to welfare provisions at the end of 2016 had added to the difficulty of finding suitable, affordable accommodation, and in particular to the resettlement of larger families. Some local authorities were reluctant or refused to take families of 5 or 6, while some were using the Scheme’s tariff payments, intended primarily to fund integration support, to top up rents. This raised concerns that refugees could be resettled where there was reduced integration support and where they could not afford to live once the tariff payments ended. Efforts by the Home Office and local authorities to gain the Department for Work and Pensions’ agreement to exemptions from the Benefits Cap for certain refugees, or to other solutions, had so far failed.
- 3.17 The Home Office, stakeholders, and refugees themselves, all recognised that how well the latter integrate in the UK is a key measure of the success of the Scheme. As early as September 2015, the minutes of a Home Office-chaired roundtable involving NGOs noted that: “Integrating refugees into society in the long-term will be as important as addressing immediate needs” and that: “We need an Integration Strategy to welcome refugees to the UK”. However, reporting in November 2017, from evidence collected from refugees between August 2016 and January 2017, UNHCR highlighted the absence of a national integration strategy. The UNHCR report also identified the provision of English language tuition, support in finding employment, and further assistance with housing, as key areas for improvement.
- 3.18 The Home Office relied on others to deliver integration support. Pre-departure, IOM ran cultural orientation workshops for all refugees aged 14 and over who had been accepted onto the Scheme. IOM argued that the 2-day workshops were not long enough, but the Home Office had resisted extending them. Efforts to get more detailed information from local authorities about what refugees could expect to find on arrival in the UK had met with mixed results, and local authorities and their ‘delivery partners’ reported that they were having to manage some unrealistic expectations from the refugees they had resettled.
- 3.19 Given that refugees were waiting on average 35 weeks from acceptance on the Scheme to resettlement, a 2-day cultural orientation workshop delivered 2 weeks prior to departure appeared to be a case of “too little, too late”, especially as refugees were arriving in the UK with little or no English.
- 3.20 In the UK, the receiving local authority was responsible for providing integration support. On a day-to-day basis it made sense for the Home Office to leave this to local authorities, but there was no evidence that it retained strategic oversight of refugee resettlements or reviewed the local authority services or capacity to resettle refugees effectively. Some refugees had found that the local authority that had resettled them could not meet their needs, and had looked to be relocated to another area.
- 3.21 Local authorities welcomed the Home Office’s flexibility in allowing them to decide how best to spend the funding it provided for each refugee. Some had pooled tariff funding (after Year 1) to create services, individually or shared with other local authorities, or to buy them in. This had enabled some to participate in the Scheme who may not otherwise have been able to do so, and had helped ensure more local authorities had volunteered to take part.

- 3.22 Local authorities and their delivery partners were broadly positive about the level of funding provided via the Scheme in the first 12 months (£8,520 per refugee), which allowed them to provide intensive support to refugees on arrival, ensuring help with essentials, including accommodation, school places, banks accounts and registration for benefits and medical treatment. This support was described as “very much the gold standard”, and better than that provided to refugees granted asylum via other routes.
- 3.23 It was less clear whether the tapered funding for Years 2 to 5 would be sufficient.<sup>7</sup> The Home Office had recognised the need to evaluate this. However, at the time of the inspection, it was not capturing the necessary data, despite the fact that by the end of 2017 over 5,000 refugees had been resettled for more than 12 months.
- 3.24 It was generally agreed that learning English was key to the refugees achieving self-sufficiency and integration, as it enabled them to find work, to study, or take part in volunteering and community activities. Stakeholders felt that progress for most refugees had been slow, partly because they had no previous knowledge of English, and also because tuition was not readily available, especially in rural areas. There were also problems with parents accessing childcare to enable them to attend classes.
- 3.25 The Home Office was aware of these issues and had made additional funding available to local authorities to increase their capacity to deliver English language tuition, or to remove barriers to attendance, such as non-availability of childcare.<sup>8</sup> In August 2017, the Home Office revised its Funding Instruction to make it clear that local authorities were required (with effect from 1 August 2017) to provide a minimum of 8 hours per week of English language tuition for 12 months, or until the refugee reached proficiency at English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Level 3.<sup>9</sup> At the time of the inspection, it had started capturing data about refugees’ progress towards English language proficiency to enable it to monitor and assess provision.
- 3.26 Refugees arriving via the Scheme faced substantial barriers when it came to finding employment, and needed extra support to overcome them. Local authorities helped refugees to register with their local Job Centre, but DWP told inspectors that staff had not been given any specific guidance or training relating to refugees resettled under the Scheme.<sup>10</sup> For example, some refugees dependent on working age benefits had been subjected to ‘sanctions’ as a result of attending English language tuition rather than seeking work.
- 3.27 The Home Office had allocated £1.7 million to fund additional employment support schemes for refugees resettled via the Scheme up to March 2018. By 31 October 2017, just £268,229 of this had been spent,<sup>11</sup> and as at Spring 2017 only 48 (2%) of the refugees of working age resettled via the Scheme in 2016 had obtained paid employment.

7 The Home Office has pointed out that the funding for Years 2 to 5 was never intended to meet the full costs.

8 The Home Office established a fund of £600,000 per year which local authorities could bid for to provide childcare. This was over-subscribed in 2017-18 and, given the demand and importance of childcare to enable access to ESOL, the funding was increased to £800,000 for 2017-18. Funding of £600,000 per year is available for childcare provision for the remainder of the Scheme.

9 This level was set following consultation with stakeholders and local authorities. Support must begin within one month of arrival and be topped up with additional conversation practice. In addition, the ESOL ‘Guidance for Local Authorities’ recommends that language support should continue beyond Year 1, until the refugee reaches a level of proficiency that enables him/her to integrate into the community and find work.

10 Commenting on the draft report, the Home Office challenged this point stating that the DWP had issued Refugee Guidance to Job Centre Plus Staff, which includes guidance on VPRS and VCRS. It attached a copy of the guidance (undated), which explained that individuals admitted under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation (sic) Scheme “do not legally have refugee status, but are granted ‘Humanitarian Protection’ for a period of five years...allowing access to public funds, public services and the employment market, in line with the support provided for refugees who claim asylum in the UK.” There is a Home Office contact number where there are any doubts about an individual’s status. Under ‘Jobseekers Allowance’ and ‘Income support’ the guidance states that the “normal eligibility conditions apply”, and continues “Income Support cannot be paid on the grounds that these claimants are studying ESOL as this only applies to refugees and not to people with Humanitarian Protection.” A separate DWP note headed ‘Refugees’, dated 7 February 2018, refers to ‘People arriving under a resettlement scheme’ and lists VPRS, Gateway and VCRS. This note states “Participants receive a 12 month support package by the local authority or community sponsors. This includes help with things like finding accommodation, opening bank accounts and finding employment. Resettlement refugees are given a one-off settlement grant by the Home Office. This grant should be classed as capital and not income. The arrival of those under resettlement schemes is known in advance so help can be given to claim Universal Credit and use our services as soon as possible after arrival in the UK. Backdating decisions are often needed on these claims, and assisted digital must always be considered.”

11 Commenting on the draft report, the Home Office stated that the budget allocation to 31 October 2017 was £884,860.

- 3.28 The provision of appropriate healthcare was another key element of integration. IOM was contracted to carry out extensive Migration Health Assessments (MHA) of all refugees accepted onto the Scheme. Nonetheless, around half of the local authorities who responded to the online survey felt that the medical information they received was not sufficient, with some stating that they would like MHAs to be more specific in terms of accommodation needs, especially whether the refugee could manage stairs. Some information had been fed back to IOM in relation to this, but there was a role here for the Home Office, working with IOM and UK healthcare professionals, to ensure that MHAs capture everything that local authorities need to know.
- 3.29 As at the end of 2017, 1,033 (c.41%) of the families resettled recorded one or more member as ‘survivors of violence or torture’, according to UNHCR’s vulnerability assessment. The Home Office reported that NHS providers were slowly adapting to the requirement to provide specialist mental health care for these refugees, but this remained “patchy”, and the Home Office needed to continue raising awareness across the NHS.
- 3.30 £2,600 per refugee was available for primary healthcare provision, and the NHS could claim further funding, described as ‘exceptional costs’. However, Home Office data indicated that not all of the funding for primary healthcare had been claimed by the NHS, and that it had paid out on just 3 claims for ‘exceptional costs’.
- 3.31 The Home Office had attempted to capture information from local authorities about the integration ‘journey’ of the refugees who had been resettled. However, a significant number of local authorities had failed to submit the requested data when it was first requested (in Spring 2017). The second attempt (in Autumn 2017) produced a much better return rate.
- 3.32 Stakeholders hoped that monitoring the integration of those resettled via the Scheme would highlight clearly that the additional support they received improved integration outcomes, and that this argued for providing similar support to refugees who arrived by other routes. However, the Home Office told inspectors that there were no external benchmarks against which to compare integration outcomes. Furthermore, local authorities had adopted different integration delivery models and the monitoring process did not require them to report how they were spending the tariff or how they were delivering integration support.
- 3.33 In 2016, the Home Office did begin tracking ‘sensitive cases’, including cases involving child protection issues, domestic violence, tensions in local communities, and criminality. This had fed into changes in the content of the IOM cultural orientation workshop, but otherwise it was unclear how the Home Office was using the information to support local authorities or to drive improvements to the Scheme.
- 3.34 When it was launched in January 2014, the Home Secretary announced that the Scheme would assist the “refugees at greatest risk” by resettling “the most vulnerable” refugees displaced by the Syrian conflict. Sensibly, the Home Office recognised that it was “not qualified to assess vulnerability” and it contracted the UNHCR to identify and prioritise “the most vulnerable” refugees for resettlement.
- 3.35 UNHCR, working with other international agencies, had developed a Vulnerability Assessment Framework to codify and assess vulnerabilities, and used a streaming tool to prioritise the “most vulnerable”, overlaying this with the criteria specific to the UK Scheme, for example family size no bigger than 6. This was an efficient and effective way of identifying refugees for resettlement in the UK from amongst the much larger refugee population, although the inspection identified some areas for improvement.

- 3.36 Firstly, when visiting UNHCR in Jordan inspectors identified that its streaming tool had not been updated to include non-Syrians, in line with the broadening of the Scheme's eligibility criteria in July 2017. Secondly, there was a disparity between UNHCR's view on the reliability of documentation used to prove identity and credibility and that of the Home Office and others. Thirdly, the Home Office's recording of refugees' vulnerability by the primary criterion cited by UNHCR, and its categorisation of withdrawals and rejections, produced a skewed picture of those referred for resettlement, and was of little value in terms of ensuring and demonstrating that the Scheme was helping "the most vulnerable".
- 3.37 The first issue came about because UNHCR updated its streaming tool annually and had not yet done so to encompass non-Syrians. Precisely what difference this would have made was unclear, but at the time of the inspection only 4 cases involving non-Syrian nationals had been referred. By the end of 2017, this had increased to 22.
- 3.38 UNHCR's streaming tool 'de-selected' refugees who were ex-combatants or criminals. Meanwhile, the decision whether to reject a referred refugee on security grounds rested with the Home Office. According to Home Office data, to the end of 2017, only 47 cases (247 individuals) had been rejected, of which just 30% had been rejected on security grounds, which suggested that UNHCR's streaming process was effective.
- 3.39 However, by not providing guidance, for example in relation to the weight to be attached to Syrian documentation issued after 2011, and not assuring the UNHCR process, the Home Office was placing too much reliance on UNHCR to establish the refugees' identity, nationality and credibility. As such, it was not actively managing the risk it had registered of a "resettled applicant committing a serious crime".
- 3.40 The Home Office's recording and monitoring of the reasons for referral, and for withdrawals and rejections, lacked depth and shade. The refugees referred to the Scheme by UNHCR typically had multiple vulnerabilities. However, the Home Office recorded only the primary criterion cited by UNHCR, casting doubt on the value of the Home Office data. Similarly, reasons for withdrawals were recorded on the Case Information Database (CID) under the "best fit" to 1 of 7 criteria. In the early stages of the Scheme, some withdrawals had been wrongly categorised as "rejections", while some cases that UNHCR had identified as "too complex to be considered on paper" had been recorded as "does not want to resettle in the UK" or "wishes to remain in host country".
- 3.41 Where a case had been accepted for resettlement and the woman was pregnant (whether at the time of acceptance or later) the Home Office's response was ponderous. Guidance instructed caseworkers to pause resettlement where "complications or [a] high-risk pregnancy preventing resettlement or other pregnancy-related issues". In practice, all pregnant cases were paused until after the child was born, even where there was no indication of any risk and the woman was within "fit to fly" timescales. The Home Office did not seek to expedite pregnancy cases and this led to increased resettlement timescales for some of the most vulnerable refugees.
- 3.42 These issues regarding identification and treatment of "the most vulnerable", along with the missed opportunities to make better use of the lengthy period between acceptance on the scheme and resettlement to advance the integration 'journey' and remove uncertainty, all point towards the Home Office needing to be more directly engaged with the pre-arrival stages of the process. Not to intrude in those functions best left to the skills and expertise of UNHCR and IOM, but to provide guidance and support where it would improve clarity and consistency.

## 4. Recommendations

### The Home Office should:

1. Review the Scheme's staffing, ensuring that roles are clearly defined (to avoid duplicated and/or misdirected effort) and set at the correct grade, and ensuring staff receive training that enables at least some of them to be deployed flexibly, as required.
2. Ensure that the data required to support the efficient and effective management of each stage of the resettlement process, including the identification and referral of "the most vulnerable" and the evaluation of integration efforts and outcomes, is defined, captured, shared and processed/analysed, and the results shared with all relevant parties.
3. Through monitoring, analysis and evaluation, and calling on the expertise of others as appropriate, determine what constitutes 'best practice' at each stage of the resettlement process, and produce (and update as necessary) the Scheme's guidance documents, ensuring they are comprehensive, coherent and drive towards consistent 'best practice'. These should cover, as a minimum:
  - a. Documentation accepted by the Home Office as proof of identity and nationality, and how to treat forged or fraudulent documents
  - b. Credibility questioning (including use of DNA testing)
  - c. Treatment of 'exceptional' cases, for example families of more than 6, and cases deemed "too complex to be considered on paper"
  - d. Treatment of pregnant women, including how their resettlement may be expedited to avoid 'fit to fly' concerns
  - e. Migration Health Assessments(MHA), particularly how these can better inform accommodation and support requirements
  - f. Financial Instructions for local authorities and the NHS, including use of tariff payments to 'top up' rents, claims for primary and secondary health care, and use of the 'exceptional costs' budget
  - g. The benefits and risks of different integration delivery models, including an assessment of the Northern Ireland 'Welcome Centre' reception model
4. Explore with IOM, and other 'upstream' partners if appropriate, how to make more effective use of the period between a refugee's acceptance onto the Scheme and their departure from the 'host' country, to improve their integration 'journey' (for example, providing pre-departure English language tuition), to manage expectations and improve the geographical matching process, and to reduce anxieties while awaiting a departure date.
5. Maintain closer, more continuous contact with participating local authorities, either by refocusing Contact Officers or reinforcing the Allocations Team, so that time is not lost in turning firm offers of accommodation and support into arrivals.

6. Review the Scheme's communication strategy, paying particular attention to:
  - a. UNHCR and IOM, clarifying as far as possible the Home Office's requirements of both after sufficient refugees have been referred to the Scheme to meet the 20,000 target
  - b. Local authorities, clarifying whether further pledges are required, including from 'new' local authorities, and dealing with concerns about the fair distribution of 'complex' cases
  - c. Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Health Boards, so that available funding is utilised to provide specialist medical provision for refugees
  - d. Resettled refugees, providing reassurance about continued support (at least until Year 5) with their integration, especially with accommodation, English language tuition, access to employment, and any special health or educational needs
7. Ensure that where the Scheme is dependent on support from, or affected by the decisions of, other government departments (for example, Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health and Social Care) that ministers are sighted on any misalignments, and that where these exist practical solutions are found.

## 5. Background

### History of the Scheme

- 5.1 The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme ('the Scheme') was launched by the Home Office in January 2014, with the aim to resettle "several hundred" Syrians in the UK over 3 years. By September 2015, the Scheme had resettled 239 refugees.
- 5.2 Priority was given to the most vulnerable, those requiring urgent medical treatment, survivors of violence and torture, and women and children at risk. The Scheme was open only to Syrian nationals who had fled Syria after 2011 and who were resident in 1 of the 5 'host' countries: Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt.
- 5.3 In September 2015, the Scheme was expanded, with the Prime Minister making a commitment to resettle 20,000 Syrians by 2020. The Department for International Development (DfID), the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Home Office became jointly responsible for meeting this commitment, with the Home Office retaining primary responsibility for the policy and operational delivery of the Scheme.
- 5.4 At the same time, the Scheme's eligibility criteria were expanded to include all refugees recognised as vulnerable in accordance with criteria set out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>12</sup>
- 5.5 In July 2017, the Home Secretary announced an extension to the scope of the Scheme to enable UNHCR to refer the most vulnerable refugees in the MENA region who had fled the Syrian conflict, regardless of their nationality. This included non-Syrian nationals who had sought refuge in Syria before 2011 and could not return safely to their home countries, as well as mixed nationality family groups.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the Scheme was renamed 'the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme'.
- 5.6 Between January 2014 and July 2017 refugees resettled in the UK under the Scheme were granted Humanitarian Protection for five years, which included leave to remain in the UK and permission to work and access public funds. However, in early 2017, the UK Government recognised that Humanitarian Protection status did not provide the same entitlements as Refugee Status, such as Carer's Allowance, access to student finance or an internationally recognised refugee travel document. Therefore, on 22 March 2017 the Government announced that all those accepted onto the Scheme from 1 July 2017 would be granted Refugee Status, while those granted Humanitarian Protection before this date could apply to change their status.

---

<sup>12</sup> Published at Chapter 6 of the 'UNHCR Resettlement Handbook', accessed at [www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/46f7c0ee2.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Syria was previously home to a number of nationalities, notably Iraqi, Palestinian and Kurdish, but most of these nationals had difficulties gaining Syrian citizenship, despite having lived there for a number of years.

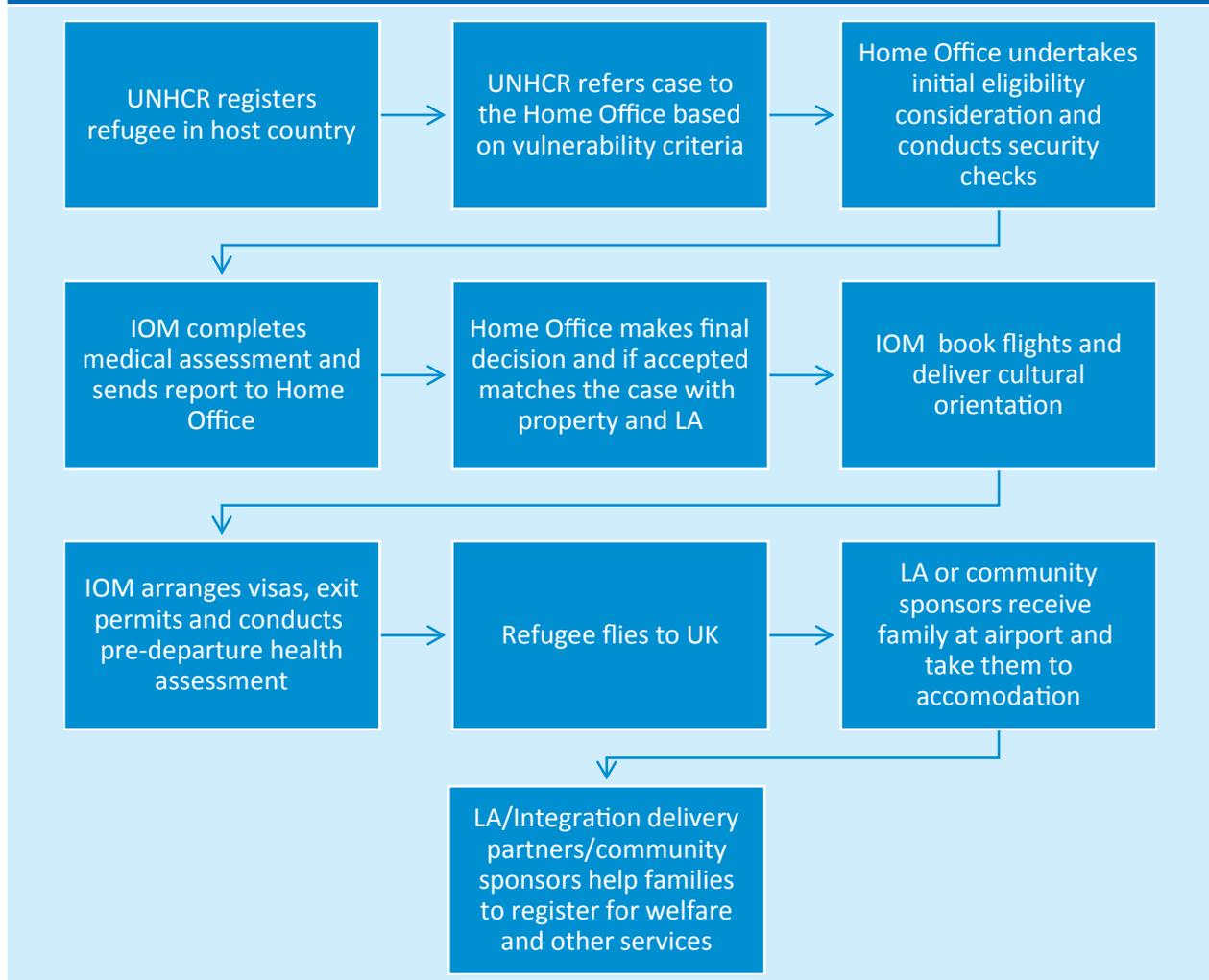
## How the Scheme works

- 5.7 The Home Office works with three key 'delivery partners' to resettle vulnerable persons: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and UK local authorities. In summary, the roles of each in the resettlement process are as follows:
- **UNHCR** registers refugees in the 'host' countries.<sup>14</sup> It considers each refugee's specific circumstances and needs against its Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF). If one or more criteria are met, UNHCR will consider referring the case for resettlement to the UK, or to another country running a resettlement scheme. For those referred to the UK Scheme, UNHCR is responsible for collecting and assessing relevant documentation, establishing identity and nationality, and collating all relevant information onto a Resettlement Registration Form (RRF), which is sent electronically to the Home Office. UNHCR also arranges exit permits for refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon.
  - **Home Office** assesses referrals received from UNHCR and ensures the refugees meet the eligibility criteria. It commissions medical assessments and undertakes security screening and checks. It decides whether to accept the refugee(s) into the Scheme and matches them to suitable accommodation in the UK, sharing the medical and other relevant information (for example, family composition) with the relevant local authority. It then liaises with IOM to make the travel arrangements.
  - **IOM** conducts Migration Health Assessments (MHA) of each refugee when they are accepted and again closer to departure. Where refugees have been accepted onto the Scheme and have been allocated to a local authority and matched with accommodation, IOM arranges flights to the UK, organises the UK visa application and obtains exit permits for refugees residing in Iraq and Egypt. IOM also runs pre-departure cultural orientation workshops for refugees.
  - **UK local authorities** volunteer to participate in the Scheme and undertake to find suitable accommodation and provide integration support to refugees. This includes meeting refugees on their arrival in the UK and settling them into the local area, helping with registration for welfare support and relevant services. A number of local authorities sub-contract integration support to third party delivery partners.
- 5.8 In July 2016, the Home Secretary announced the launch of the Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS), which provides the opportunity for community groups, instead of local authorities, to accommodate and support resettled refugees.

---

<sup>14</sup> In Turkey, refugee identification is the responsibility of a Turkish government official and is then referred to UNHCR.

**Figure 1: A simplified process map of how the Scheme operates from refugee registration to integrating in the UK**



## Home Office responsibilities

5.9 At the point that the Scheme was expanded, it was administered by a joint Home Office, DfID and MHCLG programme team, and sat within the Home Office's Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System (BICS). In January 2017, administration of the Scheme transferred to the Resettlement, Asylum Support and Integration (RASI) Directorate within UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). At the time of the inspection, the Scheme comprised an operational command: Resettlement Operations, based in Croydon and Sheffield, and teams of non-operational support staff based in various locations around the UK.

5.10 The operational command had around 60 staff:

## Croydon Teams

- **Casework Team:** manage referrals from UNHCR, ensuring that the information on the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) is complete and meets the Scheme's eligibility criteria. The team also commissions security checks, before deciding whether to accept a refugee onto the Scheme

- **Allocations Team:** matches accepted families to suitable accommodation pledged by local authorities or community sponsors
- **Arrivals Team:** coordinates the arrivals logistics, either via charter or scheduled flights, commissioning IOM to arrange flights, visas and exit permits. It liaises with the local authority to ensure that the refugees are met on arrival, deploying to airports to coordinate the arrival of refugees on charter flights
- **Payments Team:** processes ‘tariff payments’ to local authorities in 3 instalments over the year.<sup>15</sup> The team also processes approved ‘exceptional costs’, ESOL payments to local authorities, ESOL Childcare claims, the healthcare tariff to Local Health Boards, and funding for Year 2 onwards

## Sheffield Teams

- **Video Interviewing Team:** conducts pre-departure interviews to gather information from refugees to assist with their accommodation matching and integration
- **Community Sponsorship Team:** processes applications from potential community sponsors, arranging ‘site visits’ and convening review panels to decide on applications. The Team arranges for Contact Officers to undertake visits to sponsors after months 1, 3 and 9 to review progress
- **Data and Management Information Team:** produces progress reports for internal and external use, some on a daily basis, allowing managers to track the Scheme’s delivery

5.11 The non-operational teams supporting the Scheme were made up mostly of Home Office staff, with some DfID and MHCLG staff seconded to RASI. They included:<sup>16</sup>

- **The Local Authority Engagement Team:** a joint Home Office and MHCLG team, comprising Contact Officers and Strategic Leads responsible for liaising between the Scheme and local authority partners in each of the 12 regions<sup>17</sup>
- **Policy and Development Team:** develops and implements policy, process and legislative changes affecting resettlement
- **People, Communications and Stakeholder Management Team:** provides corporate services to RASI as a whole
- **Resettlement Security and Safeguarding Team:** oversees the Scheme’s pre-arrival security processes and works with local authorities on post-arrival safeguarding
- **Integration Team:** develops and implements integration policy, with a particular focus on language skills and employability
- **International Team:** a joint Home Office and DfID team responsible for ensuring the UK’s Resettlement Programme responds to global humanitarian need

## Funding arrangements

### Budget

5.12 Funding for the Scheme had come from a number of government departments. All costs for a refugee’s resettlement in the first year of the Scheme were met by DfID through Official

<sup>15</sup> 40% on arrival, a further 30% after 4 months, and another 30% after 8 months.

<sup>16</sup> Commenting on the draft report, the Home Office noted that staff also worked closely with Migration and Border Analysis (part of the Home Office’s Analysis and Insights Unit) to implement monitoring and evaluation of the Scheme.

<sup>17</sup> South East, South West, London, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, Yorkshire and Humber, North East, North West, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Development Assistance (ODA). This included payments to local authorities, Health Boards and for contracted services provided by IOM and UNHCR (MENA).<sup>18</sup> For years 2 to 5 for each refugee Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) committed to funding tariff contributions to local authorities, while English language and employment support was funded by the Home Office, with £1m per annum provided by the Department for Education (DfE) for English language tuition in England only.

**Figure 2: The Scheme's budget between 2015 and 2020 showing actual expenditure to 31 December 2017**

	15-16 (£m)		16-17 (£m)		17-18 (£m)		18-19 (£m)	19-20 (£m)
	Budget	Spend	Budget	Spend	Budget	Spend to Nov	Budget	Budget
DfID ODA	29.8	15.4	88.4	69.3	87.5	53.5	102.2	90.5
HMT	-	-	5.0	2.4	21.8	11.2	44.0	58.0
Home Office	-	-	5.1	3.6	4.4	2.1	5.1	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>98.5</b>	<b>75.3</b>	<b>113.7</b>	<b>66.8</b>	<b>151.3</b>	<b>153.3</b>

- 5.13 Between 1 April 2015 and 31 October 2017, the Scheme was showing an overall underspend. Inspectors were told by the Scheme's finance managers that the underspend was due to a "lower intake" than originally planned, meaning lower tariff payments to local authorities and Health Boards and lower payments to the IOM for medical assessments, cultural orientation and flights.
- 5.14 There were also underspends on staff costs, reflected in the ODA budget. Recruitment and retention of staff had been an issue throughout the life of the Scheme. At the time of inspection, the Operational Command was operating with 61.11 full time equivalents (FTE)<sup>19</sup> staff in post, with the budget having been set for 73.19 FTE.<sup>20</sup>

## Local Authority Tariff

- 5.15 In the first year of resettlement, local authorities receive £8,520 for each refugee. The services and support local authorities were expected to provide in return were set out in a Funding Instruction.<sup>21</sup> local authorities were also able to claim exceptional 'unforeseen costs' incurred in the first 12 months of resettlement. These claims were decided on a case-by-case basis by the Home Office.

<sup>18</sup> Until January 2017, UNHCR costs were governed by a pre-existing agreement with DfID, so no UNHCR costs were charged to the Scheme before that date.

<sup>19</sup> 1 FTE is equivalent to 1 staff member working full-time; hours worked by staff who are not full-time are added together and expressed in numbers and fractions of FTEs.

<sup>20</sup> These staffing figures were provided in response to a formal evidence request in November 2017. However, commenting on the draft report, the Home Office stated: "In October 2017, the programme had 95.63 FTE on its payroll. In addition, there were 8 OGD staff and 6.95 Agency staff whose costs were met from the programme budget, as well as 2 staff members whose costs were covered from other sources, making a total of 112.58 effective FTE."

<sup>21</sup> Published at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/634000/2017-18\\_Combined\\_LA\\_FI\\_v1\\_0\\_PUBLISHED.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634000/2017-18_Combined_LA_FI_v1_0_PUBLISHED.pdf)

**Figure 3: Table showing the tapered financial support provided to local authorities**

Year of resettlement	Tariff payment to local authority
1	£8,520
2	£5,000
3	£3,700
4	£2,300
5	£1,000

- 5.16 Local authorities were able to pool the money received for each refugee for years 2 to 5 and use it to pay for services to support any of the refugees they had resettled under the Scheme.
- 5.17 In September 2016, the Home Office announced an additional £10 million funding package for English Language tuition for resettled refugees, making £850 available for each adult refugee. This was explained in a revised Funding Instruction published in August 2017. Also, Local Health Boards were able to claim from the Home Office the costs of primary and secondary healthcare in the first 12 months of resettlement, up to a maximum of £2,600 per refugee, plus any ‘exceptional costs’ (uncapped).<sup>22</sup>
- 5.18 The financial support package for local authorities was limited to refugees resettled under the Scheme and the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme (VCRS),<sup>23</sup> and was not available for others granted refugee status, such as in-country asylum claimants.<sup>24</sup> This had prompted the All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees to express its concern about a “two-tier system” of support for refugees in the UK.

## Previous Reviews

- 5.19 Since September 2016, there had been a number of reviews of the Scheme:
- **National Audit Office (NAO), September 2016**<sup>25</sup> – the NAO examined the Scheme’s processes, progress against targets, and the risks to future delivery, and whether these were being addressed. The NAO made 6 recommendations, focused on ensuring the expectations of local authorities and of resettled refugees were managed and that government departments were alive to the risks to successful delivery and contributed towards mitigating them. In addition, the NAO recommended greater monitoring of the Scheme and the development of evaluation measures to ensure the Scheme adapted to the needs of the most vulnerable and that success beyond the delivery of 20,000 refugees was defined
  - **Public Accounts Committee (PAC), January 2017**<sup>26</sup> – the PAC drew on the NAO findings and took oral evidence from senior civil servants in November 2016. The Committee made 8 recommendations, including improved monitoring of local authority pledges of support,

<sup>22</sup> Funding Instruction published at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/634008/2017-18\\_English\\_Healthcare\\_FI\\_-\\_Published.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/634008/2017-18_English_Healthcare_FI_-_Published.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> The other UK resettlement Schemes, Mandate and Gateway, provide some level of funding for participating local authorities, but only for the first 12 months after resettlement.

<sup>24</sup> Accessed [https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0004/0316/APPG\\_on\\_Refugees\\_-\\_Refugees\\_Welcome\\_report.pdf](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0004/0316/APPG_on_Refugees_-_Refugees_Welcome_report.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/The-Syrian-Vulnerable-Persons-Resettlement-programme.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmpubacc/768/768.pdf>

clearer plans to evaluate success criteria and reviews of the level of English language provision, and specific help to survivors of torture. The Government agreed to implement all of the PAC's recommendations<sup>27</sup>

- **Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), February 2017<sup>28</sup>** – the CSJ examined all aspects of the Scheme, including housing, community integration and healthcare, and the setting up of the Scheme. It made 21 recommendations, covering a wide range of issues, including housing, employment, integration, education, healthcare and the treatment of religious minorities, women and children
- **UNHCR, November 2017<sup>29</sup>** – drawing on research carried out between August 2016 and January 2017, the UNHCR report 'Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom' focused on efforts to integrate refugees in the UK. It examined and made recommendations in relation to accommodation and matching, family reunification, employment, medical health, ESOL, pre-departure orientation, and legal status. It identified English language provision, support in finding employment and further assistance with housing, and a national integration strategy as key areas for improvement

---

<sup>27</sup> Government response to PAC report accessed at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/597087/58882\\_Cm\\_9429\\_Treasury\\_Accessible\\_pdf.pdf#page=31](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597087/58882_Cm_9429_Treasury_Accessible_pdf.pdf#page=31)

<sup>28</sup> The Centre for Social Justice is an independent think tank that aims to "put social justice at the heart of British politics". Report accessed at <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Syrian-Refugee-Crisis-Final-002.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/basic/5a0ae9e84/towards-integration-the-syrian-vulnerable-persons-resettlement-scheme-in.html>

## 6. Inspection findings – delivering “the 20,000”

### ‘The first 1,000’

- 6.1 On 7 September 2015, the Prime Minister announced that the Scheme, which had been running since 2014, would be expanded to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection by 2020. On 19 October 2015, in a further statement, he set the target of resettling the first 1,000 of the 20,000 by Christmas 2015.<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 4: Table showing the quarterly and cumulative totals of resettled persons 2014-2017**

By end	Quarterly total	Cumulative total
2014 Q1	13	13
2014 Q2	37	50
2014 Q3	40	90
2014 Q4	53	143
2015 Q1	44	187
2015 Q2	29	216
2015 Q3	36	252
2015 Q4	1,085	1,337
2016 Q1	517	1,854
2016 Q2	1,044	2,898
2016 Q3	1,516	4,414
2016 Q4	1,292	5,706
2017 Q1	1,601	7,307
2017 Q2	1,228	8,535
2017 Q3	859	9,155
2017 Q4	1,144	10,299

- 6.2 Figure 4 shows how quickly the Home Office Resettlement Team had to scale up its operations following the announcement of the Scheme’s expansion. Between January 2014 and September 2015, the Home Office had resettled 252 refugees under the original plan to resettle “several hundred” Syrians over 3 years. In meeting the September 2015 commitment, between October and the end of December 2015 it resettled a further 1,085 refugees.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Reported at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34574668>

<sup>31</sup> The ‘1,000 by Christmas 2015’ was treated as in addition to those resettled prior to the announcement.

- 6.3 In the first few months of 2016 the Home Office deliberately slowed down its operations in order to consolidate and revise processes as a result of the lessons learned from the ‘first 1,000’ exercise. As a result, the number resettled in Q1 2016 (January – March) was roughly half that of the total for the 3 months to Christmas 2015.

## Staff recruitment and retention

- 6.4 Home Office senior managers informed inspectors that the speed with which the Scheme was expanded in September 2015 had required a quick, short-term solution to staffing. This had included drafting in 15 ‘surge staff’ from Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC).<sup>32</sup>
- 6.5 In January 2016, the ‘surge staff’ returned to HMRC and other staff were appointed on fixed-term, 11-month contracts. Over the course of 2016 and 2017, 4 subsequent recruitment campaigns failed to produce the required number of staff, and in November 2017 the Scheme was operating with 8 staff short of its funded complement. The Home Office told inspectors that this was partly due to some staff leaving on promotion during the period, while the temporary nature of the appointments originally on offer had not helped.<sup>33</sup>
- 6.6 The Scheme’s senior managers acknowledged that there was a staff retention issue in Croydon, where most of the Scheme’s ‘operational’ functions were based. This chimed with the findings from other recent inspections.<sup>34</sup>
- 6.7 Despite a relatively high turnover, inspectors observed that managers and staff were highly motivated. Staff told inspectors that there was a sense that they were making a real difference to refugees’ lives, and “the culture” felt different to other parts of the Home Office they had worked in. Senior managers said they were determined to create a positive atmosphere, and staff were given opportunities to visit other parts of the operation, including meeting refugees arriving on charter flights, in order to encourage this.
- 6.8 The senior managers hoped to develop “multi-functional” staff who could work in whichever of the Scheme’s operational teams needed them in order to mitigate the impact of staff turnover and shortfalls. However, managers considered that “attrition” rates, and the time taken to train staff, made multi-functionality difficult to achieve in practice.

## Progress against target

- 6.9 The Senior Civil Servant responsible for the Scheme told inspectors that ministers had set a deadline of May 2020 to resettle the 20,000 refugees. The Home Office was aiming to have resettled the vast majority of the 20,000 by December 2019, in order to have time to resolve any difficult cases before this deadline.

---

<sup>32</sup> Under a standing agreement between the Home Office and HMRC.

<sup>33</sup> More recent trawls have been for permanent staff.

<sup>34</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-report-on-asylum-intake-and-casework> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspection-report-on-entry-clearance-processing-operations-in-croydon-and-istanbul-july-2017>

**Figure 5: Table showing the number of refugees resettled versus target January to November 2017**

By end	Cumulative target	Actual total	+/- Cumulative Target
January	5,967	5,986	+19
February	6,514	6,414	-100
March	7,060	7,068	+8
April	7,300	7,374	+74
May	7,720	7,650	-70
June	8,260	8,296	+36
July	8,486	8,619	+133
August	8,881	8,805	-76
September	9,390	9,155	-235
October	9,630	9,583	-47
November	10,050	9,920	-130
December	10,590	10,299	-29

- 6.10 Although the Home Office was 130 short of its internal target at the end of November 2017, inspectors were told that a further 448 individuals had flights scheduled before the end of 2017. In the event, 379 individuals were resettled in December 2017. While the total at the end of the year was 291 short of target, over 10,000 refugees had been resettled at the mid-point of the Scheme, and maintaining this rate of resettlements put the Home Office on track to achieve the 20,000 target by 2020.

### UNHCR referrals

- 6.11 The Home Office had identified 10 “dependencies” for successful delivery of the 20,000 target, the first of which was that “UNHCR referrals are sufficient in number and delivered.”<sup>35</sup>

**Figure 6: Table showing number of UNHCR referrals since the expansion of the Scheme in September 2015**

By end	Quarterly Total	Cumulative Total
Q3 2015	1,841	1,841
Q4 2015	718	2,559
Q1 2016	1,490	4,049
Q2 2016	2,490	6,539
Q3 2016	1,843	8,382
Q4 2016	1,676	10,058
Q1 2017	1,008	11,066

<sup>35</sup> Internal Home Office document.

Q2 2017	1,884	12,950
Q3 2017	2,183	15,133
Q4 2017	1,848	16,981

- 6.12 The Home Office and UNHCR had agreed annual referral quotas, subdivided by host country, but UNHCR senior managers told inspectors that one of the main advantages of the way the UK Scheme operated was that where 1 of the 5 host countries was unable to meet its annual pledge of referrals the shortfall could be made up from another host country. Other international resettlement schemes were not as flexible.
- 6.13 By the end of 2017, the Home Office had received 16,981 referrals, 1% above target according to the Home Office's progress report.<sup>36</sup> The Home Office told inspectors it had deliberately accelerated the rate of referrals to create a pipeline of cases and have around 2 years to have everyone resettled by May 2020. Senior managers expected that between Q2 and Q3 2018 they would have received sufficient referrals to meet the 20,000 target, factoring in a 10% attrition rate for withdrawals and rejections.
- 6.14 UNHCR told inspectors that uncertainty about whether the UK would extend its resettlement programme after 2020 made it difficult for UNHCR to plan its operations beyond mid-2018, when the required number of referrals would have been delivered. In Amman, for example, UNHCR had expanded in order to meet the UK's resettlement quota, and it was not clear whether it would need to retain staff there or release or relocate them.

### Local authorities: "Pledges" and "Firm Offers"

- 6.15 By the end of 2017, the Home Office had received 'pledges' from local authorities indicating their willingness to resettle a total of 22,716 refugees. However, these pledges had to be converted into "firm offers" of suitable and available accommodation and support that could be allocated to refugees accepted for resettlement. Once it had firm offers, the Scheme's Allocation Team had the task of matching refugees with properties.
- 6.16 With pledges in excess of 20,000 and levelling off, the head of the Local Authority Engagement Team<sup>37</sup> told inspectors that the emphasis had shifted to converting more pledges into firm offers, which involved the Team, the Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs)<sup>38</sup> and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

### Consideration timescales

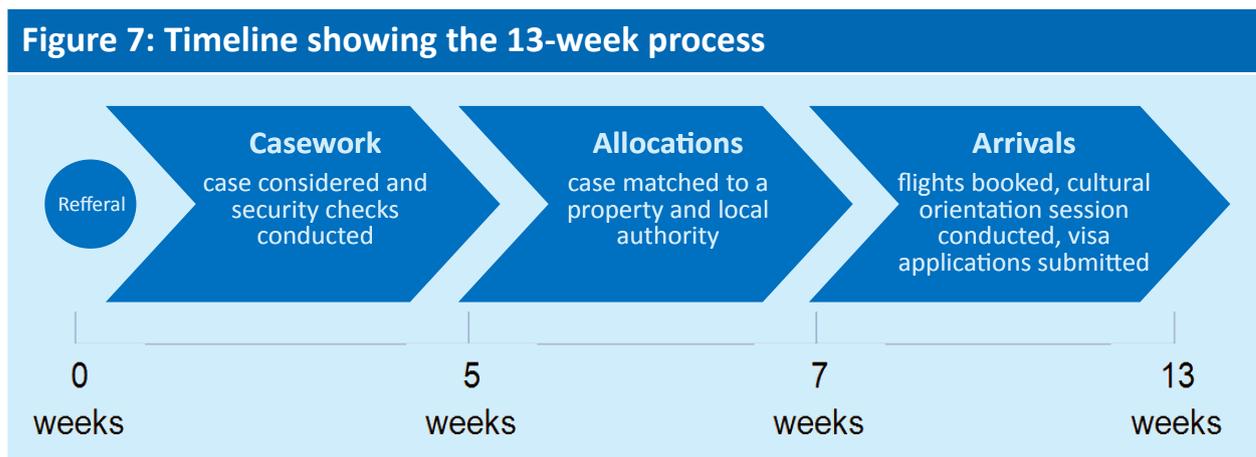
- 6.17 During the final months of 2015, the Home Office was working to an 8-week resettlement process, from referral of a refugee by UNHCR to their arrival in the UK.
- 6.18 In early 2016, a review by the Resettlement Team reported that "the shorter process was not necessarily in the interest of the refugees and was not operationally feasible moving forward."<sup>39</sup> As a result, in April 2016, the Home Office moved to a "minimum 13-week process" – see Figure 7.

<sup>36</sup> The 2016 referrals target was 7,206 and the Home Office had received 7,499. For 2017, the target was 7,000 and the Home Office received 6,923.

<sup>37</sup> Jointly staffed by Home Office and MHCLG.

<sup>38</sup> SMPs are regional partnerships funded by the Home Office. The SMPs work with regional partners to develop and support migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugee networks, encompassing grass roots organisations and a network of multi-agency fora and specialist and task groups. In the context of the Scheme, SMPs coordinate accommodation matching and share good practice in their region.

<sup>39</sup> Home Office response to the inspection's initial evidence request.



- 6.19 The 13-week process included a period of 6 weeks after the refugee(s) had been allocated their accommodation during which time they could prepare for the move to the UK. Between 7 September and 31 December 2015, 230 visa applications had been processed for refugees who subsequently withdrew from the Scheme. A further 157 were subsequently rejected. Anecdotal evidence suggested that those who withdrew just before travelling did so because they did not have sufficient time to prepare for the move.
- 6.20 The extended ‘Arrivals’ period also allowed the Home Office and its delivery partners time to obtain visas and exit permits once the refugees had been matched to accommodation. Previously, the visa had been arranged on receipt of the refugee referral from UNHCR.
- 6.21 The Home Office described the 13-week timescale as “indicative” and the minimum amount of time needed to move from referral to resettlement. According to Home Office data, between 1 April 2016 and the end of 2017 resettlements consistently took longer than 13 weeks, rising to 35 weeks through the second half of 2017.

**Figure 8: Average time taken from referral to resettlement since the introduction of the 13-week process**

By End	Days (weeks)
Q2 2016	130 (19)
Q3 2016	136 (19)
Q4 2016	166 (24)
Q1 2017	195 (28)
Q2 2017	229 (33)
Q3 2017	247 (35)
Q4 2017	244 (35)

- 6.22 However, even with these extended timescales, resettlement under the UK Scheme was taking considerably less time than resettlement via other international schemes. In October 2017, Canadian and Australian Embassy staff in Amman told inspectors that their resettlements were taking over 12 and 18 months respectively. At the same time, UNHCR told inspectors that refugees identified for the American resettlement programme were facing waits of 5 to 6 years. The longer timescales were partly explained by the fact that, in all 3 cases, screening and interviewing of refugees was done by officials (rather than by UNHCR as for the UK).

- 6.23 UNHCR believed that refugees were unaware of the “minimum 13-week process”, but had a general expectation that once they were accepted by the UK they would be quickly resettled.

### Casework ‘Work in Progress’

- 6.24 UNHCR sent referrals to the Home Office where they joined the Casework team’s Work in Progress (WiP) queue. At the time of the inspection, the Casework Team comprised 6 Executive Officer (EO) caseworkers and 5 Higher Executive Officer (HEO) senior caseworkers (SCW).<sup>40</sup> Their task was to determine whether the refugees referred by UNHCR were eligible for resettlement.
- 6.25 The EO caseworkers were responsible for checking that the refugee satisfied the high level eligibility requirements of the Scheme,<sup>41</sup> and that there were no “security triggers” within the information provided that meant further security screening was required. They then made a recommendation whether the refugee should be accepted onto the Scheme, and passed the case to a SCW. The SCW reviewed the information that had already been considered by the EO caseworker, plus the refugee’s Migration Health Assessment (MHA) and the results of security screening, which the Home Office would not have at the EO consideration stage.
- 6.26 Inspectors observed that the EO caseworkers did not regard themselves as decision makers. Their role was to conduct initial checks, and request any missing information. SCWs made the decision to accept the refugee onto the Scheme or not. The process appeared to involve duplication of effort, with much of the same information being checked twice.
- 6.27 The Casework Team senior manager told inspectors that the intention had been for SCWs to fulfil an assurance role rather to act as decision makers. However, “resettlement applicants committing serious crimes”<sup>42</sup> had been identified as a key risk, and it was essential that “not a single case [went] wrong”. While it was still the ambition to move to a targeted assurance regime, staff turnover and the relative inexperience of the EO caseworkers in post meant that 100% assurance of the EO casework was necessary.
- 6.28 EO caseworkers and SCWs were each required to complete 3 referred refugee family cases per day. It was not clear how this target had been set, and inspectors queried whether it was appropriate that the same target applied to both, given the different responsibilities. Senior managers told inspectors that they had not been able to evaluate these benchmarks because of the high turnover of staff.
- 6.29 Home Office data for the Scheme covering the period September 2015 to the end of 2017 indicated that the average time cases remained in the Casework WiP before a decision was made was 7 weeks. Between the end of Q3 and the end of Q4 2017, the number of refugees in the WiP increased from 924 to 2,771. In mid-October 2017, a new digital tool had been introduced which was intended to streamline the casework consideration process. However, senior managers reported that there had been numerous “teething problems”, which had caused a build-up in cases awaiting casework consideration.

---

40 Commenting on the draft report, the Home Office stated that there were 4 HEO senior caseworkers at this point, which contradicts what inspectors were told on 24 October 2017.

41 That the refugee was referred under one of UNHCR’s vulnerability criteria; resided in one of the 5 host countries; and had fled the conflict in Syria.

42 RASI’s ‘Risk Register’, July 2017, an internal Home Office document.

## Allocations 'Work in Progress'

- 6.30 Once the Casework Team had accepted a refugee for resettlement, the case was transferred to the 'Allocations WiP' for the Allocations Team to match the refugee with a local authority. The Allocations Team had a list of all refugees accepted for resettlement, including family size and composition, and another list of firm offers of accommodation from local authorities, with the specifications of the properties offered.
- 6.31 Having found a match, the Allocations Team referred the case via email to the relevant local authority, uploading the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) and Migration Health Assessment (MHA), with detailed information about the refugee family and its particular needs, to an online platform called MoveIT, which the local authority was able to access. These were known as 'bilateral referrals', and the local authority was asked to respond within 5 working days to accept or reject the match.
- 6.32 The 13-week process included 2 weeks for the matching of accommodation. However, it was clear that this was taking considerably longer with the Casework stage averaging 7 weeks, and the overall process averaging 35 weeks through the second half of 2017, the Allocations and Arrivals stages together were taking an average of 28 weeks.
- 6.33 Inspectors examined 71 cases in the Allocations WiP. In 22 of these, there were periods of weeks where there was no evidence of attempts to match and refer cases to local authorities or SMPs. The Home Office told inspectors:
- "The time taken to allocate a case is dependent on the availability of suitable accommodation. This needs to match in terms of size and also the specific needs of the case. Inevitably, some cases will wait longer than others. There are a large number of cases in the allocations WIP and it is not operationally practical to constantly review and proactively follow these up on an individual basis. We do however allocate the oldest cases which match the accommodation offered (whilst also taking into account other factors)."
- 6.34 Local authorities told inspectors that they had noticed a slowing down of allocations, and some were frustrated as this meant they risked having to withdraw an offer as the accommodation was no longer available. Stakeholders were also frustrated with the longer waiting times for refugees.
- 6.35 At the time of the inspection, the Allocations Team comprised an SEO team leader, an HEO manager, and 4 EOs, with 2 EO vacancies. Of the 4 EOs in post, 1 was due to leave on promotion in the near future, and 2 had been in post for only 2 months, having been transitioned from training to 'on the job learning' quicker than planned because of the staffing situation. Allocations Team members believed that staffing levels made it difficult for them to match refugees with offers of accommodation and support as quickly as they would like.
- 6.36 The senior manager responsible for the Allocations Team was also responsible for the Video Interviewing Team and had arranged for the latter to be trained in allocations work. Senior managers planned to run further recruitment campaigns and hoped to achieve a full complement of staff in the Allocations Team in 2018.
- 6.37 Meanwhile, the number of refugees in the Allocations WiP had grown during 2017. Having peaked at 2,451 at the end of Q3, by the end of the year it stood at just over 2,000. However, this reduction in Q4 coincided with a reduced throughput of cases from the Casework Team because of

the “teething problems” with the Casework Team’s digital tool, and the Allocations WiP was expected to grow significantly as the Casework Team cleared its build-up of cases.

6.38 Home Office senior managers and local authorities agreed that the greatest risk to resettling 20,000 refugees by 2020 came from the challenges of securing suitable accommodation. The Home Office’s Risk Register,<sup>43</sup> produced in July 2017, highlighted that “insufficient accommodation availability to match the profile of refugee cases, particularly if there is a high proportion of complex cases” could cause the Scheme to fail to meet the target. This risk was rated as “Red” in terms of likelihood, impact and proximity, and “Amber” in terms of implementing mitigations. The latter were listed as:

- “1. Agreeing a balance of complex versus non-complex referrals are delivered by UNHCR
2. Engaging closely with Strategic Migration Partnerships and Local Authorities around resourcing and accommodation offers
3. Developing digital solutions to support allocations
4. Strategic consideration of housing options and impact of benefit reform”

6.39 Home Office senior managers stressed that the longest part of the allocation process was “procurement of suitable properties”, while the majority of local authorities and SMPs who responded to the inspection’s online survey<sup>44</sup> cited “sourcing suitable and affordable accommodation” as their single greatest challenge.

### **Liaison with local authorities**

6.40 The senior manager responsible for the Contact Officers (part of the Local Authority Engagement Team) told inspectors that the latter’s core functions was to turn “high level pledges” into “concrete offers”, and to help to unblock any barriers to local authorities fulfilling their pledges. Allocations Team managers told inspectors that Contact Officers would usually be responsible for chasing up accommodation-matching referrals with SMPs and individual local authorities.

6.41 Inspectors found no evidence of Contact Officers helping to unblock barriers, such as uptake of “mobility cases”,<sup>45</sup> and the Contact Officers told inspectors they rarely intervened in the process once an allocation of accommodation had been made, and relied instead on the SMP. Although Contact Officers were intended to act as a single point of contact for local authorities, the latter found it easier in practice to liaise directly with the relevant Home Office Team, or to do so via their SMP.

6.42 Contact Officers told inspectors they saw their main value as being the public point of contact for the Scheme, and they spent most of their time responding to queries from local authorities or monitoring cases of interest. However, they were not responsible for collecting and sharing good practice.

6.43 There was also no evidence from the case records examined by inspectors that anyone had chased up a local authority when it had failed to respond to a bilateral referral within the agreed 5 working days. One local authority told inspectors that while it had good lines of communication with its

---

43 Internal Home Office document.

44 The inspection canvassed comments from all local authorities and SMPs via an online survey. 64 local authorities and 8 SMPs responded.

45 Cases where there was a need for special housing arrangements or adaptations due to a disability.

Contact Officer and had had “prompt and helpful” responses, it would like to see the Home Office being “more proactive” and chasing local authorities for updates on referrals.

- 6.44 Inspectors identified from the file sample that local authorities were routinely taking longer than 5 working days to respond to bilateral referrals – see Case Study 1.

### Case Study 1: Bilateral referral not chased by the Home Office

#### Summary

- On 12 December 2016, a couple with 2 children were referred to the Scheme, with legal and physical protection needs that could not be met in Lebanon, their host country.

#### What the Home Office did

- On 2 February 2017, the Home Office accepted the family for resettlement, acknowledging that the wife was pregnant and would need to travel to the UK by 2 May 2017
- On 6 March 2017, the family was matched to a firm offer of accommodation and the local authority contacted via email to confirm that it was able to accommodate and support the family
- On 3 April 2017, the local authority responded positively, but the Home Office deemed that it was now too close to the last “fit to fly” date and paused the case
- By October 2017, the family had neither been reallocated accommodation nor been resettled

#### Home Office comment

“We ask LAs to respond within 5 days but as it is a voluntary scheme, we cannot mandate this. However, it should have been made clearer in the referral the date by which we required an acceptance because of the wife’s pregnancy. Allocations didn’t chase this LA for a response. We should have done this.”

#### Independent Chief Inspector’s comment

The Home Office was aware of the pregnancy and the date by which flights would need to be arranged. Failure to prioritise and chase up the accommodation match led to the family being left in a vulnerable situation for longer than necessary.

### Family size and the impact of the Benefits Cap and Universal Credit

- 6.45 Prior to November 2015, no limit was placed on the size of families UNHCR was permitted to refer for resettlement under the Scheme. On 11 November 2015, the Home Office issued an instruction to UNHCR to refer only “up to case size 6”, as it was unable to find suitable accommodation for larger families. At the same time, it refused all cases that had been referred but not yet allocated accommodation where the family size was over 6.
- 6.46 The Benefits Cap, rolled out in November 2016, introduced a cap on state benefits for single claimants and for families.<sup>46</sup> In addition, changes to Universal Credit meant that families of 5 and

<sup>46</sup> In London the cap was £15,410 for single claimants and £23,000 for families, and outside London it was £13,400 for single claimants and £20,000 for families. See <https://www.gov.uk/benefit-cap>

6 arriving after 6 April 2017 were entitled to Child Tax Credit for the first 2 children only, unless exceptions applied.<sup>47</sup> Home Office data showed that 499 families of 5 or more members had been resettled prior to the introduction of the Benefits Cap on 6 November 2016.

- 6.47 The Home Office's Risk Register identified changes to welfare benefits since the Scheme was expanded as a risk to the delivery of 20,000 refugees, and senior managers also cited this to inspectors. In their response to the online survey, 12 local authorities reported that the Benefits Cap was acting as a disincentive to them offering larger properties for resettled refugees, as families of 5 and 6 found it impossible to manage on the capped income. Local authorities stated that they would take families of 6 only if there was "a strong likelihood of accessing disability-related benefits", as they "did not wish to see families brought to the UK to live in poverty."
- 6.48 The Allocations Team told inspectors that in London and the South East the cost of accommodation meant that some local authorities were unable to take family groups of 5 or 6.
- 6.49 Inspectors noted that some local authorities were utilising Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs),<sup>48</sup> and/or a proportion of the Home Office resettlement tariff, to top up rent payments. Other local authorities were reluctant to use tariff payments in this way as they did not believe this was sustainable or what the tariff was intended for. The Home Office was aware the tariff was being used in this way and told inspectors that it was for local authorities to decide whether they spent tariff payments on rent top-ups, but it would not recommend it. One Home Office manager told inspectors that it was a case of one "flagship" government policy clashing with another, with the real risk that the Home Office could resettle refugees into situations where they could not afford to live.
- 6.50 Stakeholders reported that they were concerned that if some of the tariff was spent on topping up rent, it would reduce what was available for essential integration support and lead to destitution once the tariff funding ended. They were uncertain how the Home Office was helping local authorities to ensure that accommodation for refugees is "affordable and sustainable", as outlined in the Funding Instruction.
- 6.51 Local authorities and delivery partners<sup>49</sup> in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out reported that they had had to invest a lot of time and effort in helping resettled families manage the changes. Problems had arisen because refugees had been unable to manage online credit journals, and because of the length of time it took for applications to be approved. Local authorities also told inspectors that since Universal Credit had introduced the payment of housing benefit to the refugees themselves (rather than the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) making housing payments directly to landlords), landlords were reluctant to offer accommodation for resettlement as they were concerned that refugees would fail to pay their rent.<sup>50</sup>
- 6.52 The Home Office stated that it had taken steps "to minimise the impact" of welfare changes and provided an additional £100 per refugee on arrival to mitigate the 6 week wait for the first Universal Credit payment. The Home Office had also discussed possible solutions with the DWP, such as direct rent payments to landlords. These measures did not go far enough for a number of local authorities and delivery partners, who felt that additional support, or an exemption from the

---

47 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/608051/universal-credit-2-child-limit-flowchart.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608051/universal-credit-2-child-limit-flowchart.pdf)

48 Individuals may apply for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) where the housing benefit or universal credit does not cover the cost of rent. Local authorities award DHP on a case by case basis and for a limited period. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/claiming-discretionary-housing-payments>.

49 3<sup>rd</sup> parties, often charities, contracted by local authorities to deliver integration support.

50 Commenting on the draft inspection report, the Home Office stated: "Recent changes to universal credit have reduced the processing time for claims. Claimants can also request an advance and ask for their housing payments to be paid directly to landlords. Landlords can also request for this change." This was not previously mentioned to inspectors, and the local authorities who spoke to inspectors did not appear to be aware of it.

Benefits Cap, was needed for the first 12 months after arrival while refugees learnt English and adapted to life in the UK. DWP told inspectors that the Home Office had requested exemption from the Benefits Cap for certain vulnerable refugees, but these requests had been rejected as it did not want to be seen to be prioritising refugees over other vulnerable individuals.<sup>51</sup>

### Linked cases/family reunification

- 6.53 The Home Office, UNHCR and IOM agreed that resettling extended families together was important for integration, and the Home Office looked to resettle multiple or linked family groups at the same time and in the same location. This brought its own challenges and created delays.
- 6.54 In terms of acceptance onto the Scheme, a issue with the processing of one individual could mean that everyone in the family group was put on hold. At the UK end, securing multiple properties in the same area at the same time was difficult, especially in London.
- 6.55 Inspectors found no evidence that the Home Office or UNHCR made refugees aware that looking to be resettled near other family members could delay their resettlement. The file examination found examples where the Home Office had overlooked information from the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF), or from the video interview, indicating that the refugee(s) did not mind being resettled separately from other family groups, for example an adult brother and his family.

### Migration Health Assessments

- 6.56 Refugees referred to the Home Office for resettlement had to undergo a Migration Health Assessment (MHA) by IOM medical practitioners. The Home Office commissioned IOM to produce an MHA once it has received the Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) from UNHCR. In October 2017, inspectors were given a walkthrough of the IOM clinic in Amman by the medical director and specialist staff. Refugees had blood and urine tests, received inoculations, had chest x-rays, were checked for physical infirmities and signs of psychological trauma. The clinic was modern and well-equipped. Its capacity had been increased to deal with refugees selected for resettlement to the USA, but with the latter's resettlement programme paused at the time of the inspection, the clinic was not being used to the full.
- 6.57 Once it had matched a refugee family to accommodation, the Home Office shared the results of the MHA with the local authority to allow the latter to assess whether the accommodation was indeed suitable and that it could provide the services required to meet the refugees' medical needs.
- 6.58 Inspectors noted from the files they examined that most MHAs appeared to be thorough and contained specific recommendations regarding what sort of accommodation and support the refugee(s) required. However, this was not so in every case. Meanwhile, of the 72 local

---

<sup>51</sup> Commenting on the draft inspection report, the Home Office stated: "The move into work will be more difficult for some than it is for others. Therefore those impacted by the Benefit Cap are offered support to find work, budget, and general housing advice. Part-time work can be sufficient to lift households out of the cap. Whilst we understand the difficulties associated with this, access to employment is an essential part of resettling and integrating families into our communities. We expect local authorities to work closely with the Department for Work and Pension to support resettled families into work. The programme has also mitigated risks of the cap through: 'Investing an additional £10m in ESOL provision for resettled adults' to boost and intensify support for English language and providing separate funding for childcare provision to support ESOL access; 'Providing intensive and tailored employment support for all working age adults' through the new DWP Work and Health Programme to be rolled out across the UK from October 2017. DWP have taken the policy decision that those with refugee status will qualify to join the programme immediately; 'Working with authorities and DWP to ensure that every resettled family entitled to an exemption from the Benefit Cap receives one'. Following a legal challenge DWP have recently removed residency requirements for Personal Independence Payments and some other disability benefits, which will increase the numbers entitled to claim these benefits, and therefore an exemption to the Benefit Cap; and, 'Working with partners to pilot tailored employment support through expansion of our employment pilots', which focus on getting people into work and provide intensive employment support based on previous skills/qualifications. Discussions are also ongoing with DWP and ministers to consider a range of options."

authorities that responded to the inspection’s online survey, around half (35) felt that the medical information they received was not sufficient:

- 25 reported that the MHA contained inaccurate information or missed medical conditions, including 2 pregnancies
- 4 reported that medical conditions were either understated or underplayed on the MHA
- 4 reported that the information was contradictory or unclear, particularly regarding the level of mobility
- 2 local authorities did not provide any further explanation

6.59 A handful of local authorities and SMPs stated that they would like MHAs to be more specific in terms of accommodation needs, especially with regard to whether the refugee required ground floor accommodation. Since local authorities could not conduct their own assessments until the refugee arrived they had to err on the side of caution and this could mean ground floor accommodation was tied up unnecessarily, money was spent making alterations that were not needed, or a local authority rejected a refugee because their mobility issues were imagined to be greater than was actually the case. Integration delivery partners also told inspectors that sometimes they were unable to tailor support to refugees because they were unaware of particular medical conditions.

6.60 The Allocations Team said that problems often arose because information on the MHAs was not clearly dated, particularly when the document had been updated following the initial IOM assessment.

## Case Study 2: A Migration Health Assessment containing contradictory information

### Summary

A Migration Health Assessment (MHA), dated 1 November 2016, noted the refugee “can walk and ascend stairs with mild pain and moves without help of walking aid.”

However, in a separate section of the MHA, it stated: “mobility problem accommodation without stairs.”

### What the Home Office did

The Home Office categorised the case as requiring ground floor accommodation and included it on an ‘Accommodation Matching Special Exercise for Mobility Cases’.

In September 2017, it asked UNHCR to discuss accommodation preferences with the refugee.

In October 2017, when inspectors examined the file, the refugee had yet to be matched with a suitable property.

### Home Office comment

The Home Office said it was “not clear” why the MHA concluded only ground floor accommodation would suffice for this refugee, and it “would usually ask IOM to clarify”. The Home Office also said it would “normally pick up on and refer any anomalies back to IOM”.

### Independent Chief Inspector's comment

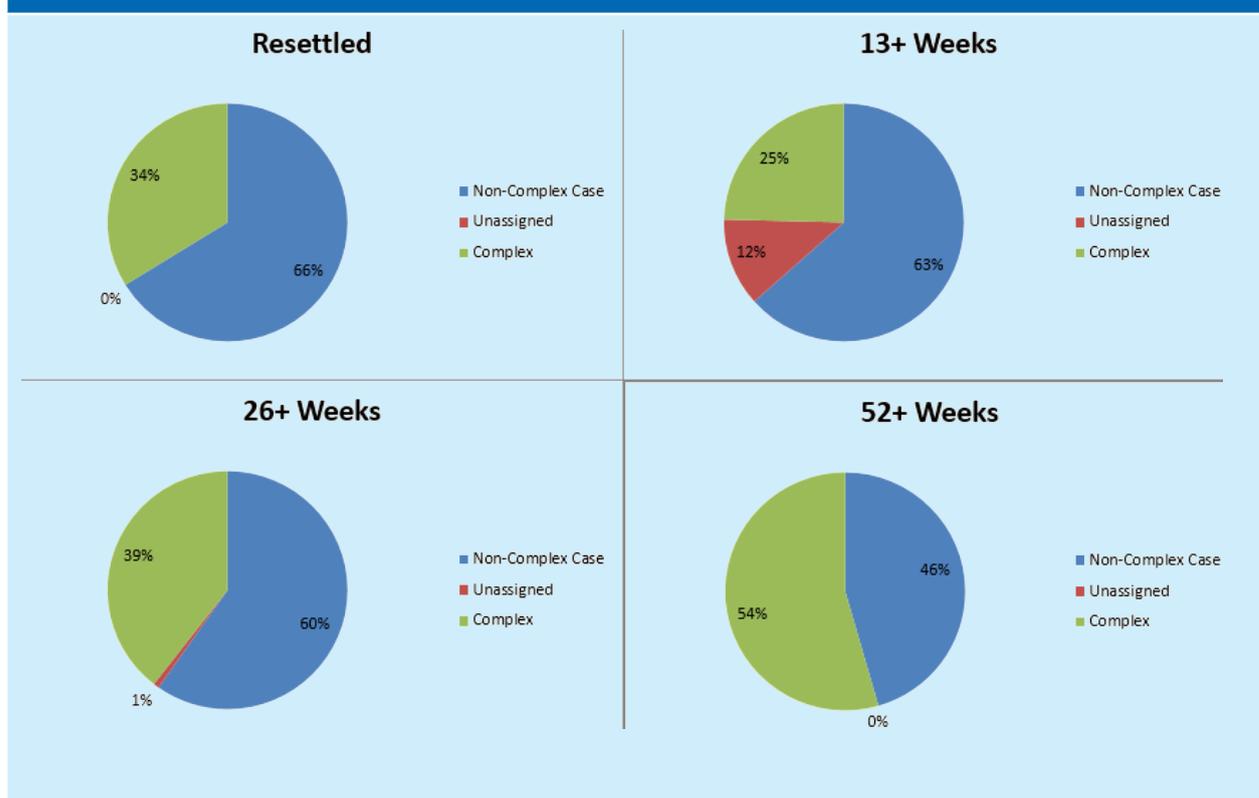
The MHA included contradictory statements, making it difficult to be certain about the specific accommodation requirements and leading to delays.

6.61 The Home Office had fed back to IOM about issues with MHAs. It became apparent that IOM staff had assumed that UK properties with stairs would have 70 or more steps, leading them to conclude only ground floor accommodation was suitable for those with mobility issues. IOM medical staff in Amman said that their head office in London had since sent pictures of typical stairs and staircases in the UK, which medical staff had showed to refugees complaining of mobility issues to get their reaction and ease their concerns. They also told inspectors that they had recently introduced a mobility assessment and, where appropriate, asked refugees to demonstrate whether they could manage the stairs in the medical centre.

### Impact of complexity

6.62 Where the refugee had specific needs relating to mobility, a medical condition, mental health, education or employment, the Home Office categorised the case as 'complex'. This was done by a senior caseworker (SCW) in the Casework Team. Other cases were categorised as 'non-complex', while those not yet reviewed by a SCW were 'unassigned'. Home Office staff told inspectors that complex cases were difficult to match with suitable accommodation, which meant they typically took longer to resettle – see Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Pie charts showing the proportion of 'complex', 'non-complex' and 'unassigned' cases at different stages of the Allocations WiP**



6.64 Local authorities reported that they often had to reject complex cases as there were no suitable ground floor properties available.

6.65 The Home Office did not hold central records of the number of rejections or the reasons given by local authorities for rejecting accommodation referrals. The Scheme's senior civil servant lead told inspectors that if a local authority rejected a refugee the Home Office would look to accommodate them with another authority, and that as at the end of November 2017 the scheme had not rejected any refugees on the basis they could not be resettled. However, the Home Office had recognised the need to introduce measures to facilitate complex cases, and particularly those with mobility needs.

### **Accommodation Matching Special Exercise (AMSE)**

6.66 The Accommodation Matching Special Exercise (AMSE) was introduced in September 2016, and then revised in early 2017. Under AMSE, the Home Office identified and flagged cases where there was a need for special housing arrangements or adaptations due to a disability which impeded the movement of one or more of the family members. These 'mobility cases' were maintained on a spreadsheet. The Home Office looked to allocate accommodation to the oldest cases first as soon as a suitable property was offered, but could decide to allocate it to a more recent mobility case if this was a better match.

6.67 Inspectors examined the records for 71 cases that had been in the Allocations WiP for more than 6 months. Of these, 21 were AMSE mobility cases.

6.68 Initially under AMSE, different batches of mobility cases were referred to different SMPs for consideration and matching with any suitable properties. However, no deadlines were set and SMPs were not chased for updates, leading a senior manager to describe the exercise as "stagnant". The effect was that cases were not actively progressed and spent many months 'ring fenced' from being referred to other local authorities or regions. Also, because of inconsistent record keeping, some mobility cases had been re-referred to a region that had already rejected them.

6.69 The Home Office told inspectors it had since improved the quality of its mobility case referrals. From 2017, cases were referred to an SMP 12 to 13 weeks before the deadline for a decision. This was intended to give SMPs and local authorities time to find appropriate accommodation, but with a deadline. An SMP told inspectors that the additional time enabled it to arrange adaptations to properties. Meanwhile, the cases were not 'ring fenced' to the region, but could be matched with accommodation offered by another local authority if this became available.

6.70 Since November 2015, the Home Office had made use of charter flights to ensure mobility cases were resettled as soon as possible. The charter flights looked to take a mix of case types: roughly, 50% 'straight forward', 30% complex, and 20% mobility cases. This had reduced the stock of mobility cases in those host countries (Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey) from which the charter flights operated. Consequently, the Home Office had begun to organise what it termed "split charters". With these, 80% of the refugees a local authority had agreed to accommodate would arrive by charter, while the other 20%, made up of mobility cases, would arrive at the same time on scheduled flights from the other ('non-charter') host countries. An SMP told inspectors that by arriving on the same day it made it easier for them to coordinate meeting the refugees on arrival and delivering integration support.

6.71 However, the "split charter" approach was possible for only half of the UK's regions, as the others had not agreed to take refugees in batches in this way. SMPs from those regions that did receive charters told inspectors that there was a growing feeling amongst them that they were taking a disproportionate number of mobility and complex cases. The Home Office had asked

the other regions to make offers to take a specific number of mobility cases, but at the time of the inspection only 1 of these regions had responded with an offer.

## Exceptional costs

6.72 The 2017-18 Funding Instruction stated:

“Payments may also be made in order to cover additional essential costs incurred by the Recipient above and beyond what could reasonably be regarded as normal expenditure and not available through other mainstream funding mechanisms.”<sup>52</sup>

6.73 The Home Office had budgeted £36 million for ‘exceptional costs’ for the duration of the Scheme. Local authorities were able to claim up to £30,000 to pay for property adaptations, and may also claim ‘void costs’ for rental payments where accommodation had been secured but there were delays in resettling refugees.<sup>53</sup> As at 31 December 2017, just £2.4 million had been claimed by local authorities since the Scheme began, against a budget to that date of £17.9 million – see Figure 10.

**Figure 10: Table showing the number and value of claims made to 31 December 2017**

Type of claim	Value of claims £K	Number of LAs making a claim
Exceptional costs	115.7	15
Void costs	47.5	20
Healthcare Providers	964.1	N/K
Social care	249	12
Special educational needs	725.8	44
To be categorised	300	34

6.74 Home Office senior managers told inspectors that they had received fewer claims than expected, but did not know why this was the case.

6.75 A quarter of the local authorities and SMPs that responded to the inspection’s online survey felt that the Scheme’s Funding Instructions were not clear, and that greater clarity and assurances about funding levels at the referral stage would encourage local authorities to accept higher numbers of complex cases.<sup>54</sup>

## Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS)

6.76 On 19 July 2016, the Home Secretary launched the Community Sponsorship Scheme (CSS) “to empower and enable community groups to take on the challenging but rewarding role of welcoming and supporting a resettled family in the UK.”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> See footnote 21.

<sup>53</sup> Local authorities receive the first 8 weeks’ void costs as part of the tariff. Where the period before resettlement exceeds 8 weeks, local authorities may claim the additional ‘void costs’ from the exceptional costs budget. The programme is also making an additional 1 month of void costs available to secure large (4-bedroom) properties.

<sup>54</sup> The Home Office commented that: “This contradicts the findings of the Year 1 Review”.

<sup>55</sup> This was updated in July 2017: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/626810/Community\\_sponsorship\\_guidance\\_for\\_prospective\\_sponsors\\_July\\_2017.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626810/Community_sponsorship_guidance_for_prospective_sponsors_July_2017.pdf).

- 6.77 The inspiration for the UK CSS had come largely from Canada. Between 4 November 2015 and 29 January 2017, Canada had resettled over 14,000 Syrian refugees via its Private Sponsorship Programme.<sup>56</sup> Canadian officials in Amman told inspectors that they had been able to draw on a long track record of successfully resettled and fully integrated first and second generation refugees, with private sponsorship dating back 40 years to the resettlement of Vietnamese ‘boat people’ in the late 1970s.<sup>57</sup>

## The CSS process

- 6.78 In July 2016, the Home Office published a Statement of Requirements<sup>58</sup> for prospective CSS sponsors. This largely aligned with the requirements of the Funding Instruction for local authorities. Sponsors were required to demonstrate they had ring-fenced funds of £9,000 per refugee to support integration,<sup>59</sup> and had secured suitable accommodation for a minimum of 2 years.
- 6.79 Speaking to inspectors in August 2017, stakeholders expressed concern that the Statement of Requirements did not contain enough detail about how sponsors should support integration outcomes, and what would happen if sponsors stopped providing support. The Home Office told inspectors that up to the 5-year point from resettlement, local authorities would be required to pick up integration support where a CSS sponsor defaulted. In such circumstances, the local authority would be entitled to the normal tariff payments.
- 6.80 Charities and community groups had to seek the approval of their local authority to register as a sponsor. The former could inspect any property being offered and would consider whether the local area had the necessary services, while the police were asked whether there were any community cohesion or race relations concerns. Meanwhile, the Home Office had introduced a rigorous application process designed to ensure that sponsors had the means and commitment to support refugees. This included a detailed integration support plan.<sup>60</sup>
- 6.81 The Home Office has offered to prospective sponsors to review applications in draft prior to formal submission to ensure they contained the required detail. It visited prospective sponsors, and considered applications in a two-stage process, involving internal review panels attended by operational managers and safeguarding and integration leads.<sup>61</sup> Contact Officers made separate visits to sponsors and refugees after months 1,3 and 9 to ensure that the relationship was working and to monitor progress against the sponsor’s resettlement plan.

## Progress

- 6.82 In the 14 months from the launch of CSS to the beginning of October 2017 fewer than 20 sponsors had been approved, and just 53 refugees had been resettled – see Figure 11.

---

56 14,274 refugees were privately sponsored between 4 November 2015 and 29 January 2017 <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees/key-figures.html>

57 Refugees who fled Vietnam by boat and ship after the Vietnam war, especially from 1978, with over 100,000 resettling in Canada.

58 Accessed <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship>

59 “You should provide a letter from the chief finance officer for your organisation explaining that at least £9,000 has been ring-fenced for the purposes of sponsorship and will be available to use if necessary, and evidence of the funds in the form of a bank statement.”

60 Home Office published Resettlement Plan template at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship>

61 An Initial Assessment Panel, comprising an SEO/HEO manager from Community Sponsorship Team and regional Contact Officer or regional strategic lead, reviews the application and requests further information or progresses to a site visit. A Decision Panel reviews all evidence and makes a final decision. The Decision Panel is chaired by the Grade 6 Operations Lead, with senior managers invited from other relevant teams.

**Figure 11: Table showing the progress and WiP of the CSS between 19 July 2016 and 6 October 2017<sup>62</sup>**

Stage	Number of Sponsors	Number of Refugees
Family resettled in UK	10	53
Family matched with sponsor and flights arranged	2	11
Sponsor approved, awaiting matching with a refugee family	5	-
Sponsor approved by Decision Panel, pending certain actions or additional information	0	-
Under consideration	6	-
Sponsor has expressed interest, but not yet submitted an application	20	-
Sponsor had expressed interest, but had decided not to submit an application	11	-
Rejected	0	-

6.83 The 53 resettled refugees were found places by 10 sponsors. While the overall numbers were small, the average family size was higher than that for the Scheme as a whole, which was 4.14.

6.84 Home Office managers stressed that ministers had never imposed targets on the CSS. The Community Sponsorship Team had set an “internal ambition” to resettle 50 individuals with 10 sponsors in the first year, and by 19 July 2017 had resettled 49 refugees with 9 sponsors. For the second year (to July 2018), the Team had aimed to resettle 250 refugees with 50 sponsors,<sup>63</sup> but managers told inspectors in October 2017 that this would not be achieved. From 19 July to the end of 2017, there were just 27 arrivals in 5 family groups.

### Restrictions on prospective sponsors

6.85 Managers told inspectors that a priority had been building a sustainable framework for CSS resettlement, and this meant establishing and embedding the correct policies and procedures, hence progress had been deliberately slow.

6.86 Staff responsible for developing the CSS policy stressed that it was “not for everyone”, as supporting a vulnerable refugee family required a significant commitment, and they had “set the bar justifiably high”. Following the announcement of the commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees by 2020, the Scheme’s Correspondence Team had received numerous offers from members of the public, including of spare bedrooms and shared accommodation. However, the decision was quickly taken to restrict CSS to those who could provide a separate dwelling.<sup>64</sup>

62 Described by the Home Office as “internal operational information ... not intended for publication”.

63 The internal ambition for year 3 (to July 2019) is to resettle families with 100 community sponsors.

64 Defined by the team as having a separate front door.

- 6.87 The time taken by the Home Office to approve community sponsors had been publicly criticised.<sup>65</sup> According to the Home Office, a lot of the time was taken up by prospective sponsors not providing sufficient information to meet the CSS' stringent application requirements.
- 6.88 The CSS had received expressions of interest from community groups to sponsor more than one family. However, the Home Office chose to accept single applications only, irrespective of the capacity of the sponsor. This had had an impact on the number of refugees who could be resettled under the CSS, but it was seen as a necessary safeguard to ensure sponsors could cope with resettling one family. In October 2017, the Home Office was considering the first application from a sponsor looking to take a second family.

## Staffing

- 6.89 The CSS team had started with 1 member of staff developing the policy, quickly increasing to 2 members of staff, both responsible for policy and guidance. An SEO with responsibility for operational delivery was not appointed until the end of 2016. The SEO was joined by an EO in July 2017, after it was decided that there was too much work for 1 person. In October 2017, the operational delivery team increased to 5 staff, with the addition of a part-time HEO and 2 EOs who were transferred from the Correspondence Team. These new members of staff were being inducted at the time of the inspection, and roles within the team had not been defined.

## Public awareness and appetite

- 6.90 Policy leads speculated that CSS uptake may have been higher had it been announced at the point the Scheme was expanded in September 2015. This was when public interest in the Syrian refugee crisis was at its highest, as reflected in the "public outpouring of support" for the Scheme.
- 6.91 However, promotion of the CSS following its launch in July 2016 had been muted. There was no dedicated operational lead in place at this point, although the Home Office told inspectors that there were "operational delivery resources in place to deal with the first applications". At the time of the inspection, the focus was on raising awareness and reaching out to prospective sponsors.
- 6.92 In July 2017, Canadian officials and community representatives with experience of the Canadian Private Sponsorship Programme, together with Home Office staff, jointly hosted a series of CSS 'roadshows', open to members of the public, at 6 venues across the UK.<sup>66</sup> Inspectors attended the first of these, in Kingston-upon-Thames, where attendees were told 2 families had been successfully resettled locally through community sponsorship. The meeting was well-attended, mostly by groups and bodies already actively involved in supporting refugees.
- 6.93 Inspectors noted that refugees had been resettled via the CSS in only 5 of the 12 UK regions.<sup>67</sup> Staff told inspectors that where an area had an established CSS sponsor this boosted regional awareness. Meanwhile, the Home Office was working with SMPs to raise awareness in regions where there was no CSS sponsor as yet.
- 6.94 A number of stakeholders told inspectors they were reluctant to support the CSS. They believed that CSS resettlements should not be counted against the 20,000 target, and the UK should make a commitment to a separate CSS figure. A Home Office senior manager told inspectors that the Home Office was not relying on the CSS to make a significant contribution to the delivery

---

65 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/18/uk-community-refugee-scheme-has-resettled-only-two-syrian-families>

66 Kingston-upon-Thames, Lambeth Palace, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Aberystwyth.

67 London, North West, South East, South West and Wales – up to 30 November 2017.

of the 20,000. However, if the CSS was a success it could encourage and be applied to possible future resettlement pledges.

## **Public goodwill**

- 6.95 Beyond the CSS, the Home Office had sought to harness public goodwill via a webpage on GOV.UK.<sup>68</sup> This directed members of the public to volunteering opportunities with charities and how to make donations.
- 6.96 Delivery partners reported that they received support from local communities ranging from donations of toys and clothes, to helpers accompanying refugees to doctor's appointments or hosting tea mornings. Many of the local authorities who responded to the online survey stated that they relied on community support and that this was the biggest facilitator of refugees' integration and to them achieving a degree of self-sufficiency in the community.

---

<sup>68</sup> Accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-refugees-what-you-can-do-to-help--2>

## 7. Inspection findings – resettling “the most vulnerable”

### UNHCR vulnerability criteria

- 7.1 When it was launched in January 2014, the Home Secretary announced that the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (the Scheme) would assist the “refugees at greatest risk” by resettling “the most vulnerable” refugees displaced by the Syrian conflict.
- 7.2 The senior civil servant lead responsible for driving integration and vulnerability policy within UKVI told inspectors that the Home Office had recognised that it was “not qualified to assess vulnerability” and had therefore contracted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to identify and prioritise “the most vulnerable” refugees for resettlement via the Scheme.
- 7.3 UNHCR used its established vulnerability criteria to identify suitable cases to refer to the Home Office during this initial phase of the Scheme. Those criteria were:
- women and girls at risk
  - survivors of violence and/or torture
  - refugees with legal and/or physical protection needs
  - individuals with medical needs or disabilities
  - children and adolescents at risk
  - persons at risk due to their sexual orientation or gender identity (actual or perceived)
  - refugees in need of family reunification
- 7.4 In May 2015, UNHCR amended its vulnerability criteria – see Figure 12. Since then, the amended criteria have been applied to all resettlement referrals made by UNHCR to the UK.

**Figure 12: UNHCR’s Global Vulnerability Criteria<sup>69</sup>**

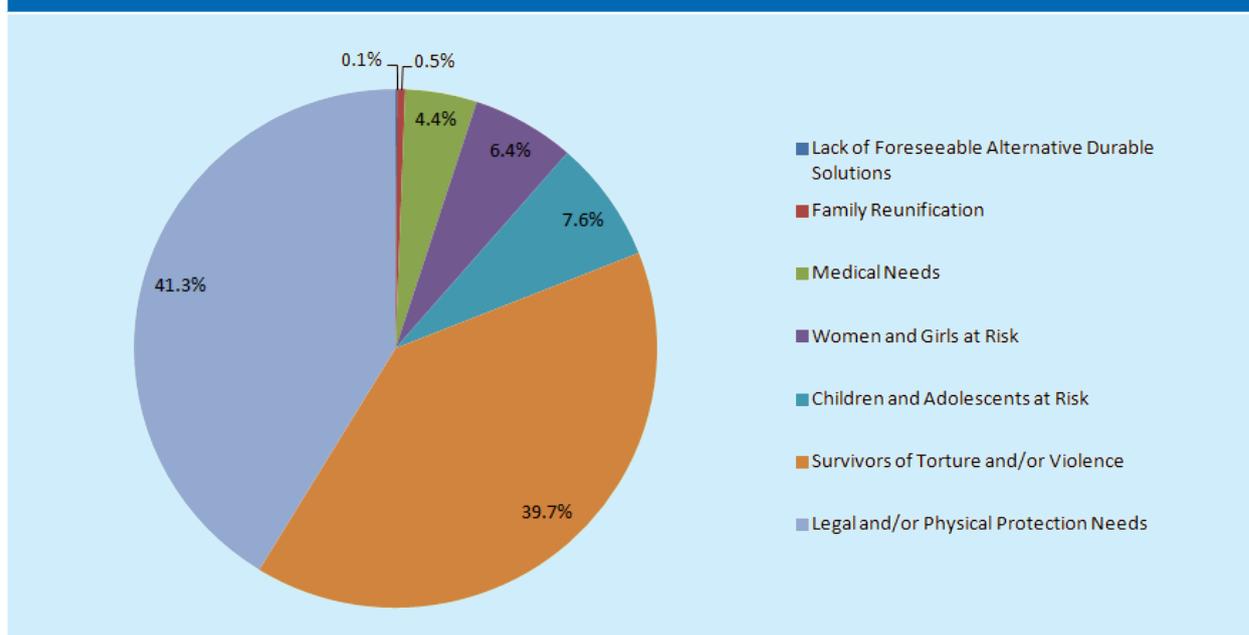
Vulnerability criteria	Description
Legal and/or physical protection needs	Individuals who face serious threats to their physical security, particularly due to political opinion or belonging to a minority group, for whom the authorities are unable to provide protection; or who have other protection risks related to their gender
Survivors of torture and/or violence	Where repatriation or the conditions of asylum could result in further traumatising and/or heightened risk; or where appropriate treatment is not available
Medical needs	Where life-saving treatment is needed that is unavailable in the country of first refuge

<sup>69</sup> Internal UNHCR document.

Women and girls at risk	Where there are heightened protection needs due to gender
Family reunification	When resettlement is the only means to reunite refugee family members who, owing to refugee flight or displacement, are separated by borders or entire continents
Children and adolescents at risk	Where a 'best interests' determination supports resettlement
Lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions	Where other solutions are not feasible in the foreseeable future, when resettlement can be used strategically, and/or when it can open possibilities for comprehensive solutions

7.5 For each referral to the Scheme, the Home Office recorded only the primary vulnerability cited by UNHCR. As at the end of 2017, Home Office data indicated that in around 80% of UNHCR referrals the primary vulnerability cited was either 'legal and/or physical protection needs' or 'survivors of torture and/or violence'. Only 0.1% of referrals were recorded as citing 'lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions' as the primary criterion. However, UNHCR told inspectors that they considered this applied to "almost all Syrian refugees in the region" and typically listed it as a secondary criterion, casting doubt on the value of the Home Office data – see Figure 13.

**Figure 13: Pie chart showing the breakdown of UNHCR referrals by primary vulnerability criterion as recorded by the Home Office (to 31 December 2017)**

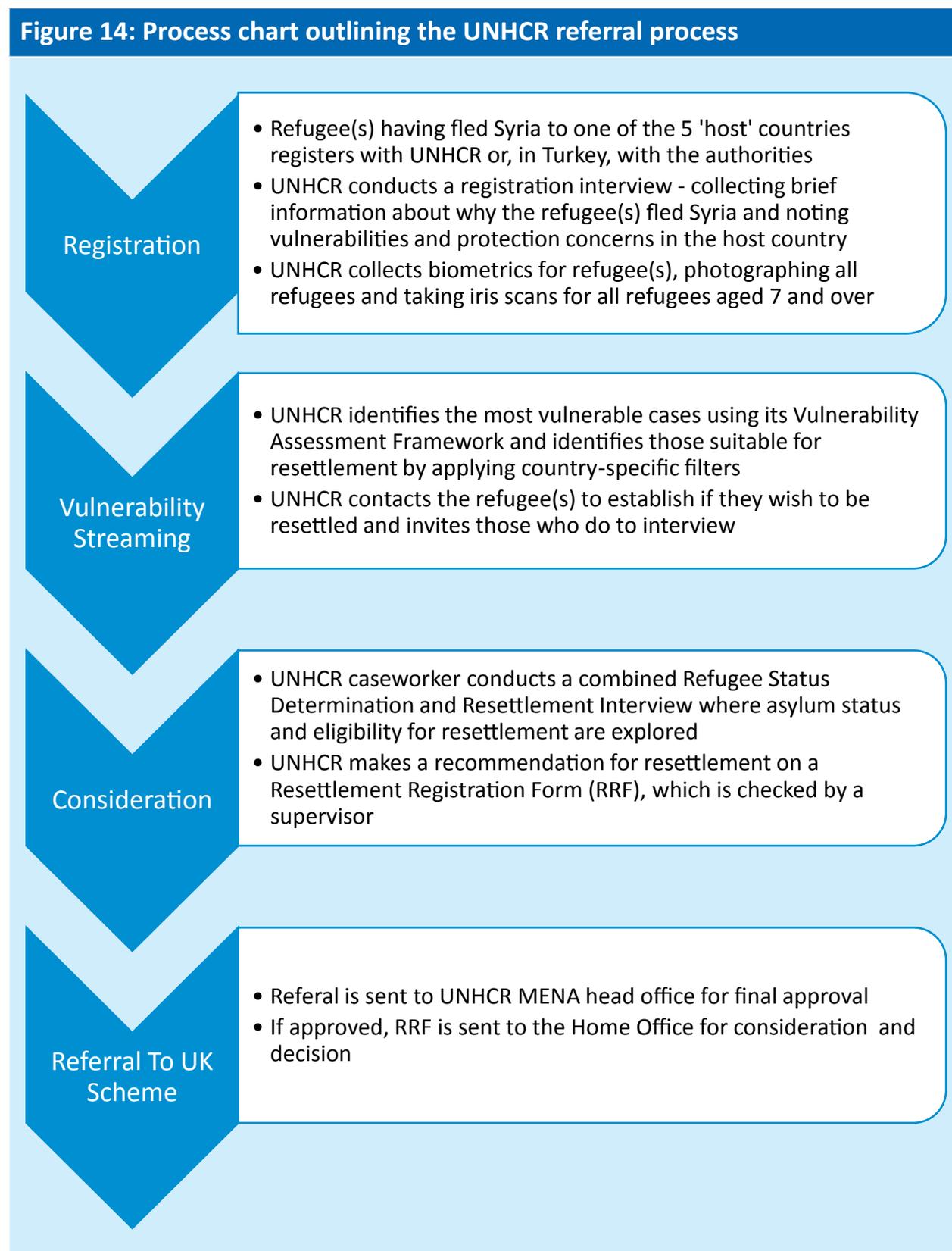


7.6 Some stakeholders were critical of the UNHCR's changes to the vulnerability criteria, pointing out that the list no longer recognised resettlement claims based on sexual orientation. In their view, this meant that the UK Government was failing to meet its commitment to "prioritise the most vulnerable refugees ... [including] LGBT people."<sup>70</sup> From the recorded data, inspectors were not able to test this. However, UNHCR assured inspectors that, in practice, LGBT refugees continued to be prioritised, and would typically fall under the 'legal and/or physical protection needs' criterion.

<sup>70</sup> Statement in Parliament on 1 December 2016 by Baroness Williams, Minister of State, Home Office.

## UNHCR selection and consideration process

7.7 UNHCR's process followed 4 stages: Registration; Vulnerability streaming; Consideration; Referral (to the UK Scheme) – see Figure 14.



## Registration

- 7.8 In addition to recording biometrics and biographical data, the Home Office looks to UNHCR to determine the identity and nationality of refugees. The Home Office had not provided any guidance to UNHCR for this part of the process, nor any monitoring or evaluation of what UNHCR had put in place. Having received guarantees from UNHCR that it always checked nationality, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued to Home Office caseworkers when considering a Resettlement Registration Form (RRF) stated “it is not necessary for the RRF to contain a statement in the RRF confirming that nationality questioning has taken place”.<sup>71</sup>
- 7.9 UNHCR sent a scanned copy of the refugee’s identity document(s) with the referral. These were invariably in Arabic. The Home Office did not request English translations. Senior managers confirmed that “caseworkers do not verify documents sent by UNHCR” and “the default is to rely on UNHCR to have verified the copies”.
- 7.10 UNHCR told inspectors that it considered that where refugees presented official Syrian documents these could be relied upon to demonstrate nationality, identity and family links. However, the Scheme’s security and safeguarding policy managers advised inspectors that the Home Office placed limited reliance on official documents issued after the start of the civil war in 2011, because there was a risk that they would be fraudulent. This view was shared by Canadian and Australian counterparts in Amman, with the latter commenting that resettlement criteria were widely known and production of fraudulent documentation to support applications had increased.
- 7.11 The Scheme’s Risk Register identified a “resettled applicant committing a serious crime” as a key risk, which would be mitigated through “reviewing UNHCR security procedures”. Home Office senior managers told inspectors that all accepted cases followed the same biometric visa processing as other types of visa applicants, and that the UNHCR process had been established in line with information on the level of risk to international resettlement. They contended that the risk was therefore being managed. However, consideration was being given to increasing assurance activity, including possible dip sampling of cases and assurance visits to UNHCR (MENA).
- 7.12 The Home Office could commission IOM to carry out DNA checks to establish identity and family relationships, but inspectors were told by Home Office staff that these were rarely requested and when they were UNHCR would “push back”. UNHCR told inspectors that it was opposed to DNA testing except in “exceptional circumstances”, as it posed a risk to family safety and cohesion, because it could be seen as challenging family relationships and could expose adultery. Before 2017, the Home Office did not record the number of DNA tests it commissioned. In 2017, up to 6 October, it had commissioned 6 – see Case Study 4.

### Case study 4: Use of fraudulent documentation and request for DNA test

#### Summary

On 19 December 2016, a family of 6 was accepted onto the Scheme. The family was due to fly to the UK from Lebanon on 3 May 2017, however the flights were cancelled 9 days before departure as the Lebanese authorities rejected the exit permit application and identified that the birth registration document for the youngest daughter, aged 6, listed the principal applicant’s brother as the child’s father.

<sup>71</sup> Casework Team SOPs – internal Home Office document.

### **What the Home Office did**

The Home Office requested a DNA test, which confirmed that the child was the principal applicant's daughter. UNHCR investigated and established that the refugee had explained in his resettlement interview that he had obtained the birth registration document for his daughter fraudulently, due to difficulties in Syria. It was unclear why this information had not been recorded on the RRF.

### **Home Office comments**

The Home Office explained that it did not query further the discrepancy in the child's date or place of birth as "this is not uncommon in Syria and is down to a variety of reasons".

It commented that [they] "rely on UNHCR...to submit accurate RRFs". UNHCR is "responsible for all out-of country casework activity, including scrutinising identity documents and interviewing registered refugees to identify and act on any safeguarding concerns". The RRF in this case was submitted with a civil extract in Arabic for the child and her siblings and this was "considered a valid document" for the Scheme's purposes.

### **Independent Chief Inspector's comment**

The issue with the girl's birth registration document should have been identified earlier in the registration process and before UNHCR submitted this family for resettlement. While the fact that original documents are in Arabic poses an obvious problem, the case highlights that the Home Office should have greater input into what documentation is required as proof of identity and family relationships, and should not simply take information in the RRF at face value.

## **Vulnerability streaming**

- 7.13 Once refugees were registered, UNHCR moved on to determining which were "the most vulnerable" and should be put forward for resettlement.
- 7.14 In May 2014, UNHCR, with others,<sup>72</sup> launched the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF). The VAF had two key components: 'vulnerability' and 'the assistance required' by the refugee(s). The second of these recognised that certain refugees required more and/or faster assistance than others.
- 7.15 The VAF was designed to assess and prioritise the vulnerability of refugee families not living in an official refugee camp, allocating a vulnerability score of 1 to 4<sup>73</sup> to specific indicators of vulnerability. UNHCR caseworkers visited refugee families and assessed them against 11 indicators of vulnerability using a VAF questionnaire.<sup>74</sup> This information was uploaded onto a database, which also recorded information collected during registration and by partner organisations, and ranked refugees on their level of vulnerability.
- 7.16 A further streaming tool applied filters to the vulnerability database so that only refugees suitable for resettlement were identified for referral. The filters were aligned with UNHCR's general resettlement eligibility criteria. For example, polygamous marriages, ex-combatants, criminals, and those unwilling to be resettled, were filtered out.

<sup>72</sup> UNICEF, UN Women, World Health Organisation, World Food Programme, Handicap International and other international and national agencies.

<sup>73</sup> Where 1 = low vulnerability, 2 = moderate vulnerability, 3 = high vulnerability and 4 = severe vulnerability.

<sup>74</sup> The 11 vulnerability indicators are: predicted welfare, dependency ratio, coping strategies, documentation status, disability (introduced in 2017), socio-economic vulnerability, food security, access to wash and hygiene facilities, shelter, health and education.

- 7.17 In addition to these ‘general filters’, country-specific filters ensured that referrals aligned with the eligibility criteria of the particular resettlement country. For the UK Scheme, the country-specific filters filtered out all cases with family size over 6, those who had fled Syria before 2011, and those not residing in 1 of the 5 host countries.
- 7.18 Inspectors visited UNHCR in Jordan in November 2017 and noted that the filters applied for the UK Scheme still included “Syrian nationals”, thereby filtering out all other nationalities, despite the fact the UK Scheme had been extended to non-Syrian nationals on 5 July 2017. UNHCR told inspectors that it reviewed the filters for the UK Scheme annually, and this would be rectified when they were next reviewed. By 30 November 2017, only 4 cases involving non-Syrian nationals had been referred to the UK Scheme, however this had increased to 22 by the end of 2017.
- 7.19 Home Office senior managers told inspectors that UNHCR HQ in Geneva had been consulted about the extension of the Scheme to non-Syrians, and the Home Office relied on UNHCR HQ to disseminate this policy change. They said that the terms of the extension had been deliberately broad as it was “not possible to codify all possible compositions of cases that would/might qualify” and the Home Office was unable to issue guidance covering all scenarios. The Home Office also said that UNHCR had agreed to submit ‘dummy’ cases to test the new eligibility criteria.
- 7.20 Inspectors found 8 cases out of 33 they examined where the referral had been rejected on nationality grounds prior to July 2017. There was no evidence that these referrals would be reconsidered in light of the changed eligibility criteria, and Home Office senior managers said that they “rely on UNHCR to re-submit any cases that now fall under the broader scheme”.

## Consideration

- 7.21 Having completed the streaming process, UNHCR arranged to interview the principal ‘applicant’ to confirm they were still willing to resettle. If so, UNHCR completed an RRF.
- 7.22 Inspectors observed 2 UNHCR resettlement interviews in Amman in November 2017. During these interviews, UNHCR re-confirmed the identity of the refugees and re-checked their documentation, and enquired about any changes in family composition, circumstances and medical history. Each adult member of the family was interviewed separately and an audio and written record was made. Inspectors noted that the information captured on the RRF was not a verbatim record of the interview, but a summary of what the interviewer deemed relevant.
- 7.23 The RRF contained pre-populated statements the interviewers used as prompts. Inspectors observed interviewers using these prompts, for example asking about “all of the violence you have experienced in the past”, to establish fear of return. There was no evidence that the Home Office had had any input into these prompts or had suggested standard questions for the resettlement interview.

## Migration Health Assessment

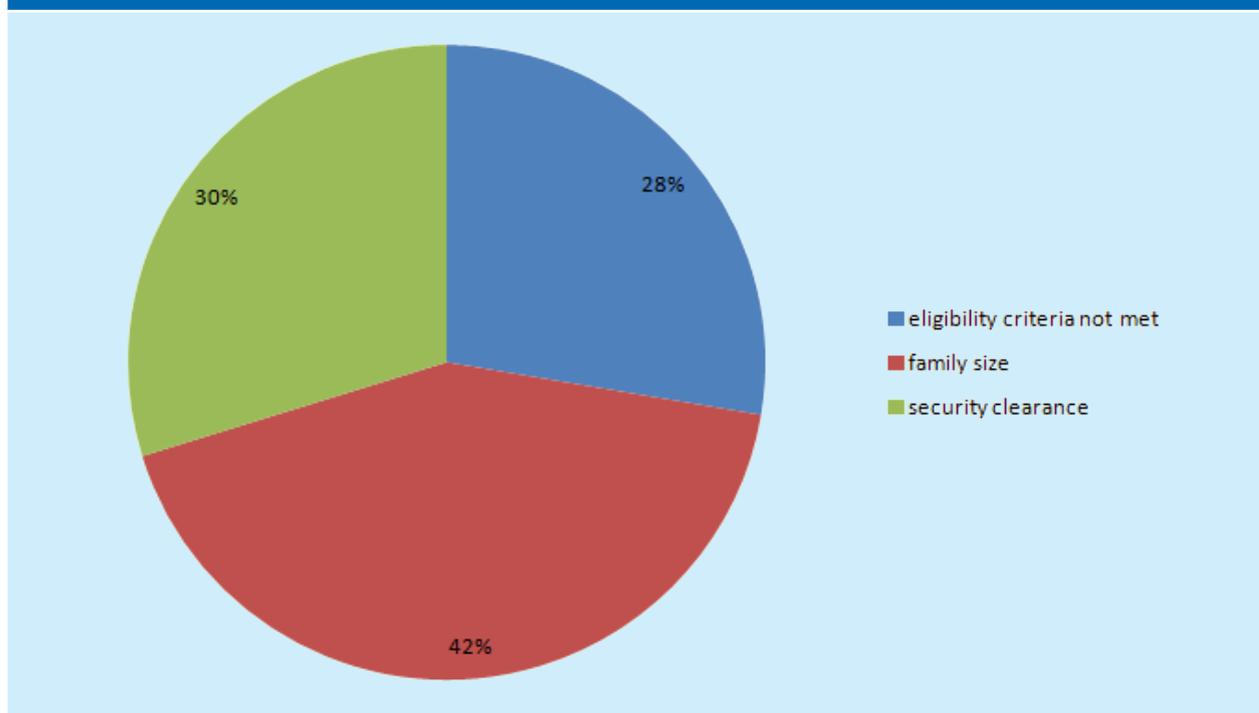
- 7.24 On receipt of a referral from UNHCR, the Home Office commissioned IOM to carry out a Migration Health Assessment (MHA) of each refugee who had been referred. IOM was responsible for informing the Home Office of any health condition(s) that might impact services and support required once the refugee was in the UK.

- 7.25 The medical examination included a mandatory tuberculosis check, a pregnancy check, an assessment of any mobility issues, and a physical check for evidence where the refugee claimed to be a victim of torture or violence. At the time of the inspection, IOM was also piloting mental health assessments in Jordan and Lebanon. Staff at the IOM clinic in Amman told inspectors that the thoroughness of the Migration Health Assessments meant the UK's was the "most humanitarian scheme".
- 7.26 Inspectors were told that IOM made every effort to counsel refugee women to reveal if they were pregnant so that the examination could take account of this, for example not exposing the fetus to x-ray. This was necessary because women might seek to conceal the fact that they were pregnant, fearing it would be a barrier to resettlement.

### Home Office case consideration

- 7.27 Guidance for Home Office caseworkers stated: "as a caseworker it is not your role to assess whether cases meet a required standard to be considered vulnerable".<sup>75</sup> Instead, caseworkers were focused on ensuring that the minimum eligibility criteria were met; that there were no security concerns; and that there were no child custody, safeguarding or other issues requiring clarification. This meant that most UNHCR referrals were accepted for resettlement, with only 47 cases (247 individuals) having been rejected between 7 September 2015 and the end of 2017 - see Figure 15.

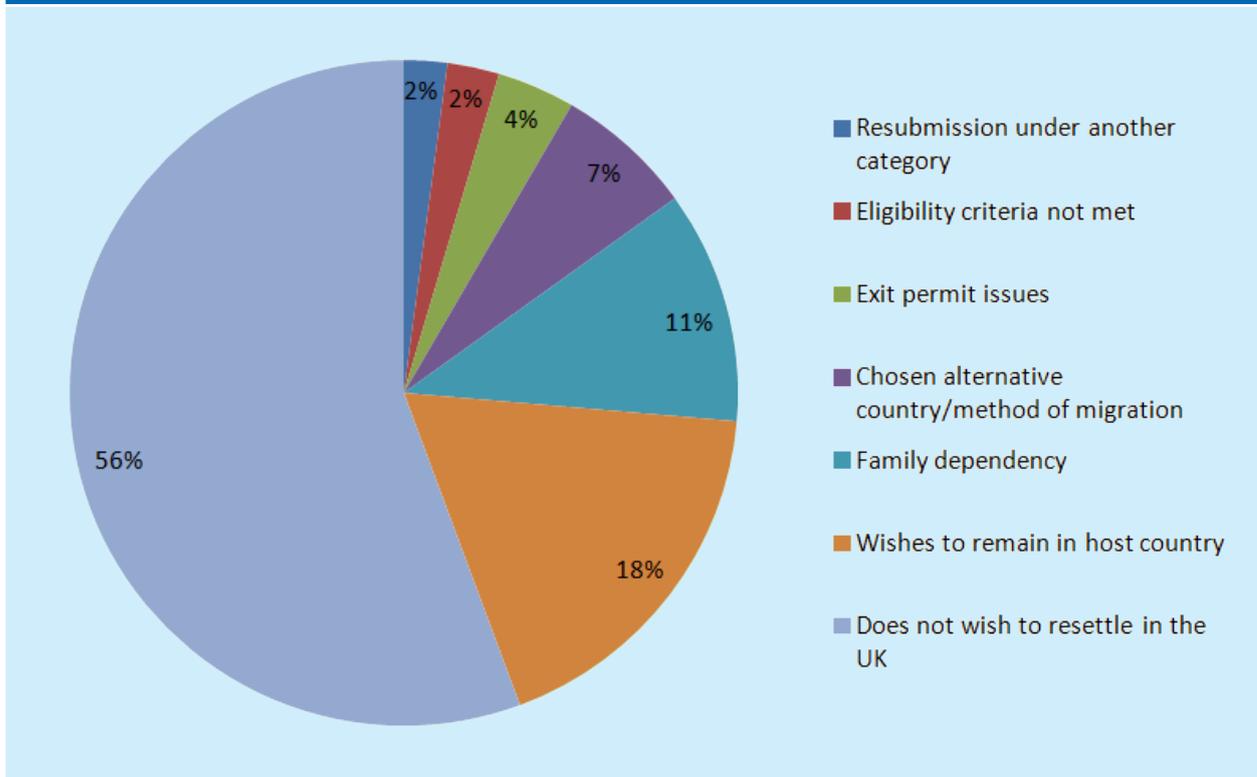
**Figure 15: Pie chart showing breakdown of rejections for the Scheme between 7 September 2015 and 31 December 2017**



- 7.28 In addition to these rejections, a further 239 referred cases (975 individuals) were withdrawn either by the individual or by UNHCR. The Home Office had 7 categories under which it recorded withdrawals – see Figure 16.

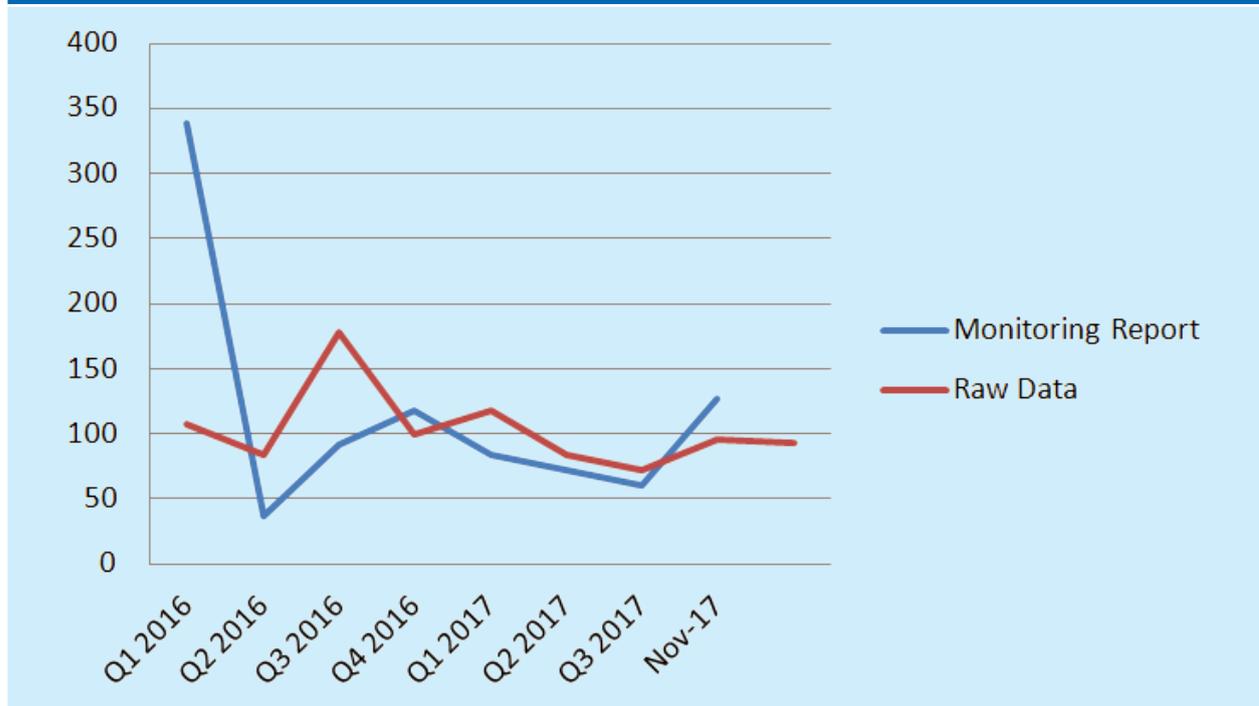
<sup>75</sup> Internal Home Office document.

**Figure 16: Pie chart showing breakdown of withdrawals by category to 31 December 2017**



- 7.29 Inspectors examined 50 case records where the referral had been recorded as withdrawn. In 14 of the 50 withdrawn sampled cases the reason given by UNHCR or the individual, did not align with the category allocated to it by the Home Office. In 8 of the 14, UNHCR had withdrawn the referral because it was “too complex to be considered on paper”. The Home Office had recorded these as “does not wish to resettle in the UK” or “wishes to remain in host country”.
- 7.30 Home Office senior managers advised that they used the ‘best fit’ to 1 of the 7 categories. They recognised that this might lead to “inconsistencies of categorisation but it was agreed to minimise the number of categories which are to give a broad indication of reasons only”.
- 7.31 Data provided by the Home Office indicated that, in the early stages of the Scheme, withdrawals had been categorised inappropriately as “rejections”. This made it more difficult to measure the impact of the Home Office’s efforts to reduce late withdrawals, such as the extension of the pre-arrival timescales from 8 to 13 weeks from 1 April 2016.
- 7.32 The Scheme’s progress tracking reports suggested that the extension of timescales in 2016 had had a positive impact on the rate of withdrawals, but the raw data was less conclusive.

**Figure 17: Graph showing withdrawals from the Scheme per quarter, comparing the Scheme’s raw data and a progress (monitoring) report**



## Family size and pregnancy

7.33 Stakeholders told inspectors that there were 2 issues, in particular, that affected the Scheme’s ability to resettle “the most vulnerable”: family size and pregnancy.

### Family size

7.34 The Scheme limited family size to 6. However, guidance told caseworkers to check if “UNHCR have confirmed [in the RRF] that the family is content to split across two properties”. Senior managers told inspectors that caseworkers and UNHCR could discuss specific cases of larger families, with a view to identifying whether resettlement was an option, subject to acceptance of the family by a local authority.

7.35 Between 7 September 2015 and the end of 2017, 14 families with more than 6 family members were resettled in the UK. Of these, 11 were families of 7, 2 were families of 8, and 1 was a family of 9.

7.36 In the 33 case records examined by inspectors where the Home Office had rejected a referral, 20 were rejected on the basis of family size. There was no evidence in any of those records that caseworkers had considered whether resettlement might be possible or had discussed the referral with UNHCR or any local authorities.

7.37 The Home Office told inspectors the family size limit was necessary as local authorities were unable to source appropriate accommodation. Some larger families had been accepted initially, and later rejected when the accommodation issues became apparent. UNHCR sympathised with the Home Office’s position, but considered there was a “direct correlation between family size and vulnerability”, with larger families more likely to be vulnerable due to the number of children to support and the greater likelihood of health issues.

## Pregnancy

- 7.38 Stakeholders were concerned about the way the Home office managed the resettlement of pregnant women. The guidance provided to Home Office caseworkers stated that caseworkers must confirm that all family members are “fit to fly” and that “no pregnancies have been noted”. It was silent on what to do if a pregnancy was noted.
- 7.39 Scheme managers clarified to inspectors that the Home Office’s approach was to “pause” pregnancy cases where there were “complications or [a] high-risk pregnancy preventing resettlement or other pregnancy-related issues”. However, staff told inspectors that the default was to pause all pregnancy cases until the child was born, even where there was no indication of any risk and the woman was within “fit to fly” timescales. Staff said that this was to avoid arranging accommodation only for the arrival to fall through, because it was too close to the due date for the woman to travel or for any other reason, such as exit permit issues or a change of heart.
- 7.40 Staff also said they would not seek to expedite pregnancy cases, unless they received a specific request to do so from UNHCR. Senior managers supported this approach, commenting that: “there is no evidence to suggest pregnant women have heightened vulnerability”. This appeared to be at odds with Home Office’s Adults at Risk Policy,<sup>76</sup> which identified pregnant women among the groups that were “particularly vulnerable to harm and therefore at risk”.
- 7.41 The impact of pregnancy on resettlement was of particular concern where the birth of the child would take the size of the family above 6. In such instances, senior caseworkers were expected to liaise with relevant agencies to determine whether the resettlement could go ahead. In discussions with inspectors, senior caseworkers seemed unclear how to proceed with such cases.
- 7.42 Inspectors examined the case records of 4 pregnant women where the birth of the child would take family size over 6. All 4 families were rejected on that basis. Only 1 of the 4 case records contained any evidence that the Home Office had taken any action to secure larger accommodation.

---

<sup>76</sup> Accessed at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/574970/adults-at-risk-policy-guidance\\_v2\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/574970/adults-at-risk-policy-guidance_v2_0.pdf)

## 8. Inspection findings – integration

### Background

- 8.1 In September 2015, the minutes of a Home Office ‘round table discussion’ to map the priorities for the Scheme, hosted by the Minister for Syrian Refugees,<sup>77</sup> noted that:

“Integrating refugees into society in the long-term will be as important as addressing immediate needs” and

“We need an Integration Strategy to welcome refugees to the UK.”<sup>78</sup>

- 8.2 In January 2017, the National Audit Office (NAO) report, ‘The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme’, highlighted the need for the Home Office to pay more attention to the issue of integration. The NAO recommended that the Home Office should:

“Ensure a full monitoring and evaluation framework is operational as soon as possible. This includes defining what success looks like beyond meeting the 20,000 target.”<sup>79</sup>

- 8.3 In response, the Home Office reported to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in January 2017 that it had set 3 key objectives for the Scheme:

- to have refugee and community well-being at the heart of decision making
- to deliver value for money
- to secure and protect the UK

- 8.4 The Home Office recognised that ensuring positive integration outcomes for refugees resettled via the Scheme was crucial to achieving the first of these objectives. In the Scheme’s Risk Register it identified the risk of “Ineffective integration of resettled refugees” leading to issues with “community tension and cohesion”, and the need to mitigate this risk.

- 8.5 Building on a 2004 report, ‘Indicators of Integration’<sup>80</sup>, the Home Office set out 7 “key integration outcome areas for refugees”:

- English language
- employment
- education
- health
- security and safeguarding

---

<sup>77</sup> In July 2016, ministerial responsibility for the Scheme transferred to the Minister for Immigration.

<sup>78</sup> Internal Minutes from a round table discussion convened on 17 September 2015.

<sup>79</sup> See footnote 24.

<sup>80</sup> Accessed at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218141321/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/dpr28.pdf>

- social bridges and bonds
- secondary migration

## Pre-departure and post-arrival integration support

- 8.6 The Home Office looked to a number of “key delivery partners” to help with the integration of refugees resettled via the Scheme. In particular, it relied on the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to deliver a cultural orientation package to refugees prior to their departure for the UK, and to local authorities to deliver integration support to refugees once they were in the UK.
- 8.7 In November 2017, UNHCR published a report on the Scheme, ‘Towards Integration’.<sup>81</sup> The report focused on integration support for refugees after they had arrived in the UK, but acknowledged that “pre-departure experiences and processes are vital to successful post arrival settlement and integration.”
- 8.8 Stakeholders told inspectors that there were lengthy periods prior to departure for the UK when there was minimal communication with refugees who had been referred for resettlement. They said that regular communication with refugees while they waited to be resettled would assist their integration, as it would help to manage their expectations and reduce the instances of refugees withdrawing from the process.
- 8.9 In the context of integration, inspectors were told that UNHCR “counselled” refugees about resettlement and about the UK Scheme during their interview to establish suitability for resettlement. Inspectors attended 2 such interviews on 14 November 2017. In these, while the consideration and referral process was explained, no “counselling” was offered. Refugees who were referred were provided with a paper produced by the Home Office and translated into Arabic covering ‘Frequently Asked Questions’,<sup>82</sup> but these were not explored during the interview.
- 8.10 Within 5 to 6 weeks of being referred to the Scheme, refugees had a short interview, either with a Home Office official via video link<sup>83</sup> or, where this was not possible, with an IOM representative.<sup>84</sup> The purpose of this interview was to gather information to assist the accommodation matching process, for example establishing whether the refugee(s) wished to live in an urban or rural area, or the importance of proximity to certain amenities, such as a place of worship.
- 8.11 Inspectors observed 2 video interviews while visiting IOM in Jordan. A husband and wife were interviewed separately, with IOM providing an interpreter. They appeared to understand no English. The interviewer followed a set script, including some introductory remarks aimed at explaining the purpose of the interview and putting the interviewee at ease. Nonetheless, the refugees did not seem relaxed, and it was not evident that they fully understood the relevance of the questions. Nor was it clear that the interviewer was able to contextualise their answers, for example whether their previous home a few miles from the centre of Damascus equated to an “urban” or “rural” area in UK terms, so that asking them which they would prefer lacked any real meaning.

81 <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/protection/basic/5a0ae9e84/towards-integration-the-syrian-vulnerable-persons-resettlement-scheme-in.html>

82 The FAQs included: “What is the application process? When will I know if I have been accepted? Do I have to pay for my plane ticket to the UK? What would my status be upon arrival? Can my family members join me later?”

83 For referrals from Jordan and Lebanon.

84 For referrals from Egypt, Iraq or Turkey.

- 8.12 Following this short interview, the process involved no further contact with the refugee until suitable accommodation had been secured and resettlement could proceed. At that point, refugees were invited to attend a cultural orientation workshop delivered by IOM.
- 8.13 Home Office data indicated that for 2017 as a whole the average time from referral by UNHCR to arrival in the UK was almost 33 weeks, while the average gap between the Home Office (or IOM) accommodation matching interview and the cultural orientation workshop was almost 26 weeks.
- 8.14 In Amman, inspectors visited a family that had been accepted for resettlement. It had been 2 months since the family had last been contacted by the Home Office, UNHCR or IOM. The family told inspectors that this was unsettling, and that they were keen to move to the UK as soon as possible.

### Cultural orientation

- 8.15 IOM delivered pre-departure cultural orientation on behalf of the Home Office. The latter expected IOM to deliver this to “100% of identified Beneficiaries”<sup>85</sup>, defined as all refugees aged 14 and over who had been accepted onto the Scheme.
- 8.16 IOM told inspectors that, unlike some other international resettlement schemes, the Home Office placed no requirement on IOM to ensure that a refugee attended the cultural orientation workshop. It said that there was a 90% attendance rate at workshops across its MENA region.<sup>86</sup> Where a refugee did not turn up, the onus was on the refugee to make contact with IOM and request a place on a later workshop.

### Duration of the cultural orientation workshop

- 8.17 IOM informed inspectors that the UK cultural orientation workshop was based on similar workshops provided to those refugees resettled under the Gateway Scheme. However, while the Gateway workshop was delivered in a day (5 hours), the workshop for the Scheme was delivered over 2 days (10 hours) in recognition of the challenges faced by this particular cohort of refugees.
- 8.18 In the early months of the Scheme, the Home Office had received feedback from local authorities that refugees were arriving with insufficient knowledge of life in the UK. Subsequently, the content of the workshop had been updated, and the Home Office had asked IOM, for example, to include sessions on domestic violence and children-specific issues, having identified a requirement for this through its monitoring with local authorities of ‘cases of interest’.
- 8.19 Stakeholders and refugees told inspectors that the workshops did not provide enough detail about the area where the latter were being resettled or what they could expect to find on arrival in the UK, for example, not differentiating between London and a Scottish island. Local authorities had been invited to provide a short local factsheet for refugees. However, the quality and value of these was variable. Inspectors examined one. The information it contained was limited to basic facts about the local authority, population, travel links, and images of notable landmarks. By contrast, Northern Ireland had provided a video and detailed information about what refugees could expect to find on arrival in the Province.

---

<sup>85</sup> The Home Office and IOM agreement is underpinned by a ‘Grant Agreement’. That document sets out what is required of IOM as well as the fee to be paid for those services. The document has not been published.

<sup>86</sup> The 90% refers to all workshops, not just those for refugees coming to the UK. The Home Office told inspectors that IOM return figures indicated a 97% attendance rate.

- 8.20 IOM believed that more specific, tailored information would help to “remove the shroud of vagueness” about what refugees could expect. It would also help to manage expectations and counter-balance the rumours that spread among the community, for example, that one local authority provided refugees a car and £10,000 upon arrival.
- 8.21 IOM tried to give refugees the relevant factsheet before the workshop, as time was tight to cover all of the course content in 2 days. IOM was generally content with the level of detail provided at the cultural orientation workshops, but there was no time to discuss or develop topics that interested those attending. The instructors said that similar workshops delivered by IOM on behalf of other resettlement nations were longer: the Canada workshop was 3 days, USA’s was 4 days, and Australia’s was 5 days. The days themselves were slightly shorter than the 2-day UK workshop, but this helped maintain concentration levels.
- 8.22 IOM told inspectors that, in 2016, it had made a formal request to the Home Office to extend the UK workshop to 3 days, following which it had been extended from 1 day (5 hours) to 2 days (10 hours). In not agreeing to a 3-day workshop, the Home Office responded that it had seen no evidence of “a positive correlation between lengthier cultural orientation and better integration outcomes for refugees”. It also pointed out that while other countries devoted more time to pre-arrival cultural orientation they did not necessarily provide the same level of support to refugees upon arrival.
- 8.23 Inspectors found that there was no formal feedback mechanism or monitoring process by which the usefulness or success of the cultural orientation workshops could be evaluated. The Home Office told inspectors it was “planning a discussion with IOM to look into whether a more formal feedback mechanism for cultural orientation would be possible/practical”.

### **Post-arrival integration support**

- 8.24 Responsibility for the provision of integration support post-arrival in the UK rested largely with the receiving local authority. As well as providing suitable accommodation, which met specific needs where required, the local authority was also responsible for facilitating English language tuition, employment, healthcare and family and social support.

### **Local authority participation**

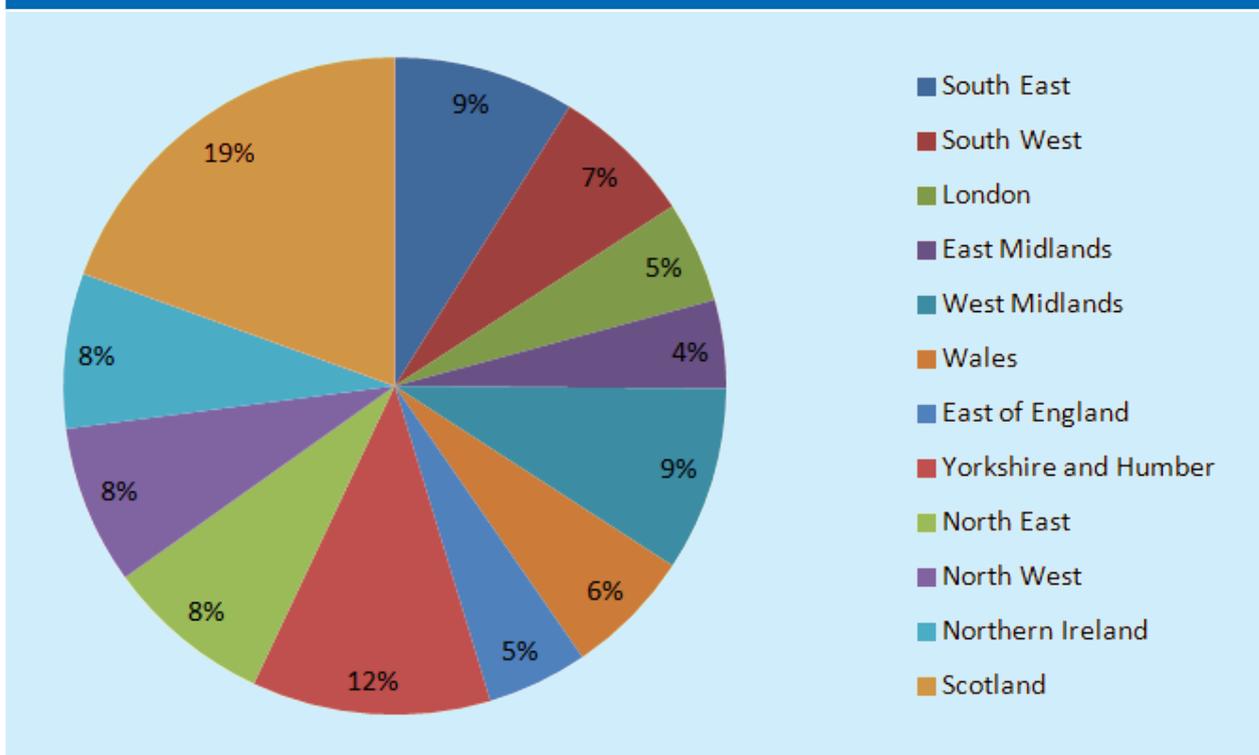
- 8.25 Local authorities participate in the Scheme on a voluntary basis. Since it was launched an increasing number have joined in – see Figure 18. As at the end of 2017, 275 local authorities had resettled refugees, representing 66% of the total number of UK local authorities.

**Figure 18: Graph showing the number of local authorities that had resettled refugees via the Scheme to the end of 2017**



8.26 Figure 19 provides a breakdown of resettlements by region.

**Figure 19: Breakdown of resettlement by region as at 29 September 2017**



## Oversight of resettlement services

8.27 Home Office guidance<sup>87</sup> issued to local authorities in July 2017 stated:

“Our policy is aimed at ensuring an equitable distribution of refugees across the country so that no individual local authority bears a disproportionate share of the responsibility. We are working closely with local authorities to ensure that this remains the case.”

8.28 The Home Office Funding Instruction<sup>88</sup> described the minimum services local authorities were required to provide. The key requirements during the first 12 months of the refugees’ lives in the UK include:

- ensuring accommodation is available which is “affordable and sustainable”
- meeting refugees on arrival, providing transportation to accommodation, a welcome pack of groceries and £200 cash per refugee
- helping refugees to register with schools, Job Centres and General Practitioners
- ensuring interpreter services are available throughout period of resettlement support
- ensuring adult refugees have access to a minimum of 8 hours ESOL<sup>89</sup> within first month of resettlement for at least 12 months or Level 3

8.29 In addition, the Funding Instruction required local authorities to “develop an overarching (or framework) support plan and bespoke support plans for each family or individual for the first twelve (12) Month period of their support to facilitate their orientation into their new home/area.” It did not set out any minimum requirements for the structure or content of the support plan. The Home Office told inspectors that the Funding Instruction was designed to be “deliberately vague in recognition of the diverse array of [refugee] needs”, which reflected the Scheme’s ethos: “not to turn away an offer of support.”

8.30 While this approach had been successful in encouraging participation from a large number of local authorities, stakeholders and local authorities expressed concern that it had resulted in refugees being resettled in areas where the services they required were not available. Stakeholders cited the non-availability of halal food, legal advice, and Arabic interpreters in certain local authority areas as particular barriers to successful integration.

8.31 There was concern that some local authorities had made unrealistic pledges after getting “carried away” with the public enthusiasm for the Scheme. The example was cited of certain remote local authorities that had resettled refugees who had subsequently requested to be relocated to neighbouring, more urban local authority areas. SMPs told inspectors that while they coordinated allocations within the region on behalf of the Home Office, each local authority decided for itself whether to participate in the Scheme and how many resettlement places to offer.

## Funding levels

8.32 Local authorities and their delivery partners were broadly positive about the level of funding provided via the Scheme in the first 12 months. The funding allowed them to provide intensive support to refugees as soon as they arrived, ensuring help with the essentials, including suitable accommodation, school places for children, banks accounts and registration for benefits and medical treatment.

---

<sup>87</sup> Published at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/631369/170711\\_Syrian\\_Resettlement\\_Updated\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/631369/170711_Syrian_Resettlement_Updated_Fact_Sheet_final.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> See footnote 21.

<sup>89</sup> English for Speakers of Other Languages.

- 8.33 Integration delivery partners saw that the support available to refugees arriving via the Scheme as “very much the gold standard”, and better than the support provided to refugees granted asylum via other routes.
- 8.34 Local authorities welcomed the flexibility to decide how best to use the funds provided. Some neighbouring local authorities had pooled funds, in order to provide services that they would not have been able to sustain individually, while others had contracted with third sector organisations to deliver integration support in partnership. A number of local authorities told inspectors that without this flexibility they would not have been able to support the integration of the refugees, and one said that without it it would not have been able to participate in the Scheme at all.

### Support for English language learning

- 8.35 SMPs, local authorities and integration delivery partners<sup>90</sup> told inspectors that learning English was key to refugees achieving self-sufficiency and integration. It enabled them to find work, to study, or to take part in volunteering and community activities.
- 8.36 The Home Office Funding Instruction made it clear that local authorities were required to provide a minimum of 8 hours per week of English language tuition for 12 months, or until the refugee reached proficiency at ESOL Level 3.<sup>91</sup>
- 8.37 Inspectors met 9 refugees in 3 local authority areas. They had been in the UK between 2 and 24 months. They had had some language tuition and felt confident engaging in conversations with the local community. All were committed to improving their language skills. However, stakeholders felt that progress for most refugees had been slow, partly because they had no previous knowledge of English,<sup>92</sup> and also because tuition was not readily available, especially in rural areas. There were also problems with parents accessing childcare to enable them to attend classes.
- 8.38 The Home Office was aware of these issues and had made additional funding available to local authorities to increase their capacity to deliver English language tuition, or to remove barriers to attendance, such as non-availability of childcare. In August 2017, the Home Office revised its Funding Instruction to make it clear that local authorities were required (with effect from 1 August 2017) to provide a minimum of 8 hours per week of English language tuition for 12 months, or until the refugee reached proficiency at ESOL Level 3.
- 8.39 The Home Office told inspectors that it had started capturing data about refugees’ progress towards English language proficiency, which would enable it to monitor and assess provision.

### Employment support

- 8.40 There was broad agreement amongst stakeholders that employment was another major element of integration, and that refugees arriving via the Scheme needed extra support to overcome the “substantial barriers” to finding work.
- 8.41 Local authorities assisted resettled refugees to register with their local Job Centre to receive support and advice about obtaining employment. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

---

<sup>90</sup> Mentioned by 29 respondents to the online survey and by each of the local authorities visited by inspectors.

<sup>91</sup> There are 5 ESOL levels, of which the first 3 are entry levels. Entry level 3 is ‘Intermediate’, where vocabulary is limited, but rapidly improving.

<sup>92</sup> UNHCR explained that English was not routinely taught in schools in Syria and therefore refugees were likely to have low levels of English language on arrival in the UK. Children who had spent a significant amount of time in a host country tended to fare better, since English was taught as part of the standard curriculum.

told inspectors that staff at Job Centres had not been given any specific guidance or training relating to refugees resettled under the Scheme. As such, resettled refugees were considered and managed as part of a “general vulnerable cohort”, which included the homeless and those with addictions.<sup>93</sup>

- 8.42 Local authorities and stakeholders reported that this had led to a number of issues both in terms of accessing benefits and of assistance with finding employment. They said that the absence of clear guidance meant that some refugees dependent on working age benefits had found themselves subject to ‘sanctions’ as a result of undertaking English language tuition rather than seeking work, while others had applications for Personal Independence Payments or Disability Living Allowance refused as Job Centre staff considered that they did not meet residence requirements.
- 8.43 The Home Office told inspectors that it did not hold data on the number of resettled refugees who had been ‘sanctioned’ or refused access to benefits, as the DWP did not “report to the Home Office details of their operation and/or their application of sanctions.”
- 8.44 With respect to finding employment, local authorities and stakeholders reported that support from Job Centre staff was not sufficiently tailored to the needs of the individual, particularly those with limited English language skills. As at Spring 2017, only 48 (2%) of the refugees of working age resettled via the Scheme in 2016 had obtained paid employment.
- 8.45 The Home Office had allocated £1.7 million to fund additional employment support schemes for refugees resettled via the Scheme up to March 2018. By 31 October 2017, just £268,229 of this had been spent.<sup>94</sup> Some of the funding had been allocated to a pilot project, that provided refugees with tailored support to obtain employment – see Case Study 5.

### **Case study 5: Employment pilot in a local authority (an urban area with a long history of asylum dispersal and refugee resettlement)**

#### **A third sector organisation had:**

- introduced an employment scheme in the area
- secured funding from the Home Office to roll out employment support to 9 other local authorities in the same region during 2017-18
- worked with integration delivery partners to embed employment advisers in 2 support centres in the local authorities (including a drop-in centre in the first local authority area)

#### **Employment advisers had:**

- worked with individual refugees to identify barriers to them finding work and ways of addressing these barriers
- delivered careers advice, CV writing workshops, and assisted refugees to obtain verification of their overseas educational certificates
- secured volunteering and work opportunities for refugees from local businesses

<sup>93</sup> See footnote 10.

<sup>94</sup> Commenting on the draft report, the Home Office stated that the budget allocation to 31 October 2017 was £884,860.

#### At the halfway stage, the pilot had:

- delivered support to 35 refugees
- assessed 17 refugees as 'ready for work' and secured employment for 7 of them
- secured additional training for 16 and volunteering opportunities for a further 4

#### Independent Chief Inspector's comment

This employment pilot demonstrated the benefit of tailored employment support in securing jobs for refugees. A 41% employed rate for those assessed as 'ready for work' on the pilot was significantly higher than the 2% of working age refugees in paid employment for the Scheme as a whole.

- 8.46 The pilot project was expected to operate until April 2018, at which point it would be evaluated. The Home Office planned to learn lessons from the pilot and to consider funding other employment support proposals across the UK.

### Provision of specialist medical support

- 8.47 The Home Office provided funding for healthcare provision, with the NHS able to claim £600 for primary healthcare for each refugee (typically services provided by General Practitioners) and £2,000 for secondary care (further investigation, admission to hospital or specialist services). Where healthcare costs exceeded £2,000, and the refugee's condition was identified within 12 months of arrival in the UK, the NHS could make a claim for further funding, described as 'exceptional costs'.
- 8.48 Home Office data indicated that the NHS had not claimed all the funding for primary healthcare available to it, and that the Home Office had paid out on just 3 claims for exceptional costs. There was no data for the number of exceptional costs claims rejected, or the reasons for rejection, although the Scheme's Finance Team told inspectors it was aware of instances where the NHS had sought funding for mental health provision and had been rejected as it appeared that funding would be used to create a service for the general population.<sup>95</sup>
- 8.49 The Home Office told inspectors it had planned for higher claims and attributed the lower than expected take-up to a lack of awareness amongst NHS Trusts and Clinical Commissioning Groups. Awareness raising exercises had been conducted and the Home Office hoped that NHS providers would increase their claim rate accordingly.

**Figure 20: Table showing the proportion of primary healthcare funding claimed in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales**

Country	Number of Refugees	Eligible funding (£)	Actual Claimed (£)	Proportion of funding
England	6,564	3,938,400	3,613,200	91.7%
Wales	633	379,800	318,600	83.9%
Scotland	1,935	1,161,000	715,200	61.6%
Northern Ireland	703	421,800	138,600	32.9%

<sup>95</sup> Commenting on the draft inspection report, the Home Office stated: "This is contrary to our understanding. We can't use VPRS funding to build capacity generally, but nor can we fund a level of provision which exceeds that available to the indigenous population. However, we are not aware of instances where the NHS has sought funding for mental health provision and has been rejected."

- 8.50 In January 2017, drawing on the NAO report about the Scheme, the PAC noted that more than half (55%) of refugees arriving via the Scheme were survivors of torture or violence, but were not receiving the specialist support and treatment they needed. As at the end of 2017, 1,033 (c.41%) of the families resettled recorded one or more member as ‘survivors of violence or torture’. Despite the potential requirement for mental health support for these individuals, the Home Office described the provision of such support as “patchy”. In one region, for example, 68 (47%) of the families resettled by the end of 2017 recorded one or more member as ‘survivors of torture or violence’, but there were no specialist services in the region for victims of torture, as well as a shortage of general mental health services in Arabic.
- 8.51 A regional SMP had negotiated with multiple NHS providers and the Home Office to permit the pooling of resources to ‘buy-in’ specialist provision from another NHS area. However, this had not been done elsewhere, and some areas struggled to provide sufficient mental health services.
- 8.52 Local authorities and SMPs considered that the NHS providers in their areas were slowly adapting to the requirement to provide specialist mental health care and were becoming more aware of how to obtain funding for those services. However, this remained a slow process and, in their view, the Home Office needed to continue to raise awareness across the NHS.

### Family reunification

- 8.53 Stakeholders told inspectors that Syrian culture emphasised the importance of family bonds and, as a result, separation from family members could act as a barrier to integration. All of the refugees who spoke to inspectors mentioned that they had “left behind” family members and some said that had they been aware that reunification would be so difficult they would not have agreed to be resettled.
- 8.54 While UNHCR and the Home Office attempted to ensure that family links were identified, by 30 November 2017 only 24 refugees had been resettled under the ‘family reunification’ criterion.
- 8.55 Refugees reported that UNHCR had led them to believe they would be able to arrange for family members to join them once they had resettled in the UK. However, inspectors saw no evidence of this during the onsite visit to Amman, and Home Office literature explained the reunification process. As with the uncertainty and rumours about what support and services refugees could expect, it appeared there was a gap between expectations and reality.

### Monitoring and evaluation

- 8.56 In September 2015, when the Scheme was expanded, the Home Office did not have any means of monitoring or measuring success beyond counting the number of refugees resettled against the target 20,000 by 2020. In 2016, the Home Office decided that the data it needed would be best captured by way of a data sharing process between itself and local authorities, in support of which the latter would report on how refugees were faring at 2 months and 12 months after their arrival in the UK.
- 8.57 The first exchange of data took place in October 2016. However, the Home Office told inspectors that local authorities had not had sufficient time to prepare for the exercise, and it had received returns for around 1,000 refugees, about a quarter of the number that had, by then, been resettled. There were also inconsistencies in the way the data had been collected and recorded. As a result, the Home Office considered the October 2016 dataset to be “unreliable”.

- 8.58 The Home Office had worked to simplify the process. Despite this, local authority participation remained patchy, with only 4,000 returns received out of an expected total of 7,000 in April 2017. At the time of inspection, the Home Office had not completed its analysis of the September 2017 returns.
- 8.59 Although incomplete, the Home Office told inspectors that the later returns had provided “more robust” data, highlighting some “good news stories” and providing evidence of certain barriers to integration. However, it believed it would need to see further datasets before it could draw any firm conclusions.
- 8.60 Local authorities and SMPs told inspectors that they welcomed any feedback on their efforts to integrate refugees. However, the Home Office reported that it did not have ministerial permission to share its analysis of the data that had been collected. However, it had made a submission to the Immigration Minister to be able to do so.

### Limitation of current monitoring

- 8.61 At the time of the inspection, the refugee monitoring process was recording progress towards integration between months 3 and 15 from the date of arrival in the UK. There was no process in place to monitor progress between years 2 to 5 or beyond, despite funding for years 2 to 5 being provided so that it “supports programme evaluation and reporting”.
- 8.62 The Home Office told inspectors that it was “aware that integration outcomes can take some time to manifest themselves” and it was “exploring looking at longer term outcomes by matching refugees in other government departments’ databases”. However, as at the end of 2017 there were no agreements in place with other government departments covering the sharing of this data.
- 8.63 Stakeholders hoped that monitoring would highlight clearly that the additional support provided to refugees resettled via the Scheme improved integration outcomes, and that this argued for providing similar support to refugees who had arrived by other routes. However, the Scheme’s evaluation team told inspectors that there were currently no external benchmarks against which to compare integration outcomes.

### Delivery models

- 8.64 The monitoring process did not require local authorities to report how they spent the tariff or how they were delivering integration support. Inspectors identified 3 different delivery models:
- **Direct delivery by council services:** where integration support was either subsumed into established, mainstream services, such as housing support, or delivered by teams created specifically to provide support to refugees in the local authority area
  - **Subcontracting integration support:** where the local authority engaged a third party ‘delivery partner’ to provide integration and/or accommodation support, awarding contracts for Year 1 support or pooling funding to provide support over the lifetime of the Scheme
  - **Welcome Centre:** (exclusive to Northern Ireland) where refugees were taken to 1 of 2 welcome centres on arrival and stayed for 5 nights, during which time they were registered for essential services and oriented with their local resettlement area, before being collected by their integration support worker(s) and taken to their permanent accommodation

8.65 The Scheme's senior managers told inspectors that they did not have a view about which model worked best. They were focused on increasing local authority participation. The Home Office reported that it had contracted a private social research company to produce a qualitative evaluation of refugee experiences and progress, which would include examination of the different delivery models. However, the initial evaluation was not expected until the end of summer 2018.

### Monitoring sharing best practice

8.66 The Home Office relied on SMPs to facilitate the sharing of 'best practice' between local authorities at a regional level. Inspectors were told of examples of where this had been effective, such as in Wales where the Welsh Local Government Association (the SMP for Wales) had introduced a "cultural orientation toolkit" to help local authorities support newly resettled refugees. Similarly, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (acting as the SMP for Scotland) had introduced an online "knowledge hub" which local authorities could access for guidance and support.

8.67 While SMPs shared best practice within regions, there was limited evidence of routine sharing between regions. However, the Home Office pointed to good practice case studies the Scheme had collected and disseminated on the Local Government Association Knowledge Hub, and a 'masterclass' the Local Authority Engagement Team had hosted in September 2017.

### Cases of interest tracker

8.68 In 2016, the Home Office began tracking "sensitive cases" where these were identified post-arrival. A 'cases of interest tracker' (a spreadsheet) was "designed on the basis that most local authorities had no experience of supporting resettled refugees, and would therefore value being able to discuss issues that presented" with the Home Office.

8.69 It was unclear to inspectors how the Home Office was using the information captured on the tracker to support those local authorities with limited experience of resettling refugees. Contact Officers told inspectors that increasing amounts of their time was spent monitoring and updating the "ever-expanding" cases of interest tracker, but in most cases they lacked the experience or knowledge to advise local authorities on how to proceed.

8.70 Home Office managers said that they monitored cases of interest to ensure the "responsible statutory bodies do what they should do". However, there was limited evidence that the Scheme had the competence or remit to advise on appropriate actions for the cases of interest and inspectors noted that local authorities coordinated the response to sensitive cases.

8.71 The Home Office told inspectors that analysis of the tracker had led to an additional session on domestic violence awareness being incorporated into the pre-departure cultural orientation classes. This was the only example inspectors saw of the data collected on the tracker having been used to drive improvements.

8.72 At the time of the inspection, the cases of interest tracker was under review "focusing on whether the existing definitions of cases of interest remain appropriate, and whether there is a need for greater clarity [of] roles and responsibilities."

## Monitoring Years 2 to 5 funding

- 8.73 The Home Office had decided that a “light touch financial monitoring regime would be the best way to deliver value for money for the tax payer, by keeping bureaucracy to a minimum.”
- 8.74 Home Office senior managers confirmed that the tapered funding over Years 2 to 5 reflected the expectation that refugees would achieve an increasing degree of self-sufficiency and financial independence. However, over half of the local authorities and SMPs that responded to the inspection’s online survey reported that the level of funding available over Years 2 to 5 was insufficient, primarily because refugees had progressed more slowly than expected in learning English and obtaining employment.

**Figure 21: Graph showing time spent in the UK as at 30 November 2017 by refugees who had entered via the Scheme**



- 8.75 When establishing the tariff the Home Office had recognised the need to evaluate whether tapering was appropriate. However, its monitoring process did not enable it to review this despite the fact that, by 30 November 2017, 5,097 refugees had been resettled for over 12 months and funding for them was now tapered.

# Annex A: Criteria used in this inspection

The inspection used nine of the ICIBI criteria:

## **Operational Delivery**

- Decisions on the entry, stay and removal of individuals should be taken in accordance with the law and the principles of good administration
- Customs and Immigration offences should be prevented, detected, investigated and where appropriate, prosecuted
- Resources should be allocated to support operational delivery and achieve value for money

## **Safeguarding Individuals**

- All individuals should be treated with dignity and respect and without discrimination in accordance with the law
- Enforcement powers should be carried out in accordance with the law and by members of staff authorised and trained for that purpose
- All border and immigration functions should be carried out with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Personal data of individuals should be treated and stored securely in accordance with the relevant legislation and regulations

## **Continuous Improvement**

- The implementation of policies and processes should support the efficient and effective delivery of border and immigration functions
- Risks to operational delivery should be identified, monitored and mitigated

## Annex B: Role and remit of the Independent Chief Inspector

The role of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (until 2012, the Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency) was established by the UK Borders Act 2007. Sections 48-56 of the UK Borders Act 2007 (as amended) provide the legislative framework for the inspection of the efficiency and effectiveness of the performance of functions relating to immigration, asylum, nationality and customs by the Home Secretary and by any person exercising such functions on her behalf.

The legislation empowers the Independent Chief Inspector to monitor, report on and make recommendations about all such functions. However, functions exercised at removal centres, short-term holding facilities and under escort arrangements are excepted insofar as these are subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons or Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary (and equivalents in Scotland and Northern Ireland). The legislation directs the Independent Chief Inspector to consider and make recommendations about, in particular:

- consistency of approach
- the practice and performance of listed persons compared to other persons doing similar activities
- the procedure in making decisions
- the treatment of claimants and applicants
- certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum act 2002 (c. 41) (unfounded claim)
- the law about discrimination in the exercise of functions, including reliance on section 19D of the Race Relations Act 1976 (c. 74) (exception for immigration functions)
- the procedure in relation to the exercise of enforcement powers (including powers of arrest, entry, search and seizure)
- practice and procedure in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of offences
- the procedure in relation to the conduct of criminal proceedings
- whether customs functions have been appropriately exercised by the Secretary of State and the Director of Border Revenue
- the provision of information
- the handling of complaints; and
- the content of information about conditions in countries outside the United Kingdom, which the Secretary of State compiles and makes available, for purposes connected with immigration and asylum, to immigration officers and other officials

In addition, the legislation enables the Secretary of State to request the Independent Chief Inspector to report to her in writing in relation to specified matters.

The legislation requires the Independent Chief Inspector to report in writing to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State lays all reports before Parliament, which she has committed to do within eight weeks of receipt, subject to both Houses of Parliament being in session. Reports are published in full except for any material that the Secretary of State determines it is undesirable to publish for reasons of national security or where publication might jeopardise an individual's safety, in which case the legislation permits the Secretary of State to omit the relevant passages from the published report.

As soon as a report has been laid in Parliament, it is published on the Inspectorate's website, together with the Home Office's response to the report and recommendations.

# Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Home Office for the co-operation and assistance received during the course of this inspection and appreciate the contributions from the Home Office staff. We are also grateful to the many UK-based and international stakeholders who participated.

## Inspection Team

Oversight	<b>Adrian Duffy</b>
Lead Inspector	<b>Roland Potts</b>
Project Manager	<b>Hollie Savjani</b>
Inspectors	<b>Caroline Parkes</b>
	<b>Christian Thompson</b>
	<b>Grant Morriss</b>
	<b>Charmaine Figueira</b>
	<b>Paul Sherratt</b>
	<b>Christolite Ashley</b>







CCS0418492496  
978-1-5286-0347-8