



From Harm to Home:

How the UK Government can strengthen
refugee resettlement and integration

International Rescue Committee | February 2023

Acknowledgements

Written by Eleanor Paton.

Contributions and review kindly shared by: Daphne Jayasinghe, Denisa Delic, Georgina Sword-Daniels, Olivia Sundberg, Claudia Craig, Laurence Gerhardt, Nicola Marven, Emery Igiraneza, Mark Nowottny, Imogen Sudbery.

Special thanks also to: Wali Ahmadzai, Jennifer Louise- Robinson, Raneem Alzahr, Sarah Allen, Dina Nabih, Aashika Sulabelle, Laura Kyrke-Smith, Najwa Al Abdallah, Emily Boniface, Caroline Hocking and the International Rescue Committee's refugee leadership group.

Colleagues from across the sector who participated in research discussions: Andy Hewett, Awmaima Amrayaf, Laura Giani, Zainnab Makele, Sasha Ali, Katherine Huang, Chris Lyons, Elif Ulun Ascı, Cat Baron, Zoe Bantleman, Marianne Schönle, Ludovico Giannotti, Rhiannon Young, Gill Searle, Kama Petruczenko and Chris Cooper-Davies.

The International Rescue Committee is grateful to Khalsa Aid International for supporting the publication of this report and for supporting IRC's RISE programme in the United Kingdom.

Company Limited by Guarantee
Registration Number 3458056
(England and Wales)

Charity Registration Number
1065972

Front cover: Nasrin and her parents, Maasom and Hiba. Nasrin was born with a serious heart condition. Her family were resettled to the UK through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and she received crucial medical care. *E.Heatherwick/IRC.*



From Harm to Home:

How the UK Government can strengthen refugee resettlement and integration

Foreword	1
1) Executive summary and recommendations for the UK Government	2
2) Introduction	5
3) Context	6
3a) The global challenge and the UK response	6
3b) Strengthening the UK response	9
4) Best practices and lessons learned	12
4a) Pathways to safety	12
▪ Design of pathways to safety	12
▪ Delivering stronger responses	14
4b) Refugee Integration	16
▪ Promoting more equal treatment	16
▪ Accelerating participation in the labour market	17
▪ Fostering a partnerships approach	19
▪ Enabling refugee participation	19
5) Conclusion and recommendations for the UK Government	21
Annex 1	23
Annex 2	24
Endnotes	25

Foreword

Najwa Al Abdallah
Trustee, IRC UK Board

It was the afternoon of the 5th of September 1983, I was just four years old, but the memories I have from that day are engraved in my soul forever.

I was born in Lebanon during the civil war. We had to flee our village with my cousins. Five children, three women and the driver were packed into a tiny car with nothing, just the clothes we were wearing. The following morning, we woke up to the news of the death of several of our relatives. For a week the only food we had was plain bread. Then we moved to a “safer” area where we stayed for several months. No electricity, no running water, no money. We stayed at the “new home” with another family and tried to pretend that life was normal when nothing about it was normal. I missed my books, my friends, my dolls, especially the one with the purple dress with a mini dog. My brother and I were schooled at home by my older sister. What made life a bit easier was the generosity of the hosting community and the empathy they showed to us.

That is what this report makes clear: the importance of kindness and compassion, and the difference strong and early integration can make to the lives of refugees like me. I feel lucky that I was able to make the UK my home, and grateful that this country provided me with stability, continuous learning and development, safety, and a lot of laughter (I like the British humour). Most importantly it has given me hope for a better future.

I hope the UK Government will heed the lessons that we have learnt from the International Rescue Committee’s work with refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine and implement our recommendations for a better future. If the UK were to increase resettlement places and improve its integration offering, just imagine the wealth of knowledge, diversity, experience, resilience, dreams, and expertise these refugees could bring with them to enrich the UK further.



Sanghar, Pakistan, where recent flooding has wreaked havoc on local homes and infrastructure. *J. Zoicherman/All rights reserved 2022.*

1. Executive summary and recommendations for the UK Government

Global forced displacement is escalating, with record breaking numbers – at least 100 million people around the world – forced to flee their homes. Among them are over 27 million refugees, whose lives and communities have been **shattered by persecution and a rising number of active conflicts**. The vast majority are hosted by low- and middle-income countries, many of which face economic hardship and domestic challenges.¹ **The need for the international community to provide safe routes for refugees has never been greater.**

With increasing numbers of people making dangerous journeys across the English Channel in search of safety, **responding to displacement has become a priority for the UK Government. For this to be effective, compassion is critical.** Yet despite the New Plan for Immigration (2021) committing the Government to safe routes to the UK, the overall package of reforms – including the Nationality and Borders Act (2022) – have grave implications for upholding refugee protection. COVID-19 has also setback progress on safe routes, causing the UK to delay the launch of the UK Resettlement Scheme, the original target for which is still unmet. Meanwhile, the Government is facing challenges and significant delays in integrating refugees and finding suitable accommodation, relying instead on hotels.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, the UK has launched welcome, bespoke initiatives to offer safety to people fleeing conflict in Ukraine and Afghanistan. **Learnings from these schemes** can inform a stronger, more effective UK approach to refugee protection which is so urgently required in a volatile global context.

2023 presents an opportunity for action for refugees. Inaction not only risks failing those fleeing crisis but also depriving communities of the demonstrable benefits of welcoming refugees. We know that the UK can act faster and more effectively. Moreover, new, and recent polling exclusively commissioned for this report² shows wide public support for Government action:

YouGov polling commissioned by the International Rescue Committee shows that the **British public are supportive of the Government helping refugees integrate into their new communities.**

- The majority of the public (64%), support the Government increasing the amount of **English language support** to refugees.
- The majority of the public (61%) also support the Government providing **employment support** to refugees who are seeking a job.

Similarly, YouGov polling showed that a large majority of UK business decision makers **support allowing asylum seekers to work, overcoming a critical barrier to integration.**

- Over two thirds (68%) of businesses would support the Government **changing the law to allow asylum seekers to work** after they have waited six months or more for their asylum claims to be processed.
- The majority of businesses (65%) believe that if the Government allowed asylum seekers to work this would have a **positive effect on the UK economy.**

Informed by the expertise of IRC's UK clients and IRC's decades of experience in crisis response and delivering resettlement and integration services, this report analyses lessons from the UK's current refugee response schemes and sets out a three-point plan that can underpin a bold vision for the UK. Firstly, commit to an ambitious and achievable resettlement target, of at least 10,000 places a year. This equates to around 15 refugees per Parliamentary constituency.³ Secondly, publish a National Integration Strategy, and thirdly, prioritise the refugee response by reinstating the post of Minister for Refugees.

Resettlement is an effective tool in the response to increasing global needs. It is both an established route to protection for the most vulnerable and a means of alleviating pressure on countries already hosting large numbers of refugees.

However, UK resettlement figures are now lagging behind other G7 economies such as Germany, France, and Canada, with implications for its global standing and credibility.⁴ Without **investments in the sustainable increase of resettlement**, the UK risks undermining its

own commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and damaging its global standing by failing to share responsibility for refugee protection.

Based on our analysis, this report sets out a series of recommendations that would help deliver on the Government's priorities whilst offering a lifeline to some of the world's most vulnerable people, ultimately supporting the development of thriving and cohesive communities in the UK.



Salam and Ruba fled shelling in their hometown in Syria. Ruba participated in the IRC's soap-making project which employed Syrians. A. Hammam/IRC.

IRC's three point plan

1. Scale up safe routes

Deliver sustainable and ambitious resettlement programming for the world's most vulnerable refugees, by:

- Pledging a **new and ambitious resettlement target** by committing to at least 10,000 resettlement places per year under the UK Resettlement Scheme.
- Investing in the **capacity of key actors in the resettlement process** (e.g. local authorities, Department for Work and Pensions and other operational partners) and strengthening vital infrastructure, such as access to housing, including emergency accommodation.
- Upholding the **protection-centred** nature of resettlement so that it delivers for the most vulnerable people.
- Establishing an **emergency mechanism** for resettlement to allow urgent resettlement to take place within a matter of weeks.
- Ensuring sponsorship places (e.g. community sponsorship) are **additional** to resettlement places and **supported through investments** in safeguarding and capacity building for sponsors.
- Ensuring that efforts to strengthen resettlement are **additional** to **upholding asylum rights**.

Strengthen the Ukrainian and Afghan schemes in the short to medium term, as well as future crisis specific efforts, by:

- Ensuring the **swift delivery of places** based on scale of need, including by applying flexibility to processing requirements. For example, by exercising discretion in relation to biometrics on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.
- Providing **long-term protection** that can support the inclusion of new arrivals into the community. For example, by extending leave to remain for Ukrainians.
- Addressing **inconsistencies across the schemes** by ensuring that all individuals have access to refugee family reunion rights.
- Improving **transparency to support the monitoring of progress**. For example, in relation to reporting on the Afghan schemes.

2. Publish a National Integration Strategy

Develop a National Integration Strategy that includes:

- Increased and **tailored English language support** that can meet individual abilities and needs.
- **Individualised employment support** that can deliver faster labour market integration. For example, by supporting individuals to re-enter professions.
- Delivering **integration services from an early stage**, both through investments in pre-departure orientation for resettled refugees and for asylum seekers upon arrival.
- **Involving forcibly displaced people** in the design and delivery of policy and programming.
- Fostering a **partnerships approach to integration priorities** (e.g. accommodation and employment) that involves all stakeholders including national, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, the private sector, academic institutions, and refugees themselves. For example, by establishing a private sector network to support the employment of refugees.
- **Cross cutting principle: Promoting more equal treatment and access to rights** across groups of forcibly displaced people. For example, by granting the right to work for asylum seekers.

3. Reinstate the post of the Minister for Refugees

- **Reinstate the post of Minister for Refugees** so that refugee protection is represented, prioritised, and coordinated across government.
- Invite the Minister for Refugees to attend the **newly established Cabinet Committee** for Home Affairs.

2. Introduction

Forced displacement is soaring. At least 100 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes. Among them are over 27 million refugees, whose lives and communities have been shattered by persecution and a rising number of active conflicts. However, most of these individuals remain hosted by low- and middle-income countries, who often face their own challenges and economic hardship.

Responding to displacement has become a priority for the UK Government and a critical issue in public debate. However, this has not yet resulted in an effective and sustainable response – indeed a reliance on punitive approaches points to a troubling departure from internationally agreed norms of refugee protection. Moreover, while the New Plan for Immigration (2021) committed the Government to safe routes to the UK, resettlement numbers have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Only a quarter of the number of refugees were resettled in the year ending September 2022, by comparison to 2019.⁵ While commitments to offer protection to people fleeing conflict in Ukraine and Afghanistan are welcome, it is critical that the UK Government defines and implements a more sustainable response, in line with its international commitments and global standing as a G7 economy.

Resettlement is an integral part of ensuring a more effective response to global need. It is an established pathway that offers protection to the most vulnerable and alleviates pressure on countries already hosting large numbers of refugees. Evidence from IRC's decades of experience as a resettlement and integration agency demonstrates that a holistic resettlement process, including the delivery of quality integration support drives self-reliance, benefitting both refugees and their new communities. IRC's programming is rooted in best practice and the provision of technical assistance to service providers, ensuring that refugees and

asylum-seekers can thrive in local communities, whether on a temporary or permanent basis. Indeed, IRC's experience points to the critical importance of integration support for all new arrivals. By delivering integration services from an early stage and granting the right to work, the UK would be taking preventive action against social exclusion and would foster more cohesive communities.

This report integrates learnings from the Ukrainian and Afghan schemes and identifies priorities for strengthening the UK's approach to refugee protection. It demonstrates why the Ukraine and Afghanistan initiatives should be complemented by a long-term and sustainable commitment to the world's most vulnerable refugees and the communities that host them. It sets out the case for an ambitious UK resettlement target of **at least 10,000 refugees per year**, the development of a **National Integration Strategy** to support more inclusive and cohesive communities and prioritising the refugee response by **reinstating the post of Minister for Refugees**.

Throughout 2023, culminating at the Global Refugee Forum in December, the UK has an opportunity to establish a **bold vision for refugee resettlement and integration**. Pledging an ambitious target for resettlement places and prioritising the integration of new arrivals would demonstrate leadership on forced displacement and solidarity with regions affected by conflict. This opportunity must not be missed.



Maryna, Serhii and their son in front of their home that was destroyed in a missile strike in Dnipro, Ukraine. They have since been rebuilding it. *D. Alhindawi/IRC.*

3. Context

3a) The global challenge and the UK response

Global challenge

Since the last Global Refugee Forum in 2019, global displacement has accelerated rapidly, reflecting a rise in conflict, amongst other factors. There are more active conflicts than at any time since World War II, driven by an unprecedented growth in internationalised internal conflicts.⁶ At the same time, recent years since 2019 have seen fragile and conflict-affected states suffer compound damages to their health systems and internal stability because of COVID-19, setting back progress on development indicators and contributing further to fragility. At the end of 2019, 79.5 million people had been forced to flee their homes.⁷ By May 2022, this figure had reached 100 million, representing a decade long upwards trend.⁸ There has been a corresponding increase in resettlement needs – more than 2 million refugees⁹ with specific or urgent protection risks, are estimated to be in need of resettlement this year. In 2019, it was close to 1.4 million.¹⁰

Snapshots from regions affected by crisis illustrate how high refugee hosting countries already face their own challenges:

Syria crisis

Almost 777,800 Syrian refugees are estimated to be in need of resettlement in 2023.¹¹ The vast majority of Syrians are hosted in the region – with Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt already hosting nearly 5.43 million Syrian refugees between them – but resources are stretched.¹² For instance in Lebanon, a combined political and economic crisis has been exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 Beirut port explosion. Hundreds of thousands of people have been pushed into crisis or worse (IPC 3+) levels of food insecurity and the essential functions of the Lebanese state have been severely limited, including its ability to support drinking water infrastructure – highlighted by the spread of cholera for the first time in decades.¹³ Healthcare has been particularly affected by the economic crisis, which has led to triple digit price increases and an acute shortage of medical supplies.¹⁴

The IRC's programming in conflict and crisis

The IRC works in over 40 countries affected by conflict and crisis. For instance, IRC has responded to need in Syria since 2012. While in Lebanon, the IRC delivers cash assistance, legal services, education, training, economic support and primary healthcare to Syrian refugees and other affected communities. In Pakistan, the IRC has responded to last year's flooding as well as providing ongoing healthcare, education, job training and other essential services across the country. In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the IRC response focuses on health and the protection of vulnerable refugee women and children.

Afghanistan crisis

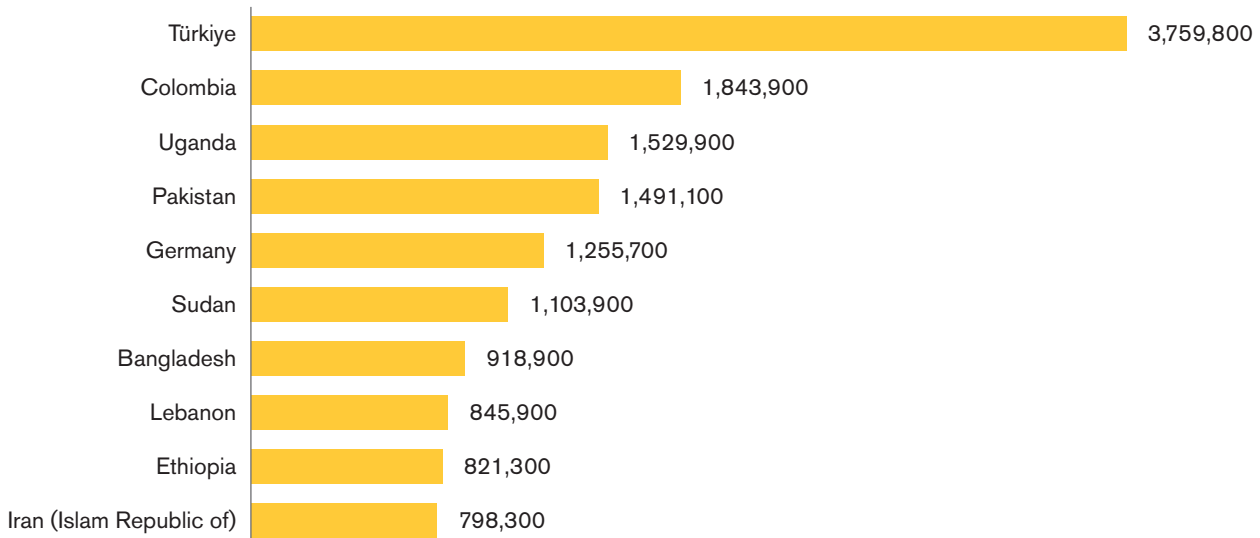
The change of power in Afghanistan in August 2021 has led to intensifying countrywide humanitarian needs, and increasing displacement both within and across the country's borders.¹⁵ **Overall Afghan refugees are estimated to have the second highest resettlement needs globally (around 14 percent, or some 274,000 individuals), with most of these individuals located in Iran and Pakistan.**¹⁶ Iran and Pakistan together host more than two million registered Afghan refugees. Meanwhile in Pakistan, this year's flooding caused US\$40 billion of damages and, with a majority of crop fields destroyed, the coming year's harvests are expected to fall significantly – compounding food insecurity.¹⁷

Rohingya crisis

The Rohingya people have faced decades of violence in Myanmar. **UNHCR estimates that more than 100,000 Rohingya refugees in total will be in need of resettlement in 2023.**¹⁸ Refugees have been driven across the border to Bangladesh which hosts almost one million Rohingya refugees,¹⁹ within dangerously overcrowded refugee camps where basic services are stretched beyond their limits. Each heavy monsoon creates challenges with outbreaks of diphtheria and cholera, as well as emergency levels of malnutrition.²⁰

People displaced across borders by host country | end-2021²¹

UNHCR displacement figures



The UK's recent response to displacement

As a drafter and signatory to the Refugee Convention, the UK has a strong tradition of offering refuge to those fleeing persecution and conflict. It has stood in solidarity with refugees and crisis-affected communities globally for decades. However, recent years have brought about challenges in living up to this tradition.

The UK's most recent response to displacement has been informed by the [New Plan for Immigration](#) (2021) and the [Nationality and Borders Act](#) (2022) which have altered the landscape for refugee protection in the UK. They advance the Government's preference for people seeking protection to arrive via safe routes, as opposed to seeking asylum via irregular entry (e.g. Channel crossings).²² The impact of recent reforms is explored in further detail below, however despite committing to '*strengthen the Government-backed routes available to those in need*'²³ the UK has struggled to deliver on its resettlement commitments. The UK's Global Refugee Forum resettlement pledge in 2019 sought to support the delivery of the Global Compact on Refugees and committed the UK to several actions including: consolidating different schemes into the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), resettling 5,000 of the most vulnerable refugees in 2020, and developing an emergency mechanism to allow urgent resettlement to take place within a matter of weeks.²⁴ While the Government did create the UKRS (which includes additional routes for community sponsorship and close family members through the mandate scheme), its implementation was delayed due to COVID-19 and the scheme did not operationalise until 2021. In the year ending September 2022, only 1,101 people were resettled through the UKRS.²⁵ The emergency mechanism also remains outstanding.

Meanwhile, the UK has rapidly developed bespoke schemes designed for people fleeing crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine. Both responses have prioritised safe and regular routes over asylum rights. For instance, in the case of Ukraine, circumventing the rights and entitlements afforded to refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention by relying on visa led processes.²⁶

Definitions: resettlement and integration

Resettlement: Resettlement involves the selection and transfer of vulnerable refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State that has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status and access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Refugees are identified for resettlement in accordance with UNHCR's protection criteria. For instance, those with acute medical needs, survivors of torture, and women and girls at risk due to their gender.²⁷

Integration: While there is no one definition of integration IRC understands it as a two-way process dependent upon the efforts of both the individual and receiving community. It is distinct from concepts such as assimilation. The process is multifaceted, including legal, economic, and social-cultural elements.²⁸

Many Afghans seeking safety were initially evacuated under Operation Pitting and given protection under either the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy. Since then, more people have been given protection and by November 2022, there had been 12,296 grants of indefinite leave to remain.²⁹ Meanwhile, the Government's response to Ukraine has combined a route for managed migration, the Family Visa Scheme, with facilitating protection through a community led response, Homes for Ukraine. This has led to a combined total of 157,300 new arrivals.³⁰

Between March and August 2022 more people received temporary protection in the UK under the country's two main Ukraine Schemes than the total who received protection under the country's asylum system and refugee resettlement routes combined between 2016 to 2021.³¹ Separately, the Government also extended permission to stay for Ukrainians already in the UK under the Ukraine Extension Scheme.

While the Government's initiative to respond to the crises in Ukraine and Afghanistan was welcome, these schemes should complement, longer-term, sustainable efforts that can respond to rising levels of forced displacement and enable the UK to play an effective role in global responsibility sharing.

Routes to safety: Why resettlement?

- Resettlement remains the primary and often, only durable solution for refugees most at risk and or/ experiencing extreme vulnerabilities. For instance, for refugees with complex medical needs securing access to resourced and resilient healthcare systems can be a matter of life and death.
- It is one of the few safe, regular, and orderly routes for refugees to reach the UK. The strengthening of routes such as these is of benefit both to refugees and welcoming communities.
- It offers a solution to protracted displacement. Refugees eligible for resettlement have fled home countries such as Syria and are often hosted in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon. Ongoing conflicts and insecurities make return home impossible, but at the same time, reception and asylum systems in high refugee hosting countries face significant strain. People are often forced to live in camps and informal settlements for a long-time and conditions are regularly unsuitable for catering to complex needs and securing long-term inclusion. This has a particular impact on the most vulnerable, e.g. survivors of violence/and or torture or those with specific legal or medical needs.



Chadia photographed with her supervisor at the school canteen where she works in Brighton, UK. You can read more about Chadia's story [here](#). B. Zapata/IRC.

3b) Strengthening the UK response

A sustainable response through resettlement and integration

Resettlement, as an established pathway that offers protection to the most vulnerable and alleviates pressure on refugee hosting countries, should form an integral part of the UK Government's response.

The UK has built good practices in refugee resettlement, with the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) offering safety to over 20,000 refugees between 2014 and 2021.³² While the scheme experienced delays due to COVID-19 related obstacles, it was one of the larger programmes globally and recognised for setting 'a high standard in refugee resettlement'.³³ The capacity of resettlement actors such as local authorities, NGOs and local volunteers also grew as the scheme developed, establishing the infrastructure, services and expertise to sustainably increase refugee resettlement year on year. **Unfortunately, this opportunity has yet to be seized.** The number of arrivals under the UKRS has been far lower than under the VPRS and there is no measurable target, making it difficult for participating local authorities and NGOs to plan for new arrivals sustainably.

What is more, UK resettlement figures are now **lagging behind other G7 economies such as Germany and France**, with implications for its global standing and credibility. These countries also welcome far more refugees overall.³⁴ When influential actors such as the UK are perceived as unwilling to play their part in responding to displacement, the incentive for others to do so diminishes. As with other shared global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, addressing forced displacement requires a coordinated approach and strong precedent set by wealthy states. If the UK continues

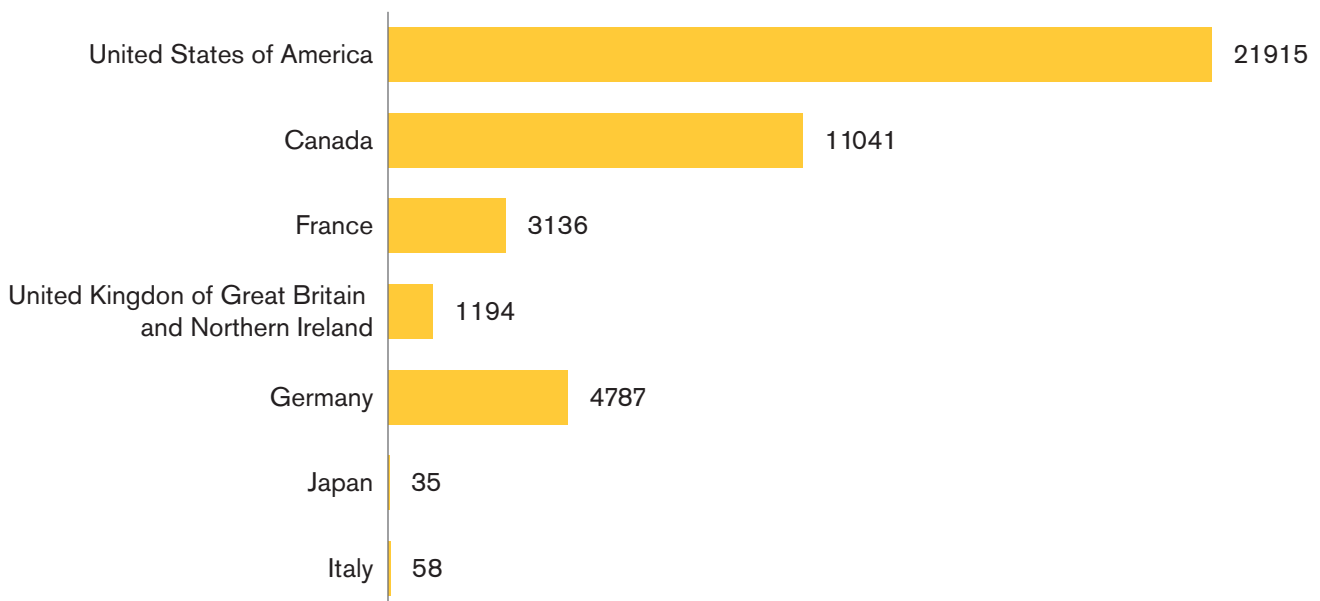
to falter, resettling refugees at a slow and unambitious rate, IRC calculates it will have contributed **only 1.2 percent %³⁵ to the global target of resettling at least one million refugees by the end of 2028.**³⁶ For a country that was previously considered a global leader in refugee resettlement efforts, this would be perceived as shirking global responsibility sharing. Moreover, the UK has the capacity to do far more, underpinned by the experience of local communities. A substantial pledge would be achievable because its delivery would build on expertise already generated through the implementation of other schemes such as the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

While asylum is not the focus of this report, it is important to note that efforts to expand routes such as resettlement should always **be additional to ensuring access to asylum.** Any comprehensive response to forced displacement will necessarily require states to uphold asylum rights at the same time as strengthening other pathways to safety.

Critical to the success of any resettlement programme is the delivery of quality integration support that enables refugees to participate fully in their new communities and wider society. This relies on the UK creating a strengthened and more cohesive approach to integration that equips new arrivals with the vital support to rebuild their lives and achieve self-reliance.

Facilitating the long-term inclusion of displaced people can be transformative, not only for the individuals seeking to rebuild their lives in safety, but also for the communities that welcome them. Evidence from other contexts where the IRC works illustrates the economic contributions made by refugees.

G7: UNHCR Resettlement Figures for 2022³⁷



For instance, research published by Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and the IRC found that refugee women could generate up to \$1.4 trillion to annual global GDP if refugee gender pay and participation gaps were closed in the top 30 refugee-hosting countries.³⁸ Another study of European Union countries, using IMF estimates of the economic impacts of refugees and asylum seekers, found that investing one Euro in welcoming refugees can yield nearly two Euros within five years.³⁹ That empowering refugees to meaningfully participate in their new communities has wider and positive societal impact was a point also reinforced by COVID-19. For instance, refugee-led organisations played a vital role in the COVID-19 crisis response effort through information sharing and as frontline responders.⁴⁰

However, to yield results and positive outcomes for refugees and the UK economy, important structural issues need to be addressed. These include defining a strategic vision for integration, ensuring that integration support is delivered from arrival, and granting asylum seekers the right to work. A National Integration Strategy would present an opportunity to define evidence based and effective approaches to integration, reflect learnings and best practices, and address obstacles. Overall, the experience of IRC's clients reflects a need for a more joined up and long-term approach to integration, including cross-sectoral buy-in. With learnings and best practices from recent schemes such as the VPRS, ACRS and Homes for Ukraine readily available, this is also an opportune moment to reflect on strategic direction and build on these insights for the future.⁴¹

Essential to the design of a successful integration strategy is prioritising integration support from an early stage. The positive impact of this has been well documented for both resettled refugees and asylum seekers. Providing services such as language learning, cultural orientation, and job readiness training upon arrival also supports more cohesive communities. This is particularly pertinent in the context of long processing times for asylum seekers' applications,⁴² making tools for self-reliance and community participation critical, regardless of the outcome of an individual's case. Moreover, as most applicants receive refugee protection⁴³ early integration support for asylum seekers would support long term outcomes for refugees. **Years left in limbo have a cost** – both to the individual suffering the impact on their emotional and economic wellbeing, and to the wider society which is unable to benefit from the diverse strengths and contributions of new arrivals.

“We are trying to learn and improve ourselves and to adapt to life in the U.K. With the IRC Cultural Orientation Programme, we learned new things we didn't know before. We learned about our rights and obligations. We have a better idea of how to book appointments with the GP. How to get a driving licence, how to apply for a job.”

Maasom from Syria.

The implication of years left in limbo is most clearly illustrated by denying asylum seekers permission to work. With very limited exceptions, asylum seekers in the UK are unable to work, yet there is a strong case for policy change in this area, explored later in the report. Significantly, the case for change has cross sectoral support, including from the private sector. In December 2022, IRC commissioned a YouGov poll of 2,000 business decision makers across industries⁴⁴ on the right to work for asylum seekers and found that **over two-thirds supported policy change and the majority said that this would have a positive impact on the economy as a whole**. By changing the immigration rules the Government would allow asylum seekers to both provide for themselves and contribute to the resilience of the economy.

Resettlement and Integration Programming at the IRC

The IRC works to support people in crisis survive, recover, and rebuild their lives. The organisation brings resettlement and integration expertise from its programming in the United States and Europe. The IRC's European programmes are based on evidence and best practice that include a technical assistance model, designed to support local service providers to improve the quality and effectiveness of integration support measures and services, ensuring that refugees and asylum-seekers can participate and thrive in local countries and communities, whether on a temporary or permanent basis. This work is currently implemented through IRC country offices in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia and the UK, as well as through an expanded network of 19 additional countries through the European Resettlement and Integration Technical Assistance (EURITA) project.

YouGov Poll Results December 2022

68% of businesses would support the Government changing the law to allow asylum seekers to work after they have waited six months or more for their asylum claims to be processed.

65% believe that if the Government allowed asylum seekers to work this would have a positive effect on the UK economy.

Policy: gaps and opportunities to strengthen resettlement and integration

Since 2019, there have been wide ranging reforms to immigration policy in the UK. This section reviews those reforms and the global policy context. It identifies opportunities for the UK to define an ambitious commitment to refugee protection.

New Plan for Immigration and the Nationality and Borders Act

The New Plan for Immigration's objectives identified '...fairness, efficacy, and deterrence...' as the strategy's guiding principles with similar aims underpinning the related Nationality and Borders Act.⁴⁵ Taken as a whole, these reforms have grave implications for refugee protection. They instill a two-tier system where Group 1 refugees (those who have come to the UK directly, without passing through a safe country) receive more comprehensive protection than Group 2 refugees (those who do not arrive directly from a country where their life or freedom was threatened) are eligible for.⁴⁶ Additionally, those arriving through an irregular route may also face punitive measures such as deportation to Rwanda, rather than being able to lodge a claim for protection at all.⁴⁷

Moreover, while the Nationality and Borders Act changed the structure of refugee protection in the UK it made no statutory provision for resettlement and family reunion options for Group 2 refugees were limited.⁴⁸ In view of the punitive approach that the Act took towards irregular entry and the limitations it places on family reunion, there is an urgent need to provide alternatives and strengthen safe and regular routes to the UK. Significantly scaling up resettlement is an integral part of achieving this. The New Plan for Immigration's consultation document and official Government response confirmed support for refugee resettlement and the pilot of an emergency resettlement mechanism. However, the emergency mechanism has not been developed yet, and the Plan also introduced the concept of integration outcomes as a consideration for access to resettlement schemes, which IRC does not believe should be included.⁴⁹ Rather, refugees should be resettled in accordance with need and in line with UNHCR's protection criteria.

The New Plan for Immigration also made commitments in relation to integration.⁵⁰ These included:

- Committing to £14 million for a cross-government Refugee Transitions Outcomes Fund to offer greater support to newly recognised refugees with a focus on employment and getting people into work.
- The development of a package of tailored support such as language training, and work placements, to help refugees build their lives in the UK. For example, the Refugee Employability Project.
- Committing to improve the offer of English language teaching.

While these are welcome commitments and provide an entry point for strengthening refugee integration in the UK, key gaps remain. Firstly, there is no dedicated strategy defining a comprehensive approach to delivering refugee integration in the UK. Secondly, there is a lack of integration service provision upon arrival. Not only does this compromise the chance for newly arrived refugees to rebuild their lives, but also puts individuals at greater risk of exploitation, as they lack familiarity with rights and protections. These gaps, coupled with the continued denial of the right to work for asylum seekers, represent important structural obstacles to delivering high quality integration support and successful outcomes.

The Global Compact on Refugees

The UK Government has also endorsed the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) which acts a blueprint for more predictable and equitable responsibility sharing and emphasises the importance of resettlement as a durable solution to displacement. Participating states are encouraged to make specific and measurable pledges to realise the Compact's ambition ahead of Global Refugee Forums. The first Forum took place in 2019 and the second is due at the end of this year.

The GCR's Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways set out a vision to substantially increase third country solutions for refugees, with a cumulative target of over one million refugees to be resettled by the end of 2028.⁵¹ In line with this vision, the UK made two pledges at the 2019 Global Refugee Forum: the first a refugee resettlement pledge focused on the creation of the UK Resettlement Scheme and the second, a commitment to work with civil society and others to increase integration support for all refugees in the UK through the Integrated Communities Action Plan.⁵² Elements of the refugee resettlement pledge (e.g. the target and emergency resettlement mechanism) have not been met and while the Integrated Communities Action Plan was overall considered beneficial, it was not targeted at refugee integration specifically.⁵³

There remains then a need for the UK to concretely define its commitment to refugee resettlement and to integration. Initial commitments in the New Plan for Immigration and pledges made at the last Global Refugee Forum provide a starting point for this work, but it is crucial that the UK both revives its refugee resettlement ambitions and invests in a more strategic and holistic approach to refugee integration. This would truly deliver urgently needed leadership on refugee protection.

The Global Refugee Forum 2023 in December is crucial opportunity for the UK, and wider international community to define an ambitious commitment to responsibility sharing in response to global displacement. This will also be an opportunity for the UK Government to lead by example, drawing on lessons learned to contribute a positive and effective pledge that furthers the Global Compact on Refugees.

4. Best practices and lessons learned

4a) Pathways to safety

Global stakeholders, including the UK, have yet to adequately scale up their efforts to expand safe and regular ways for refugees to reach protection, despite escalating displacement and concerns about dangerous journeys. Drawing on learnings from recent crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as COVID-19 – this section identifies solutions for the UK's more effective response. It argues that resettlement should be expanded as part of the UK's long-term response to global need and makes recommendations on strengthening the bespoke responses to Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Design of pathways to safety

Increasing resettlement places would not only benefit the most vulnerable refugees but also support the UK's standing and diplomatic influence, by showing solidarity with high refugee hosting countries. Setting ambitious targets and making provision for emergency cases is crucial to the design of successful resettlement schemes. Learnings from the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) also point to the importance of ensuring sufficient places and upholding family unity. Principles for the design of schemes are outlined below.

Set ambitious targets and increase the capacity of resettlement schemes

The original target of resettling 5,000 refugees in year one of the UKRS was not met and at the time of writing the scheme had been paused for new cases. As a first step, the Government should fully operationalise the scheme as part of increasing its capacity. This is vital preparatory work ahead of delivering a substantial pledge and would support maintaining the UK's resettlement infrastructure. The second step should be for the UK to commit to a target of resettling at least 10,000 refugees per year. Targets can help strengthen accountability, but also support partners in the resettlement process such as UNHCR, IOM, local authorities, and civil society to plan for the operational delivery of resettlement and integration programming by ensuring appropriate funding and resourcing.

Make provision for emergency cases

All resettlement states such as the UK setting aside a percentage of places each year for urgent or emergency places, regardless of the country of origin or asylum⁵⁴ would mean that global resettlement capacity can respond to emergency need. Emergency mechanisms like this can provide lifesaving solutions for refugees who are at high risk of refoulement⁵⁵ (return to a country where an individual

faces danger of persecution), have urgent medical needs, or might otherwise be held in extended detention with damaging mental and physical health implications.⁵⁶ Such emergency provisions can help resettlement states be more responsive with the systems and processes in place (e.g. for coordinating with local authorities) to respond swiftly. The UK commitment to an emergency resettlement mechanism as part of its Global Refugee Forum pledge in 2019 has yet to be taken forward. Its design and implementation should be a priority.

Ensure that complementary pathways remain additional

Complementary pathways are a valuable and important tool in expanding third country solutions for refugees. The examples of community-led initiatives such as Homes for Ukraine or the UK Community Sponsorship Scheme demonstrate the successful leveraging of British public support and individuals' willingness to contribute to overall refugee protection efforts. Crucially, they also resulted in increased numbers of places for refugees. However, a significant distinction between Homes for Ukraine and traditional community sponsorship efforts is that sponsorship places are usually (in line with UNHCR's guidance) *additional* to pledged resettlement places.⁵⁷ This is because resettlement is both a means for governments to offer protection to a specific group of refugees – those that are the most vulnerable, and a tool for responsibility sharing with regions affected by conflict.⁵⁸ These are functions that community sponsorship cannot fully replace. Moreover, if places for community sponsorship are counted within resettlement targets, rather than being additional, the overall number of people offered protection falls.

Ensure appropriate urgency and scale

The ACRS announced in January 2022 was a welcome response, with the aim being to offer protection to those who *'assisted UK efforts in Afghanistan'*.⁵⁹ However, the scheme has faced challenges in meeting the urgency and scale of need. Despite the UK pledging up to 20,000 resettlement places for Afghans across five years under the ACRS, the Government confirmed that this number includes approximately 6,500 people who were brought to safety during and after evacuations to the UK in the summer of 2021.⁶⁰ This leaves around 13,500 places for the remaining two pathways under that scheme, both of which were only launched in June 2022, nearly one year after the change of power in Afghanistan.

Pathway two set a target of 2,000 places for vulnerable refugees and pathway three aimed to welcome 1,500 people who had assisted the international effort. However, both of these targets were unambitious given the scale of need and are likely to fall short of assisting all people who would have been eligible. For instance, pathway three is designed to offer protection to GardaWorld staff, British Council contractors and Chevening Alumni (as well as their family members), but NGOs working directly with individuals in country report that even one group – GardaWorld staff and family members – total over 1,000 places.⁶¹

Uphold family unity

The family is widely recognised as a fundamental unit in society and its unity a crucial principle of refugee protection.⁶² Many Afghans that arrived on the evacuation flights unfortunately became separated from their families

in the chaos that ensued with the shift of power in Kabul. Although the Government has committed⁶³ to offering family members of those on the ACRS safety the scheme's design does not automatically facilitate this. For instance, people granted protection under pathway one receive 'Indefinite Leave to Remain', which does not enable access to refugee family reunion. A mechanism for refugee family reunion would give these individuals an automatic, free right to bring their spouse and children to live with them in the UK. This would offer a safe route to the UK that can provide an alternative to dangerous journeys, at the same time as limiting stress and worry for refugees so that they can focus on settling into their new home. As a first step, the Government should create a specific mechanism for people on ACRS pathway one to be reunited with their family, and future initiatives should seek to build in provision for family members from the start.



Morhaf working in his barbershop in North Lebanon. He is the sole income provider for his family. *N.Colt/ IRC.*

Delivering stronger responses

Responding to displacements caused by the Ukraine and Afghanistan crises and sustaining resettlement during COVID-19 generated notable innovations and learnings. These lessons learned outlined below can inform the delivery of swifter, resilient and more accessible resettlement programming.

Embed flexibility and innovation

With the outbreak of war in Ukraine, there were calls to lift visa requirements for people fleeing the conflict. While this approach was not utilised, the Ukrainian schemes have offered temporary protection to many people – with over 157,000 new arrivals as of January 2023.⁶⁴ Initial operational challenges with the schemes were well documented.⁶⁵ Issues included: applicants having to travel to Visa Application Centres, long processing times, lack of translated information and onerous documentation requirements. These all created barriers to accessing swift protection. However, over time the Home Office responded to these challenges by allowing Ukrainian passport holders to submit biometrics on arrival, utilising the UK Immigration: ID check app by which people could also submit their biometrics, adapting documentation requirements and publishing translated guidance.

Setting targets for processing Ukrainians' visa applications helped reduce waiting times.⁶⁶ Such investments in flexibility and technological innovation are welcome and make protection more accessible to people seeking safety. A similarly flexible approach that drives efficiencies and effectiveness could benefit other groups too, such as Afghans. This could involve exercising discretion in relation to the submission of biometrics and waiving or deferring the application of this requirement.⁶⁷

The COVID-19 pandemic also generated innovations for resettlement. As in-person processing of resettlement cases became difficult, UNHCR, IOM, states and other actors in the resettlement process worked together to allow for remote processing, including conducting virtual interviews.⁶⁸ Innovations like these present an opportunity to deliver swifter case processing, particularly pertinent for protection of those in emergency need of resettlement. This can also help states swiftly meet pledges, so that places are not lost due to operational challenges, and make resettlement more future proof and resilient to travel restrictions as well as changes in the countries of first asylum that make in-person travel harder (e.g. conflict, natural disasters).

Case study: Delivering the remote processing of resettlement cases

COVID-19 related obstacles to travel and application processing severely impacted resettlement activities during the pandemic. However, practitioners sought new ways of continuing programming. For instance, the use of videoconferencing as a means of conducting refugee case interviews was one innovation that had garnered the interest of several EU+ countries before the outbreak of COVID-19 and was then implemented by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) at the Resettlement Support Facility (RSF) in Turkey during the pandemic.

In adopting a strategy for remote processing, EASO sought to ensure resettlement operations were maintained, secure the quality and integrity of the processing of cases and adapt to the different requirements of states' programmes. By designing different options for processing (which were sensitive both to the needs of refugees and member states) EASO and were able to meet some of the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Three different approaches to processing that were utilized are outlined below.

Processing approaches:

- RSF-based: refugees able to travel to the RSF have their applications processed with the support of interpreters and staff onsite.
- Decentralised: refugees travel to an office within reach of their residence.
- Fully remote: this was dependent on access to Wi-Fi and refugees having the relevant technological skills.

EASO found that remote processing has the benefit of cost efficiency, speeding up the process for refugees and could be particularly valuable in allocating emergency places. However, it requires a greater investment of time in the preparation stage and raised some additional considerations of confidentiality.

Safeguarding for refugees and support for sponsors

One of the challenges with Homes for Ukraine were the reports of some Ukrainian women feeling at risk from their sponsors.⁶⁹ This underscores the importance of adequate safeguards and rigorous oversight of matching efforts. The majority of sponsors will have limited to no experience of providing support for refugees fleeing crisis, therefore facilitating advice and training services for sponsors is critical to the success of the scheme. It is also important to ensure that provision for emergency funding to support accommodation is made in advance in case a sponsor falls through, is unsafe or is no longer able to provide sufficient support. If sponsorship schemes are to be scaled in the UK, it is crucial that contingency plans, as well as safeguarding and training initiatives are fully resourced in line with best practice.⁷⁰

Transparency in monitoring and reporting of resettlement and other regular routes

Greater transparency and communication increases the ability of civil society actors and other stakeholders to prepare for and support the refugee response. For instance, regular updates and projections on the number of new arrivals and the composition of refugee groups, can help local authorities and operational partners anticipate need and plan resourcing and capacity requirements ahead.

Strengthening governance through ministerial responsibility

The Minister for Refugees was appointed in response to the crisis in Ukraine and to implement the Ukrainian and Afghan Schemes. With the portfolio sitting across both the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, it is notable that Ministerial oversight and accountability led to improvements in the Ukraine scheme's implementation, including much swifter processing times. The same Ministerial role was also previously appointed to oversee the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme which delivered vital safety and support to over 20,000 refugees.⁷¹

With global displacement rising, alongside increasingly protracted conflicts, the need to maintain dedicated capacity and resource to oversee the Government's response remains vital. This is true both in relation to pathways to safety, but also in an integration context. With a wide range of schemes and differing provisions, as well as varied expectations of local authorities and other providers, a dedicated focal point could help ensure the success of the schemes. Overall, the post of the Minister of Refugees would help ensure refugee protection can be prioritised and coordinated across government appropriately including via representation in the Cabinet Committee for Home Affairs as necessary.



IRC UK held a celebration for graduates of the Refugee Integration in Southeast England programme. This was for clients who've completed the IRC's cultural orientation course. *E. Dalziel/ IRC.*

4b) Refugee Integration

In recent years, the UK has hosted a diverse range of people in need of protection – from Syrians on the VPRS, asylum-seekers fleeing persecution or crises, and most recently Afghans and Ukrainians – many of whom currently receive different support depending on their status. The UK must now define a more coordinated and strategic vision for integration. Building on our client's expertise and feedback, learnings from the Ukrainian and Afghan responses in the UK, as well as IRC's wider programmatic experience, this section identifies four priorities for inclusion in a National Integration Strategy.

1) Promoting more equal treatment

Differences in rights and access to support is a feature of the national refugee system, both across safe and regular pathways, as well as in relation to asylum seekers. This section considers the case for more equal treatment across schemes. It takes those established in response to Ukraine and Afghanistan as one example, as well as arguing for increased early integration services and enhancing integration by granting the right to work for asylum seekers.

Ukrainian and Afghan schemes

Immigration status varies across the Afghan and Ukrainian schemes. This has implications for the rights and entitlements of different refugee groups, funding, and long-term integration prospects. For instance:

- Afghans on pathway one of the ACRS receive indefinite leave to remain but not currently an automatic right to refugee family reunion. However, those on pathway two have access to family reunion rights available to resettled refugees and pathway three allows for some family members to be resettled in the UK alongside the main applicant.⁷²
- Local authorities received GBP 10,500 per person arriving via Homes for Ukraine.⁷³ However, similar funding has not been available for refugees on the Ukraine Family Scheme. The definition of family applied is also narrower on the Extension scheme than on the Family Scheme. Unlike the Afghan schemes, where people receive indefinite leave to remain, Ukrainians only receive temporary status of three years.⁷⁴

These inconsistencies demonstrate a need for more equal and consistent treatment across the schemes. Access to family reunion, durability of status and provision for integration support all play a valuable role in fostering the long-term inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. Like secure and durable immigration status, family reunion provides individuals with the stability they need to settle in and integrate. There is also strong case for delivering more durable status for Ukrainians. Analysts predict that the conflict is likely to be protracted,⁷⁵ and that the reconstruction of infrastructure and homes will take years.⁷⁶ Future refugee protection efforts should incorporate the right to family reunion and durable status in their design, as well as making provision for sufficient funding so that local authorities are equipped to welcome

new arrivals. A more consistent approach to status, rights and entitlements, can also reduce complexity for stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, operational and implementing partners) as they seek to coordinate the response and work with the individuals to accelerate the integration process.

Early integration support

Offering services such as language learning, employment advice or cultural orientation upon arrival accelerates integration outcomes further down the line.⁷⁷ Such services support displaced people to achieve self-reliance more swiftly and actively participate in their new communities. While the gap in services may be starkest for asylum seekers, early integration services are vital for all new arrivals seeking to rebuild their lives in the UK. The experience of IRC's programming and feedback from our clients also points to the importance of strengthening pre-departure orientation for refugees arriving on resettlement schemes, improving access to vital information on rights and entitlements. This should be combined with more detailed orientation services on arrival. Ideally, information providers should coordinate pre and post arrival trainings and regularly review the provision of information to ensure it meets need.

Granting asylum seekers the right to work

The benefits of labour market integration are immense and drive other integration outcomes.⁷⁸ While refugees have the right to work, most asylum seekers in the UK do not.⁷⁹ Contrary to the view that granting the right to work would act as a 'pull factor' and encourage irregular migration, there is no long-term correlation between labour market access and destination of choice. In fact, studies show that granting access to the labour market is unlikely to have any long-term impact on the number of asylum applications received by the UK.⁸⁰

The case for policy change is based both on individual welfare, as well as wider benefits to the community and the economy. For individuals who often face lengthy wait times in the asylum system – at the end of 2022, over 40,000 people had been waiting for between one and three years – being unable to work exacerbates other challenges and limits opportunities for integration.⁸¹ For instance, many asylum seekers experience poverty – the state allowance is only £5.84⁸² per day, while an extended period of uncertainty, worry and boredom can contribute to mental health issues. Importantly, the prohibition severely limits opportunities for integration since having a job enables new arrivals to practice language skills and build social and professional networks.

Many organisations have also pointed to the economic case for reform. The Lift the Ban coalition estimates that preventing people seeking asylum from working costs the taxpayer more than £300 million a year.⁸³ Meanwhile, IRC's YouGov poll of 2,000 business decision makers across industries⁸⁴ found the majority supported policy change and thought it would have a positive impact on the economy as a whole:

- Over two thirds (68%) of businesses would support the Government changing the law to allow asylum seekers to work after they have waited six months or more for their asylum claims to be processed.
- The majority of businesses (65%) believe that if the Government allowed asylum seekers to work this would have a positive effect on the UK economy.

2) Accelerating participation in the labour market

Employment gives refugees access to social and professional networks, opportunities to practice language skills, and an income to provide for themselves and their families. It is also associated with positive mental health including lower levels of psychological distress and depression.⁸⁵ However, refugees with the right to work in the UK often encounter practical barriers to doing so. These include developing English language skills to a professional level, difficulties in translating their skills and qualifications into the UK equivalent, administrative barriers, unfamiliarity with the UK job market, lack of knowledge of UK methods of searching, applying, and interviewing for jobs, and practical barriers such as access to childcare. This section considers key areas for action in driving labour market integration.

“It [the IRC’s Employment readiness training] is really useful to me. We’ve studied how to prepare for interviews, how to create a cover letter and Dina gave us a lot of useful advice. Now I feel more confident than I was before. And I’ve already been on two interviews and I think that I am more or less successful!”

Oksana from Ukraine.

Case study: BRPs and the importance of the swift provision of identity documentation

Without accurate identity documentation refugees face further barriers to integration. One learning from the Afghan schemes has been the importance of the swift delivery of Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) to refugees. Many of IRC’s Afghan clients experienced long delays in receiving their BRPs, preventing some of them from accepting job offers. Some also reported too few appointments and a lack of communication in relation to the application process. Without these permits, it is difficult for refugees to verify their right to work, apply for a driving license or prove their immigration status to rent a property.

The IRC worked with the Home Office to resolve these issues and going forward, the Government should continue to address barriers to swifter delivery of IDs, promote the [Employer Checking Portal](#) more widely with businesses and consider allowing other forms of identification as a means of verifying immigration status e.g. receipt of job seekers allowance. The IRC also notes the concerns in relation to discrimination that have already been raised by relevant stakeholders in relation to the policy paper [New Plan for Immigration: Legal Migration and Border Control](#) which sets out the Government’s plans for digital only immigration status.⁸⁶ If the Government is to move to a digital only system, it is critical that the process is communicated clearly to refugees (e.g. with translated information) and that issues such as digital literacy and access to technology are fully addressed.



Maasom’s family were resettled to the UK through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme so his daughter Nasrin could receive crucial medical care. Nasrin is now at school and Maasom has been volunteering at the local charity shop. *E. Heatherwick/IRC.*

Strengthened English language support

Throughout IRC's work with refugees in the UK, including on the Afghan and Ukrainian schemes, our clients have consistently identified English language support as critical to their integration efforts. Indeed, the value of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) has been widely documented for its positive impact on employment prospects, wellbeing, and participation in the community.⁸⁷ Although access to ESOL provision varies across the UK, issues include too few hours to make meaningful progress and a gap in the provision for refugees with a lower starting level of English.⁸⁸ Increased and dedicated local resourcing can help address these challenges. For instance, Bedford ESOL Advice Service, originally funded by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, has been identified as a best practice model for replication. It includes a dedicated regional coordinator and tailored ESOL support for learners of different levels. Offering family friendly ESOL and childcare support alongside ESOL classes, would improve accessibility for refugee women. Our clients have also raised the need for more pathways for refugees to develop professional, vocational, or industry-specific English. Widening access to proficiency tests for these – such as International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Occupational English Test (OET) – would increase employability outcomes. These qualifications are, for example, necessary to enter the medical profession.⁸⁹

Recognising professional qualifications and experience

Many of IRC's clients have arrived in the UK with professional qualifications and are eager to return to their chosen career path but experience barriers in having their credentials recognised. One way the Government could support this would be to facilitate greater coordination and communication between accreditation initiatives, professional bodies, the private sector, and the national agency for qualifications and skills (UK ENIC), which delivers statements of comparability for qualifications. This would not only support refugees' in finding employment but could help with gaps in sectors with skills shortages. For instance, the social care sector.⁹⁰ Building the capacity of the Department of Work and Pensions and its Jobcentre Plus network to deliver more inclusive and personalised support for refugees from various types of professional backgrounds would also facilitate faster labour market integration.

Best practice approaches

The learnings above speak to the importance of creating individualised pathways to labour market integration. The IRC has found that strengths-based case management approaches (recognising and building upon the existing qualities and skills which newcomers bring to the UK) are highly effective. IRC has also seen the benefit of this approach in other contexts. For instance, in Germany, IRC collaborated with Care.com on a training programme that facilitated entrance for refugee women into caregiving as well as addressing a critical labour market need.⁹¹

Offering 'bundled' services is also beneficial, particularly for women. Offering opportunities for refugees to develop their employability skills (e.g. CV creation) alongside financial education (e.g. budgeting) and 1:1 support (e.g. coaching) increases employment outcomes.

Case study: economic empowerment programming at IRC UK

IRC UK's economic empowerment programming supports refugees to secure employment. The programme includes tailored and language-appropriate support for clients, employer engagement, and capacity-building of service providers to improve employment opportunities for refugees. The programme has been offered to Afghan, Syrian and Ukrainian clients and on average, two thirds of clients who have completed IRC's Job Readiness Training course receive a job offer within 90 days.

Clients receive 18 – 20 hours of 'Job Readiness Training' online workshops which are co-facilitated by bilingual and bicultural integration officers as well as tailored one-to-one coaching sessions from employment specialists. Alongside the comprehensive JRT course, Coaching sessions offer personalised CV and cover letter support, job search and application support and mock interviews.

Partnership working

The IRC engages directly with employers to discuss approaches to refugee workplace inclusion, and through 1:1s with clients also directly identifies local employers with job opportunities. The IRC has also delivered free capacity-building training to other service providers across the Southeast, including DWP staff, on topics such as strength-based case management and supporting women in the workplace.

Support from corporate volunteers

Job seeking clients are also supported by corporate mentors who are able to share their employment experience and insights. The IRC has worked with Verizon employees since 2022, and in 2023 will begin working with employees from other businesses including American Express. Volunteers have offered advice regarding CVs and interview techniques by joining online Job Readiness workshops as guest experts, as well as co-facilitating English language practise workshops.. Language support workshops have been particularly welcomed by clients, who have the chance to practice online in small groups. Volunteers themselves have reported a 100% percent 'extremely satisfying' rating of their experiences as volunteers. It is hoped IRC UK will expand volunteer projects to foster greater understanding between different communities and support wider integration outcomes.

3) Fostering a partnerships approach

Integration is a two-way process, dependent both on the efforts of refugees and relevant stakeholders. Action from central government is critical to setting strategic direction and creating an enabling legal and policy environment. It can also play an important role in fostering multi stakeholder partnerships to successfully address integration priorities such as employment or accommodation. The government has already established Strategic Migration Partnerships throughout England and this spirit of collaboration should be built upon in future planning.

Accommodation

Both the Afghan and Ukrainian responses have demonstrated some of the challenges in securing suitable accommodation for refugees. As of November 2022, over 9,000 Afghans⁹² remained in hotels and challenges with placements have included: lack of housing stock, difficulties securing accommodation for larger families and proximity of potential houses to halal supermarkets and mosques. Our clients have shared the detrimental impact this has had on their mental health and their ability to put down roots and integrate into UK society.

While Homes for Ukraine sponsors have been a valuable source of integration support (e.g. assisting with access to services such as the NHS) a limitation of the scheme has been the short-term commitment that sponsors have been required to provide in relation to accommodation. Recent reports suggest that thousands of Ukrainians now face homelessness.⁹³ There are various reasons for this, including short term expectations, breakdown in relations, change in circumstances and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. However, securing suitable and long-term accommodation is an important factor in enabling people to integrate into society. For instance, moving out of temporary accommodation may have implications for maintaining employment or result in children having to move school. Where sponsorship placements are considered going forward, factoring in longer-term plans for accommodation will be key.

There is a significant unmet need for social housing in the UK⁹⁴ and as such this is a challenge that goes beyond securing accommodation for refugees. However, there remain opportunities to address this issue. As part of reviewing and setting an overall direction for integration policy, the Government would benefit from a housing strategy to articulate a clear vision and plan for providing refugee accommodation. This strategy should be based on consultation with local authorities, the private and public housing sector, civil society organisations, and refugees themselves. Long-term funding commitments from government, as was the case with the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), can also support local authorities in their planning to deliver services for new arrivals. Indeed, under the VPRS most local authorities secured housing from the private sector for resettled

refugees.⁹⁵ In the short-term, greater promotion of the Government's [Afghanistan Housing Portal](#) which allows private landlords to offer homes to specifically accommodate people arriving from Afghanistan would be beneficial.

Employment

Accommodation challenges reinforce the critical importance of supporting refugees to become self-reliant through early integration services and tailored support to access the labour market. Refugees who can access to decent work, particularly where this is commensurate with their skill set, are not only empowered to continue on their chosen career path – an important component in rebuilding personal identity and direction following displacement – but are less reliant on services from the state such as housing. This can be accelerated by greater engagement with the private sector to identify administrative and policy barriers to employment and identify solutions, as well as supporting and incentivising inclusive recruitment practices. Indeed, there are already plentiful examples of the business community acting on this issue, demonstrating the potential of expanded engagement. For example, IRC worked with the Business Refugee Action Network (BRAN) to improve employment opportunities for refugees and the European Commission established an 'Employers Together for Integration Initiative.' To strengthen labour market integration, the Government may wish to consider establishing a network of experienced businesses to regularly support and advise on increasing employment opportunities for refugees, as well as conducting peer to peer influencing and knowledge sharing on this issue.⁹⁶

4) Enabling refugee participation

Involving refugees in the design of policies that impact them is essential to the success of policy and programmatic approaches to integration.⁹⁷ It is through doing so that policy makers and other actors such as NGOs, and multilateral institutions can develop a strengthened understanding of barriers and new ideas for solutions. Collaboration also impacts the way that information is received by refugee communities, by strengthening trust and enabling a greater understanding of policies. It also supports the adaptation of services in meeting needs.⁹⁸ The government should identify more opportunities for refugees to influence strategic thinking on integration and invest in this effort for the long-term. For instance, by setting aside funding to support participation through providing compensation and ensuring accessibility for a diverse range of groups e.g. through translation and interpreters.

Case study: refugee leadership at IRC UK

IRC UK's refugee leadership training aims to empower refugees so that they are able to influence the services, programmes, policies, and strategies that impact their lives. The benefits of investing in refugee leadership capacity are manifold. IRC's experience of delivering similar trainings in the United States highlighted how doing so can help combat barriers to civic participation, such as a fear of engaging based on experience with governments in other countries, language barriers, and a concern that input will not be taken seriously.

The leadership group activities are structured using the LEAD model: Lead, Empower, Advocate and Develop. Initial sessions introduce theories in an interactive way and then clients put theory into practice, through discussions, meetings with local leaders, and the development of ideas to effect change in their community.

- **Lead:** clients participate in sessions on effective leadership and group decision-making.
- **Empowerment:** clients learn about strengthening communication skills for influence, meet local leaders and visit Parliament.
- **Advocate:** clients participate in sessions on advocacy, public speaking and telling powerful stories.
- **Develop:** clients design a proposal for social change in their community and participate in a community event. The leadership clients' proposals included providing a fast-track intensive language course, supporting newly arriving medical staff into employment and providing vocational trainings for refugees to find meaningful employment. These ideas, when taken into consideration, can contribute to solving the longer-term issues faced by refugees



Oksana moved to the UK from Ukraine in 2022. She takes part in the crafts at the IRC's family fun day. *B. Zapata/IRC.*

5. Conclusion and recommendations for the UK Government

With displacement figures on the rise, the need for a truly global response has never been more pressing. The number of people displaced has reached 100 million and there has been a corresponding increase in resettlement needs – more than 2 million refugees with specific or urgent protection risks, will be in need of resettlement this year.

The IRC welcomes the UK Government's commitments to support refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan and its offer of safety to some of the world's most vulnerable people through the UK Resettlement Scheme. Yet, we know that there are opportunities to strengthen and improve the UK's response to displacement, making it more effective and robust. Inaction would not only fail those forced to flee but come at a cost to communities at home that are ready to support refugees.

The action required must include setting ambitious resettlement targets, investing in emergency capacity, and strengthening existing efforts by ensuring access to family reunion, long-term protection, and quality integration support. Ensuring that integration services are delivered from day one, and that all new arrivals can access the labour market, would be transformative for newcomers and communities alike.

The rise in dangerous journeys across the Channel and tragic loss of life illustrate the urgency of action. The need to expand safe routes for refugees has never been greater. At the Global Refugee Forum this year, the UK has an opportunity to demonstrate global leadership and respond to one of the most critical challenges we face collectively. This opportunity must be seized.



Afghan journalist and single mum Zahra, son Zaheen, and her daughter Baheena, play scrabble to practice their English. The family fled Afghanistan in August 2021. Zahra completed the IRC's cultural orientation and leadership training. You can read more about Zahra's story [here](#). *E.Heatherwick/IRC.*

IRC's three point plan

1. Scale up safe routes

Deliver sustainable and ambitious resettlement programming for the world's most vulnerable refugees, by:

- Pledging a **new and ambitious resettlement target** by committing to at least 10,000 resettlement places per year under the UK Resettlement Scheme.
- Investing in the **capacity of key actors in the resettlement process** (e.g. local authorities, Department for Work and Pensions and other operational partners) and strengthening vital infrastructure, such as access to housing, including emergency accommodation.
- Upholding the **protection-centred** nature of resettlement so that it delivers for the most vulnerable people.
- Establishing an **emergency mechanism** for resettlement to allow urgent resettlement to take place within a matter of weeks.
- Ensuring sponsorship places (e.g. community sponsorship) are **additional** to resettlement places and **supported through investments** in safeguarding and capacity building for sponsors.
- Ensuring that efforts to strengthen resettlement are **additional** to **upholding asylum rights**.

Strengthen the Ukrainian and Afghan schemes in the short to medium term, as well as future crisis specific efforts, by:

- Ensuring the **swift delivery of places** based on scale of need, including by applying flexibility to processing requirements. For example, by exercising discretion in relation to biometrics on the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.
- Providing **long-term protection** that can support the inclusion of new arrivals into the community. For example, by extending leave to remain for Ukrainians.
- Addressing **inconsistencies across the schemes** by ensuring that all individuals have access to refugee family reunion rights.
- Improving **transparency to support the monitoring of progress**. For example, in relation to reporting on the Afghan schemes.

2. Publish a National Integration Strategy

Develop a National Integration Strategy that includes:

- Increased and **tailored English language support** that can meet individual abilities and needs.
- **Individualised employment support** that can deliver faster labour market integration. For example, by supporting individuals to re-enter professions.
- Delivering **integration services from an early stage**, both through investments in pre-departure orientation for refugees on safe routes and for asylum seekers upon arrival.
- **Involving forcibly displaced people** in the design and delivery of policy and programming.
- Fostering a **partnerships approach to integration priorities** (e.g. accommodation and employment) that involves all stakeholders including national, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, the private sector, academic institutions, and refugees themselves. For example, by establishing a private sector network to support the employment of refugees.
- **Cross cutting principle: Promoting more equal treatment and access to rights** across groups of forcibly displaced people. For example, by granting the right to work for asylum seekers.

3. Reinstate the post of the Minister for Refugees

- **Reinstate the post of Minister for Refugees** so that refugee protection is represented, prioritised, and coordinated across government.
- Invite the Minister for Refugees to attend the newly **established Cabinet Committee** for Home Affairs.

Annex 1

Methodology

1) Research and findings

In relation to learnings on resettlement and integration, this report is informed by focus group discussions with the International Rescue Committee’s clients and interviews with key stakeholders in the sector. This includes: UNHCR, the Refugee Council, the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association, DLA Piper, Ben & Jerry’s refugee employment and entrepreneurship programme, Paul Hastings LLP, UK ENIC, West Sussex Council, the East of England Strategic Migration Partnership, Commission on Integration, and stakeholders from outside the UK, to draw lessons learned from their contexts.

2) YouGov polling of the British public

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,004 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18th - 19th January 2023. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

The survey has been conducted using an online interview administered with members of the YouGov Plc GB panel of 800,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. An email was sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample according to the sample definition, inviting them to take part in the survey and providing a link to the survey. (The sample definition could be “GB adult population” or a subset such as “GB adult females”). YouGov Plc normally achieves a response rate of between 35% and 50% to surveys however this does vary dependent upon the subject matter, complexity and length of the questionnaire. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

3) YouGov polling of business decision makers

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2001 Business Decision Makers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22 – 29 December 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of British business.

The survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc UK panel of 800,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. Emails are sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample. The e-mail invites them to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link. Once a panel member clicks on the link they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas. (The sample definition could be “GB adult population” or a subset such as “GB adult females”). Invitations to surveys don’t expire

and respondents can be sent to any available survey. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

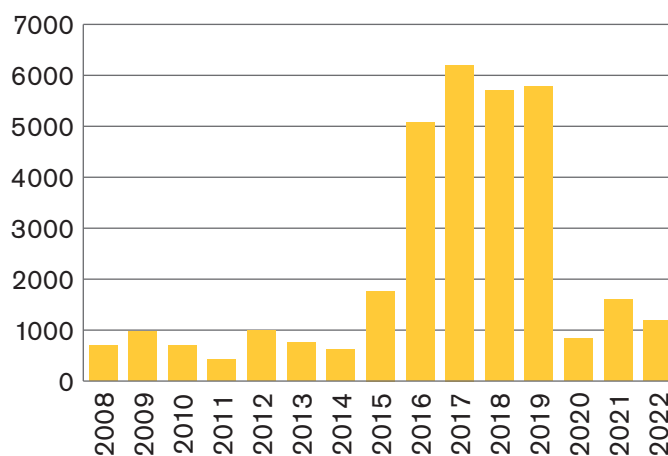
4) Resettlement projection

The IRC calculated the UK’s projected progress towards the global goal of resettling at least one million refugees by 2028, linked to the delivery of the Global Compact on Refugees. UNHCR’s Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030 states that ‘With 2019 as the starting point, the Strategy sought a cumulative total of over 1 million refugees being resettled by the end of 2028. The Strategy’s objective was realized in 2019 but not in 2020-21... the goals of the Strategy can still be realized, through the processing of the 240,000 refugees currently awaiting departure to various resettlement countries and by expanding existing commitments, including having multi-year programs.’

Using what we know about resettlement trends in the UK, exempting 2016 – 2019 (the VPRS), we can loosely predict that we’re on a path to resettling just 1.2% of the 1 million through to 2028.

The IRC is aware that The Strategy began in 2019 but considers it valid to calculate a rate based on the three years between 2020 -2022 as 2019 is an outlier. The number in 2019 reflects the now completed VPRS and refugee resettlement rates have returned to the range seen in the years prior to 2016 as demonstrated by the graph below.

UK Resettlement Departures



Source: [UNHCR Resettlement Data Portal](#)

Annex 2

UK Government's 2019 Global Refugee Forum pledge

Source: [Pledges and Contributions](#).

GRF-00978

Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

New UK Resettlement Scheme

12/11/2019

The UK has a long and proud history of supporting refugees in need of international protection. The UK has provided safe and legal routes for tens of thousands of people to start new lives through our resettlement schemes including the Gateway Protection Programme and more recently the Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Schemes, (as well as our Mandate Scheme). The UK has reaffirmed this ongoing commitment by announcing a new scheme. From 2020, we will:

- Consolidate three of our existing resettlement routes into a single, global scheme
- Resettle in the region of 5,000 refugees in year one
- Enable greater flexibility to respond to where the need is greatest
- Expand our Community Sponsorship and Mandate routes
- Develop an emergency resettlement mechanism

The UK recognises that responding to refugee displacement is a shared challenge and responsibility for the international community. We remain committed to working with that community to address the needs of the most vulnerable refugees. Our new scheme aligns with the Global Compact on Refugees and UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy (2019-21) on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, by ensuring our resettlement places are sustainable and have maximum protection impact. We look forward to welcoming thousands more refugees in the years to come.

Endnotes

1. UNHCR, [Global Trends 2022](#).
2. See Annex 1.
3. Together with Refugees, [Conservative peers lead push for global resettlement target](#), 2021.
4. UNHCR, [Resettlement Data 2022](#), accessed January 2023.
5. Home Office, [Immigration Statistics](#), year ending September 2022.
6. IRC, [Emergency Watchlist 2023](#).
7. UNHCR, [Global Trends 2019](#).
8. UNHCR, [Global Trends 2022](#).
9. UNHCR, [Projected Global Resettlement Needs Assessment for 2023](#).
10. UNHCR, [Projected Global Resettlement Needs Assessment for 2019](#).
11. UNHCR, [Projected Global Resettlement Needs Assessment for 2023](#).
12. UNHCR, [Operational Data Portal](#), accessed January 2023.
13. IRC, [Emergency Watchlist 2023](#).
14. World Bank, [Lebanon Public Finance](#), 2022.
15. UNHCR, [Displacement, humanitarian needs surging inside Afghanistan and across region](#), 2022.
16. UNHCR, [Projected Global Resettlement Needs Assessment for 2023](#).
17. AP News, [Pakistan: World Bank estimates floods caused \\$40B in damages](#), 2022.
18. UNHCR, [Projected Global Resettlement Needs Assessment for 2023](#).
19. UNHCR, [Operational Data Portal](#), accessed January 2023.
20. IRC, [Bangladesh](#), 2022.
21. UNHCR, [Global Trends Report](#), data from 2021, published 2022.
22. House of Commons Library, [Safe and legal routes to the UK for people seeking protection](#), 2023.
23. Home Office, [How does the UK help refugees through safe and legal routes?](#), 2021.
24. See Annex 2.
25. UNHCR, [Asylum in the UK](#), 2022.
26. Refugee Studies Centre, [Ukraine: the UK is failing to meet its obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention](#), 2022.
27. UNHCR, [Resettlement Handbook](#), 2011.
28. UNHCR, [Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom](#), 2017.
29. Home Office, [Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data](#), accessed January 2023.
30. Home Office, [Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data](#), accessed January 2022.
31. 115,000 arrivals. University of Oxford, Migration Observatory, [Q&A: The UK and the Ukraine refugee situation](#), August 2022.
32. Home Office, [Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes Factsheet](#), 2021.
33. UNHCR, [The UK's Syria Resettlement Programme: Looking Back, and Ahead](#), 2021.
34. UNHCR, [Refugee Data Finder](#), accessed January 2023.
35. See Annex 1.
36. UNHCR, [Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#), 2022.
37. UNHCR, [Resettlement Data 2022](#), accessed January 2023.
38. IRC, [Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential](#), 2019.
39. Tent Partnership for [Refugees and the Open Political Economy Network](#), [Refugees Work: A Humanitarian Investment that Yields Economic Dividends](#), 2016.
40. IRC, [Strengthening the COVID-19 Response in Refugee and Migrant Communities](#), 2021, and UNHCR, [Refugee-led innovations during COVID-19](#), 2020.
41. For instance, on the VPRS accommodation was largely secured through the private sector, lessening the impact on social housing. UNHCR, [Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom](#).
42. As of November 2022, 40,913 people had been waiting for between one and three years, and 9,551 people had been waiting for between three and five years. Refugee Council, [New figures reveal scale of asylum backlog crisis](#), November 2022.
43. 77% of initial decisions made in the year ending September 2022 resulted in a grant of asylum or humanitarian protection. Refugee Council, [Government statistics show a staggering backlog of asylum claims, a high grant rate, and a lack of safe routes](#), November 2022.

44. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2001 Business Decision Makers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd – 29th December 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of British business size.
45. Home Office, [Consultation outcome – New Plan for Immigration: policy statement](#), updated 2022 and Home Office, [Nationality and Borders Bill: factsheet](#), 2021.
46. Right to Remain, [What Does the Nationality and Borders Act Mean for UK Asylum and Immigration Law?](#), 2022 and Freedom of Movement, [Detailed policy on differential treatment of refugees announced](#), 2022.
47. Home Office, [Factsheet: Migration and Economic Development Partnership](#), 2022.
48. UK Government, [Permission to Stay on a Protection Route](#), 2022.
49. The New Plan's policy statement noted that the Government would 'look at the range of people accessing resettlement schemes including the potential for people to achieve better integration outcomes in the UK' Home Office, [Consultation outcome – New Plan for Immigration: policy statement](#), updated 2022.
50. Home Office, [Consultation outcome – New Plan for Immigration: policy statement](#), updated 2022.
51. UNHCR, [Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#), 2022.
52. The Commission on the Integration of Refugees, [A Broken System? Asylum Reform Initiatives 1997 – 2022](#), November 2022.
53. Ibid.
54. UNHCR, [Projected Global Resettlement Needs Assessment for 2023](#).
55. 'The principle of non-refoulement prohibits the transfer of a person from one authority to another when there are substantial grounds for believing that the person would be in danger of being subjected to violations of certain fundamental rights' ICRC, [Note on migration and the principle of non-refoulement](#), 2018.
56. WHO, [Immigration detention is harmful to health – alternatives to detention should be used](#), 2022.
57. UNHCR, [Three Year Strategy on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways, 2019 – 2021](#), 2017.
58. UNHCR, [Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#), 2022.
59. Home Office, [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#), 2022.
60. Victoria Atkins, Minister for Afghan Resettlement, [Question for Home Office](#), 2022.
61. British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group, [Case Studies on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy \(ARAP\) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme \(ACRS\)](#), 2022.
62. UNHCR, [The Right to Family Life and Family Unity of Refugees and Others in Need of International Protection](#), 2018 and [Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom](#), 2017.
63. 'A spouse or partner and dependent children under the age of 18 of eligible individuals will be resettled under the scheme. Some additional family members may be resettled in exceptional circumstances'. Home Office, [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#), 2022. The IRC is grateful to the Families Together Coalition for discussion of this point.
64. Home Office, [Ukraine Family Scheme, Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme \(Homes for Ukraine\) and Ukraine Extension Scheme visa data](#), January 2022
65. BBC News, [Ukraine war: Visas a shambles, Brits with Ukrainian family say](#), March 2022.
66. Minister for Refugees Lord Harrington identified two targets for processing Ukrainian visas. One of these was two days per visa and the other 15,000 visas per week under the Ukraine Schemes. Please find more information at these links here: [Refugees minister Richard Harrington promises those fleeing Ukraine won't wait longer than two days, April 2022](#) and [Lord Harrington's letter to Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee, June 2022](#).
67. Free Movement, [Applicants from Afghanistan may not need to enrol biometrics at the time of an application](#), October 2022.
68. IRC [Strengthening the COVID-19 response in refugee and migrant communities](#), 2022.
69. UNHCR, [Statement on the UK's Homes for Ukraine scheme](#), April 2021.
70. UNHCR, [Promoting integration through social connections](#), accessed October 2022.
71. Home Office, [Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes Factsheet, March 2021](#), September 2021.
72. Home Office, [Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme](#), 2022.
73. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Funding for councils: Homes for Ukraine](#), 2023. Please note the Government has also released further funding this January.
74. Guidance on different provisions can be found through links on the following webpage, [Home Office, UK visa support for Ukrainian nationals](#), 2022.
75. Washington Post, [The war in Ukraine is on track to be among modern history's bloodiest](#), 2022.
76. Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister said that 140,000 residential buildings had been destroyed [Ukrainian Multimedia Platform for Broadcasting](#), 2022.
77. OECD, [Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees](#), 2018, and European Parliament, Study for the EMPL Committee, [Labour Market Integration of Refugees, Strategies and Good Practices](#), 2016.
78. Institute for Public Policy Research, [Making it Work: Refugee Employment in the UK](#), 2003, and European Parliament, Study for the EMPL Committee, [Labour Market Integration of Refugees, Strategies and Good Practices](#), 2016.

79. There are some limited exceptions e.g., where an applicant has an existing right to work, based on their current leave to remain in the UK, or after 12 months where they may work in one of the few roles on the shortage occupation list.
80. University of Warwick, [Access to the labour market: a pull factor for asylum seekers?](#) 2016 and MAC, [Migration Advisory Committee Annual Report, 2021](#).
81. As of November 2022, 40, 913 people had been waiting for between one and three years, and 9,551 people had been waiting for between three and five years. Refugee Council, [New figures reveal scale of asylum backlog crisis](#), November 2022.
82. Home Office, [Asylum support](#), 2023.
83. Lift the Ban Coalition, [Truss, Sunak, must commit to lifting ban on asylum seekers working after record wait times revealed](#), 2022.
84. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2001 Business Decision Makers. Fieldwork was undertaken between 22nd – 29th December 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of British business size.
85. Huyen Lai, Clemence Due and Anna Ziersch, [The relationship between employment and health for people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds: A systematic review of quantitative studies](#), 2022.
86. For an overview, please see: Laura Devine Solicitors, [Digital-only immigration status: dynamic or discriminatory?](#), 2022.
87. East of England, Strategic Migration Partnership, [Employment, Language and Wellbeing Support Key To Refugee Integration](#), 2022 and Greater London Authority, [English Language \(ESOL\) for Resettlement](#), 2022.
88. East of England, Strategic Migration Partnership, [Employment, Language and Wellbeing Support Key To Refugee Integration](#), 2022.
89. General Medical Council, [Evidence of your knowledge of English](#), accessed December 2022.
90. House of Lords Library, [Staff shortages in the NHS and social care sectors](#), December 2022.
91. IRC, [Forging a common path: A European approach to the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers](#), 2018.
92. Home Office, [Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data](#), November 2022.
93. The Times, [Homeless Ukrainian refugees up 30% in a month as host families end support](#), 2022.
94. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, [Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#), 2022.
95. UNHCR, [Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom](#), 2017.
96. This is envisaged as supporting and complementing the work of other initiatives in this area, such as the [Refugee Employment Network](#).
97. Commitments at the global level recognise the significance of refugees' participation. The [Grand Bargain](#) committed to a 'Participation Revolution' and raised the profile of the accountability to affected populations (AAP) agenda. The [Global Compact on Refugees](#) also aims to 'provide a basis for predictable and equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing among all United Nations Member States, together with other relevant stakeholders... including... refugees themselves'.
98. IRC, [Strengthening the COVID-19 Response in Refugee and Migrant Communities](#), 2021.

**New York**

122 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10168-1289
USA

Amman

Al-Shmeisani Wadi Saqra Street
Building No. 11
PO Box 850689
Amman
Jordan

Bangkok

888/210–212 Mahatun
Plaza Bldg., 2nd Floor
Ploenchit Road
Lumpini, Pathumwan
Bangkok 10330
Thailand

Berlin

Wallstraße 15A,
10179 Berlin,
Germany

Brussels

Square de Meeûs 5-6
De Meeûssquare 5-6
1000 Brussels
Belgium

Geneva

7, rue J.-A. Gautier
CH-1201
Geneva
Switzerland

London

International Rescue Committee UK
100 Wood Street
London
EC2V 7AN

Nairobi

Galana Plaza, 4th Floor
Galana Road, Kilimani
Nairobi, Kenya

Washington, D.C.

1730 M Street, NW
Suite 505
Washington, DC 20036
USA

GET INVOLVED
SPREAD THE WORD
VOLUNTEER
DONATE

RESCUE.ORG/UK
44 (0)20 3983 2727