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Lord Hylton
House of Lords
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May 2019

Dear Lord Hylton,

Thank you for your question at the Oral Parliamentary Questions session on Tuesday 30th April, regarding the ability of this country to take in the number of asylum-seeking children provided for through section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016, commonly known as “the Dubs amendment”.

The UK has contributed significantly to hosting, supporting and protecting the most vulnerable children affected by the migration crisis. This country provided protection to over 6,600 children in 2018 and over 34,600 since the start of 2010 through a number of different routes. Since 2010, the UK has received over 18,000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), who have been cared for by local authorities.

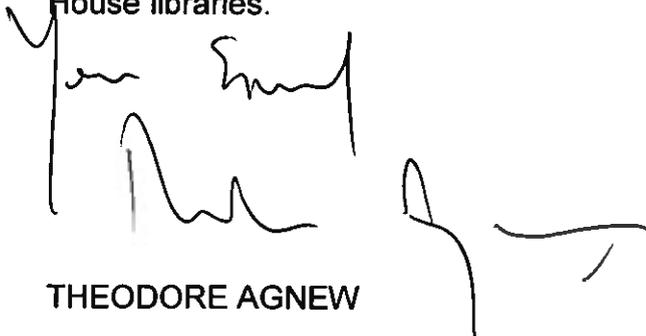
We remain absolutely committed to relocating the remaining children up to the specified number of 480 under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the Dubs Amendment). We are working closely with participating States – France, Greece and Italy – and with delivery partners including the UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency), the International Organization for Migration and non-governmental organisations to ensure the safe transfer of children referred by each participating state to the UK. Over 220 children are already in the UK and transfers are ongoing continuously.

The Government also recently acted to remove the date criterion so that participating States can now refer the most vulnerable children regardless of when they arrived in Europe. We hope that removing the date criterion will speed up transfers and enable participating States to more easily identify children for transfer as soon as possible.

However, relocation of eligible children to the UK is also dependent on the availability of appropriate local authority care placements. In recent years, the UK has received a significant number of asylum claims from unaccompanied children. Last year alone, the UK received 2,872 UASC, which represents 20% of all UASC claims lodged in EU countries in 2018. This follows previous years which have seen similarly high numbers of unaccompanied children arriving in the UK – 3,253 in 2015, 3,290 in 2016 and 2,399 in 2017. As a result the number of UASC in the UK being 'looked after' by local authorities has significantly increased. In 2013, there were just 1,950 UASC being looked after in English local authorities, representing 3% of all looked after children.

At the end of March 2018 there were 4480, representing 6% of all looked after children. It is also important to note the broader trend of increasing numbers of looked after children in local authority care – 75,420 at the end of March 2018, up 4% on 2017. Despite these increasing pressures, the Government continues to work closely with local authorities and welcomes all offers from local authorities to look after unaccompanied children to fulfil all of our existing commitments.

I hope this answer clarifies the Government's position. I will place a copy in the House libraries.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Theodore Agnew', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

THEODORE AGNEW