

1<sup>st</sup> November 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the relocation of unaccompanied children from Europe.

As you will be aware the French Government has committed to dismantling the migrant camp in Calais. While this decision and the timing of the operation is a matter for the French, I am clear that we must do all we can to safeguard the welfare of unaccompanied refugee children living in the camp.

I know that this Government takes its humanitarian responsibilities extremely seriously and work is continuing on both sides of the Channel to ensure that a safe, lawful and efficient process is in place to transfer eligible unaccompanied children to the UK as a matter of urgency, and to ensure that they are kept safe during the clearance process.

Children arriving in the UK from Calais will either be reunited with family members or will be appropriately looked after by established care providers. We must act in the best interests of children and where it is determined that they should come to the UK, the Government will act quickly to place them in the care of their relatives or put in place appropriate care arrangements once safeguarding checks are complete.

Work has already begun ahead of the clearance and children are leaving the Calais camp and are now in the UK. They will later be reunited with UK family members, subject to safeguarding checks.

You are right that we must focus on protecting innocent children and that is precisely what the Government's refugee policy is doing. For example, in the year ending June 2016, 49 per cent of those resettled under the Syrian Vulnerable Person's Resettlement Scheme were under 18 years old.

It is crucial that we take the most vulnerable refugees from the regions they are in so as not to encourage people to make dangerous journeys. In line with this, the Home Office has also announced a new scheme to resettle vulnerable children from the Middle East and North Africa region, working closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in designing this scheme.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**