



Resettlement of Afghan citizens to the UK

Non-EU Immigration: MW 498

Summary

1. The planned resettlement to the UK of between 20,000 and 30,000 Afghan citizens is a major event, comparable in scale to 20,000-30,000 Ugandan Asians taken in by Britain in 1972. (Syrian refugee resettlement since 2011 has been on a similar scale). Estimates of the cost of the Afghan resettlement ranges up to **£2.5 billion** over the next ten years but the numbers could expand further. The scheme will add still further to net foreign migration to the UK which has averaged some 300,000 per year since 2001 unless the government takes some countervailing measures in their immigration policies, of which there is no sign.

Introduction

2. The Taliban took power in Afghanistan in August 2021, prompting the government to expand and open new programmes to resettle Afghans in the United Kingdom. Between 2013 and the end of August 2021, around 9,000 former locally employed staff in Afghanistan and their families, who were assessed to be at serious risk as a result of work for the UK Government or Armed Forces, were relocated here. 7,000-8,000 former staff and their families came in April-August 2021 (including at least 2,200 children). In August, during the evacuation operation named Operation PITTING, 500 'special cases' deemed to be at particular risk were also brought here. The government plans to bring in 20,000 people over five years under a bespoke resettlement scheme, including some people who have already been called forward but not yet arrived. We estimate that the total arriving **between 2013 and 2025 will be more than 30,000** when subsequent family arrivals are taken into account. We summarise details of the resettlement schemes as well as numbers coming via the asylum process, the estimated financial cost and the local authorities pledging to host arrivals.

What are the schemes involved?

3. The UK employed 7,000 Afghan interpreters, translators and other locals in support roles during Operation Herrick (2003-2014) while 2,850 Afghans worked as interpreters and translators for British forces on the frontline. In 2012 the government introduced the ***Ex Gratia resettlement and redundancy scheme*** for working staff who had been in post working directly for the UK Government. This eventually covered those who worked for the UK on or after 1 May 2006. The scheme was meant to be reserved for 'the most

serious cases'. Applicants also had to have served more than 12 months when they were made redundant or resigned. **1,400 people were relocated from 2013**. The scheme runs until November 2022.

4. The ***Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP)*** is now open to any current or former staff employed directly by the government in Afghanistan since 2001, who are assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life, *regardless of employment status or length of time served. The scheme is open-ended and there is no numerical limit*. The policy provides for the main applicant to bring their close family members (spouse and under 18 children) and they will be granted Indefinite Leave to Remain. Other family may be come in exceptional circumstances. The scheme opened in April 2021. The first ARAP flight was on 22 June 2021. Since then, around 7,000 Locally Employed Staff and their family members have been relocated¹.

5. The ***Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS)***. This was announced in August 2021 but is not yet operational. The first arrivals were 500 'special cases' evacuated in August 2021 who were identified as being particularly at risk, including female politicians, members of the LGBT community, women's rights activists and judges and Chevening scholars². 20,000 people will be allowed to resettle in the UK over the course of five years but this is unlikely to be the limit of the numbers. The current refugee family reunion policy also allows a partner and children under 18 of those granted protection to join them here if they formed part of the family unit before the sponsor fled their country. Afghan nationals recognised as refugees (including those coming under ACRS) will be able to sponsor qualifying family under this route. We estimate that this will add another 8,000 or so people to the eventual ACRS-linked numbers³. Ministers have not yet confirmed the start date but the Home Office has indicated who the scheme would prioritise⁴. The government says they will be replicating the Syrian resettlement scheme under which 20,000 people were resettled here from 2015 onwards. 56 members of the HO staff are allocated to run this scheme.

6. Afghans are also able to claim asylum from the UK. If deemed to be in need of protection they can be given refugee status as well as the right to bring in further family members.

How many people are involved in each scheme and in total?

7. A total of 17,000 people were brought to the UK from Afghanistan since April 2021, including 15,000 people between 15 August and 31 August⁵ (this included around 8,000 British Nationals⁶, and 7,000 Afghans). The total includes some Afghan nationals who were brought to the UK as part of the August military evacuation (Operation PITTING). Those who came as part of this operation were given visa waivers as well as limited permission to stay outside of the Immigration Rules for six months⁷. The government did not confirm which immigration status the evacuees who are not part of ARAP currently have, but did confirm that they are eligible to work, study and receive free healthcare.

8. It is also notable that British citizens and settled UK people who were evacuated from Afghanistan in August will be able to bring in their family members without having to meet the minimum income requirement, English language rules or pay application fees.

9. The Government said around 7,000 people were evacuated under ARAP between June and August 2021⁸. On 1 June 2021, the UK Government announced that ARAP applications would be streamlined. In August, the Ministry of Defence revised the rules so that they would also include those dismissed for minor administrative offences, and said that claims could also be made from a third country.

10. Between 2001 and 2021, at least 31,000 Afghans have been granted refugee status or another form of humanitarian protection in the UK⁹. The UK also removed 15,755 people to Afghanistan who had no right to be here (2008-19), including failed asylum claimants, immigration offenders and, possibly, foreign national offenders¹⁰. Following events in August 2021, the HO temporarily paused decision-making for outstanding Afghan asylum claims until it publishes new country guidance for how staff should treat claims. Refused cases will be looked at again in advance of an asylum appeal hearing to see whether the refusal 'is still appropriate'¹¹. The government has suspended enforced returns to Afghanistan¹². Those who were previously refused asylum, who believe their situation has changed would have to make a further submission to have their case re-considered.

What are the initial arrangements for arrivals?

11. A person who has been judged as eligible for the Ex Gratia, ARAP or ACRS must then apply for immigration permission¹³. The schemes offer relocation for eligible Afghans, their pre-existing partners and minor dependent children. There is also some scope for additional family members to come, depending on the facts of the case. From September 2021, relocated Afghans no longer need to wait five years in the UK before applying for indefinite leave to remain but are immediately being granted this. All arrivals must quarantine for ten days on arrival in government-approved hotels. The Ministry of Defence said it provided logistics support to the Managed Quarantine Service in hotels in Manchester. It added that, as of 27 September 2021, '*all persons extracted from Kabul under Operation PITTING have now finished their mandatory period of quarantine*'¹⁴. The Government announced a package of funding and support, called 'Operation Warm Welcome', on 1 September 2021¹⁵. After a visa is issued, the Home Office will contact councils in order to find housing and confirm an arrival date. An integration support package (lasting a year) includes assistance accessing education, health services, National Insurance numbers, and access to benefits¹⁶.

Where are those coming from Afghanistan being settled in the UK?

12. Most recently evacuated Afghans have been put in temporary 'bridging' accommodation in hotels¹⁷. Senior Home Office personnel suggested in late September 2021 that there were 7,000 people from Afghanistan in such hotels¹⁸, although some Ministry of Defence-owned houses have been leased to local authorities to use until appropriate longer-term properties can be found¹⁹. The government has said it is seeking '*firm offers of support*' from councils able to show they have a specific home or homes available for an Afghan family, although some councils have decided it would be unfair to offer homes to Afghans ahead of local people who are on the housing waiting list.

13. According to media reports, half of England's 343 councils have offered long-term accommodation (170 or so), though the government has said 'more than 100'²⁰. These are 'spread around the country'²¹. Below is a list of areas reported to have either offered housing or which are in the process of searching for available accommodation:

- London, 27 of 32 Councils have offered accommodation, e.g. 700 people are being housed in the London Borough of **Greenwich** at the Intercontinental Hotel at the O2 Centre. The Park Plaza hotel near Waterloo (**Lambeth**) is also being used²².
- **Manchester** (e.g. where people are quarantining at the Raddison Park Inn).
- **Stoke-on-Trent**
- **Ashford in Kent**
- **Brighton and Hove**²³
- **Derby**
- **Swindon**²⁴
- **South Cambridgeshire**
- **North Hertfordshire**
- **Norwich**
- **Nottingham**
- **Leicester**
- **Walsall** in the West Midlands has taken in 69 evacuees so far and says it hopes to house up to 120.
- **Scotland**, including councils such as Inverclyde, Fife, Falkirk, North Ayrshire, Perth, Scottish Borders, Aberdeenshire, Dumfries and Galloway and Midlothian.

How much will this cost taxpayers?

14. Under ARAP, the government was offering local authorities £10,500 for the first year for each person relocated in order to pay for accommodation and support, in what was expected to be a multi-year scheme to help integration. It was subsequently announced that councils that receive people via the ACRS or ARAP scheme will receive a basic tariff of £20,520 per person over the course of three years (£10,500 in year one, £8,000 in year two and £4,020 in year three) as well as:

- £4,500 per child for education
- £850 to cover English language provision for adults requiring this support
- £2,600 to cover healthcare, although not clear these latter costs are per year

15. This suggests that ***it will cost £100,000 to support a family of four over three years, although it will be rather more than this in total if the family has any entitlement to cash benefits (i.e. Universal Credit, including housing costs, child benefit etc) which could come to another £50,000-100,000 over three years. Subsequent arrival of relatives may represent an additional significant undertaking.***

16. As well as the basic tariff of £20,520 per person over three years (£6,840 per person per year - costing £150 million for 20,000+ people in 3 years), affected councils will receive²⁵:

- £20 million of funding in the financial year (2021/22) to support additional costs.
- £17 million more to cover additional housing costs - £10 million in the first year, up to £5 million in year 2 and £2 million in year 3.
- £3 million of additional NHS funding under the ARAP scheme for access to healthcare and GP registrations. All are being offered the COVID-19 vaccine.
- £12 million to prioritise additional school places, to provide school transport, specialist teachers and English language classes. There is further funding for up to 300 undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships for Afghans at UK universities. Adults will also be able to access English language courses free of charge.
- £5 million has been put aside as a discretionary fund to help house large families (the average family evacuated during the latter half of August has seven people, according to the government.)
- *Spread over three years (including additional funding at the level of the 2021/22 financial year) the costs of these extras would total about **£100 million***

17. Government has also announced the **removal of the Habitual Resident Test (HRT)**. Those resettling under the scheme have been able to apply for social housing and homelessness assistance from 16 September regardless of their length of stay in the UK.

18. A leaked Treasury document, reported by the media, suggested that housing and other services for those resettled would cost more than **£2.5 billion** over the next decade²⁶. The document - Afghan Resettlement: Domestic Support Offer and Funding Requirements - said just under £400 million has been allocated so far to help with resettlement, but an extra £557 million could be needed over three years. If divided over three years, this total estimated cost of £957 million would amount to **£319 million per year**.

1 October 2021

Notes

1. Government guidance also makes clear that Government departments can make cases for people employed via contractors to support the Government's defence outcomes. Home Office letter to Home Affairs Committee, 22 September 2021, URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/7441/documents/77803/default/>
2. Parliamentary answer, September 2021, URL: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-20/%35%31%38%33%31>
3. This is based upon an order-of-magnitude calculation based on refugee family arrival numbers against protection grantees and directly resettled people. There were 143,000 grants of protection or direct resettlement during 2010-2021, including 28,600 refugees relocated here (more than any other country in Europe), mostly from Syria. As against this, there were just under 60,000 refugee family entry clearance grants (subsequent family members joining those granted refugee status in the UK) between 2010 and 2021. Subsequent refugee family members appear to add about **40%** again to the initial number of main protection grantees / resettled refugees. 40% of 20,000 is 8,000. See Home Office asylum and resettlement statistics.
4. This included: a) those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech, or rule of law (for example, judges, women's rights activists, academics, and journalists); and b) vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk, including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT c) Those who were called forward by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, but who we were unable to evacuate before ceasing operations in Afghanistan, will also be guaranteed a place under the ACRS. The Foreign Secretary has pointed to some of the practical and bureaucratic difficulties that cases in the last category pose, such as the need to conduct background security checks, to the Foreign Affairs Committee in early September. Home Office media factsheet, September 2021, URL: <https://>

- homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/09/13/arcs-other-routes/; See also transcript of evidence before Foreign Affairs Committee, 1 September 2021, URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2650/pdf/>
5. Statement by former Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, BBC News, 2 September 2021, URL: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-58245684>
 6. Parliamentary answer, September 2021, URL: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-20/%35%31%38%34%33>
 7. A Home Office media factsheet, published on 19 August, provided more detail about the latter category. See latest version of this factsheet: <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2021/09/13/arcs-other-routes/>
 8. A Treasury document reported by the media stated that 7,000 people were expected to come via ARAP in 2020/21.
 9. House of Commons Library, September 2021, URL: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9307/CBP-9307.pdf>
 10. Between 2004 and 2020 10,341 Afghans were subject to 'enforced return' and 5,275 Afghans subject to immigration enforcement returned voluntarily. Home Office immigration statistics, year ending March 2021.
 11. See Parliamentary Answer, September 2021, URL: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-03/41787>
 12. Government policy paper, 'Afghanistan resettlement and immigration policy statement (accessible version)', 13 September 2021, URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement/afghanistan-resettlement-and-immigration-policy-statement-accessible-version>
 13. According to the House of Commons Library: "UK Visas and Immigration, a part of the Home Office, is responsible for assessing the visa application. Part 7 of the Immigration Rules (paragraphs 276BA1 – 276BD1) set out the eligibility criteria for a grant of limited (i.e., temporary) leave to enter the UK for people assessed as being eligible under the ex gratia scheme or in need of relocation under the ARAP. Paragraphs 276BC1- 276BD1 specify grounds for refusing applications or curtailing a previous grant of leave to enter. Broadly, these relate to character, conduct and public security considerations.... Paragraphs 276BE1 – 276BS1 of the Immigration Rules specify the grounds for granting, refusing and curtailing limited leave as the dependant of an Afghan citizen offered relocation in the UK. Until April 2019 the Immigration Rules did not allow pre-existing family members to travel to the UK separately from the lead applicant. Rather, they could only be granted limited leave to enter under these rules if they travelled to the UK at the same time as the lead individual." Other types of family case (sponsors/relatives ineligible under the refugee family reunion rules and relatives of British citizens and people settled in the UK) are covered by the broader family migration provisions in the Immigration Rules. House of Commons Library briefing, 10 September 2021, URL: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9286/CBP-9286.pdf>. See also, Home Office, Additional guidance on the eligibility of additional family members under the Afghan locally employed staff relocation schemes, v1.0, 4 June 2021, URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/991391/arap-additional-dependants-guidance-v1.0ext.pdf
 14. Parliamentary answer, September 2021, URL: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-09-20/%35%31%37%35%39>
 15. Government press release, September 2021, URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/operation-warm-welcome-underway-to-support-afghan-arrivals-in-the-uk>; In July 2021, the government announced that it had decided not to make any substantive changes to the eligibility criteria for refugee family reunion. See Home Office, 'Report in relation to legal routes from the EU for protection claimants, including family reunion of unaccompanied children, , July 2021, URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005033/CCS207_CCS0621842724-001_Statement_in_relation_to_legal_routes_from_the_EU_Web_Accessible.pdf
 16. People relocated in the UK are subject to the DWP's Habitual Residence Test. Prior to accessing mainstream benefits they are supported by the local authority. Funding for this comes from the Government department that approved the person's relocation. See Home Office's funding instruction to local authorities, 2021-22, URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-relocation-and-assistance-funding-instruction>
 17. See Government press release, August 2021, URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-healthcare-and-housing-support-for-those-arriving-from-afghanistan>
 18. Transcript of evidence before Home Affairs Select Committee by Home Office senior personnel, September 2021, URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2778/default/>
 19. See Parliamentary Answer, July 2021, URL: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2021-07-06/debates/A3B91672-6CFC-4598-A1CF-5FE9621F1E39/AfghanInterpretersUKRelocation#contribution-B17BE6C5-219F-4583-96C5-EE73553D9031> The government has also opened an Afghanistan Housing Portal: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghanistan-housing-portal-offers-of-support>
 20. Meanwhile, the second Permanent Secretary to the Home Office said in September 2021: "Since the Afghanistan repatriation, we have already secured strong partnership relationships with more than 100 local authorities that are actively looking for places, to find homes for families and for others." Transcript of evidence before Home Affairs Select Committee by Home Office senior personnel, September 2021, URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2778/default/>
 21. Transcript of evidence before Home Affairs Select Committee by Home Office senior personnel, September 2021, URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2778/default/>
 22. See press report, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/13/afghan-refugees-in-uk-quarantine-hotels-treated-like-prisoners>
 23. Statement by Tim Loughton MP, in transcript of evidence before Home Affairs Select Committee by Home Office senior personnel, September 2021, URL: <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/2778/default/>
 24. See press report, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/13/afghan-refugees-in-uk-quarantine-hotels-treated-like-prisoners>
 25. Local Government Association, Council support for Afghan resettlement, September 2021, URL: <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/communities/refugees-and-asylum-seekers/council-support-afghan-resettlement>
 26. See BBC, August 2021, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-58426795>