

#REFUGEESWELCOME

Refugee Children Campaign Guide: September to December 2016

Context:

There are over 90 000 unaccompanied refugee children in Europe. The UK has resettled less than 100 of them, and those that have been safely brought to the UK, has mainly been due to the work of Citizens UK in Calais. Through our research on the ground, Citizens UK has identified that there are currently 387 unaccompanied minor children currently in Calais, eligible for relocation to the UK.

Other key political developments

We are also organising trips for Leaders of Councils to visit Calais so that they can see the camps and meet some of the young people. Contact Daniel.mackintosh@citizensuk.org if your council leader would like to visit Calais with our team.

In October (before winter arrives), we are likely to see the demolition of the Calais camp and other smaller camps across Northern France, with a population in total of 12 000 people. Over 100 children were 'lost' last time a section of the camp was demolished. A census of the current population will be conducted to ascertain the exact groupings of the population, including those who can gain legal access to the UK via Dublin 3 and Dubs and those who can claim asylum in France/other countries. The assessment will be done by the French authorities.

We have heard the French authorities in Calais have started deporting people back to country of entry as a deterrent, i.e. get on a bus or be deported from Calais. The situation will get increasingly tense as police confront the challenge of moving thousands of frustrated people on a short timescale.

We are not yet clear what role the UK government will play in collecting people, especially children, who are eligible to be resettled in the UK under Dubs or Dublin, and who will carry out the children's best interest assessment (BIA), the outcome of which needs to point to relocation to the UK before a child can be moved. At the moment, we do not think there is no plan to operationalise the Dubs Amendment in the camp today. This means that it is only local French authorities that will carry it out, even though they may not have the capacity to deliver it.

As a result, we will, working with French lawyers, launch a court challenge to require the French government to establish children's centres to look after these children.

What schemes exist to resettle children to the UK?

There are 4 UK government schemes which relate to refugee children. There is also an EU mechanism, the Dublin III Regulation.¹

1. **Resettlement of refugee children from Europe** – Immigration Act 2016 (including 'Dubs' amendment). Number to be agreed with Local Governmentⁱ

¹ For more information, please see <https://www.refugees-welcome.org.uk/resources-2/>

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2. **Resettlement of children at risk** – 3000 refugee children to come from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)ⁱⁱ
3. **Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme** – 20,000 people to come to the UK by the end of the current parliament. This involves families and individuals directly from the region and housed in self-contained accommodationⁱⁱⁱ
4. **Transfer scheme for unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) within the UK.** This involves relocating children from authorities with high numbers such as Kent^{iv}
5. **EU Dublin III Regulation**, by which unaccompanied minors can be reunited with their family in the UK.

Political Priorities and the Dubs-Bishop of Durham Amendment (supported by Stella Creasy MP)

The UK government is currently using public goodwill to encourage councils to take ‘Kent children’ (who are already in the UK). Not one child has been resettled in the UK from Europe under the Dubs Amendment. All of the children currently resettled in the UK have come under Dublin III.

Lord Dubs and the Bishop of Durham have tabled a new amendment to the Children and Social Work Bill that requires the government to create a safeguarding strategy for refugee children. The rationale for this amendment is three-fold. First, to get the government to take up its responsibility act on the original Dubs Amendment so that no child who has family in Britain or is eligible for the UK’s protection is left to fend for themselves in the camps in Europe. Stella Creasy MP will be introducing the amendment in the Commons. Second, to engage the concerns of local authorities as to the costs of resettling children, the safeguarding strategy will also make recommendations on their full-cost reimbursement and how local authorities will be engaged prior to children arriving. Finally, the strategy will help to distinguish the schemes under which children are being brought to the UK. This is important because then we will be able to clearly identify the number of Dubs, as opposed to Dublin, children have been resettled.

The political priorities until December 2016 are to: 1) expose the lack of government action on the Dubs Amendment. 2) Support the new Dubs- by lobbying your own MP² 3) Apply pressure to the UK and French government to perform best interest assessments so that a brisk decision can be made on how to protect children in Calais.

That is why we are calling on refugee welcome teams throughout the country to take action. The issues outlined here relate to the different components of the campaign. If you can press on all of them over the next month, that would be great. If you can only do one, then it would be good to focus on the Paddington Action on October 24.

² <http://labourlist.org/2016/09/stella-creasy-children-must-not-be-left-to-rot-in-the-mud-of-calais-my-plea-to-conference-delegates-over-refugee-crisis/> and see the text of the amendment here - [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2016-2017/0057/17057\(j\).pdf](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2016-2017/0057/17057(j).pdf)

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TIMELINE UNTIL DECEMBER 2016

Each action is designed to get a particular reaction from a particular person who has the power to make the decision we want. Each key action will be pre-ceded by a conference call for people to check in and get the latest information and for teams to share how their local actions are developing. This timeline is a great opportunity for new leaders in your teams to lead on different actions, which will develop capacity and energy amongst your leaders.

Conference Call – September 2016 – ‘Call from Calais’ – updates on the destruction of the camp (date TBC) – please check the Facebook Group ‘Citizens UK Child Refugee Campaign’

Conference Call with Stella Creasy on Dubs-Bishop of Durham-Creasy Amendment - Tuesday 4th October at 7pm

First week of October – Dubs-Bishop of Durham- Creasy Amendment. Mass lobby of MPs

- Target: local MP
- Actions: Can your team put in 50 calls to your local MP over 5 days (10 per day) along with 50 emails to support the amendment? Could also include calling local friends/faith/education leaders to see if they would also put in a call to their MP. Could you also do a mass signing of a letter and hand deliver to your MP at their surgery? See key talking points for engaging your MP below.

Monday 24 October – Paddington Actions on local Council Leaders

- Target: Local Council Leader
- Actions:
 - Action 1: Paddington bears visit your Council Leaders and call on them to commit to a particular figure of Dubs Amendment refugee children that they can resettle locally. See below for some ideas of what the action can contain. At the action, all those present can sign a version of the letter below to hand in to the Leader.
 - Action 2: Encouraging your schools to stand in solidarity with the 387 children in Calais currently eligible for resettlement to the UK. More information on this to follow.
 - Action 3: In the build-up to the 24th, could you arrange, amongst your group, or at a local school/youth group, a public showing of the Paddington movie. Then to discuss the question ‘what can the Paddington movie teach us about what we should do today?’

Monday 31 October (19:00): Conference call to evaluate Paddington actions and share upcoming plans to find foster carers

Mid-November – Finding Foster carers

- Target: foster carers in your area found through local faith, education and civil society groups

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- Action: bring together people interested in becoming foster carers, including those interested in fostering a refugee child. Contact Homes for Good (<http://www.homeforgood.org.uk/>) and your local council to join you to share the process on how to become a foster carer. Demonstrate you are a partner for your local council to work with.

Monday 21 November 19:00: Conference call to plan the Christmas backpack actions

Mid- December – Backpack Christmas Present

- Target: Council Leader
- Action: Encouraging welcome schools to build backpacks. Each backpack will represent a child, for whom a local school has a place, and the local refugee welcome team has already found a foster care parent for. These backpacks will then be presented to the Leader of Councils, asking them, if they have not yet, to commit to resettling the number of children for whom we have a complete package (foster care parent and school place). If the Leader has committed to a particular number of children, then ask them to present the backpack to the child when they arrive.

Ideas for Paddington Action

- Dressing up as Paddington bears (order paper masks from internet)
- Great quotes from movie: "Please look after this bear"; As Aunt Lucy, in the *Paddington* movie says "Long ago, people in England sent their children by train with labels around their necks, so they could be taken care of by complete strangers in the country side where it was safe. They will not have forgotten how to treat strangers."
- National government's decision to take refugee children depends via the Dubs Amendment, depends on the demonstrated appetite of local authorities to accept unaccompanied children.
- Gift: ajar of marmalade with a tag on it that says 'Please look after this child'.



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Redbridge Paddington Action with Leader of Council Athwal



Choices for Syrian children ...



if you stay



if you leave

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Key talking points for engaging your MP on new Dubs/Bishop of Durham/Creasy Amendment for a safeguarding strategy for refugee children

- 1) Demonstrate your power while being polite but firm. If you are part of a local refugee welcome team, when introducing yourself, mention who else (what communities) are on the local team and also care about this issue. This is important so that your MP does not think that you are alone.
- 2) State clearly what you would like your MP to do: support the amendment - [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2016-2017/0057/17057\(j\).pdf](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2016-2017/0057/17057(j).pdf)
- 3) Set out a little of the context:
 - a. There are over 90 000 unaccompanied refugee children in Europe. The UK has resettled less than 100 of them, and those that have been safely brought to the UK, has mainly been due to the work of Citizens UK in Calais. Through our research on the ground, Citizens UK has identified that there are currently 387 unaccompanied minor children currently in Calais, eligible for relocation to the UK.
 - b. By the end of October (before winter arrives), we are likely to see the demolition of the Calais camp and other smaller camps across Northern France, with a population in total of 12 000 people, by the French authorities. Over 100 children were 'lost' last time a section of the camp was demolished.
 - c. Despite Parliament passing the Dubs Amendment (section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016), no children have been resettled under this scheme. Instead, government is using the goodwill generated by people towards refugee children in the UK to fulfil their duties towards children who have already arrived in the UK – 'the Kent kids' (make sure you are able to talk about the other schemes if needed, see above).
- 4) Why is the new amendment needed?
 - a. First, to get the government to take up its responsibility act on the original Dubs Amendment so that no child who has family in Britain or is eligible for the UK's protection is left to fend for themselves in the camps in Europe. Stella Creasy MP will be introducing the amendment in the Commons.
 - b. Second, to engage the concerns of local authorities as to the costs of resettling children, the safeguarding strategy will also make recommendations on their full-cost reimbursement and how local authorities will be engaged prior to children arriving.
 - c. Finally, the strategy will help to distinguish the schemes under which children are being brought to the UK. This is important because then we will be able to clearly identify the number of Dubs, as opposed to Dublin, children have been resettled.
- 5) Will you support the new Amendment? Will you send me a letter (give your email address) stating that you will support the amendment?
- 6) Thank them for their time and mention that other people in your team may be calling them over the next few days.
- 7) FOLLOW UP: it is very important to write them a brief email, outline the conversation, and asking, in writing, for them to state whether they will be supporting the Amendment.

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Draft Letter to Leaders of Councils encouraging them to resettling refugee children

Dear ,

We are extremely proud of the way your council and our local community has been at the forefront of the Refugees Welcome movement.

We know this is a historic crisis and that each of us must do what we can. That's why we formed, that's why we've been so encouraged by the way in which you and our council have responded.

I'm sure you will be aware that in May this year the Dubs amendment, named for Lord Alf Dubs who is himself a survivor of the Kindertransport programme in the 30s, was passed with cross party support.

The amendment pointed to the plight of over 90,000 child refugees who've found their way to Europe, over 10,000 of whom according to Europol have disappeared. These children, as I'm sure you know, face appalling risks as they take their lives into their own hand, live destitute in Greece, Italy and even the "Jungle" camp in Calais.

In that context every political party backed the call to identify the most at risk, and in consultation with local government, commit to see them relocated to the United Kingdom and to safety. Government consultations with local authorities have focussed so far on the developing National Transfer scheme which has already come into effect in relocating children who arrive in Kent. That same scheme is envisioned as the vehicle for placing the very most vulnerable children from across Europe into the care of local authorities.

To date no children have made this transfer. It is natural that setting up the right processes that adequately protect a child's best interests takes time in places like Greece and Italy, but for around two hundred children identified by Citizens UK as eligible for transfer from Calais there can surely be no reason for continued delay.

These children face extreme risks, well documented by UNICEF as including sexual violence, trafficking and modern day slavery, abuse and even death as they try to enter the UK illegally.

This not a party political issue but a humanitarian one. With demolitions likely in Calais this September and a risk that these children are scattered and hurt their relocation is an absolute priority. That's why we're writing to request, that like dozens of other councils, you commit to protecting between 10 and 50 of these terribly vulnerable children.

The funding package has been confirmed, the measure has passed parliament, we must now show that a lack of will at the local level does not stand in the way of help arriving.

Please would you reply with all possible urgency to let us know whether you can play a part?

Yours,

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- ⁱ Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street and The Rt Hon David Cameron (2016) *Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to be resettled from Europe*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/unaccompanied-asylum-seeking-children-to-be-resettled-from-europe> (Accessed: 21 August 2016).
- ⁱⁱ Harrington, R., Home Office, The Rt Hon James Brokenshire, 2016. New scheme launched to resettle children at risk [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-scheme-launched-to-resettle-children-at-risk> (accessed 8.21.16).
- ⁱⁱⁱ Home Office, The Rt Hon Theresa May, 2014. Oral statement by the home secretary on Syrian refugees [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/oral-statement-by-the-home-secretary-on-syrian-refugees> (accessed 8.21.16).
- ^{iv} Home Office, UK Visas and Immigration, Department for Education, The Rt Hon James Brokenshire, 2016. Government launches national transfer scheme for migrant children [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-national-transfer-scheme-for-migrant-children> (accessed 8.21.16).