



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

Baroness Coussins
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0AA

2 June 2020

Dear Baroness Coussins,

I am writing to update you on how the FCO is supporting the British Council in light of the difficulties the organisation is experiencing due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In your supplementary question to Baroness Northover's Oral Question on the repatriation of British citizens overseas in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on 14th May, you asked how many citizens employed by the British Council had been repatriated. I can confirm that, as of this week, 393 members of staff and dependents have been withdrawn from all overseas locations, and no further withdrawals are currently planned.

The FCO remains committed to the British Council which is why we agreed to provide the Council with additional funding of £26m for the 2019-20 financial year. We also provided half of their 2020-21 Grant-in-Aid funding upfront in April – the total for the financial year stands at £174m - to further alleviate pressures. In addition to further funding, the FCO are working with HM Treasury to see what further support can be provided.

The FCO have also supported the British Council in accessing wider government relief available through the Covid-19 Job Retention Scheme and similar schemes in other countries. This will help them support many of its workforce, and those employed through its partners, funded through the commercial side of the business.

FCO officials will continue to work closely with the British Council in the coming days and weeks to address the impact of Covid-19 on its operations, and ensure that the organisation is well placed to continue to deliver its crucial work in a changing world.

A copy of this letter will be placed in the libraries of both Houses.

Yours sincerely,

LORD (TARIQ) AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON
Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth
Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict