

## PARLIAMENTARY ROUND UP 6 October 2018 – 12 October 2018

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Parliament was in recess from 13 September 2018 – 9 October 2018

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### ACCOMMODATION

[174682](#)

Caroline Lucas (Green, Brighton, Pavillion) asks the Secretary of State for the Home Department (SSHD), what plans his Department has to grant local authorities more (a) flexibility and (b) powers in overseeing how and where asylum seekers are housed in their areas.

Caroline Nokes, 10.10.18: The Home Office is committed to working co-operatively with local authorities and communities to ensure the sustainability of asylum accommodation contracts.

Since September 2016 the Home Office has actively and extensively engaged with local authorities with a wide range of stakeholders across local government, statutory and third sector as part of the development of the new asylum accommodation contracts and the information obtained through this process has influenced the design of the future service provision.

Currently, when properties are identified for procurement by one of the existing providers, we consult with LAs before asylum seekers are accommodated. A number of factors will be considered in terms of clustering the supported asylum population, such as cohesion and anti social behaviour. We will continue to engage with local authorities and the wider community throughout the procurement and implementation of the new contracts to offer flexibility where possible.

### ACCOMMODATION

**House of Commons, Westminster Hall, 1430 10.10.18, Asylum Accommodation Contracts read [here](#) watch [here](#)**

Motion: **That this House has considered asylum accommodation contracts.** Moved by Alex Cunningham (Lab, Stockton North)

*Speaking: Alex Cunningham; Jim Cunningham (Lab, Coventry South); Kate Green (Lab, Stretford and Urmston); Anna Turley (Lab, Redcar); Chi Onwurah (Lab, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne), Debbie Abrahams (Lab, Oldham East and Saddleworth); Paul Blomfield (Lab, Sheffield Central); Dame Caroline Spelman (Con, Meriden); Marsha de Cordova (Lab, Battersea); Louise Haigh (Lab, Sheffield, Heeley); Alex Sobel (Lab, Leeds North West); Karen Lee (Lab, Lincoln); Jim Shannon (Strangford, DUP); Chris Stephens (SNP, Glasgow South West); Sir Edward Davey (Lib Dem, Kingston and Surbiton); Jess Phillips (Lab, Birmingham, Yardley); Helen Hayes (Lab, Dulwich and West Norwood); Thangam Debbonaire (Lab, Bristol West); Paul Sweeney (Lab, Glasgow North East); Stuart Malcolm McDonald (SNP, Glasgow South); Stuart C McDonald (SNP, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East), Afzal Khan (Lab, Gorton)*

**Issues covered:**

**Length of time of proposed contracts:** Government weeks away from signing new contracts that will determine the quality of [...] accommodation support for the next 10 years [...] Serious concern that contract is for 10 years without any review period built in [...] reckless and wrong. (Alex Cunningham); Wrong to award 10 year contract without adequate contract compliance in place (Marsha de Cordova); having contracts for 10 years is reckless and wrong (Stuart C McDonald) The proposed COMPASS contracts are worth £4 billion and will be binding for the next 10 years, with no review period built in. The previous contracts did not have adequate review provisions, but there was at least a break clause after five years (Afzal Khan)

- What provisions exist in the new draft asylum contract for future Governments to alter or terminate that contract, and what costs would those provisions incur? (Paul Sweeney)

**Inadequacy of current provision:** Provision failing to meet current contract criteria; Difficulties in getting service providers and subcontractors to [...] fulfil contracts to vulnerable people (Alex Cunningham); Pattern of private companies in relation to public services (Jim Cunningham); unwillingness and inability of private sector to provide safe, habitable accommodation; outsourcing companies “acting like vultures are failing our most vulnerable” (Alex Sobel); Court judgement against Newcastle City Council preventing it from imposing decent home standards on asylum accommodation (Chi Onwurah); In cases [of unacceptable provision] local authorities should be empowered to take over contracts and oversee them (Karen Lee); Difference in standards imposed on private sector and voluntary sector and detail of case of security breach with respect to human trafficking victim at Stone Road in Birmingham (Jess Phillips); incidents are not exceptions [...] symptomatic of wider problems, but they also show specific deficiencies in the design and delivery of the asylum accommodation contracts. (Thangam Debbonaire)

**Examples of inadequate provision in constituency:** Alex Cunningham (including inadequate provision of equipment eg plates duvets etc), Debbie Abrahams, Paul Blomfield, Alex Sobel

(including vermin infestations, inadequate baby gate, mould), Afzal Khan (cockroaches, bedbugs, damp, leaks, mice)

- I..ask the Minister to get into a little bit of detail and ensure that the new contracts define good tog ratings, decent pillows and—who knows?—even a plate that can be left clean for use the next day. (Alex Cunningham)
- Would she be content knowing that her own child was sleeping in a cold, damp house with just a duvet with a 6.5 tog rating? Could she sleep at night if she had an 18-year-old daughter who was sharing a room with a stranger, whose background she did not know? Would she be okay watching cockroaches and rodents crawl across the floor and perhaps on to the bed, while her children were trying to sleep? (Alex Cunningham)
- Request for Minister to carry out unannounced visit to temporary asylum accommodation in Stockton (Alex Cunningham)
- Will the Minister commit to taking a more transparent approach to ending the appalling conditions that are, at the moment, common in asylum accommodation? (Afzal Khan)

**Opportunity for improvements to provision:** Opportunity to ensure service providers are delivering what they are supposed to and treating asylum seekers with dignity and respect [...] for Government to lay down higher standards; need for new contracts to specify eg tog ratings, quality of equipment (Alex Cunningham); Need to know that legally enforceable minimum standards will be provided [...]so that people who are not getting them might have recourse to the law (Sir Edward Davey); contracts should be an opportunity to right the wrongs and ensure that taxpayers' money funds decent accommodation, reflecting us as the compassionate and welcoming country that we want to be (Thangam Debbonaire); the expiry of the COMPASS contracts provides the perfect opportunity to deliver fundamental reform and to safeguard and improve asylum accommodation provision. Instead, the Home Office has decided to press on with a new set of contracts that repeat so many of the flaws in the existing model, including a lack of proper accountability, a lack of oversight for local authorities and a lack of proper resources to allow them to fulfil their duties. (Stuart C McDonald)

- What assessment and review has the Department made of the current asylum accommodation approach, and particularly the work carried out by contractors such as Serco? (Paul Sweeney)
- I should like the Minister to assess the impact of the change in approach at local level since 2012 when, for example, the YMCA provided the contract in Glasgow, which is now provided by Serco. What change has that meant to the quality of service provision? (Paul Sweeney)
- What learning from the current contract period has been used to inform the design of the new contract? [...]Did it involve engaging with the views of asylum seekers or speaking to charities on the ground to assess and improve the contract? I do not think any of that has happened, and there has been no discussion and no indication whatsoever that such things have taken place. (Paul Sweeney)

**Monitoring of provision, Recommendations of Home Affairs Select Committee:**

Need to step up monitoring with compliance and complaint mechanisms built into provision (Alex Cunningham); On monitoring quality, if local authorities had the contracts, there would be a group of people in the local authorities who could help monitor them. (Sir Edward Davey)

Report of Home Affairs Select Committee suggesting much tighter monitoring and inspection regime (Kate Green); Recommendations of Home Affairs Select Committee that the Government recognise local authorities and the third sector as key stakeholders, empower devolved Governments to monitor the delivery of the contracts and give local authorities greater flexibility to determine where accommodation is procured (Alex Cunningham); we have heard the same criticisms over and over again from asylum seekers, from organisations that do such fantastic work on their behalf, and from the Home Affairs Committee, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. (Stuart C McDonald) ; The Home Affairs Committee, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee have all published highly critical reports of the current COMPASS contracts. Less than a year ago, I was in this Chamber discussing urgent recommendations made by the Home Affairs Committee, many of which have yet to be resolved. (Afzal Khan).

- UNHCR is ..one of dozens of organisations that... has recommended that the new contracts must have robust monitoring, with compliance and complaints mechanisms built into the agreements. I wonder whether the Minister agrees with that? [...]
- I really look forward to hearing from the Minister how the compliance and monitoring will be improved for the new contracts.(Alex Cunningham)
- What reassurance can the Minister give us today that the contracts will be properly monitored, whether that is to do with duvets, quality of housing, advice or other aspects of the contracts that will be let? (Sir Edward Davey)
- What checks will be carried out to ensure that accommodation is habitable? (Paul Sweeney)
- Who will define and monitor the minimum quality standards for housing, and what assessment has been made of the habitability of accommodation provided since 2012? (Paul Sweeney)

**ICIBI report:** The Home Secretary is currently sitting on a report from the independent chief inspector of borders and immigration, which was sent to him on 9 July and should have been published within eight weeks. (Afzal Khan)

#### **Role of Local Authorities and third sector organisations / need for partnership working:**

- Need to work in partnership structures to be established to allow local authorities and regions to work with the Home Office and contractors to better manage provision (Alex Cunningham) need to listen to local authorities and third sector organisations, expertise of local authorities (Alex Cunningham, Anna Turley);
- Need to ensure communities on board as well (Debbie Abrahams)

- Our councils are expected to bail out these companies, but they are not granted any oversight of the delivery of their contracts. That is both insulting and impractical. It has created a system lacking in democracy and dignity [...]Councils and charities must have a central role in ensuring that the safety of asylum seekers is the priority in delivery. There must also be independent oversight of these contracts to ensure that people come before profit. (Alex Sobel)
- need for providers to have meaningful consultation and dialogue with the local authorities and the Home Office (Chris Stephens);
- Local authorities are not being given an appropriate oversight role and powers to determine provision in their areas, and nor are they, or other partner organisations, given the necessary resources to support all the work and services required in dispersal areas. That has to stop. (Stuart C McDonald)
- The Home Office must think again urgently and listen to the requests and calls made by participating authorities and organisations that work with asylum seekers. Those bodies are calling for equal partner status for local authorities involved in the new contracts, and for full disclosure of terms and conditions. They call for full transparency and accountability from contractors when sharing information requested by local authorities to support the work they do on dispersal. They are calling for local authorities to have full authority over dispersal levels and cluster limits at a council and ward level, and for the Home Office's power to overrule councils on procurement decisions to be brought to an end. The Home Office should directly and adequately fund local authorities to undertake all the work they do in supporting asylum seekers effectively. That includes those destitute families that the Home Office prevents from accessing public funds.(Stuart C McDonald)
- Last month, 14 local authorities took the unprecedented step of writing to the Home Secretary to warn that the asylum accommodation system is on the brink of collapse, and that he must personally step in. [...]What Labour is calling for, and what a Labour Government would oversee, is the return of responsibility for asylum accommodation, and the billions that come with it, to local authorities. In the absence of that, the very reasonable key recommendations from local authorities and third sector and community groups should be incorporated [...] Local authorities, charities and community groups are an essential part of asylum accommodation delivery. They are already central to integrating asylum seekers, and they are the ones who step in when things go wrong. It is essential that the Government are transparent with both the public and Parliament during this procurement process.(Afzal Khan)
- Local authorities need the power to inspect properties and safeguard vulnerable people. Despite being the ones who step in when contracts fall short, often to prevent destitution, local authorities do not have the power to regulate the conditions of asylum accommodation. The new contracts must give more powers and resources to local authorities to oversee and inspect accommodation in their areas. (Afzal Khan)
- Have local authorities been offered the contracts? It seems that they might be able to do a lot better with £4 billion over the next 10 years. I would not be surprised if they could do it for less, and it would be of higher quality. They could lock it in to their overall local housing

strategy. Has there been any discussion with the Local Government Association, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities or other local authority organisations about whether they could provide the services? If not, why not? (Sir Edward Davey)

### **Asylum dispersal**

Briefing from Local Government Association confirming that the current model of provision for asylum seekers does not provide the necessary funding for councils and is likely to place further pressures on specific areas of the UK. (Alex Cunningham); Need for flexibility to be extended in the asylum dispersal system (Anna Turley); Home Office has now pushed the whole system of asylum accommodation to breaking point. Some key local authorities that have been involved in the scheme for decades are now saying enough is enough, and they are seriously looking at withdrawal from it. Responsibility for that lies squarely with the Home Office, which has repeatedly failed to address those concerns, which have been expressed again today, instead playing them down and tinkering around the edges. Our local authorities have been pushed too far. (Stuart C McDonald); Last month, 14 local authorities took the unprecedented step of writing to the Home Secretary to warn that the asylum accommodation system is on the brink of collapse, and that he must personally step in. (Afzal Khan); Asylum seekers are not evenly distributed across the UK, with 35 local authorities—less than 10% of the total—hosting three quarters of the asylum seekers in dispersal accommodation. Many towns and cities across the north of England have more asylum seekers in a handful of wards than entire regions in the south and east of the UK. This often causes problems in local areas, especially as local authorities have no power to veto where accommodation will be procured. (Afzal Khan)

- will the Minister listen to those perfectly reasonable asks and engage with dispersal authorities about them during her imminent four nations meeting? If the Government will not listen to those asks and engage with the authorities, the Minister must explain the consequences of their alternative approach. For example, do they accept that they are required to re-engage with existing dispersal authorities to seek their participation in the new contracts, or is it the Government's position that having endured COMPASS 1, those authorities have no option but to continue on to COMPASS 2? In the latter case, what is the legal basis for that assertion, and what will happen if councils take a different approach? (Stuart C McDonald)
- Will the Minister clarify her Department's plan B if key local authorities withdraw from the scheme? Would the Department seriously consider attempting to procure private accommodation and place asylum seekers in cities without engaging dispersal-area councils? Does she believe that the legislation gives her those powers? If she is seriously stating that funding for local authorities is already sufficient, will she provide accountability by setting out the funding formula used for that in an easily comprehensible published document? (Stuart C McDonald)

### **Parliamentary scrutiny / Status and transparency of procurement process**

- briefing from Asylum Matters says Government's asylum accommodation contracts worth more than £4 billion. That is £4 billion of public money, but Parliament seems powerless to influence the procurement process in order to ensure that some of the most vulnerable in

our society get the support that they deserve as human beings. I hope that that will change today. (Alex Cunningham)

- “we do not know an awful lot about [the contract]” (Sir Edward Davey);
- open the tendering process to proper scrutiny (Thangam Debbonaire)
- Belief that current situation is that the Home Office has not yet received compliant bids in north-east England, Yorkshire and the Humber and Northern Ireland. With no information provided to local authorities about why that situation has happened, the people who could be left to pick up the pieces are being left in the dark. (Alex Cunningham)
- Key stakeholders are being kept in the dark on the procurement process. Feedback during the consultation was not taken on board, and problems were treated as one-offs, rather than as symptomatic of wider failings. In a letter to the Home Secretary, the leaders of eight local authorities in Yorkshire said they were disappointed by the decision to seemingly limit public scrutiny until the re-tender process was closed. They described the transition to the current COMPASS contracts in 2012 as a failure, with mass sudden homelessness prevented only by local authorities stepping in [...] It is essential that the Government are transparent with both the public and Parliament during this procurement process.. (Afzal Khan)
- Has the Minister seen that analysis [of the Statement of Requirements commissioned by Asylum Matters] and, if so, what does she think of it? (Alex Cunningham)
- Perhaps the Minister can update the House on the current status of compliant bids and, if we do not have them, tell us about plan B. (Alex Cunningham)
- Why has [the Statement of Requirements] not been shared with Members of Parliament? Can aspects of the contract not be shared with Members of Parliament—perhaps the Home Affairs Committee—beforehand on whatever terms are needed? (Sir Edward Davey)
- If Members can see the contracts, can the Minister tell us today whether there really will be minimum standards? (Sir Edward Davey)
- I ask the Minister whether she will commit to publishing at least the statement of requirements and performance management regime for the new contracts. (Thangam Debbonaire)

### **Forced room sharing, HMOs and vulnerability**

- Report put together by Asylum Matters on asylum housing in Tyneside finding real problems with mother and baby accommodation, with women with two children of different ages being put together in one room and sickness resulting; victims of torture being forced to share rooms and Freedom from Torture information on this; information from Justice First re Government’s refusal to define ‘vulnerable’ in relation to room sharing; reply of Government to Parliamentary question stating room sharing would continue to be permitted (Alex Cunningham);

- One reason why this happens is Home Office failure to share information effectively with housing provider, contracts should require Home Office to share information (Louise Haigh)
- Government's position is that a person will not have to share a room if they are determined to be "vulnerable", yet the Government have refused to define what vulnerable means to them. (Alex Cunningham)
- There is no doubt that some of the most vulnerable people living in our country not only are being given some of the most shocking accommodation, but are being asked to share rooms, which is causing their mental health to deteriorate [...] We hear about people who...are being asked to share a room with people whom they tried to escape from (Sir Edward Davey)
- No one should be forced to share a bedroom (Afzal Khan)
- Need to reduce use of large-scale houses of multiple occupation. In particular, vulnerable service users such as pregnant women, new mothers, victims of violence or torture, and those with physical and mental health needs should not be in large-scale HMOs. Proper and effective vulnerability screening needs to take place regularly in asylum accommodation to identify individuals with specific support needs, such as those with mental health issues, the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, survivors of trafficking, pregnant women, young mothers and LGBT individuals. (Alex Cunningham);
- Recommendation by Doctors of the World that the contracts be amended to ensure that those seeking asylum are provided with the right to register with a GP while housed in initial accommodation, and to require accommodation providers to register vulnerable people with a GP within five working days of arrival at initial or dispersed accommodation. (Alex Cunningham);
- No one should be forced to share a bedroom, and providers should respect local rules on homes in multiple occupation. There must be better provision for vulnerable asylum seekers. To highlight just one example, pregnant women are being moved late in their pregnancy and at very short notice, interrupting their maternity care. That can have a significant impact on the mental health of the women, who have often already faced significant trauma. Maternity Action has called on the Government to require contractors to comply with existing Home Office guidance on the dispersal of pregnant women and new mothers and to collect data to enable the Home Office to monitor compliance with that guidance.(Afzal Khan)
- How will [continuation of room sharing] work? Will she spell out what "strict criteria [under which room sharing will be permitted] are? How does she define vulnerability? How will providers be monitored [...] and managed to ensure that they do not just ignore the advice and disregard individual needs? (Alex Cunningham)
- What will change in the contract to sort this out? [reduction of use of large scale HMOs, especially with respect to vulnerable people] These people need to feel safe and secure in

order to be able to rebuild their lives away from the horror they have escaped.(Alex Cunningham)

- Does the Minister agree with recommendations [those seeking asylum are provided with the right to register with a GP while housed in initial accommodation, and to require accommodation providers to register vulnerable people with a GP within five working days of arrival at initial or dispersed accommodation]? (Alex Cunningham)
- Can we not get to a point where people simply do not have to share bedrooms? It does not seem too unreasonable a question to ask or too unreasonable a criterion to have in the new contracts. (Sir Edward Davey)

### **Complaints process**

- Examples of bullying from staff at large scale accommodation facilities (Alex Cunningham)
- Need for complaints management system to provide ways and means for asylum seekers to raise complaints, lack of proper complaints management process (Alex Cunningham).

### **Northern Ireland**

- Denial of access to ongoing support if accommodation refused, asylum seekers having to move accommodation at short notice (Jim Shannon)
- Particular issues in Northern Ireland, lack of trust and reluctance to approach Police Service of Northern Ireland, lack of reporting of racial harassment, medical reports to evidence relocation, difficulties experienced when children have to move school. (Jim Shannon)
- Request for the Minister to let [Jim Shannon] know how we can improve the system to help people in Northern Ireland.
- Request for the extension of the refugee transition period from 28 days to 56 days. (Jim Shannon)

### **Glasgow**

- Issue of 330 threatened lock changes evictions of asylum seekers in Serco properties in Glasgow over summer, despite the fact that some had ongoing appeals / fresh claims, protests in Glasgow, lack of information sharing Home Office and local authority, work of Govan Law Centre (Chris Stephens);
- have had to deal with 106 asylum cases in the past five months alone, largely because of Home Office service level failures. Not the job of MPs to do Home Office's job for it and to have to deal with that level of failure. Clearly contract not working [...] tribute to organisations working with asylum seekers in Glasgow and registered social landlords, 106 asylum cases dealt with in last five months, effect of inadequate "move on" policy including on children; no word from Scottish Conservative Party on this issue (Paul Sweeney)

### **Unaccompanied children**

- Shortfall in costs of accommodating unaccompanied asylum seeking children cared for by Local Authority; legacy or old standard grant rates have not increased since they were introduced in 2011-12 (Dame Caroline Spelman)

### **Initial accommodation**

- People in Barry House in London for long periods; not fit for purpose; cramped, poorly managed, vermin, no accountability. Need for service standard for amount of time people stay in initial accommodation, with financial penalties if not met, councils funded to step in if problems not addressed, funding for short term psychological support, early years and English language provision, relationship between accommodation standards and wider dysfunctionality of Home Office (Helen Hayes)

### **Caroline Nokes (Immigration Minister):**

- conscious of the debt we owe [...] local authorities that are part of [...] dispersal [...] and [...] work incredibly hard to make available services and facilities to enable those seeking asylum to integrate [...]
- We have [...] started a dialogue about how we can increase the number of dispersal areas. We all know that the more that we are able to disperse asylum seekers among different local authorities, the easier it is for those authorities to manage. Indeed, it is better for our communities for there to be a wide range of people living within them and contributing to the better integration of asylum seekers.
- I have engaged in discussions over the past few months with some metropolitan mayors, local authorities, the Local Government Association, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other groups of local authorities [...] Serious conversations are ongoing about how we can increase the number of dispersal areas, whether I have the power to mandate that and whether that is the right way forward [...]
- (To Sir Edward Davey) it is true that no local authorities have come forward as part of this bidding process [...]
- [...] perhaps there is a very good case for breaking contracts down further, which might increase engagement from local authorities.
- [...] I am never averse to the greater engagement and involvement of local authorities. [...]

### **Sir Edward Davey:**

- Have the Minister or her officials talked to different local authorities to see what sort of contract they would be able to bid for? [...] It is a question of whether the Home Office is willing to design the contracts in a way that would be achievable for local authorities.

### **Caroline Nokes:**

- Officials have of course engaged with local authorities and will continue to do so, and they have shared with both local authorities and stakeholders the statement of requirements [...]
- I see absolutely no obstacle to [sharing the Statement of Requirements] given that we have already shared it with a number of stakeholders and local authorities.
- [...] some very constructive engagement with Glasgow City Council, and later with the Scottish Government.
- [...] one thing that situation [in Glasgow] taught us is the benefit of making sure that there are information-sharing mechanisms between the Home Office, local government and the accommodation providers. That is absolutely key [...]

- It would be unfair of me today to comment on numbers [...]what is clear through that process [...]is that some of those individuals had submitted additional claims for asylum and some were still at an appeals process. That absolutely indicates that the information sharing has to be of the highest quality.
- [...] through the asylum process there are many opportunities to submit appeals and to make fresh or additional claims. That sometimes puts accommodation providers, and indeed the Home Office, in the difficult position of having to consider claims and have them properly go through the courts. When people's claims for asylum are found by the courts not to be appropriate, of course we have to take action. [...] we have to improve our ability to ensure that those with no valid claim for asylum are assisted to return to their country of origin; unfortunately, we have to do that.
- [...] There is much more work to do to speed up the process and ensure that Home Office processes are accurate at the earliest possible stage. However, a lot of that is about finding mechanisms for people who are going through the process to bring forward as much information as possible as soon as possible [...]
- [Jim Shannon] painted a very clear picture of how the situation in Northern Ireland could be different [...]He will know that Northern Ireland is one of the areas where the contract has not received the same level of interest that it has in other areas, so clearly we have more work to do there [...]
- [He] [...]spoke about [...]oversight of complaints[...] Of course the preference must always be for a service provider [...]to deal with complaints from service users promptly and adequately in the first instance. However, I recognise that that does not always happen, and of course escalation routes exist and will continue to exist—ultimately to UK Visas and Immigration—and I am very keen that complaints should be raised and addressed with the utmost efficiency and speed.
- I have heard some horror stories [...]this afternoon, which we would certainly not wish anyone, let alone one's own child, to experience. That was particularly true of the comments about vermin and cockroaches. Of course those things are not acceptable and we do not wish them to happen now, let alone under the new contracts.
- [...] I wish to address about the length of contracts [...]There is a break at seven years, at which point we would be able to address the—[Interruption.] Well, the current contract is seven years as well, and that will give us the opportunity to review matters, should we need to do so.

**Alex Cunningham:** [...]Will she take that point back and think again about it, and see whether we could perhaps have breaks at three years or five years?

**Caroline Nokes:**

[...] I will certainly think about it. On break clauses, there are indeed mechanisms within the contracts being proposed to ensure that any changes that the Home Office wishes to make in the future can be enacted appropriately, so these are not contracts that are set in stone for a 10-year

period. As I said, there is a break clause at seven years, but we will also have the opportunity to make changes that we may need to make [.....]

[...] Alongside the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, we continue to explore how central and local Government can work better together to enable us to meet our international commitments and to let service providers, local partners and civil society play their part. We are currently working with a number of local authorities to develop a place-based approach to asylum and resettlement, and considering how closer working and greater collaboration could work in practice.

[...]we are determined to improve standards and will stipulate more standardisation in the initial accommodation estate. That will ensure that there are dedicated areas for women and families, and more adapted rooms for those with specific needs, including pregnant women.

The new contracts will improve service-user orientation, to help service users to live in their communities and access local services. There will be better data-sharing with relevant agencies, to better join people to those services. [...]

The new contracts will also focus on safeguarding and improvements to support vulnerable service users, which will build on the enhancements to safeguarding that have been put in place across the immigration system over recent years. Standardised health checks will be introduced to identify those with specific physical and mental health needs, and we will provide more uniform training for providers' staff on safeguarding.

I also want the new contracts to improve advice services. We will introduce a national contract to provide advice to and assist destitute asylum seekers in making support applications.

The new contracts will further improve engagement with other agencies, and the accommodation provider will be required, during the normal course of its operations, to liaise and co-operate with other organisations, including local authorities, the voluntary sector, the NHS and the police, which will ensure that the interests of the service users are best served.

I am clear that I want the new contracts to build on the groundwork for a constructive relationship between central Government, local government, the private sector and civil society, for the benefit of communities and those seeking asylum.

### **Alex Cunningham**

[...] I appreciate the Minister's response to the debate. There were many things that she did not manage to cover in her remarks and I hope that I can look forward to receiving a letter from her that addresses some of the things that I outlined in my speech. Nevertheless, I make the appeal again to be transparent, to get into the detail and to work with others, especially local authorities. I also go back to that word "monitor". Please, please, please put a system in place to monitor these contracts properly to ensure that asylum seekers get the facilities that they need, so that they can at least live a peaceful life in that respect.

Question put and agreed to.

## ACCOMMODATION

[176654](#)

Alex Sobel (Lab, Leeds North West) asks SSHD, whether in setting the requirements for asylum accommodation and support contracts he has complied with section 1 of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and considered (a) how (i) those contracts might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the areas in which asylum seekers will be accommodated and (ii) he might act with a view to securing that improvement and (b) whether to undertake a consultation on those matters; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Nokes, 11.10.18: Over the last two years, and in accordance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, the Home Office has engaged extensively with a wide range of stakeholders and partners to develop the strategy and requirements for the next generation contracts.

This engagement has utilised various approaches including 1-2-1s, workshops and a written exercise. Information gleaned from this allowed the project team to build on lessons learned from the existing COMPASS arrangements. Through the Home Office funded Strategic Migration Partnerships, we bring together national, regional and local public sectors to coordinate activity to deal with effects of the immigration system on local economies and communities.

## DECISION MAKING

House of Commons, 9.10.18, Oral Answers to Questions, Justice, Topical Questions read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Stuart C McDonald (SNP, Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East): People are still having to wait an average of 42 weeks to get a hearing before the immigration and asylum first-tier tribunal, which is a long time to be in immigration limbo. What steps are the Government taking to reduce that time and what do they regard as an unacceptable waiting time target?

Lucy Frazer (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice) The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight that waiting times for tribunals could be reduced. We are recruiting new members of the tribunals; in February and March, we appointed 226 new medical members of the social security tribunal. I am also meeting, and have met twice, my counterpart in the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that we can get those waiting times down.

## DECISION MAKING

[174051](#)

Catherine McKinnell (Lab, Newcastle Upon Tyne North) asks SSHD, what assessment his Department has made of the reasons for the proportion of his Department's appeals against immigration rulings which are refused; and if he will make a statement.

Caroline Nokes, 9.10.18: The Home Office carefully considers all allowed appeals and only challenges these in the Upper Tribunal where we believe there has been a material error of law.

## DECISION MAKING / ENFORCEMENT

House of Lords, 9.10.18 Counter Terrorism and Border Security Bill, Second Reading, read [here](#)  
watch [here](#)

[...] Lord Ramsbotham (Crossbench) [...]having been critical for many years of the Home Office’s failure to direct and oversee the systematic processing of legal asylum and immigration applicants, I am concerned about how any of its fragile systems will cope with the demands made on them by both legal and illegal immigration after Brexit. Having lost sight of at least 631,000 legal applicants [...] how on earth will border officials identify, let alone question and detain, individuals suspected of involvement in hostile activity for or on behalf of another state? [...]

## **DESTITUTION / HOMELESSNESS**

[174047](#)

Catherine McKinnell (Lab, Newcastle Upon Tyne North) asks Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps his Department is taking to improve support for people who sleep rough who are non-UK nationals.

Heather Wheeler (Parliamentary Under-Secretary (Housing, Communities and Local Government) 9.10.18: No one should ever have to sleep rough, regardless of background or nationality. That is why we have committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027.

On the 13 August 2018 the government published the Rough Sleeping Strategy in which we laid out a number of new interventions to improve support for non-UK nationals who sleep rough. This includes:

- additional training for frontline staff;
- an additional Home Office Rough Sleeping Support team to support and resolve the immigration status of non-UK national rough sleepers; and
- a £5 million fund to help local areas support non-UK nationals off the streets.

These interventions compliment the £100 million Controlling Migration Fund, which has already supported a number of projects to help non-UK nationals away from the street and is currently open to further bids from local authorities.

The Rough Sleeping Strategy is published here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf)

## **HEALTH**

[HCWS995](#) [HLWS962](#)

Statement made in the House of Commons by Caroline Nokes, and in the House of Lords by Baroness Williams of Trafford, announcing the Government is seeking to double Immigration Health Surcharge to £400 per annum for most non EEA temporary migrant categories.

[...] “Certain vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers and modern slavery victims are exempt from paying the IHS” [...]

## **ENFORCEMENT / INTEGRATION / EDUCATION**

[176553](#)

Stephanie Peacock (Lab, Barnsley East) asks SSHD, what recent steps he has taken to ensure that the provisions of immigration bail do not restrict the access to education of adult survivors of modern slavery.

Caroline Nokes, 11.10.18: Immigration bail is a valuable tool which enables individuals who are liable to be detained to remain in the community, subject to certain conditions. All individuals on immigration bail will have a minimum of one bail condition, but study is just one of the available options. It is not mandatory to impose a restriction on study; it should only be imposed where appropriate.

Guidance for Home Office staff clearly sets out the circumstances in which restricting study as a condition of immigration bail may be appropriate.

Any individual on immigration bail who is concerned that a study condition is inappropriate in their particular circumstances should be encouraged to contact the Home Office using the contact details on their Notification of Grant/Variation of Immigration Bail (BAIL 201) notice.

## **ENFORCEMENT / STOKE ON TRENT / SUPPORT**

[176514](#)

Gareth Snell (Lab, Stoke on Trent Central) asks SSHD, what was the consultation process with UK Visa and Immigration prior to the decision to close the immigration reporting centre in Stoke-on-Trent.

Caroline Nokes, 11.10.18: The move of reporting away from Stoke-on-Trent was part of a wider programme of work to rationalise our reporting locations to more effectively manage the reporting population.

When the decision to move reporting operations in Stoke-on-Trent had been made, stakeholders were informed. These stakeholders included; Staffordshire Police, Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Team; Social Services; St Marks Hall; Citizens Advice Bureau; SMK Solicitors; Morden Solicitors and Duncan Lewis Solicitors.

## **EU**

[HCWS987 HLWS954](#)

Justice and Home Affairs, Pre-Council Written Statement made 10.10.18 by David Gauke (The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice in the House of Commons, and Lord Keen of Elie (The Lords Spokesperson) in the House of Lords

[...] The Home Secretary will attend the JHA Council for Interior Day on 12 October.

There will be a policy debate on the proposed Regulation to amend the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation which aims to reinforce the EU's Integrated Border Management strategy and further protect the external borders by providing the European Border and Coast Guard Agency with a standing corps of 10,000 staff with executive powers, their own equipment and the ability to act in third countries. This is a Schengen building measure which the UK does not participate in.

The Council will discuss the proposed recast of the EU Returns Directive. The UK chose not to participate in the current version of this Directive. The UK will need to decide whether to participate in this recast.

The Council will discuss developments under the comprehensive approach on migration. The Presidency will focus on the Common European Asylum System, cooperation with North African countries on a range of migration issues including Search and Rescue disembarkations, and work to tackle organised immigration crime. The UK supports work to strengthen the EU's external borders and to intensify relationships with key third countries in order to break smuggling networks and ensure that protection is given to those most in need.

The Council will discuss proposed EU JHA funding programmes for the next (2021-27) Multiannual Financial Framework. These programmes will commence after the UK's exit from the EU and the end of the envisaged Implementation Period. The UK will not be participating in any future programmes as a Member State. The UK will consider options to participate as a third country on a case by case basis where there is benefit to the UK.

There will be further debate on the reform of the Common European Asylum System, including the issues of solidarity, responsibility and relocation in the context of the Dublin IV proposal, in which the UK is not participating.

## **FAMILY REUNION / CHILDREN / CALAIS**

[HCWS997 HLWS964](#)

Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, Written Statement HCWS997. Made 11 October 2018 by in House of Commons by Caroline Nokes and in the House of Lords by Baroness Williams of Trafford.

[...] further to my Written Ministerial Statement of 13 September 2018 ([HCWS961](#)), this Statement of Changes introduces a form of leave to remain for those children transferred to the UK as part of the Calais camp clearance to reunite with family between October 2016 and July 2017 and who do not qualify for international protection (i.e. refugee status or humanitarian protection). It is our view that all those 549 children transferred from Calais to the UK to reunite with family should be able to remain here with their family members. We do not consider that it would be in their best interests as children to separate them from their families, having received significant support from the UK authorities to reunite and integrate here [...]

## **RESETTLEMENT**

House of Lords, 9.10.18 Counter Terrorism and Border Security Bill, Second Reading, read [here](#) watch [here](#)

[...] Lord Marlesford (Con) [...] We should be more discriminating over those to whom we grant refuge. When David Cameron proposed to take 20,000 refugees from Syria, some of us asked for priority to be given to Christians and Yazidis, who were particularly subject to persecution. Up to now, the Government have resisted this.[...]

## **RESETTLEMENT / LGBTQI**

### [HL10429](#)

Lord Scriven (Lib Dem) asks HMG what consideration they have given to including sexual orientation and gender identity as additional vulnerability criteria alongside UNHCR's criteria for future resettlement programmes.

Baroness Williams of Trafford (Minister of State, Home Office), 10.10.18: We have confidence in UNHCR's systems and the agreed submission categories upon which they refer cases to the UK government to be considered for resettlement. UNHCR is the internationally recognised and mandated agency for dealing with refugees: it has a global presence and 65 years' experience in handling refugee crises, and is best placed to identify and refer the most vulnerable refugees for resettlement.

Looking to the future, we have begun work with key stakeholders and international organisations on our future Asylum and Resettlement Strategy, which includes consideration of a future resettlement offer, post-2020.

## **RESETTLEMENT**

### [HL10407](#)

The Lord Bishop of Durham asks Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to announce any resettlement commitment through the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme beyond 2020; and if so, when.

Baroness Williams of Trafford, 10.10.18: Work has begun with key stakeholders and international organisations on our future Asylum and Resettlement Strategy. This includes consideration of the UK's resettlement offer beyond 2020.

## **RESETTLEMENT**

International Development Committee, 10 October 2018, Oral Evidence, Forced Displacement in Africa read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Includes evidence by George Okoth-Obbo (Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, UNHCR): "As you know, with the United Kingdom we have advocated that the different streams of resettlement be consolidated in a package, to which we have put a number of 10,000. If the United Kingdom was to go anywhere towards that, we would see the two effects I have mentioned; i.e. it will help people and have an incredible demonstration effect. The word I would use for that would be "tremendous".

## **COUNTRY SITUATIONS**

### **CHILDREN**

## [EDM1688](#)

### Learn to Live Campaign

Date tabled 11.10.18 Primary sponsor Tom Brake (Lib Dem, Carshalton and Wallington); Sponsor Catherine West, Hornsey and Wood Green

That this House congratulates Year nine students from Carshalton Boys Sports College and Hornsey School for Girls for participating in War Child's 'Learn to Live' campaign; welcomes the engagement shown by the students to interact with and understand the issues facing child refugees in Iraq, Jordan and the Central African Republic; expresses regret for the devastating suffering child refugees have faced through being caught up in conflicts; notes that exchanging information between these two groups has helped develop friendships across borders; and hopes that these new friendships will continue to grow as students continue to send messages to each other through the campaign.

### INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

## [174136](#)

Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) asks Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to support long-term internally displaced people.

Alistair Burt (Minister for State, Department of International Development), 9.10.18: The UK is committed to supporting Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). We are shifting our approach in protracted crises to more effectively meet the long term needs of displaced populations through access to education and healthcare and support to livelihoods. The UK has large bilateral programmes in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen that support IDPs and the communities that host them. We also support, through core and bilateral funding, some of the key UN agencies involved in responding to IDP needs, such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

### FORCED DISPLACEMENT IN AFRICA

International Development Committee, 10 October 2018, Oral Evidence, Forced Displacement in Africa read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Richard Burden; Mrs Pauline Latham; Mr Ivan Lewis; Paul Scully; Henry Smith.

I: Sanj Srikanthan, Acting Senior Vice President Europe and Executive Director UK, International Rescue Committee; Markus Geisser, Senior Humanitarian Affairs and Policy Adviser, International Committee of the Red Cross; Lucy Hovil, Senior Researcher, International Refugee Rights Initiative.

Session covers scale of displacement in East Africa, conflicts in South Sudan, internal displacement in Kenya and displacement in Somalia, the situation in DRC, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Lake Chad. Also covers international response, the situation of women and girls, sexual violence, need for education and programmes to enable families to generate resources, response of NGOs to sexual exploitation and abuse, durable solutions including repatriation and integration, funding from the international community on loans, Global Compact, securitisation of borders, need for focus on IDPs.

II: George Okoth-Obbo, Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, UNHCR; Valentin Tapsoba, Africa Bureau Director, UNHCR.

Session covers UK funding of UNHCR, approach to encampment in Uganda and Ethiopia, World Bank funding, need to increase resettlement in UK, UNHCR relationship with DFID and IOM, UNHCR action on allegations of bribery, corruption and sexual abuse, and the UN Global Compact on refugees.

#### BURMA MYANMAR / ROHINGYA / WOMEN

House of Commons, 10 October 2018, 1200, Oral Answers to Questions, Department of International Development, Rohingya women read [here](#) watch [here](#)

Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford), Sandy Martin (Lab, Ipswich), Rosie Duffield (Lab, Canterbury): **If she will provide additional funding to support and protect Rohingya women living in refugee camps.**

Alistair Burt: [...] DFID supports organisations that help Rohingya women and has committed £129 million to the crisis overall. A third of our recent £70 million allocation is being spent on protection services, including women's centres, emergency nutrition and midwifery care and support for survivors of gender-based violence. We will continue to explore additional funding options.

Debate also covers: sexual violence against Rohingya women, shortfall in funding to UN joint response plan, UK contribution to funding for victims of sexual violence, conditions of return.[..]

#### BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[173642](#)

Chris Law (SNP, Dundee West) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the policy paper [Bangladesh Sexual and Gender Based Violence Assessment, Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, 14 to 21 November 2017](#), which of the recommendations have been implemented and how.

Alistair Burt, 9.10.18: The UK is leading the way in supporting a range of organisations providing specialised help to women and survivors of sexual violence among Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh. The Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative team's report and recommendations have informed the government's response to gender-based violence in this crisis. We continue to put protection and the needs and voices of girls and women at the centre of our response, and our support for the international effort in Bangladesh.

UK support to address GBV in the Rohingya refugee camps has included:

- 30 Child Friendly Spaces providing protective services and psychosocial and psychological support.
- 19 women's centres offering a safe space, psychosocial support and activities to women and girls.
- 206,287 Rohingya refugees and host communities have received GBV and SRH services with UK funding. Services provided have included referrals, midwife care, survivor's cases and healthcare and GBV care.
- Case management is being provided for 2,190 survivors of sexual and gender based violence.

- 19 sexual and reproductive health clinics are providing family planning, maternal and newborn services.
- Up to 60,000 women now have access to midwifery care.
- Up to 30,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women and 120,000 under-fives have been provided with emergency nutrition support.

#### BURMA MYANMAR / BANGLADESH / ROHINGYA

[906959](#)

Rushanara Ali (Lab, Bethnal Green and Bow) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, if her Department will provide additional funding to Rohingya refugees in preparation for the cyclone season.

Alistair Burt, 10.10.18: The UK has invested £12.6 million specifically in emergency preparedness before the cyclone season. The Bangladeshi government is experienced in responding to extreme weather events. We are working with the government and other partners to keep emergency preparedness a priority, to enhance coordination and to ensure the overall response builds resilience.

#### FRANCE

[173617](#)

Jeff Smith (Lab, Manchester Withington) asks SSHD, what discussions his Department has had with their French counterparts on the forced eviction of asylum seekers at the Grande-Synthe camp in Dunkirk.

Caroline Nokes, 9.10.18: Following the clearance of the 'Jungle' camp in Calais in 2016, French authorities have worked extensively to ensure that similar camps do not form across Northern France. This remains a domestic matter for the French and as such the British Government are not consulted prior to any clearances which take place. Following the closure of the Grande-Synthe camp, we were informed by French authorities that the migrants have been moved into asylum accommodation, where their claims will be considered and the necessary support will be provided.

In January 2018, the UK and France signed the Sandhurst Treaty, which demonstrates our ongoing commitment to prevent irregular migration and to the continued operation of the juxtaposed controls. Our cooperation with France includes joint work to improve security at the shared border in northern France; to reduce illegal migration flows towards northern French ports and to support France in returning migrants with no legal right to be in Europe.

#### KENYA

[174135](#)

Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) asks Secretary of State for International Development, with reference to the [study by the International Finance Corporation and the UN Refugee Agency on Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya](#), published on 4 May 2018, what assessment her Department has made of the economic gains to host communities if refugees are able to work.

Harriet Baldwin, 9.10.18: DFID assesses that opportunities for refugees to work in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya and other refugee camps, can provide considerable benefit for host communities. This includes through increased refugee spending on local goods and services and in some cases, the hiring of host community members to work in refugee owned businesses and homes. The findings of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) study on Kakuma, are consistent with DFID's recent support to refugees in Kenya, which has helped build the self-reliance of refugees, including through livelihoods opportunities and greater integration with host communities. DFID Kenya has participated in a number of discussions with IFC/UNHCR, the private sector and other development partners on the findings of the study and its implications for donor programming in Kenya.

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES / UNRWA

[173937](#)

Tom Brake (Lib Dem, Carshalton and Wallington) asks the Secretary of State for International Development, whether the Government plans to maintain the current level of funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency in the next departmental spending review for her Department.

Alistair Burt, 9.10.18: The UK remains firmly committed to supporting the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, for whom we have been a consistent top 5 donor. The process for agreeing Spending Review commitments is a Treasury lead. Once this has been set out, DFID will review departmental priorities to agree the best use of its Official Development Assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the wider Middle East region.

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES / UNRWA

[173938](#)

Tom Brake (Lib Dem, Carshalton and Wallington) asks the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has made to the US Government on its decision to withdraw funding from the UN Relief and Works Agency.

Alistair Burt, 10.10.18: The Foreign Secretary discussed the issue of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) with the Senior Adviser to the President, Jared Kushner, on 22 August. We are concerned about the impact of the US cutting its funding. The Government has recently increased its support to UNRWA. The UK has so far provided £57.5 million in funding this year for the Agency to help vulnerable Palestinian refugees, as well as £2 million to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to help provide Gazans with access to clean water and sanitation.

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES / UNRWA

[906954](#)

Matthew Pennycook (Lab, Greenwich and Woolwich) asks the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the effect on Palestinian refugees of recent reductions in US aid.

Alistair Burt 10.10.18: Proactive UK lobbying has helped reduce the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees' (UNRWA) immediate financing shortfall. However, the withdrawal of US funding

could exacerbate the future humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees and threaten regional security. The UK Government has committed to provide £57.5 million to UNRWA this year.

#### PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

[174719](#)

Jim Shannon (DUP, Strangford) asks the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with the Norwegian Refugee Council on Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

Alistair Burt, 10.10.18: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials regularly meet with the Norwegian Refugee Council to discuss the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and to get updates on the progress of the British funded legal aid programme. The programme supports Bedouin communities and Palestinians facing demolition or eviction in Area C of the West Bank to challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system.

#### SUDAN

House of Lords, 11 November 2018, 11.06am read [here](#) watch [here](#)

[...] Baroness Cox (Crossbench) My Lords, is the Minister aware that earlier this year I visited Blue Nile state in Sudan with my small NGO, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust—HART—where we met 9,000 recently displaced people who were desperate. They had no food, they were at risk of starvation, and HART was the only NGO to reach them. We were able to raise emergency funding which saved many lives, but there are reports of a very high mortality rate, especially for children. Will the Minister therefore explain how the UK Government are working with the international community to fulfil its responsibilities to protect and provide for these very vulnerable, and indeed dying people?

Baroness Goldie (Lord in Waiting, HM household, whip): I thank the noble Baroness, who raises a very important point. She will be aware that the UK Government, through our Department for International Development, has been providing very significant help. Indeed, the UK remains one of the largest humanitarian donors to Sudan and we are the largest contributor to the Sudan Humanitarian Fund. We contribute approximately £15 million a year to that fund and we are trying to provide help with clean water and sanitation, particularly helping children, women and girls through food and nutrition interventions. We are also doing everything we can with emergency food assistance and support, because there are South Sudanese refugees and newly displaced people arriving in Sudan.

#### SYRIA

House of Lords, 9.10.18 Counter Terrorism and Border Security Bill, Second Reading, read [here](#) watch [here](#)

[...] Lord Paddick (Lib Dem) [...] The other last-minute provision that we have serious concerns about is the Secretary of State designating areas overseas as being illegal for UK citizens or residents to travel to. It could become illegal for a Syrian refugee who is resident in the UK but whose family still lives in Syria to visit them, even though his mother or father could be dying. Again, the Government

will say that there is the “reasonable excuse” defence, but how sick does your mother have to be before it is considered reasonable for you to travel to a designated area? [...]