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House of Commons

Committee of Public Accounts

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme

Thirty-fourth Report of Session 2016–17

Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report

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The Committee of Public Accounts

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Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Dr Stephen McGinness (Clerk), Dr Mark Ewbank (Second Clerk), George James (Senior Committee Assistant), Sue Alexander and Ruby Radley (Committee Assistants), and Tim Bowden (Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Committee of Public Accounts, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 4099; the Committee's email address is pubaccom@parliament.uk.

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Summary

The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme) has performed well so far, providing support to some of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees. We commend the Home Office (the Department) and the other government departments, local authorities and delivery partners involved for their efforts and their achievements so far. After a concerted effort to resettle 1,000 refugees before Christmas 2015, the programme team sensibly took a step back in early 2016 to redesign a more sustainable programme. However, meeting the overall target, to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in the UK by May 2020, remains a significant challenge. Local authorities' participation in the programme is voluntary and the success of the programme will depend on their statements of good intention translating into firm offers of places. The number of refugees in the programme is small compared to the total number of people local authorities support. But some local authorities are confused about what exactly it is they are expected to provide to refugees and have also expressed concerns about what programme funds will cover and what they will need to pay for out of their other budgets. Some refugees are uncertain about what they are entitled to, and what is expected of them, as part of the programme. It is not yet clear whether survivors of torture or violence are getting the specialist help they need to be able to come to terms with their experiences. While progress so far is certainly encouraging, it is essential that these issues are addressed to ensure the success of the programme in the long-term.

Introduction

Since it began in 2011, the civil war in Syria has caused mass movement of Syrians, both within the country and to neighbouring countries. Syrians now make up the largest refugee population in the world, with almost five million having fled to neighbouring countries to escape the conflict. In January 2014, the UK Government announced that it would establish a Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme) to allow selected refugees to resettle in the UK. The programme was relatively small in scale, resettling 239 refugees up to the end of September 2015. In September 2015, the Government announced that it would expand the programme to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in the UK by May 2020. The programme became the joint responsibility of the Home Office (the Department), the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for International Development. It is open to Syrians registered as refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, or with the government in Turkey, and who meet one or more of UNHCR's criteria for vulnerable groups. The Department and its partners successfully met their initial target to resettle 1,000 Syrian refugees as part of the programme by Christmas 2015. By the end of June 2016, a total of 2,659 Syrian refugees had been resettled, making up 13% of the overall target.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. **The success of the programme is dependent on pledges of offers of support from local authorities turning into firm places.** The participation of local authorities in the programme is voluntary. Local authorities make indicative pledges to resettle refugees, which become firm offers once the local authority has secured appropriate accommodation, support and services. The number of refugees in the programme is small compared to the total number of people local authorities support. But some local authorities are concerned that the funding available will not be enough to cover the support and services they will need to offer refugees, particularly at a time when they face a number of other financial pressures. Practical issues such as whether families are ready and able to travel to the UK, and whether accommodation and school places are available in local authorities, have already caused delays in resettling refugees. There has also been some confusion over what local authorities are required to provide to refugees when they arrive. Failing to address these issues could pose risks to the successful delivery of the programme in future. The Home Office (the Department) told us that it has enough indicative pledges of support from local authorities to meet the 20,000 target, but it is essential that these materialise into firm offers of resettlement places.

   Recommendation: ***The Department should:***

   - ***Regularly review the number of remaining pledges and work with local authorities to ensure that they are able to provide firm offers of support; and***
   - ***More clearly specify what local authorities are expected to provide to refugees to address any current disparities or confusion.***

2. **Uncertainties and a lack of clarity about the programme are causing anxiety for some refugees.** Refugees resettling in the UK as part of the programme are granted humanitarian protection status by the Department rather than 'refugee' status. The Department told us that this was because the Government's overall strategy was to bring an end to the Syrian civil war and enable refugees, whether in the UK or neighbouring countries, to return home easily and rebuild their lives and their country. But granting humanitarian protection, as opposed to refugee, status means people can also miss out on access to some public services, for example certain welfare benefits or student finance. It also limits their ability, compared to people with refugee status, to travel to other countries. It is not always clear to refugees what they are entitled to under their humanitarian protection status, or what will happen to them after the end of the programme, which is causing them undue stress. The Department recognised that there are pros and cons to granting refugees humanitarian protection status and committed to keeping the matter under review to ensure refugees get the support they need given their circumstances.

   Recommendation: ***The Department should, by the end of the financial year, make sure that there is full and clear communication with refugees about the programme—including the services they can expect, their entitlements, restrictions, and the implications of having 'humanitarian protection' status.***

3. **Community Sponsorship, where groups of individuals agree to provide initial support to refugees, was introduced in July 2016.** But it is not yet clear how it will complement, rather than compete with, the local authority resettlement route. Other countries such as Canada make wide use of private sponsorship and community sponsorship as part of their resettlement programmes. In comparison, community sponsorship is new to the UK and has supported small numbers of refugees so far. There are important differences between the support and services offered through community sponsorships and the local authority route. For example, community sponsors are required to provide less money and support for a shorter amount of time than the five years offered through the local authority route. It will be essential to the success of community sponsorships, and the programme as a whole, that community sponsorships are complementary to, rather than competing with, the work of local authorities and that refugees don't fall through gaps in the system.

   Recommendation: ***The Department should write to us within six months to provide an update on community sponsorships.***

4. **The Department's plans for evaluating the success of the programme are still too vague.** The Department has identified the categories against which it plans to measure the success of the programme: for example refugees' progress with English, secondary migration and employment. But it has yet to determine more specifically what it aims to achieve against each of these categories. It still does not have a baseline for the programme against which to judge progress despite the expanded programme having been in operation for over a year. The Department told us that setting a baseline for the programme was challenging owing to the larger numbers involved compared to previous resettlement programmes and the uncertainty around the characteristics of the refugees that will be resettled. We acknowledge these difficulties, but it is essential that the Department sets up targets to be able to measure progress and evaluate the overall success of the programme. Measuring and assessing the extent of secondary migration will be particularly important in determining the success of refugees' integration into their communities and whether they have become economically independent.

   Recommendation: ***The Department should, by the end of this financial year:***

   - ***Analyse the evidence it has collected in order to produce a baseline for the programme; and***
   - ***Set out the outcomes against which it will judge the success of the programme.***

5. **The Department has not yet worked out what is the right amount of English language teaching to provide.** Learning English is essential for refugees to be able to integrate into their communities and communicate with service providers, such as doctors and jobcentre staff. Refugees currently receive around four hours of English language classes per week during their first year in the UK, which refugees and organisations supporting them feel is not enough for them to properly integrate into, or communicate with, their local communities. In September 2016, the Department announced that it would make an additional £10 million available for English language classes. The funding is expected to provide an additional six

hours of classes per week during refugees first three to six months in the UK. It will also be used to provide regional co-ordinators to share and bring together best practice and explore more innovative approaches to helping refugees learn English, such as buddying. We welcome the increased focus on learning English, and the commitment to exploring new ways of getting the best from these efforts, but it is not clear whether this will be enough to ensure refugees are properly integrated into their communities and able to become economically active in the UK.

Recommendation: ***The Department should, within six months, review what is being delivered by the increased funding for teaching English to determine whether it is sufficient to allow refugees to communicate independently with service providers and integrate quickly into their local communities.***

6. **It is not clear that survivors of torture are receiving the specialist support and treatment they need.** More than half of the refugees resettled as part of the programme up to the end of June 2016 are survivors of torture or violence. However, only a few have been referred to specialist organisations for assessment and rehabilitation services. Our previous report on Access to Mental Health services similarly found that only around a quarter of people estimated to need mental health services have access to them. The Department told us that it shares information about refugees' experiences and mental health conditions with local authorities if it receives this information prior to refugees' arrival in the UK, but that it is up to local authorities to make sure that the relevant support and services are in place. The Department told us that it can be difficult to identify whether refugees are survivors of torture in advance of their arrival in the UK as they may be concerned about revealing their experiences to a stranger, or might think it could affect whether they are eligible for resettlement. While recognising these difficulties, it is nonetheless essential that survivors of torture are identified as soon as possible and that they receive the specialist support they need once they arrive in the UK.

Recommendation: ***The Department should, within six months, along with local authorities and delivery partners, undertake a full review of how victims of torture are being identified and supported to understand what more can be done.***

1 Establishing the programme

1. On the basis of a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, we took evidence from the Home Office (the Department) about the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme (the programme).[1]

2. Since it began in 2011, the civil war in Syria has caused mass movement of Syrians, both within the country and to neighbouring countries. Syrians now make up the largest refugee population in the world and almost five million people have fled to neighbouring countries to escape the conflict. In January 2014, the UK Government announced that it would establish a Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme to allow selected refugees to resettle in the UK. The original programme was relatively small in scale and resettled 239 refugees up to the end of September 2015.[2]

3. In September 2015, the Government announced that it would expand the programme in order to resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees in the UK by May 2020. The Government also added an interim target to resettle 1,000 Syrian refugees by Christmas 2015, which the Department and its partners successfully met. By the end of June 2016, a total of 2,659 Syrian refugees had been resettled in the UK as part of the programme, making up 13% of the overall target.[3]

4. The programme is the joint responsibility of the Home Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for International Development. It also involves a large number of other organisations, including international organisations, other government departments, local authorities and third sector delivery partners.[4]

Local authority participation

5. Local authorities are responsible for resettling and integrating refugees into their new local communities once they arrive in the UK. Their participation in the programme is voluntary. Local authorities make indicative pledges to the Department to resettle refugees, which become firm offers once the Department has identified the refugees and the local authority has secured appropriate accommodation, support and services to meet their needs.[5] The extent of local authority participation in the programme so far has varied greatly across the country, with Scotland having resettled around a third of refugees so far.[6] The Department told us that it had no plans to change the voluntary nature of the programme as it was important that the programme was delivered in a co-operative and collaborative way with local authorities. It told us that introducing a mandatory approach would not create the right dynamic for the programme, nor was it necessary as it had no evidence that pledges were being reneged upon.[7]

1 C&AG's Report, *The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme*, Session 2016–17, HC 626, 13 September 2016
2 C&AG's Report, paras 1, 2, 1.2–1.3, 1.8
3 C&AG's Report, paras 2, 4, 1.9, 3.4
4 C&AG's report, paras 3, 2.4
5 Q 97, C&AG's Report paras 9, 2.8–2.9
6 Qq 44, 96–98
7 Q 97

6. The Department is confident that it has enough indicative pledges of support from local authorities to meet the overall 20,000 target. It told us that it had designed the programme so that it was resilient and flexible enough to respond to policy changes in the speed or number of refugees that it needed to resettle, should it be required to in future.[8] It also told us that it was working with local authorities to make sure that the programme proceeded at a pace that local authorities were comfortable with and could deliver the services needed.[9] Some practical issues have nonetheless caused delays to resettling refugees, for example whether families are ready to come to the UK and whether the accommodation is available. We also heard an example from one of our own constituencies where there have been delays getting refugee children on the programme into school.[10]

7. Local authorities receive specific funding to help them support refugees during their first five years in the UK. This starts at £8,520 per person for their first year in the UK and reduces each additional year they are in the UK.[11] Some local authorities are concerned that the funding available will not be enough to cover the support and services they will need to offer refugees, particularly at a time when they face a number of other financial pressures.[12] For example, around 20% of the children in the programme are expected to have Special Educational Needs and therefore require additional support. We asked whether local authorities could be assured that the needs of refugees will be taken into account in the local authority funding formula and special funds made available by the Department. It told us that that the numbers of people involved in the programme, particularly those that will require additional support, were small compared to the total number of people local authorities support, but that it had made specific funds available to local authorities to support those with special needs. It committed to working with local authorities to determine the effects of changes to the local authority settlement on their ability to provide support and services to refugees.[13]

8. The Department told us that the amounts set for the local authority tariff for each refugees' second to fifth year in the UK had been determined in consultation with local authorities, including those who had already participated in the programme and those who had participated in the Gateway Protection Programme, as well as the Local Government Association.[14] The local authority tariff is designed to contribute to, rather than cover in full, the costs to local authorities of providing support and services during refugees' second to fifth years in the UK at a rate of around 80% of total costs. The Department told us that the majority of local authorities it spoke to were happy to pledge on the basis of this contribution.[15]

Clarity about the programme

9. The Department has not ring-fenced what the money provided to local authorities through the tariff can be used to fund.[16] While it has set out in a statement of requirements what services it expects local authorities to provide to refugees, there has been some

8 Qq 40–41, 96, 98
9 Qq 45, 97
10 Qq 53, 97
11 Qq 18, 52, C&AG's Report para 2.12
12 Qq 46, 48, 51, C&AG's Report paras 13, 2.13, 4.9
13 Qq 48–50
14 Qq 46–47
15 Q 47
16 Q 52, C&AG's Report para 2.13

confusion over what local authorities can and should provide in practice, for example whether they can or should provide families with a washing machine.[17] The Department committed to reviewing the guidance provided to local authorities as part of the funding and statement of requirement for refugees' first year of support. It confirmed, however, that a team of ten contact officers are available within the Home Office to answer local authorities' questions.[18]

10. Syrian refugees resettling in the UK as part of the programme are granted humanitarian protection status by the Department rather than the refugee status typically granted to successful asylum seekers. This has created a number of practical difficulties around access to certain welfare benefits and other means of support that can have a negative impact on the lives of refugees.[19]

- Until a recent policy change by the Department for Work & Pensions, both those with refugee status and humanitarian protection status were unable to claim Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments immediately despite being brought into the UK because of a medical condition or disability that would otherwise have qualified.[20]
- Those granted refugee status are able to access student finance and are eligible for home fee status from the time they are granted refugee status. In comparison, those granted humanitarian protection status have to have been resident in the UK for three years in order to qualify for a similar level of support, meaning many miss out on a university education.[21]
- Humanitarian protection status makes it easier for an individual to return to their country of origin, but less easy to travel elsewhere, for example to travel abroad to visit relatives. In comparison, refugee status makes it easier to travel elsewhere, but harder to return to an individual's country of origin.[22]

11. The Department told us that it chose to grant humanitarian protection status rather than refugee status because the Government's overall strategy was to bring an end to the Syrian civil war and enable refugees, whether in the UK or neighbouring countries, to return home and rebuild their lives and their country.[23] The Department asserted that the overall impact on the lives of refugees is the same regardless of whether they are granted refugee or humanitarian protection status as both have full access to the labour market and are entitled to apply to settle permanently in the UK after five years at no cost.[24] It accepted, however, that this decision had caused some unexpected issues which it committed to keeping under active review.[25]

12. It is not always clear to refugees what they are entitled to under their humanitarian protection status, or what will happen to them after the end of the programme, which is

17 Qq 52, 101
18 Qq 101–103
19 Qq 34, 75–82, Refugee Council (SRP0002), C&AG's Report paras 11, 3.17–3.20
20 Q 77
21 Qq 34, 75, Refugee Council (SRP0002)
22 Qq 76, 82
23 Q 75
24 Q 78, Home Office (SRP0004)
25 Qq 34, 75

causing some people undue stress.[26] The Department told us that it was committed to understanding the experiences of the people taking part in the programme and how it could best address any issues arising. For example, it has produced a factsheet in Arabic and English to more clearly explain their humanitarian protection status and requirements for travel documents.[27] It told us that it was working with local authorities to make sure that they understood the issues that had been raised and central government's guidance on each of these points.[28]

Community sponsorship

13. Other countries, such as Canada, make wide use of private sponsorship and community sponsorship as part of their resettlement programmes.[29] Community sponsorships, which allow individuals and organisations to privately sponsor and support refugees, were introduced in the UK as part of the programme in July 2016.[30] A very small number of refugees have been resettled through the community sponsorship scheme so far.[31] The Department told us that it was deliberately starting at a relatively small scale because the approach was new to the UK and it wanted to fully understand what would be required of sponsors.[32]

14. The Department has not set a target or quotas for community sponsorships as it wants them to operate alongside the main scheme and at a pace that potential sponsors are able to deliver.[33] Supporting a refugee, whether through community sponsorships or the local authority resettlement route, can require considerable resources and professional support over an extended period of time.[34] The Department confirmed that it worked with potential sponsors and local authorities to determine who would be best suited to which resettlement route, and has established strict criteria to help inform this decision. For example, it would not place an individual with particular or exceptional needs in a community sponsorship if it felt that the state needed to provide them with considerable support.[35]

15. There are important differences between the support and services offered through community sponsorships and the local authority route. For example, community sponsors are required to provide less money and support for a shorter amount of time than the five years offered through the local authority route.[36] Refugees will require services and support from local authorities even if they are being sponsored by individuals or community groups. The Department recognised that it is important that community sponsorships are complementary, rather than compete with, the resettlement route offered by local authorities.[37]

26 Qq 55, 82, C&AG's Report paras 11, 3.16, 3.19–3.20
27 Q 83
28 Q 83
29 Q 84, C&AG's Report para 4.12
30 Qq 56, 59, 90, C&AG's report para 4.12
31 Q 90
32 Qq 56, 58–59
33 Qq 56, 91
34 Q 56
35 Qq 58, 92
36 C&AG's Report para 4.13
37 Q 56

2 Evaluating the success of the programme

Plans for evaluating the programme

16. The Home Office (the Department) recognised that the success of the programme is not simply about moving 20,000 people from one location to another, but about enabling them to integrate effectively into the UK, or, if the civil war ends, to allow them to return to Syria if they wish to do so.[38] The Department has identified the categories against which it plans to measure success, for example refugees' progress with English, secondary migration and employment, but it has yet to determine what it aims to achieve against each of these categories.[39] The Department was not able to tell us, for example, the proportion of refugees it expected to achieve which level of English language at the end of the programme, or what proportion of the working-age population in the 20,000 it would expect to be working by when.[40]

17. The Department has not established a baseline for the programme against which to judge progress, but accepted that it needed to establish this as soon as possible given that the expanded programme has been in operation for over a year.[41] The Department told us that the larger number of people involved in the programme compared to previous resettlement programmes, and the uncertainty around the characteristics of those who will be resettled, made setting a baseline for the programme challenging. Other countries, such as Canada, Australia and Germany, are more experienced in delivering resettlement at scale. The UK Gateway Protection Programme, in comparison, resettles less than 1,000 people per year.[42] The Department also told us that the characteristics of the people being resettled in the UK as part of the programme are different to those of traditional asylum seekers in the UK and they therefore have different needs. Around 90% of those who apply for asylum in the UK are already resident in the UK. In comparison, the Syrian programme is only open to refugees registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, or the government in Turkey and who meet one or more of UNHCR's criteria for vulnerable groups.[43] The Department told us that it was working with international partners to determine the baseline for the programme and what it will need to measure to determine success and whilst its plans were at an early stage it will write to us before Christmas 2016 with details of the first evaluation scheme and early thoughts on its next steps for evaluation.[44]

18. Secondary migration, where individuals or groups move from one area within the UK to another, will be particularly important to help understand the early success of the programme, but challenging to measure.[45] The support provided to refugees requires them to stay in the local authority they have been resettled to. If refugees leave the local authority after, for example, their first year in the UK, neither their original local authority, nor the

38 Qq 7, 14
39 Q 7, 22
40 Qq 7–9, 14
41 Q 11, C&AG's Report para 4.15–4.16
42 Qq 7–8, Refugee Council (SRP0002)
43 Q 15, C&AG's Report paras 2.5 and 2.7
44 Q 8, Home Office (SRP0004)
45 Qq 16–17

local authority they move to, will receive the local authority tariff for their second to fifth years in the UK.[46] Some refugees may move because they have gained employment and no longer need financial support from their local authority. Others, however, might leave after their first year in the UK because they are no longer receiving the support they need from their local authority as the amount paid through the local authority tariff decreases.[47] We asked the Department how it would measure such a fluid set of circumstances. The Department committed to looking at the patterns across local authorities to determine the extent of secondary migration and ensure that the programme was working properly.[48]

English language classes

19. Most of those who are resettled in the UK as part of the programme do not have a high enough level of English to be self-sufficient in the UK. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that refugees have access to English language classes during their first year in the UK.[49] The local authority tariff has been used to provide refugees with around four hours of English language tuition per week. Refugees and organisations supporting them have said that this is insufficient to allow refugees to learn English quickly enough or to a detailed enough level to allow them to integrate into their communities or access services without interpreters.[50] Learning English is essential to refugees being able to integrate and communicate with their local communities and service providers and an important part of gaining employment and becoming economically active.[51]

20. In September 2016, the Department announced that it would make an additional £10 million available for English language classes, £5 million of reallocated money from an underspend in the programme's budget, and £5 million from the Department for Education.[52] The Department told us that the funding would be used to invest in people early with a view to achieving long-term benefits such as refugees being able to engage with, and integrate into their local communities, or become economically active. In part, the funding will be used to provide an additional six hours of classes per week during refugees' first three to six months in the UK.[53] The Department told us that it recognised that the programme would bring refugees into a range of locations, including those who are not familiar with welcoming people who don't speak English. The funding will therefore also be used to provide regional co-ordinators to share and bring together best practice and explore more innovative approaches to helping refugees learn English, such as buddying.[54]

Survivors of torture and/or violence

21. More than half of the refugees resettled as part of the programme up to the end of June 2016 were survivors of torture and/or violence. We received written evidence from Freedom from Torture, a registered charity and human rights organisation dedicated to the treatment and rehabilitation of survivors of torture who seek refuge in the UK. It told

46 Qq 16, 18–19
47 Qq 16–17, 20–21
48 Qq 17, 21
49 Q 10, C&AG's Report para 3.13
50 C&AG's Report para 3.13
51 Q 65, C&AG's Report para 3.14
52 Qq 61, 63–64, 67–68, C&AG's Report Footnote 20
53 Qq 65, 70–71
54 Qq 61, 66

us that it was concerned that people taking part in the programme who were survivors of torture were not gaining access to the specialist services they need to recover from their traumatic experiences. Despite being the largest torture rehabilitation organisation in the country, only a handful of people from the programme have been referred to Freedom from Torture for assessment or rehabilitation services. The organisation was therefore concerned that the mental health needs of the vast majority of those who are survivors of torture were not being identified, or that they were being allocated to areas of the country where specialist support was not available.[55] Our previous report on access to mental health services similarly found that a high proportion of people with mental health conditions do not have access to the care that they need. Only around a quarter of those estimated to need mental health services have access to them. Good access to mental health services for all patients is important. Many people can make a full recovery if they receive appropriate treatment when they need it and at an early stage.[56]

22. The Department told us that it shares information about refugees' experiences and mental health conditions with local authorities if it receives this information prior to refugees' arrival in the UK, but that it is up to local authorities to make sure that the relevant support and services are in place. It can be difficult to identify whether refugees are survivors of torture in advance of their arrival in the UK as they may be concerned about revealing their experiences to a stranger, or might think it could affect their ability to resettle. The Department told us that it worked with local authorities to make sure that any information was treated in an appropriately confidential way and that local authorities were able to fully consider whether they could provide the services required. It also told us that it worked with local authorities once refugees had arrived in the UK to help them deal with cases where it only becomes apparent an individual is a survivor of torture after their arrival.[57]

55 Q 95, Freedom from Torture (SRP0001), C&AG's Report Figure 8, para 4.9

56 Committee of Public Accounts, *Improving access to mental health services*, Sixteenth report of Session 2016–17, HC 80, 21 September 2016

57 Q 95

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 14 December 2016

Members present:

Mr Richard Bacon	Kwasi Kwarteng
Phil Boswell	Nigel Mills
Chris Evans	Karin Smyth
Kevin Foster	

In the absence of the Chair, Mr Richard Bacon was called to the chair.

Draft Report (*The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement programme*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 22 read and agreed to.

Introduction agreed to.

Conclusions and recommendations agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Thirty-fourth of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 11 January 2017 at 2.00pm

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

Monday 7 November 2016	*Question number*
Mark Sedwill, Permanent Secretary, and **Paul Morrison**, Director, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme, Home Office	Q1–113

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee's website.

SRP numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

1 Freedom from Torture (SRP0001)

2 Home Office (SRP0004)

3 Refugee Council (SRP0002)

4 Unicef UK (SRP0003)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current session

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2016–17

First Report	Efficiency in the criminal justice system	HC 72 (Cm 9351)
Second Report	Personal budgets in social care	HC 74 (Cm 9351)
Third Report	Training new teachers	HC 73 (Cm 9351)
Fourth Report	Entitlement to free early education and childcare	HC 224 (Cm 9351)
Fifth Report	Capital investment in science projects	HC 126 (Cm 9351)
Sixth Report	Cities and local growth	HC 296 (Cm 9351)
Seventh Report	Confiscations orders: progress review	HC 124 (Cm 9351)
Eighth Report	BBC critical projects	HC 75 (Cm 9351)
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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Accounts Committee

Oral evidence: The Syrian Resettlement Programme, HC 768

Monday 7 Nov 2016

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 7 Nov 2016.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Meg Hillier (Chair); Mr Richard Bacon; Philip Boswell; Chris Evans; Kevin Foster; Kwasi Kwarteng; John Pugh.

Sir Amyas Morse, Comptroller and Auditor General, Adrian Jenner, Director of Parliamentary Relations, National Audit Office, Louise Bladen, Director, NAO, and Marius Gallaher, Alternate Treasury Officer of Accounts, HM Treasury, were in attendance.

Questions 1-113

Witnesses

I: Mark Sedwill, Permanent Secretary, Home Office and Paul Morrison, Director, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme, Home Office.

Examination of witnesses

Mark Sedwill and Paul Morrison.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to our witnesses, Mark Sedwill, the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office—welcome back—and Paul Morrison, the Director of the United Kingdom Resettlement Programme at the Home Office. May I check, Paul, is that all resettlement programmes, or just the Syrian project?

Paul Morrison: It is all resettlement programmes.

Q2 **Chair:** So it is Gateway and Calais and everything.

Paul Morrison: That's right.

Q3 **Chair:** Big job at the moment then. Our hashtag today is #Syria. Today, we are looking at the Syrian resettlement programme on the back of a National Audit Office Report into how that has been going.

To kick off, Mr Sedwill, you had this ambition to get 1,000 people in before Christmas, which was a pretty big rush, given that the commitment had not been made many months before that—it was quite a fast pace—and then there was a pause between then and April. What did you learn from having to work at such pace? Perhaps it will be Mr Morrison answering, I'm not sure. What did you then bring in that was different? Did you make any changes as a result, when you started again in April?

Mark Sedwill: Thank you, Chair, and for the opportunity to appear before the Committee on this. The pause was designed essentially before we even started cranking the handle on the first 1,000. When I asked Mr Morrison to take on the programme, we agreed that what we would do—I think this was even before the then Prime Minister had set us the 1,000 interim target—would be to take the current programme chassis and see how much pressure it could bear.

Q4 **Chair:** Do you mean Gateway?

Mark Sedwill: The existing Syrian one—there was a Syrian vulnerable persons programme already, but it was running at a trickle essentially. We agreed that we would try and take that to see how much pressure it could bear and to learn some lessons from that. But we recognised that to hit a target such as the 20,000—so bringing in several hundred a month—we would have to construct a new pipeline, build relationships with a wider range of local authorities and find new methods. So, essentially, it was always designed to have a "crank the handle fast" to begin with, but then we had the 1,000 target, which meant that we had to crank it very fast. Then pause, learn the lessons and design a more resilient pipeline to operate at a higher level.

Q5 **Chair:** So you had always planned to have a gap, a pause after Christmas.

Mark Sedwill: Not specifically a pause at that stage, but we knew that we would have to build a new, industrial-strength mechanism at the same time as taking the original mechanism and trying to push as much through it as we could. Mr Morrison could probably talk in a bit more detail.

Q6 **Chair:** Mr Morrison, what did you learn from that first 1,000 coming in at such pace?

Paul Morrison: We learnt a combination of positive things and things that we needed to develop. The positive elements of it were that this was an unprecedented increase in the programme—we had never tried to resettle this number of people on such timeframes, with the number of different local authorities that we were engaged with right across the United Kingdom—and a lot emerged from that which was about how we could work effectively together as an entire UK-wide operation. There were things we needed to develop. When you are dealing with tens of cases a month, you can almost offer a bespoke caseworker on a very small number of cases, but once you start getting into the volumes of hundreds coming through on that timeframe, many of the systems you have are not going to work—spreadsheets and manual systems—so what we needed to do was to construct something that could actually withstand the throughput that the Permanent Secretary was talking about.

The other point was that as we learned to do it at that pace, which was a very positive outcome, it revealed a number of things about how we could best serve the refugees we were settling and work with the local authorities. For example, doing it at that pace meant we were taking receipt from the UN and very rapidly resettling people into places all around the United Kingdom. We realised that we needed to allow the number of cases in the system to build up, to give refugees the appropriate amount of time and, critically, to give local authorities the appropriate amount of time to prepare for the arrival of refugees in their areas.

Chair: We will come back to some of the issues around preparation and how you assess who is coming through and their needs.

Q7 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** Clearly you are achieving some success in bringing people in, but I am interested in what happens to your monitoring and evaluation. That seems to be the challenging aspect of this exercise, or a particularly challenging aspect. You have given a number of criteria for what you will be monitoring, but I am afraid they seem quite vague to me. For instance, when you talk about progress in English language, are there any benchmarks or assessments? Are people going to pass exams? How does one monitor that?

Mark Sedwill: It is essentially to enable people to integrate effectively into the UK, but again, Mr Morrison, do you want to pick up the detailed question?

Chair: For anyone tuning in, this is paragraph 4.16 on page 41 of the Report.

Paul Morrison: We have been very clear from the outset that success in this scheme is not simply about moving 20,000 people from one location to another. The outcomes you describe are precisely those we want to achieve and monitor. What we have therefore done from the outset is to define the areas you describe around English language progression and entry into the labour market. We have built the programme right from the outset with the capacity to monitor those things, so that we do not have to come to that later in the day and start trying to retrofit an evaluation.

Because we have never brought this number of people on this scale from the situation we are experiencing in Syria, there are some challenges in setting effective baselines—for example, around what proportion of the working-age population in this 20,000 we would expect to be working by when, given that they come from the background they come from and given that they have got English language requirements. We want to keep that ongoing evaluation and start thinking about what the baseline and the success we need to measure against look like. In doing that, we are working closely with our international partners, who have more experience of doing this at scale, so we are understanding that. What I cannot say at the moment is precisely what proportion should be at which level of English language. We are at the early stages of this process.

Q8 **Chair:** Which international partners are you talking to?

Paul Morrison: For example, the Canadian Government, the Australian Government, the German Government—all those countries have done resettlement at scale. The experience we have, as the Permanent Secretary said, has been quite low level. For example, the Gateway scheme, which I am also responsible for, has less than 1,000 a year. This is a completely different dynamic. The other thing is that the people we are bringing in are a different cohort. The people we brought in under Gateway, for example, had been in refugee camps for at least five years.

Q9 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** In terms of the specifics of measuring progress, if I were being very rigorous about it, I would say that the easiest way is to measure everyone's English language proficiency at the beginning and then see their progress over one, two and three years. I am not getting from the Report that you are going to apply that sort of method.

Paul Morrison: We will, but what I cannot say to the Committee at the moment is, "I am therefore confident that it should be this level of proficiency after this period of time." I am measuring the baseline and getting it so it can be robustly measured as we get through this 10-year commitment, but I cannot—

Q10 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** So you are saying that they are going to have English language tests when they come, to see where they are.

Paul Morrison: Part of the statement of requirements for everyone is that they get into English language provision, and as part of that we are asking local authorities to monitor progression in English language. That is at a very early stage, because we only started relatively early, and seeing

progression in that will take some time. We will see that as the programme continues.

Q11 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** But you need to get the baseline pretty fast, because people are coming in.

Paul Morrison: Correct.

Q12 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** Have you done anything?

Paul Morrison: We have had the first drop of that data, which has only just come in after the first year. We ask local authorities to provide that.

Q13 **Chair:** That is the 1,000 and then the ones who have arrived since then.

Paul Morrison: Yes. We have got a good cut coming back in from local authorities, but that is only just arriving now. That will start informing the baseline that we are going to measure against for the remainder of this commitment, which, as I say, is a long-term, multi-year commitment.

Q14 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** The last question I am going to ask on this subject is, how do you measure what level they can get to after five years? What sort of outcomes do you want?

Mark Sedwill: Essentially, it is yet to be determined. The objective here is not a particular level of English language. It is to ensure people are safely and properly integrated into the UK or, if the Syrian civil war ends, able to return and continue their lives there if they wish to do so. It is an indicator, and we want to ensure people are employable and so on, but there will be other indicators as well. It is a good proxy, but I do not think we can say that there is a particular level that we would want every individual to achieve.

People are coming in family groups. For example, in a family that the two of us met last week on a visit to Birmingham, the two sons—both students—have already achieved what seemed to be almost fluent English, having not had it before. The parents are obviously taking longer. Those things need to be worked through individually.

Q15 **Philip Boswell:** Very briefly, you may have noticed that we are bombing Syria. What makes you think it is appropriate that someone has to learn English before they can apply for asylum in the UK, when we are actually part of the problem?

Chair: It is not before.

Mark Sedwill: We bring people under the Syrian vulnerable persons scheme to the UK, and many of them have no English when they come. They do not have to have English before they come to the UK. We bring them in to the UK and resettle them here. As Mr Kwarteng was just pointing out, we will then assess their English. We have increased the English language provision; that is one of the points made in the Report.

Philip Boswell: So we are teaching it to them here.

Mark Sedwill: We are teaching it to them here.

A more general point—we have been asked this implicitly, but it is worth making this point. The characteristics of this cohort are different to the traditional asylum seekers coming to the UK, most of whom have been in the UK already—90% claim after they are resident in the UK. This is a group of people we are bringing from refugee camps with the UNHCR. It is a very different cohort who have different needs. That is why we designed a different programme around them.

Chair: Different from Gateway.

Q16 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** With respect to things like health outcomes, you are talking about the same problem, in terms of measuring these things. Obviously, the harder the target, the easier it is to measure, but Mr Sedwill has talked very broadly about softer issues, which are harder to measure. I will leave that to one side for now.

The particular thing that concerned me in this Report is secondary migration. Two things come to my mind. First, it seems very hard to measure, so how are you going to keep tabs on it? Secondly, I'm not quite sure what the purpose is. You mentioned secondary migration, but what are you trying to achieve by measuring it?

Mark Sedwill: You mean internal secondary migration, Mr Kwarteng?

Kwasi Kwarteng: That's right.

Mark Sedwill: Of course, we want to ensure that there is a fair distribution of people around the country, which is why we have involved more local authorities. Mr Morrison can fill in the detail. If people no longer need direct state support, they can move. If they can get a job somewhere else in the country, they can follow the work. The state support to them that is provided through local authorities requires them to be in the area they have been resettled to. There is a natural dynamic that will encourage people, while they remain dependent on the state, to stay in the areas they have been resettled to, and we can then manage the impact on public services. Of course, if they become economically active—if they get job offers or their company moves them somewhere—they are just an economically active member of the population and free to move.

Paul Morrison: That is exactly right. The reason is here in the evaluation framework, Mr Kwarteng. If we are resettling large numbers of people to a location that they almost immediately leave and go to another local authority, which puts pressure there, we have to start asking ourselves what is happening with the success of the initial resettlement.

For the first year, every local authority that receives a family under this scheme will have a caseworker and the means of engaging with that family. We will know through that year whether they are seeking to exit the scheme. If they do that and say they don't want to remain in the area that we have initially settled them in, as the Permanent Secretary said, the general advice would be that you do not then receive support from the

local authority. We encourage people to remain with that support, because that's where we believe they are going to get the best support and integration. We measure it to ensure that we are seeing people stay where they are initially settled. As the Permanent Secretary said, if over the course of time they get economically active and are able to move to different places, that is not in itself negative.

Q17 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** But it is a very clear-cut and—dare I say it?—bureaucratic world that you are envisaging. In practice, people may be in Devon and spend three days a week in London doing a part-time job and then come back. They might go off for a week or two somewhere else. My issue is: how does one measure that? It is such a fluid set of circumstances. You could have people moving from one area permanently to another. You could have people doing almost a weekly commute. The variations make it difficult to measure. Even if it is useful to measure, how do you do that?

Mark Sedwill: I think it is useful to measure, probably not particularly around individual cases, but for us to look at the patterns overall and see if the programme is working. If, as Mr Morrison said, we put people in a particular town and we discovered that within three months all or a significant proportion of them had moved, we would have ask ourselves some questions about the initial distribution, the performance of that local authority etc. So it would not necessarily be pursuing individual cases to say you should or should not have relocated, but it would be a way of assessing whether the initial distribution, the support package etc. for the programme in aggregate in those areas is working. So it is more management information, I would say, than casework information, if I can make that distinction.

Q18 **Chair:** Will you be looking at what local authorities were providing beyond the first year as well? Doesn't the money drop down quite considerably in years 2 to 5?

Mark Sedwill: Yes.

Q19 **Chair:** So will you be looking at whether that is having an impact?

Paul Morrison: Yes, that is exactly right. Obviously, if the person leaves the area, the local authority will not get that tariff for years 2 to 5 to support them.

Q20 **Chair:** A family may, say, leave in year 3 because the year 2 money was not really providing them with the support they needed. That is a possibility if you have got family with definite needs. It may be that that drop-off is too much.

Mark Sedwill: Of course, the money goes to the local authority rather than to the individual. So the individual would still get whatever support the local authority provides on a statutory basis to people in its area.

Q21 **Chair:** My point is that if a local authority is getting less money in years 2 to 5—we recognise the taper—and it turns out that even with that money the local authority is not able to provide the support the family needs and

they find that going to friends or family who have settled elsewhere is a better option for them, that is one of the things you need to guard against when looking at—

Mark Sedwill: I think you are right. Of course, if that were the cause, one would expect that to be a countrywide pattern, whereas if it were localised we would have to see what lessons one might draw about the locality. So it is very much going to be in the data, and that is why I described it more as management than casework information.

Q22 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** Your phrase "management not casework" is a good one, and it reinforces my question about this whole thing. These criteria seem very soft in terms of monitoring and evaluation. When I hear monitoring and evaluation, I think of targets, hurdles, numbers and that sort of thing, whereas these criteria seem very soft. Broadly, how will you judge yourselves over the next five or 10 years?

Mark Sedwill: I do not think that "soft" is quite the right word, because of course we are not delivering a thing; we are dealing with people.

Chair: I am not saying it is not challenging, but I think Mr Kwarteng said it was hard to measure. We like measurable things.

Mark Sedwill: I do understand the point. It is just that we do need to measure the complexity of dealing with assessing the success of human beings. In a sense, there is an even broader one: we are going to have to look at it probably through survey data, ongoing casework information and the experience of local authorities. Fundamentally, what we are trying to get at is how successfully have these people integrated? Have they been able to pick up their lives, get themselves into the labour market and live independently? I entirely accept this is a work in progress. We will have to work through the best way to make that assessment, because fundamentally that is the question the country expects us to ask: have we done the right thing by these people and are they able to live their lives?

Q23 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** In terms of the purpose of the Committee, we are looking at not an inconsiderable amount of public money—£1.7 billion.

Mark Sedwill: Agreed.

Q24 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** And I will not use the word "soft" but it is difficult to define success. You are reasonably well-paid, capable public servants and you should be held to a standard. It is very important that we get that.

Lastly, do you think that you have the capacity to deliver this programme and examine yourselves critically? That is what I am slightly worried about in the ongoing programme. You need some sort of internal audit.

Mark Sedwill: I think the short answer is yes. Of course, external scrutiny of the kind we have had helps, but we have internal audit as well, who work to the same professional standards as the NAO and who will monitor for me, irrespective of any work the Committee may wish to follow up, how effectively we implement the recommendations of the Report and any recommendations we get from the Committee, and

whether the programme is on or off track. I get a great deal of management information of that kind and internal audit look at a whole range of different programmes for us. We have ongoing management information as well.

Paul Morrison: Although we constructed this at pace, as we did it we did it in a completely structured way. So I have a director of finance who sits within the programme team. I have a management information function, which delivers exactly week-by-week the information that I need to know that the programme is running effectively. I have also appointed a discrete person whose job it is to make sure that the evaluation is going to work. As I said, what we have built into the programme right from the outset is what needs to go into this programme to ensure that we are able to evaluate, not just in a soft way, but the actual crunchy numbers, the data—

Q25 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** That is what I want.

Paul Morrison: That is precisely what this evaluation framework is referring to. It is not just some words on, you know, educational outcome. Beneath that there are a number of specific indicators.

Q26 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** But would you accept that at the moment it is just words?

Paul Morrison: No. I would not accept that it is just words because, as I said before, we have gone out and we have worked with local authorities, the Local Government Association and their equivalents in the devolved Administrations, to make sure that there are actually data coming in that will allow us to answer the question about that progression, whether it is in education, whether it is in the labour market and so on.

Q27 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** It is just that we have not seen any of that.

Paul Morrison: No, and as I said, one of the reasons is that this is a long-term programme and the data is only just coming in to us. What I cannot therefore do is in all honesty say, "This is the baseline and this is what we need to do."

Q28 **Chair:** When can we expect to see the first results of the evaluation?

Paul Morrison: We are going to have to look at what we have got back and its utility. We want to be as engaged and transparent as we can be. I do not want to give false promises about exactly when I can set baselines and whether that is going to be appropriate for this cohort. What I am trying to do in constructing the programme—

Q29 **Chair:** So you have got your first raw data. You are honing whether that is the right information that you have been asking of the providers. So, a guesstimate? Six months? Summer, which I know in the civil service can stretch from March to about December? Give us a rough idea. We may want to come back and look at this again. We will see how you do today and how it goes on, but we want to call you back at the right time.

Paul Morrison: I am going to slightly reserve judgement given it is literally as we speak that we are considering it.

Q30 **Chair:** Could you write to us in a month or perhaps by the end of this year to tell us when you think you are going to have the first evaluation and how you are going to change it as a result of what you have learned?

Paul Morrison: Yes, I certainly will. Sure.

Q31 **Chair:** On the investment, in paragraph 3.14 on page 33, the NAO quotes the Tent Foundation and the Open Political Economy Network, who "found that investing €1 in welcoming refugees in the European Union…could yield nearly €2 in economic benefits within five years." Are you looking at that methodology and seeing if you can make an assessment about the economic benefits of bringing Syrians in in this resettlement, Mr Morrison?

Paul Morrison: Whether or not we use that methodology specifically, one of the dynamics we want to get to is the extent to which the self-sufficiency of the people we are bringing in will allow them to be economically active and contribute to the economy.

Q32 **Chair:** Because this is a different group to the Gateway individuals and families, so potentially there is a huge benefit economically.

Mark Sedwill: That point you have just made is one of the footnotes in the estimates that the NAO has made of the cost of the programme, recognising that there is still considerable uncertainty about the economic input that people will have and therefore the requirement for benefits and so on.

Chair: We recognise that it is very early days.

Mark Sedwill: Those are the indirect costs, if you like, in the NAO numbers, which are obviously based on the analysis that we have.

Q33 **Chair:** I think the example you gave earlier about two teenagers already proficient in English certainly reflects what I see in my constituency.

Mark Sedwill: Exactly.

Q34 **Chair:** But the question is then about other things. In fact, talking about those teenagers, what about university fees for those teenagers who are approaching it? Because of their status, they don't automatically qualify to be paid through university. Is that something you are aware of, Mr Morrison? Are you doing something about it?

Paul Morrison: Yes, we are aware of it. The situation you refer to relates to the status of the people coming in—

Chair: Humanitarian protection rather than refugee status.

Paul Morrison: Yes, humanitarian protection as opposed to refugee status. There were solid reasons for why humanitarian protection as opposed to refugee status was the grant. We are now aware that there are

the issues that you have described, so we are working very closely with the Department for Education and others to look at that and to consider the issues. That is one of those things that we keep under active review.

Q35 **Mr Bacon:** May I first apologise for arriving late? I have been in the Middle East and have just got back.

Can I just ask you to clarify your answer? Are you saying that you have not yet done any assessment, but that you are going to do some assessment, of this statement at the bottom of page 33, which says that extra investment in humanitarian help yields further economic dividends?

Paul Morrison: My answer was that, as a general principle in applying the objectives of the programme to get people to self-sufficiency as early as possible, we hope that that will lead to their contributing economically to the UK, although that is not the primary objective of the programme. Specifically on the Open Political Economy Network, looking into their particular methodology, I have not—

Q36 **Mr Bacon:** And you were not planning to?

Paul Morrison: Not this particular one, but certainly on the general principle of at what point people will become economically active and what investment we need to make to make that most likely. We are certainly working on that basis.

Mark Sedwill: Part of the answer is in figure 6, which is right in the middle of the Report. If you look at the right-hand half of that page, the NAO, on the basis of the information we have so far, which I know they would accept is incomplete, have made a series of assumptions about the overall cost of the programme—the indirect as well as the direct costs. Some fairly conservative assumptions have been made, as Departments do, about economic activity. Of course, what we will want to do as we run the programme though—this goes to Mr Kwarteng's point—is continue to refine those estimates as we can, to properly understand the economic input that people can make.

Q37 **Chair:** Until the NAO did this work, had there been any work in government even trying to approximate the figure in figure 6, which we thought was quite helpful?

Mark Sedwill: The NAO work, of course, collates analysis from within the Government—

Q38 **Chair:** But you are the responsible Department—you are the accounting officer. Would you have had this oversight had the NAO not done this work?

Mark Sedwill: Probably not in exactly this form. We have been more concerned, to be frank, with the direct costs so far. This is something I think we would have come to over time, but the NAO have captured it very well.

Q39 **Chair:** Perhaps Louise Bladen from the NAO can just illuminate it, and then we will bring in Dr John Pugh.

Louise Bladen: It is probably worth pointing out that some of the Departments that we feature in figure 6—DWP and HMRC—had very deliberately not looked at the cost of this because it is such a small percentage. It was just us trying to get the direct costs, as Mr Sedwill says, and then adding in the other bits that had not been captured.

Q40 **John Pugh:** The main thrust of my question is about local authorities' differential response, reaction and performance. Can I begin with two general and different questions? It is not an unsuccessful scheme, but it pales into insignificance when compared with what the Canadians and the Germans have done, for example. The premise of the scheme is that we take the most vulnerable people and work out the target for 2020. Do you think we could, or should, accelerate this, given that the longer people are left vulnerable the worse it is for them?

Mark Sedwill: I think whether we should is, of course, very much a question of policy.

Chair: He's just trying—you're too experienced to be led down that path.

Mark Sedwill: Sometimes I forget whether I am in front of the other Committee or this one, and I stray.

Q41 **Chair:** But could you do it?

Mark Sedwill: When I first gave Mr Morrison this task, I said to him, "We can't assume that policy is completely settled, in terms of the pace at which we would want to bring in these people", so we are trying to build some spare capacity and latitude into the way we are operating so that there is some flexibility. That, apart from anything else, gives us more confidence about hitting the 20,000 target as well, and it gives us a certain amount of latitude were there to be a shift.

It is worth keeping in mind that one of the most significant constraints is at the far end of the process, with the UNHCR, because the UNHCR's view is that people are normally best settled within the region, where they have all the cultural affinities and so on. They have been managing a lot of competing programmes from us and other countries—as you suggest, Dr Pugh, there are others who have bigger programmes than the UK—and they want to be sure that they are not just shunting people into the programmes but that this is genuinely in the best interest of the family groups they are putting into them. As I say, generally, the UNHCR's view is that people are best cared for close to home, because it is then easier for them to return when circumstances permit. That perhaps takes us slightly into the "should" territory as well as the "could". Mr Morrison might want to add to that.

Paul Morrison: That is exactly right. Part of the development of the programme is to make sure that certain elements of it—for example, the casework that the Home Office has to conduct—are automated, resource-light and as efficient and effective as possible, precisely so that if scale does expand, we have the capacity to deal with it.

Q42 **John Pugh:** The second question is more about co-ordination, because it

is not the only thing on your in desk. You have a Government commitment to take 3,000 vulnerable child refugees from the Middle East and north Africa, and you have unaccompanied child refugees from Europe under the Dubs amendment and so on. Is it being co-ordinated in any way with the Syrian programme?

Chair: Mr Morrison can answer, because he is co-ordinating. We don't need you both every time.

Paul Morrison: Some of the commitments that you have described, Dr Pugh, are directly under my responsibility, so the 3,000 people arriving under the vulnerable children scheme from the Middle East region will be managed by the self-same folk. The other unaccompanied minors from Europe that you mentioned are being managed alongside the unaccompanied minors who will arrive, for example, in Kent through a new national transfer scheme. It is operated by my colleagues in the asylum side of the Home Office, and we absolutely co-ordinate tightly and make sure that in our engagement with local authorities we do it collectively and together and understand the interactions. Some of the children who will be arriving through the vulnerable children scheme from the Middle East, for example, will then be processed through the national transfer scheme that I described as being responsible for the other unaccompanied minors. We absolutely work together and co-ordinate and make sure we have that joint conversation.

Q43 **John Pugh:** And you are not missing a Minister for Syria now.

Paul Morrison: No, I'm not. I should say it was an absolute pleasure to work with Richard Harrington in the early stages, particularly when it needed a real impetus and engagement with local authorities across the United Kingdom, but now we have very strong, very good engagement with Robert Goodwill, the Immigration Minister.

Q44 **John Pugh:** To press you on engagement, local authorities are engaged to a differing extent. There are very good maps in the Report, and we looked for a clear pattern, but we could not see a clear pattern in this. Why do you think some local authorities have bought in early and been very active, but others have hung back? Manchester is a strategic migration partnership leader with a large Syrian community, yet when you look at the north-west you can see hardly any Syrian migrants located there. What is the reason for this?

Paul Morrison: Some of the areas that came on were those that have extensive experience of being resettlement areas, so they were early adopters of the new expanded scheme. Others were completely new to this. They were not dispersal areas for asylum seekers prior to their engagement in the scheme. Nor were they—

Q45 **John Pugh:** Can I just stop you there? Some of them that were quite experienced with previous programmes such as the Gateway did not get into the Syria programme.

Paul Morrison: That is true of some of them, but others who were early adopters of the Syria scheme when it was small-scale—Glasgow, Coventry,

Bradford—then took part in the expanded scheme, as did other areas that had been part of the Gateway scheme and also asylum dispersal areas. In all of this we have been engaging with local authorities and trying to ensure we go at the pace at which they are capable of delivering the services that we need. There will be different reasons why local authorities would feel able to pledge at different times. Some of those that have not had experience before wanted to get themselves up to speed to know what it takes to support refugees.

Other local authorities, where there are large numbers of asylum seekers dispersed, will want to think how they make sure that the reception of Syrian refugees can be accommodated alongside other pressures. So the conversation is going on in the round. The issue that you describe is about when the pledges that people are going to make come forward, and we go at the pace that the local authorities we are engaging with are happy to progress at.

Q46 **John Pugh:** The sounding we have had from the local authorities is echoed in the Report. Some of them are a little bit suspicious about the funding levels and whether they will be adequate to cover the problems they may be getting into. If you look at the funding levels on page 20, they are quite generous compared with the Gateway scheme. You would have thought the local authorities that had previous experience of the Gateway scheme would have been fairly relaxed about buying into the Syrian scheme, but they seem to be worried about whether resources will taper off too rapidly for them to deal with the problems that they may encounter. Is that a correct analysis?

Paul Morrison: The way that we constructed the tariff for year two to five was entirely in consultation and collaboration with local areas, including those who had operated resettlement schemes—the Syrian scheme and Gateway.

Q47 **John Pugh:** With the LGA?

Paul Morrison: With the LGA, yes—in complete collaboration. The LGA, I should say, have been part of the programme from the outset. They sit on my programme board and have been there from the outset. We took a range of different local authority areas and asked them what they thought the cost requirement would be; there was quite a range. We ended up averaging that out, and because the intention of the year two to five funding was to make a contribution, we went with 80% of the average. By and large the majority of local authorities that I speak to are happy to pledge on the basis that that is the contribution that we make.

Q48 **John Pugh:** Just a quick question to Mr Sedwill, then. A local authority looking at that, and maybe worried about the long-term needs it might have to support, would ordinarily be quite relaxed, because they would assume that under the local authority spending rules and formula these needs would be recognised. But we are moving now towards a rates-based system, or a business rates-based system. Can local authorities be reasonably well assured that other needs and other recognition of these

new inhabitants will be given in the local authority formula, as well as through the special funds that the Home Office makes available?

Mark Sedwill: I think it is just worth remembering scale here, Dr Pugh. If you look at the proportion that we distribute around the country, it is up to 0.07% for children, for example, who tend to be resource-intensive—that is of the children's population. I mentioned that we were in Birmingham recently, and when you talk to local authorities the numbers that they are actually having to manage are very much at the margin of their overall—

Q49 **John Pugh:** But, for example, if you have a number of children with special needs, you want that somehow recognised in the funding that they are going to get, not just in the first year but in the second year, the third year and so on.

Mark Sedwill: And there are funding streams, particularly if there are special needs around individuals.

Q50 **Chair:** Just to be clear, paragraph 4.8 on page 38 says, "20% of children in the programme are expected to have special educational needs". They will not all have statements, will they? So you say there is funding available.

Mark Sedwill: My point is that this is still a very small proportion of the total number of children that the local authorities are dealing with, including, in many cases, children who are recent immigrants, who may well have different educational needs. That is part of the dialogue with them. There is of course a broader question about the changing nature of the local authority settlement, and the extent to which it is needs-based as opposed to rates-based, and we will have to work that through with them as we see what effects that has, but I think it is worth remembering that this is very much at the margin of their overall—

Q51 **John Pugh:** Agreed, but many local authorities would say in their defence that their finances are very much at the margins, which is probably the reason why they are reluctant to engage.

Mark Sedwill: I understand.

Q52 **John Pugh:** On your monitoring of what local authorities do or do not do with the money you have given them, Liverpool gets, I think, something like £8,000 for the first year. They are currently—I think it is in the public domain—issuing a prospectus to get providers to take on the chore of looking after the people under the scheme, and they are offering the providers about £4,000 per individual. There is probably a very good reason for that, and I wouldn't want to go and accuse Liverpool of supporting other budgets by using money for this purpose, but what monitoring do you do of how the money is spent?

Paul Morrison: We do not, in the central programme, ring-fence precisely what the expenditure needs to go on. We define in the statement of requirements the various different services that we expect local authorities to provide. The tender that individual local authorities may be putting out for may be specific parts of that minimum requirement, rather than

necessarily the totality of it. So for example, it would be the provision of caseworkers who were able to help people access services, or ensuring that accommodation is up to standard, or providing English language. So without having seen the specific tender that you are talking about, Dr Pugh, I cannot be exact on it, but I would say that it may well be that it is not the totality of what Liverpool City Council is requiring.

Q53 **John Pugh:** In terms of monitoring, I was told by a charity that a large number of children under the migration scheme, who are actually in place, are still not in school five months or more after being there. Do you have any data on that?

Paul Morrison: The way that we work is that we work with local authorities to ensure that there are school places available for people on arrival. It is one of the things that we talk to them about prior to arrival. I have heard anecdotal reports, like the one that you have given, about children not being in a particular school. By no means is it my impression that that is the complete case. We will want to work very closely with those local authorities where that is occurring, because what we want to do is make sure that prior to arrival, the local authorities have the school places.

Q54 **John Pugh:** Have you any information about whether local authorities where, for example, most of the schools in the area are academies are struggling more to place children?

Paul Morrison: Rather than get into the specifics of that, I would make a general point about the approach that we take. The reason we go through local authorities is that we want them, before they pledge a place, to make sure that the services are in place for the family that they are receiving. One of the key parts of that is ensuring that there are school places for the children. It is a key factor for us in determining where people go and where families are settled.

Q55 **John Pugh:** Okay; I will leave that there.

Can you go to paragraph 3.16? I will refer to that whole section, from 3.17 up to 3.20. The Report flags up that a lot of the refugees themselves are fairly unclear about what they may or may not do under the scheme. It seems very straightforward to have it spelled out for people in the appropriate language—you arrive with your pack, your £200 and the various other things you are given as well. Is that down to the local authorities as well, or do you do it centrally?

Mark Sedwill: We do provide that information, but don't forget, Dr Pugh, these are people who have been through a pretty traumatic experience, so their ability to absorb, particularly initially, is somewhat challenged. There is a process of helping people integrate. We do provide an initial briefing pack in Arabic now. Sometimes people's expectations are conditioned by the life they led in Syria; I have heard a couple of examples of that.

In a sense, it is not just about what we write down or provide to explain to them what is in the UK. We must not underestimate the very stark shift in life experience that they are going through. Inevitably, some are going to

find that quite difficult to manage. These are often people who lived—obviously, not in the refugee camps—a pretty prosperous, well-advantaged professional life in Syria, and were hoping to be able to replicate some of that here. Of course, that is not what we are able to provide. They may be able to as they become economically active again, but it is not what we are able to provide. So quite a lot of this is just the management, partly through non-governmental organisation partners, of people's expectations at an individual case work level, so that they understand the story better.

Q56 **John Pugh:** Can we conclude by saying a little about the non-governmental partners? One prevalent feature of this whole issue is an awful lot of good faith and good levels of support from the British public, NGOs and faith communities wishing to do something, but often finding it quite frustrating that they cannot get as engaged as they wish to be.

You started along the route of community sponsorship as a way of cutting through that, so that people can work around the local authority, or in a different way with the local authority. Can you say something about how that is going? To pull things together, how do you learn, as an organisation, from some of the voluntary sector organisations with a greater track record of dealing with some of these communities than you have?

Mark Sedwill: I will allow Mr Morrison to pick up the specifics, but I think the key word in all of this is partnership. It wouldn't be right to say that the community and NGO element of this is essentially around the side of local authorities; it has to be complementary, because even if they are providing some of the care, those families are still going to impose a burden on local authorities. I would see it very much as complementary to local authorities, providing some additional support along the sides and in some cases being part of the provision of local authority care. It is a mixed picture.

You are right that there is a lot of good will, but it is really important that that good will is translated into effective support for the people we are bringing in. It is quite resource-intensive; it does require a lot of professional support over an extended period. We have to be really sure that not only local authorities, as you were referring to, but the other organisations have the capabilities to do the job effectively, so that they can capitalise on the good will, but also ensure that the good will is deployed effectively in support of the people over the period.

Q57 **John Pugh:** There are some very good voluntary organisations—

Mark Sedwill: Yes, there are, and we are learning from them.

Q58 **John Pugh:** But you don't directly fund them, do you? I think you rely on the local authorities to engage them.

Paul Morrison: That's right. On the Syrian scheme, the model we have adopted—for all the reasons you were describing about ensuring that locally it has got the engagement of the services and the community—goes down the local authority route. At a national level, I should say that I

co-chair a stakeholder engagement group with Maurice Wren from the Refugee Council. On that group, all the NGOs that you, Dr Pugh, would hope we were engaging and consulting with are represented. We work very closely with all those people, who obviously have enormous experience over many years of resettling and integrating refugees.

Q59 **Chair:** How do you identify the groups doing community support? Are there particular groups or communities that do this? Are they well-meaning individuals? Who are the community supporters?

Paul Morrison: The way that we have approached community sponsorship—we are deliberately starting relatively small scale, because this is a new and novel approach in this country—is to construct a policy framework that describes the requirements that we as the Government would place on people before we would be confident about progressing a community sponsorship—

Q60 **Chair:** So you do some quality checks?

Paul Morrison: Yes, we do. One of those quality checks is whether or not you have your local authority's agreement to bring in refugees to your area. Others are such things as whether you have got the financial wherewithal or the professional capabilities to provide the services that we think are necessary.

Q61 **John Pugh:** Mr Kwarteng made a point about language skills. Some of these organisations can do a really good job and have good practice, but it is localised in one place. We do not want every individual local authority to rediscover the wheel and find out that this is a really good resource. I am just saying that you have a role to play here.

Paul Morrison: There are two ways in which we are trying to capture that, Dr Pugh. One is that we work very closely with the local government associations around the United Kingdom to use the knowledge hubs they have created to allow local authorities to work together and have peer support from those who are more experienced.

The other thing is, as the Permanent Secretary mentioned, the extra investment we are putting into English language training, for example. Part of that commitment is to provide regional co-ordinators who are able to do precisely that and bring together best practice and start some innovative approaches, alongside the additional investment in the English language training itself. That is entirely, Dr Pugh, an aspiration we have for the programme.

Q62 **Chris Evans:** Just a quick question. In terms of the Syrian refugees' experiences, are you ensuring, when placing them with local authorities through the community sponsorship scheme, that they have access to a community of interest, such as fellow Syrian refugees, or to things as basic as a mosque?

Paul Morrison: This goes not just for the community sponsorship scheme, but for the wider scheme as a whole. When we have discussions with local authorities prior to arrival, one thing we ensure is that, for

example, there is access to places of worship, if that is important for the refugees. Even some of the more remote locations have been taking steps to ensure that those issues are addressed.

You are right to highlight the question of where we locate people in terms of whether there are people from similar backgrounds there. We work very closely with local authorities around those kind of issues. Some of the things that local authorities have been considering is taking sufficient numbers of families so that even where there might not be an existing Syrian diaspora community, there is a community and a network that builds up within the resettled families in that location.

Q63 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** I understand that £10 million is allocated to language tuition by September.

Mark Sedwill: It is additional.

Q64 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** Additional. Where is that money going to come from?

Mark Sedwill: So, £5 million is from within the programme—the overall £460 million—and £5 million is additional funding from the Department for Education.

Q65 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** What do you think the extra £10 million will achieve? What things do you want it to achieve?

Paul Morrison: This is a really good example of what we were talking about before—that question you asked about the investment in people early on in order to have a longer-term benefit. This is basically providing more than double the English language provision for people in the first three to six months of their time in the United Kingdom. Our view, as we have run it for the year, is that getting their English up to speed unlocks so many other things. We have made a balance of investment judgment. Investing additional money up front in that way will benefit the people we are bringing in by getting them economically active and ensuring that they can engage and integrate.

Q66 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** Forgive me, but is the nature of the investment in more teachers, more hours in class, more visual aids—what kind of thing is it?

Paul Morrison: It is a combination. In part, it just pays for more hours in class, but we recognise that because we are bringing people into a range of areas where some people will not be familiar with welcoming new people into their communities who don't speak English, we must think innovatively about how to support English language training with a community base, buddying and a whole range of things. It is intended to do both of those things.

Q67 **Chair:** Can I pin you down, Mr Sedwill? You said it was additional, so there is an additional £5 million from the Department for Education and £5 million from the programme. So it is not quite additional.

Mark Sedwill: It is, because the £460 million was just a cap on the programme announced by the Treasury. It wasn't the budget or what we

wished to spend—it was the upper cap of what we were expected spend on the programme. In fact, because we are running it efficiently, we are programmed to come in underneath that. So we've reallocated within that cap £5 million—it is not zero-sum and wouldn't have gone on something else—and added the additional £5 million from the DFE.

Q68 **Chair:** So it is not money you have taken out of some other part of the programme that has not been delivered.

Mark Sedwill: No. We are currently expecting to spend about 10% less or something like that.

Paul Morrison: About £420 million.

Mark Sedwill: About £420 million of the £460 million on the current programme.

Q69 **Chair:** Are there any other areas where you have seen a benefit from putting money in up front, or where you have changed the way you allocate the budget as a result of the first year of the operation?

Paul Morrison: One of the things we are looking to do is to focus on how we help people into the labour market. One reason why we have to find additional approaches is that the work to get people economically active is not covered by the overseas development aid budget, because economic integration is not covered by the OECD. We are looking to find ways of making sure we do get that investment. There is a small amount within the programme which is non-ODA money and that is an example of where we just want to get it invested as early as possible, because that will bring the longer-term benefit.

Chair: That makes a lot of common sense. I suppose we then go back to Mr Kwarteng's questions about how you will make sure you see the outcomes as a result.

Q70 **Mr Bacon:** I used to work as an English language teacher overseas and here in different areas—for people who didn't have the language at all and for English adult illiteracy. I am curious about how the money is being spent—*[Interruption.]* Can I just finish my question? Given the choice between spending money on teaching for one hour a week for 50 weeks or five hours a day for two weeks, would you tend towards the latter?

Paul Morrison: Yes. The additional money is predicated on exactly that point, Mr Bacon. We want investment in the early period—the first period they are here—not drawn out for a longer period.

Q71 **Mr Bacon:** But how many hours' exposure do they get with the extra investment per day?

Paul Morrison: An additional six hours a week.

Mr Bacon: So it is only one hour a day.

Paul Morrison: Yes, within the first three to six months.

Mr Bacon: But it is every day.

Paul Morrison: Yes.

Q72 **Kevin Foster:** There has been a lot of talk about engagement with communities and council communications. I am conscious that for me recently in Devon it was about Calais migrants, rather than Syrian ones. What sort of engagement is there around temporary facilities as well as the more permanent resettlement programmes?

Mark Sedwill: For Calais migrants or Syrian ones?

Kevin Foster: For both. I spoke specifically of Calais migrants as an example in Torrington, but I meant more generally.

Mark Sedwill: The Calais migrants are, of course, all minors. That is an operation rather than a programme, if I can make that distinction, so inevitably we are putting some of those children into temporary facilities while we triage them and bring them into the UK. We are using several around the country, but none in Kent because Kent, for obvious reasons, has already borne quite a brunt from that programme. In terms of the Syrian programme, the objective is to move them straight through. Mr Morrison may want to add something.

Paul Morrison: Thank you, Mark. We took an early view that we would not move people into temporary accommodation as a matter of course within the Syrian resettlement programme. Some areas have decided that they want to give people a reception centre where they can recover from their travel, but by no means everywhere. By and large, we try to get people into permanent accommodation to give them some stability.

As the Permanent Secretary said, it is a bit different with minors when there is the ongoing requirement, particularly for local authorities—

Q73 **Kevin Foster:** Presumably unaccompanied minors.

Paul Morrison: Yes, exactly—unaccompanied minors specifically. By and large, in fact entirely within the programme that I am responsible for, everyone arrives within a family unit so unaccompanied minors do not arrive through the Syrian resettlement programme.

Mark Sedwill: I will write to correct this if I have it wrong because I am quoting from memory, but I think that under seven days is the normal period that we would have unaccompanied children in those temporary facilities before they would be placed out into a more settled setting.

Q74 **Chair:** While we are on this subject, I will just ask this. Obviously, these are the individual children who would need to be in foster care. I know this is not directly to do with the Syrian programme, but the point has been raised: have we enough foster carers in this country to take people on, particularly with the challenges that many of them will have come through?

Mark Sedwill: I think country-wide, yes, but I was in Kent in the summer of 2015, when of course they had Operation Stack but they also were facing very severe pressures on children's services. Some of that was actually partly because they have a spill-over of children's services from London boroughs into Kent, and we made changes in the legislation precisely to deal with this.

There is a national transfer scheme, so children can be transferred from the initial local authority. Under the old mechanism, if a child had arrived in Kent, came under Kent's duty of care and was housed in Oxfordshire, for example, the duty of care stayed with Kent, so that was obviously a huge burden on Kent. Under the new scheme, the child and the duty of care transfer together, so it is easier for other authorities—other children's services—to manage them properly. That is still voluntary. We do have, within the Act, the ability to mandate, but of course we would much rather do it on a voluntary basis, because that works more effectively with local authorities.

So country-wide, yes, but that is why we have had to create these new mechanisms to distribute children and distribute the burden more effectively—because it was a huge burden, in particular on Kent in the summer of 2015, when we had all the pressure on the border.

Q75 **Chair:** I want to go back to the issue of humanitarian protection, which we touched on earlier. Clearly, a decision was made to provide humanitarian protection instead of refugee status. That has, as I said, highlighted university issues and issues around access to certain benefits, because of the resident's rights that you would need to access those. So why, Mr Sedwill, was it humanitarian protection, and is it under active consideration at the Home Office to actually grant refugee status from day one, which would get round all the workarounds?

Mark Sedwill: Let me answer the question in reverse. The answer is yes, it is under active consideration; we keep it under review. There are pros and cons to both. Part of the reason for going for humanitarian protection at first was that of course the Government's overall strategy is to bring an end to the Syrian civil war and enable refugees, whether they are here or in the neighbouring countries, which is where most of them are, with a lot of support from this country, to go home, rebuild their lives and rebuild their country. In those circumstances, humanitarian protection is the natural grant of status, because it enables people to return to their country, where—

Q76 **Chair:** But the problem is, as we are seeing, it is not giving people access to certain services.

Mark Sedwill: Exactly, but there are still pros and cons to that. Humanitarian protection makes it easier to go back to your country of origin, but it is less easy to travel elsewhere. Refugee status makes it easier to travel elsewhere, but harder to go back to the country of origin. Our benefits system provides—I'll get this the wrong way round, but Mr Morrison will correct me. Under one, you can get income support; under

the other, you get jobseeker's allowance, and although the financial package is essentially the same, the requirements—for example, relating to the time you can spend learning English before you are seeking employment—are different. So there are some pros and cons to these. That is why I said I would answer in reverse: we are keeping it under active review to see what the right package is in the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Q77 **Chair:** In the meantime, the workarounds are there so that you allow, for instance, access to disability living allowance, which for a lot of these people will be essential from day one. There are workarounds, but are they permanent workarounds for everybody on humanitarian protection, or is it just for this group?

Paul Morrison: The DWP has changed the position on the disability allowance permanently. Some of the other issues that have been raised we are going to have to look at and consider, in the same way as the DWP issues were approached.

Q78 **Chair:** Okay, so things like university costs and all those things.

Paul Morrison: The one thing I should add, though, is that the fundamental impact of the status that they receive is the same, regardless of whichever it is. They have full access to the labour market. Both, after five years, will go through a process that entitles them to settle permanently in the United Kingdom. So those elements of it are the same.

Q79 **Chair:** That brings me on to my other point about what happens when humanitarian protection comes to an end after five years. They have the right to settle, but they would have to pay for it at that point, or would there be some special mechanism?

Paul Morrison: Again, I will write if I get this wrong. My understanding is that with both of those—refugee status and then the application for settlement after humanitarian protection—you have the right to apply for ILR, and I don't think it is charged for, but I will check to make sure.

Q80 **Chair:** Because it is a big cost. You might then be on your feet, but in a low-paid job. As many of my constituents going through the main system know, that is sometimes a barrier to applying for settlement or citizenship.

Paul Morrison: My recollection is that where it is a humanitarian reason and someone is then applying for settlement, after about five years—

Q81 **Chair:** Could you clarify that, because I am rusty on it?

Paul Morrison: I will make sure we get that correct.

Q82 **Chair:** Mr Sedwill, you touched on travel. If you have humanitarian protection, you can apply for a travel document to travel. Do people understand when they arrive that they have the right to do that and how they go about it? I appreciate what you say about it probably not being good to bombard people when they first arrive with how they get away from the country straight away, but a lot of people may have relatives or

contacts settled in other parts of the EU.

Mark Sedwill: This is something we are working on actively. As I said, if you have humanitarian protection, it is easier to travel back to the country of origin but harder to travel elsewhere. With refugee status, it is the other way round. That is one of the issues we are working on actively with people to try and ensure that we can provide them with the facilities they need. It goes to the question of keeping the whole package under active review. The difference between the two is essentially at the margin, but some of those differences are significant, for reasons you have just pointed at.

Q83 **Chair:** Are you talking to some people who have come through the first year of the programme?

Mark Sedwill: Yes, absolutely.

Paul Morrison: One of the characteristics we have adopted in the programme is to be truly iterative in understanding the experience of the people and then thinking about what we can do to address it. For example, on the points about status and travel documents, we now have a factsheet that people receive in both Arabic and English before they arrive, and we make sure that the local authorities who are looking after the refugees understand all those issues and have absolute crystal clarity from the Government about what the guidance is on those points.

Q84 **Chair:** We talked about the community sponsorship work. Are you borrowing from the Canadian model that was in place for their gateway programme?

Paul Morrison: The Canadians were certainly the first to adopt it. The approach we are taking is not precisely that of the Canadian model, which is based in part on private sponsorship, so members of the public can band together and self-identify people that they want to bring from the region. Our approach to community sponsorship is still based on the principle of targeting it at the most vulnerable, so it will still be people brought in via the UN, and we are working with faith groups largely, but not entirely—groups that can come together and provide evidence of the wherewithal to look after the people they are going to bring into the UK.

Q85 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** I have just two simple questions. Do we know roughly how many Syrians, or people from Syria, are living in Britain at the moment?

Paul Morrison: I don't have the exact number. Prior to the arrival here, in my recollection it was certainly in the tens of thousands. The figure I have in my mind is 70,000. I am not sure to what extent that is robust and official census data. My recollection is that it is of that order of magnitude.

Q86 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** The second question is, where do they live? Where would they be concentrated?

Paul Morrison: My understanding is that the majority would be in the larger urban areas around the United Kingdom—in London, Manchester and Glasgow. There will be people who have come through the mainstream asylum system and will therefore be in the traditional dispersal areas.

Chair: Louise Bladen from the NAO can shed some light on this.

Louise Bladen: I was just going to point out that figure 1 shows countries in the region, but also in Europe and the EU, so the UK is in there. It says there are 9,810 refugees already in the UK, about two-thirds of the way down figure 1 on page 12.

Mark Sedwill: That is refugees, not all Syrians.

Q87 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** The nature of British society is that we have huge diaspora communities and there are bound to be Syrians already living here who have lived here for a very long time in many cases. If there are clusters of people from that country, immigrants would naturally perhaps gravitate to those clusters. Sometimes these things are quite unusual—sorry to make a statement, but it is very important. For example, there are Somalis in Cardiff, but it is not immediately obvious that there would be a large Somali community in Cardiff. As I understand it, there is also a big Sudanese community in Brighton, and that is not immediately obvious either, so this sort of thing needs to be looked at perhaps more closely.

Mark Sedwill: It is a very good point, Mr Kwarteng, and I agree with you entirely. Of course, the people who will know that best will be the local authorities, which will know whether those communities operate as a community or as a series of individuals integrated in a different way, and whether that community can provide support. That is one of those vectors that the local authority—

Q88 **Kwasi Kwarteng:** But don't you think your Department, looking after this programme, should have some degree of engagement with that?

Paul Morrison: One of the things we did early on was to engage with a range of representative groups among the Syrian diaspora communities. We encouraged them to come together and collaborate, which they did—they chose to do so under an umbrella organisation called SCAN.

Q89 **Chair:** What does SCAN stand for?

Paul Morrison: The Syrian community—something—network.

Chair: We will find out. That wasn't meant to catch you out.

Paul Morrison: They sit on the stakeholder engagement group that I was talking about. There are a number of projects on which we work collaboratively with them. The other thing we are doing is that local authorities need to have translators who can help the new arrivals, and they are employing people from the Syrian diaspora. So both at a representative level and within the programme, we are engaging with

large numbers of Syrians and other Arabic speakers from the Middle East region as part of the programme.

Q90 **Chair:** Going back to the issue of community sponsorship, do you know how many people have been supported through community sponsorship since July 2016?

Paul Morrison: The number is very small at this stage.

Q91 **Chair:** What is your projection for 2020? Is it going to be a major part of the programme?

Paul Morrison: We do not set a target and a quota on community sponsorship because, as the Permanent Secretary said, it is something that we do alongside the main scheme. The people coming in are part of the 20,000, and we will go at the pace at which community sponsors are able to come forward and have the wherewithal to deliver. The reason we do it is not to generate the numbers; it is both because we believe that community sponsorship will give the people who want to contribute the chance to do so and because the Canadian model has evidence that the outcomes, the integration and the benefits that people get from going through the community sponsorship model are better. That is what we are working towards, rather than a set target that it must be this number by a certain date.

Q92 **Chair:** Do you have any criteria for who gets placed in a community sponsorship-focused settlement, compared with a mainstream local authority?

Paul Morrison: We do. We would not place, for example, someone who has very, very particular exceptional needs for which we feel the state needs to provide considerable support. We also engage with the families at this early stage to explain the community sponsorship and the associated arrangements to them before they arrive. Yes, we do have some quite strict criteria around that.

Q93 **Chair:** I am interested in how you assess it. I know that the UN does a lot of assessment of people's needs in the camps, which is presumably similar to the Gateway programme. Do you have any idea of the background? For example, if someone came here who had been a doctor in Syria, there is obviously a retraining programme that they have to go through. Do you know that in advance? Do you then look at where you place them accordingly?

Paul Morrison: We are trying to increase that capacity. As the Report says, we have been running a pilot involving video interviews in Sheffield. Those people are being interviewed in an attempt to understand that. One of the things that I should be clear about is that the primary thing we want to ensure is that people have available to them the kinds of things that we have been talking about: school places; provision to meet their healthcare needs; and houses that are appropriate for them and their families. We are trying to see if we can add that layer of nuance in how we place people.

Q94 **Chair:** Basic needs first?

Paul Morrison: Basic needs first, and then if we can, we absolutely will.

Q95 **Chair:** We have also had some good evidence from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture containing questions about how you are identifying people who have been victims of torture. They have a figure that 55% of people have either been a victim of torture or have witnessed violence—those figures are quite low for witnessing violence, given where these people have come from. I think the point is that clearly a lot of people have been through a lot of trauma. Are you identifying that, and are you working with that group? The group have a very strong reputation: in fact, I don't think anyone else equals their support for victims of torture. Clearly they have a limited resource. Do you look at that need and try to match it to where those people are, or is it something that you have not quite got right yet?

Paul Morrison: One of the difficulties in answering that question—this was referenced in the Report—is that people will not always identify those factors in advance of their arriving, whether it is associated with torture or mental health issues, because they will either be concerned about revealing it to a stranger or think that it might affect their ability to resettle. If we do have that information, we absolutely want to make sure that it is shared with the local authority in an appropriately confidential way so that they can think about whether they are able to provide the services that are required. Equally, it is as important that we work with local authorities on dealing with the consequences when those factors become apparent after arrival. I think both those aspects are important.

Q96 **Philip Boswell:** Following on from my colleagues, Dr Pugh and Mr Evans, Home Office stats to 13 June 2016 show that Scotland has welcomed approximately a third of the refugees arriving in the UK under the expanded Syrian vulnerable persons resettlement programme. We can see that illustrated in figure 7 on page 28 of the NAO Report. Of those 2,682 souls, around half were under 18 and half were female. My home local authority, North Lanarkshire, has to date welcomed 79 refugees, and are to be commended for their achievements. Given the fact that pledges of refugee uptake need to turn into action in order for any targets to be met, when will the rest of the UK catch up with Scotland? What are you doing to ensure that the pledges made to date are actioned?

Mark Sedwill: Of course, pledges are done very much at a local authority level. I echo your compliments, Mr Boswell, to the active approach taken by most Scottish local authorities—the map of course sets that out. I wouldn't want to describe it as a UK issue, or a Scotland, England and Wales issue; it is very much one that we deal with at local authority level, where we are trying to settle people in appropriate areas. It goes back to the earlier questions about ensuring that we are engaging the widest possible range of local authorities and that they have the capabilities to support the Syrian refugees as they come in. We have pledges to cover

the 20,000, so we can be confident that we will achieve the overall target, and we are seeing it through.

Q97 **Philip Boswell:** Talk is talk and action is action. Have you ensured time limits or targets for sector pledges? What enforcement, if any, can you implement for a voluntary process? Are there indications of any local authorities reneging on pledges, or do you anticipate specific pledges that will go unfulfilled?

Mark Sedwill: I think the local authorities who are pledging are actually walking the walk as well as talking the talk, Mr Boswell, right the way around the country. It is voluntary, and it is best that it is voluntary, because if we really want local authorities to lean into this and to really care for people as individual family groups, some kind of enforcement mechanism is not going to create the right dynamic. It is done very much on a voluntary basis, with local authorities operating at the pace at which they believe they can find school places and provide healthcare and deal with the trauma that people have been through. That has to be the right approach.

We have not had to contemplate a mandatory approach because we have had that voluntary mechanism, but, of course, we follow up with them, and we do that through dialogues. Mr Morrison can set out more of the detail, but we do that through dialogue and we identify with them how quickly they can achieve the pledges and how they are going to ensure that they meet the required standards. This has to be something that we do in an entirely co-operative and collaborative way, not with central and local government in some kind of juxtaposition.

Paul Morrison: I would add that yes, all the pledges are connected to a timeframe, so the 20,000 is programmed over the duration of the commitment, in order to deliver it. I have seen no evidence at all that the pledges that have come forward are being reneged on. The only issues that cause delay are practical ones relating to whether families are ready to come and whether the accommodation is available, but by and large they have been resolved completely in accordance with the plans we have delivered in partnership and collaboration with local government, the devolved Administrations and partners right across the United Kingdom.

Q98 **Philip Boswell:** If pledges are withdrawn or reneged upon, is there a contingency? Do you have additional authorities or capacity lined up anywhere?

Mark Sedwill: As I said earlier, the short answer is yes. We have around 20,000 pledges already, and we are only a year in. That is partly because of the point I addressed earlier, although I forget which of your colleagues raised it—I think it was Dr Pugh. Should the policy shift, we would have the capacity to go further or faster and, in a sense more importantly, we have even more confidence that we can hit the 20,000 target that was set. We will continue to try to build latent capacity in the system, because if we look ahead at world events, there will be occasions when the Government want to bring vulnerable people to the UK and care

for them. We have already seen the increase from 20,000 to 23,000 with the vulnerable children's scheme, and we have the Dublin and Dubs children coming in from Calais. We need to have resilience in our system, and we will make sure we do.

Q99 **Chair:** That is interesting, because the map shows quite a pattern. Scottish authorities were always particularly good at taking people from the Gateway programme. Have you seen a distinct pattern in Gateway receiving authorities and authorities that have signed up to the Syrian resettlement programme?

Paul Morrison: I would say significantly more. More than 100 local authorities have already received refugees, and the pledges that the Permanent Secretary referred to are for almost double that. A huge range of local authorities are engaging on this. Yes, the existing resettlement authorities have engaged, and they have been really helpful in helping others who are less familiar with it, but the range is actually much wider than that.

Q100 **Chair:** You are looking at good practice sharing, and I know the LGA is supporting that. Will you be assessing, in the evaluation that we look forward to seeing, the success of different authorities? Will you be quite hard-nosed? It is about not being nice to local authorities, but ensuring that people are being resettled. It would be good to see whether there is a marked difference between those who have experience through something like Gateway and those who have done it for the first time.

Paul Morrison: Those will be the kinds of trends to which the Permanent Secretary referred and which we exactly want to see, as we did the evaluation.

Q101 **Chair:** One of the things we have picked up on is that you write to local authorities confirming the level of funding, but not quite what it covers. We have had examples of a washing machine being provided to some, but not to others. If I arrived from Syria with my children, that may not seem like an essential thing because I would be glad that I was here, safe and alive, but a washing machine would be pretty handy. Do you have any plans to make it clearer so that local authorities are not unnecessarily restricting what they are offering?

Paul Morrison: As I said before, a general theme of this programme is that we want to improve it as we go along. The statement of requirement that goes to local authorities will be familiar to those who are familiar with Gateway and the existing Syrian programme. But as we have been engaging with different local authorities, there are things that we may want to look at amending and improving. The key next phase of that will be at the beginning of the next financial year, which is when we have to get the next funding notice and the next statement of requirements out, so we will definitely want to look at and think about that.

Q102 **Chair:** In the meantime, is there a sort of hotline or someone they can ring? If you are a local authority caseworker trying to settle the first family who arrive, but something does not seem quite right, can you

check? Is that easy and quick to do?

Paul Morrison: We have put in place a network in the strategic migration partnerships, which exist right across the United Kingdom, and within the programme team. I have 10 contact officers who are there to engage with local authorities to be precisely that point of contact. The answer to your question is yes.

Q103 **Chair:** And they are clear about what can be offered. If someone rang up and said, "Can I provide a washing machine?", you could say, "Yes"—simple, quick and easy.

Paul Morrison: Yes.

Chair: Okay.

Mark Sedwill: Often—

Q104 **Chair:** Mr Sedwill can never resist getting the last word, even on washing machines. I will let you, Mr Sedwill.

Mark Sedwill: You have trumped me. I will stop.

Chair: When we were discussing this in advance—without letting the secrets of our private meetings out of the bag—we were impressed that so much had been done in such a short time. The pause is not necessarily a bad thing, if you are learning from it. We have heard about some good learning, but we are quite pleased, Mr Morrison, that you do not pretend that you have it all right. There is definitely room for improvement.

Mr Kwarteng set you some stiff targets and we are looking forward to seeing the evaluation. We will keep a close eye on this, and we may call you back, or not, depending on how it goes. I am sure that the NAO will be watching as it progresses. It is important that the programme goes well because, like everything we deal with, ultimately it is about people's lives, and some of these people have been through some extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Thank you for what you have done but do not relax because we have given you a bit of a compliment. We are watching closely because there are still quite a lot of things that are not going as well as they could. Congratulations on what you have achieved so far.