



Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration Report: *An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme*

Summary

On 7 June 2018, the House of Lords is scheduled to debate a motion moved by Lord Scriven (Liberal Democrat) on the “report of the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, *An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme*”.

On 8 May 2018, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) published a report entitled [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#). In it, David Bolt, the Chief Inspector, broadly praised the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) as “essentially effective”. However, Mr Bolt caveated his praise for the scheme by cautioning that the Home Office, which acts as a cross-government lead for the VPRS, “could do more to analyse and evaluate the various stages of the resettlement process, with a view to sharing ‘best practice’ and achieving greater consistency of treatment and outcomes”. In addition, Mr Bolt argued that there could be lessons to learn from an assessment of whether resettled refugees had successfully integrated, with any lessons potentially benefitting those still in the early stages of the resettlement process. Finally, Mr Bolt urged the Home Office to be aware of how its processes affected others, including partner bodies of the scheme.

The ICIBI report made seven recommendations in respect of the VPRS. Two of these, regarding use of refugees’ pre-departure time and mechanisms to remove policy misalignments across government, were accepted in full by the Government. The remaining five were partially accepted. These concerned staffing, data, ‘best practice’ and guidance, closer contact with local authorities, and communications. Mr Bolt has described the [Government’s response](#) as “disappointing”, arguing that it committed the Government to few, if any, actions, and disputed or rejected several of the report’s findings. As a result, Mr Bolt alleged that the Government appeared “closed to the idea that there is any room for improvement” in how the scheme was managed and operated.

This House of Lords Library Briefing provides background information on the VPRS. It then considers commentary on the report, before summarising the report’s seven recommendations and accompanying government responses. The Briefing concludes with some recommended further reading.

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I. Introduction

Under the UK Borders Act 2007 (as amended), the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) is charged with monitoring and reporting on the efficiency and effectiveness of the immigration, asylum, nationality and customs functions carried out by the Home Secretary and by officials and others on their behalf.¹ The current Independent Chief Inspector, David Bolt, is a national security and intelligence specialist who previously held posts in the Security Service.²

Between August 2017 and January 2018, the ICIBI conducted an inspection of the Government's Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), the policy vehicle used to deliver on the Government's undertaking to resettle 20,000 refugees by 2020.³ This scheme is led by the Home Office, but is operated jointly with the Department for International Development and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.⁴ Following this inspection, the Independent Chief Inspector submitted a report to the Government in which he praised all those involved in the "major and rapid upscaling of effort" that had taken place following the setting of the Government's resettlement target, predicting that, as a result, there was "every reason to believe" the target would be met by the deadline.⁵ In addition, Mr Bolt concluded that the "processes on which the scheme relied were essentially effective" and that the scheme as a whole was "delivering what it set out to achieve".⁶

However, despite this endorsement, Mr Bolt argued that the Home Office could make improvements to the VPRS, including by doing more to "analyse and evaluate the various stages of the resettlement process, with a view to sharing 'best practice' and achieving greater consistency of treatment and outcomes". In addition, Mr Bolt argued that there may be lessons to learn from ongoing assessments of whether resettled refugees have successfully integrated that could help those still in the early stages of the resettlement process. Furthermore, Mr Bolt urged the Home Office to be aware of the effects on others (particularly those refugees told they had been selected for

¹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, '[Homepage](#)', accessed 31 May 2018; and Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, '[An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#)', 8 May 2018, p 64.

² Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, '[Mr David Bolt](#)', accessed 31 May 2018; and Alan Travis, '[Ex-MI5 Officer Appointed as Immigration Watchdog](#)', *Guardian*, 10 February 2015.

³ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, '[An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#)', 8 May 2018.

⁴ House of Commons, '[Written Statement: Immigration](#)', 27 February 2018, HCWS493.

⁵ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, '[An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#)', 8 May 2018, p 2.

⁶ *ibid.*

resettlement via the VPRS but who “have to wait months for further news”) of setting its processes to facilitate the 20,000 target to be met.⁷

The full inspection report, together with the Government’s formal response, was published on 8 May 2018.⁸ The report included 42 conclusions and made seven recommendations in respect of the VPRS. Two of these recommendations—regarding more effective use of the time between a refugee’s acceptance and their departure for the country of refuge, and regarding mechanisms to remove policy misalignments across government—were accepted by the Government in full. The remaining five recommendations—regarding staffing; data; ‘best practice’ and guidance; closer contact with local authorities; and communications—were only partially accepted.

2. Background

In January 2014, Theresa May, the then Home Secretary, announced details of a new programme to provide emergency sanctuary in the UK for “particularly vulnerable” Syrians displaced by the ongoing conflict in that country.⁹ Mrs May stated that this vulnerable persons relocation scheme, which later became known as the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, would “focus on individual cases where evacuation from the region is the only option”.¹⁰ In particular, the programme would prioritise:

- those who had survived torture and violence;
- women and children at risk; and
- those who required urgent medical attention.¹¹

The scheme was originally only open to Syrian nationals who had left Syria after the start of the civil war in 2011 and who were resident in one of five ‘host countries’, comprising Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt.¹²

The Syrian VPRS was relatively small in scale at first, having resettled 239 refugees by the end of September 2015.¹³ However, that month the then

⁷ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 2.

⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018; and Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018.

⁹ [HC Hansard, 29 January 2014, col 863](#).

¹⁰ *ibid*, cols 863–4.

¹¹ *ibid* and col 867. See also: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 14.

¹² Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 14.

¹³ *ibid*. See also: National Audit Office, [Home Office: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme](#), 13 September 2016, HC 626 of session 2016–17, p 5.

Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced that the scheme would be expanded in order to resettle 20,000 of the “most vulnerable” Syrian refugees in the UK by May 2020.¹⁴ At the same time, the programme’s eligibility criteria were widened to include all refugees recognised as vulnerable by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a key partner of the scheme.¹⁵ The upscaling of the programme meant that an additional 1,085 Syrian refugees had been resettled in the UK via the Syrian VPRS by Christmas 2015.¹⁶

In July 2017, the then Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, announced that the scope of the VPRS would be amended to “enable UNHCR to refer the most vulnerable refugees in the MENA [Middle East and North Africa] region who have fled the Syrian conflict and cannot safely return to their country of origin, whatever their nationality”.¹⁷ To reflect the widening in eligibility, the programme was renamed the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.¹⁸

Between January 2014 and June 2017, refugees resettled in the UK under both the Syrian VPRS and the current VPRS were granted Humanitarian Protection (HP) status for a period of five years. This included leave to remain and permission to work and access public funds.¹⁹ However, in March 2017 the Government announced that refugees accepted via the VPRS would, from 1 July 2017, be granted Refugee Status and five years’ limited leave to remain.²⁰ This would permit access to additional entitlements in excess to those conferred by HP status, including carer’s allowance, access to student finance, and an internationally recognised travel document. Those granted HP status prior to July 2017 have since been allowed to apply to convert their status.²¹

¹⁴ [HC Hansard, 7 September 2015, cols 24–34](#). In October, Mr Cameron stated that it was the Government’s ambition to increase the tempo of resettlements such that the UK would have accepted 1,000 Syrian refugees via the programme by Christmas 2015 ([HC Hansard, 19 October 2015, col 661](#); and BBC News, ‘[UK Aims to Take in 1,000 Syrian Refugees by Christmas, Says PM](#)’, 19 October 2015).

¹⁵ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 14.

¹⁶ [HC Hansard, 16 December 2015, col 1550](#); and Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 6.

¹⁷ House of Commons, ‘[Written Statement: Resettlement](#)’, 3 July 2017, HCWS23.

¹⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 14.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ House of Commons, ‘[Written Statement: Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme—Arrangements](#)’, 22 March 2017, HCWS551.

²¹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 14.

Previous Reviews

The VPRS has, since September 2016, been the subject of a number of reviews, including those conducted by the National Audit Office, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee and UNHCR. The ICIBI report summarised the findings and recommendations of these earlier reports as follows:

- **National Audit Office (NAO), September 2016**

The NAO examined the scheme's processes, progress against targets, and the risks to future delivery and whether these were being addressed. The NAO made six recommendations, focused on ensuring the expectations of local authorities and of resettled refugees were managed and that government departments were alive to the risks to successful delivery and contributed towards mitigating them. In addition, the NAO recommended greater monitoring of the scheme and the development of evaluation measures to ensure the scheme adapted to the needs of the most vulnerable and that success beyond the delivery of 20,000 refugees was defined.
- **House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC), January 2017**

The PAC drew on the NAO findings and took oral evidence from senior civil servants in November 2016. The Committee made eight recommendations, including improved monitoring of local authority pledges of support, clearer plans to evaluate success criteria and reviews of the level of English language provision, and specific help to survivors of torture. The Government agreed to implement all of the PAC's recommendations.
- **UNHCR, November 2017**

Drawing on research carried out between August 2016 and January 2017, the UNHCR report [Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom](#) focused on efforts to integrate refugees in the UK. It examined and made recommendations in relation to accommodation and matching, family reunification, employment, medical health, ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages], pre-departure orientation, and legal status. It identified English language provision, support in finding employment and further assistance with housing, and a national integration strategy, as key areas for improvement.²²

²² Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, pp 19–20.

Regarding the recommendations in the UNHCR report, the Government has since published an Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, which includes proposals relating to the integration support available to refugees.²³ In addition, the Government has since stated that it has allocated £10 million for formal ESOL provision, and “additional funding to provide childcare to facilitate access to classes and to enable better coordination of service provision and sharing of good practice”.²⁴

3. Inspection Report: Overview and Reaction

3.1 Inspection and Findings

The ICIBI inspection, conducted between August 2017 and January 2018, examined the “efficiency and effectiveness” of the VPRS, specifically:

- the progress made towards delivering on the Government’s target of resettling 20,000 refugees in the UK by 2020;
- the process for selecting refugees for resettlement via the scheme; and
- efforts to integrate refugees prior to their departure for the UK and once they had been resettled.²⁵

The inspection did not consider how the VPRS compared with other international refugee resettlement schemes, such as those operated by countries such as Germany or Canada; or other UK government-operated refugee resettlement schemes, such as Mandate, Gateway and the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme (VCRS).²⁶ However, despite these issues being outside the scope of the report, Mr Bolt did note in his foreword that the UK resettlement process was “quick by comparison to other international schemes”, although he did not identify the schemes used in the comparison.²⁷

During the inspection, ICIBI inspectors engaged in a wide range of activity. This included reviewing guidance and other Home Office documentation relating to the scheme; examining case records; visiting Home Office teams and local authorities engaged with the scheme; observing the arrival of refugees at a UK airport; interviewing Home Office staff and refugees who

²³ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: Refugees: Government Assistance](#)’, 24 May 2018, 146096. The consultation is available online and will close on 5 June 2018 (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, ‘[Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper](#)’, 14 March 2018).

²⁴ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: Refugees: Government Assistance](#)’, 24 May 2018, 146096.

²⁵ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 3.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*, p 2.

had been resettled via the scheme; and visiting Jordan, where inspectors observed selection, referral and pre-arrival ‘cultural orientation’ processes conducted by scheme partners such as UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).²⁸

The inspection report included 42 conclusions.²⁹ These focused on the development of the VPRS, including the processes that had developed in support of the programme. For example, inspectors observed that the 20,000 resettlement target was on track to be delivered by May 2020, though resettlement timeframes had lengthened during the period in which the scheme had been in operation and that the scheme was significantly reliant on local authorities for accommodation and support for refugees. Other conclusions related to funding, including underspending; challenges, including sourcing sufficient accommodation; integration matters, such as language tuition and employment; health issues, including the treatment of pregnant women; and monitoring.

Statistics on Resettlements

The ICIBI report noted that, as at the end of 2017, over 10,000 refugees had been resettled via the VPRS.³⁰ The following table details the quarterly totals for persons resettled via the VPRS between the start of the scheme in 2014 and the end of 2017, illustrating the upscaling of the programme over time:

Quarterly Totals of Resettled Persons, 2014–17

By End	Quarterly Total
2014 Q1	13
2014 Q2	37
2014 Q3	40
2014 Q4	53
2015 Q1	44
2015 Q2	29
2015 Q3	36
2015 Q4	1,085
2016 Q1	517
2016 Q2	1,044
2016 Q3	1,516
2016 Q4	1,292

²⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, pp 4–5.

²⁹ *ibid*, pp 6–11.

³⁰ *ibid*, p 21.

By End	Quarterly Total
2017 Q1	1,601
2017 Q2	1,228
2017 Q3	859
2017 Q4	1,144

(Source: Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 21)

The Government has stated that a total of 10,538 vulnerable persons had been resettled under the VPRS by the end of 2017.³¹ It has added that the VPRS is only one of the routes by which the UK resettles refugees. According to the Government, a total of 6,212 people were resettled in the UK in 2017—a 19 percent increase on 2016.³² Of these, 4,832 people were recorded as having passed through the VPRS and 539 people were recorded as having arrived under the separate VCRS.³³

3.2 Reaction

Following the publication of the Government’s response to the ICIBI report, Mr Bolt, the Chief Inspector, expressed disappointment that the document appeared to commit to “few, if any, actions”.³⁴ In addition, he added that the response appeared to dispute or reject several of the report’s findings. Mr Bolt argued that this gave the impression that the Government appeared “closed to the idea that there is any room for improvement”. He added that while, in his view, there was much to be proud of about the VPRS, the Government’s response was disappointing for both the “inspection process and, more importantly, for those relying on the scheme”.³⁵

Both the UK’s international VPRS partner organisations, UNHCR and IOM, have welcomed the scheme, though they do not appear to have commented on the ICIBI report. In February, UNHCR’s UK Representative, Gonzalo Vargas Llosa, provided the following support for the scheme:

The UK has embarked on an impressive upscaling of the VPRS in a short period, setting in place structures to welcome highly vulnerable refugees and allowing them to gradually stand on their own feet again.

³¹ House of Commons, ‘[Written Question: Refugees: Syria](#)’, 3 May 2018, 139385. See also: House of Commons, ‘[Written Statement: Immigration](#)’, 27 February 2018, HCWS493.

³² House of Commons, ‘[Written Statement: Immigration](#)’, 27 February 2018, HCWS493.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, ‘[Inspection Report Published: Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#)’, 8 May 2018.

³⁵ *ibid.*

Collaboration between the central Government, local and devolved authorities and service providers has been commendable. I've been up and down the country meeting refugee families and local communities, and the strong support for this programme and refugee integration generally is something the UK should be proud of.³⁶

At the same time, International Organisation for Migration UK Chief of Mission, Dipti Pardeshi, expressed her support for the scheme:

The generosity and welcome shown by the UK Government and the British people to those resettled is commendable.

Today, less than one per cent of refugees worldwide have been resettled and the need continues to be dire. Resettlement cannot be viewed as a one-off effort. Countries must step up to resettle more refugees and to view this as part of a holistic process to help vulnerable refugees rebuild their lives.³⁷

There does not appear to have been much external reaction to the ICIBI report, but what reaction has been produced has echoed this earlier call for more to be done. For example, Anna Musgrave, Head of Advocacy at the Refugee Council, stated that the ICIBI report confirmed that the Home Office could be “rightly proud of all it has achieved to date in resettling people fleeing the Syrian conflict to the UK”.³⁸ However, she added that, while there was much to commend, there was “still clearly room for improvement”. Ms Musgrave concluded by warning against complacency, and by urging the Home Office to “build on the successes of the VPRS, and to grasp any opportunity for learning and improvement with both hands, ensuring the UK remains a global leader on resettlement of refugees”.³⁹

In addition, press coverage of the report has focused on aspects of the scheme highlighted by the report's conclusions. For example, a *Guardian* article published earlier this month noted the inspectors' observation that refugees arriving via the scheme had encountered “substantial barriers when it came to finding employment”, and that “some refugees dependent on working age benefits had been subjected to ‘sanctions’ as a result of attending English-language tuition rather than seeking work”.⁴⁰

³⁶ UNHCR, IOM and Home Office, [Press Release: Over 10,000 Refugees Resettled in the UK Under Flagship Scheme](#), 22 February 2017.

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Refugee Council, [‘Independent Chief Inspector Publishes Report on the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme’](#), accessed 30 May 2018.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 9; and Josh Halliday, [‘Jobcentres Sanctioning Refugees for Learning English, Watchdog Finds’](#), *Guardian*, 9 May 2018.

4. Recommendations and Government Response

The ICIBI report made seven recommendations in respect of the VPRS. The Government accepted two of these in full and partially accepted the remaining five. The seven recommendations, and the accompanying Government response to each, are summarised below.

Recommendation 1: Staffing

The report's first recommendation stated that the Home Office should:

Review the scheme's staffing, ensuring that roles are clearly defined (to avoid duplicated and/or misdirected effort) and set at the correct grade, and ensuring staff receive training that enables at least some of them to be deployed flexibly, as required.⁴¹

In its response, the Government partially accepted this recommendation, arguing that it believed the relevant Home Office roles were set at the correct grade and that it already deployed relevant staff flexibly.⁴² The Government added that the Home Office would review caseworker and senior caseworker activities "in terms of case sign off and categorisation when staffing levels allow". However, it caveated this by contending that any changes to processes would be "reliant on securing the necessary changes to [Home Office] IT systems".⁴³

Recommendation 2: Data

The report's second recommendation stated that the Home Office should:

Ensure that the data required to support the efficient and effective management of each stage of the resettlement process, including the identification and referral of the 'most vulnerable' and the evaluation of integration efforts and outcomes, is defined, captured, shared and processed/analysed, and the results shared with all relevant parties.⁴⁴

The Government partially accepted this recommendation. It argued that the Home Office's monitoring framework contained "seven high-level integration outcome areas, with a detailed set of indicators beneath each area", and that "detailed analysis" had already been undertaken using data

⁴¹ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 12.

⁴² Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 2.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 12.

gathered as part of this process.⁴⁵ It also indicated that qualitative evaluation work was being conducted by Ipsos MORI, and that this would be shared with partners such as local authorities at a later stage.

In addition, the Government stated that new digital tools were being developed within the Home Office to “enhance automation and increase efficiency of casework, allocations and arrivals processes”.⁴⁶ It argued that management information was already “appropriately and securely shared with relevant bodies involved in the resettlement of vulnerable individuals” and was used by Home Office analysts to monitor and publicly report on the operation of the VPRS. However, it added that the Home Office relied on UNHCR to identify and refer the most vulnerable resettlement cases and that it did not wish to change this approach. Furthermore, the Government argued that the Home Office did not believe that a “more granular approach” to the recording of such data would “make any material difference to the cases that are referred or accepted for resettlement”.⁴⁷

Recommendation 3: ‘Best Practice’ and Guidance

The report’s third recommendation stated that the Home Office should:

Through monitoring, analysis and evaluation, and calling on the expertise of others as appropriate, determine what constitutes ‘best practice’ at each stage of the resettlement process, and produce (and update as necessary) the scheme’s guidance documents, ensuring they are comprehensive, coherent and drive towards consistent ‘best practice’. These should cover, as a minimum:

- a. Documentation accepted by the Home Office as proof of identity and nationality, and how to treat forged or fraudulent documents.
- b. Credibility questioning (including use of DNA testing).
- c. Treatment of ‘exceptional’ cases, for example families of more than six, and cases deemed “too complex to be considered on paper”.
- d. Treatment of pregnant women, including how their resettlement may be expedited to avoid ‘fit to fly’ concerns.
- e. Migration Health Assessments (MHA), particularly how these can better inform accommodation and support requirements.
- f. Financial Instructions for local authorities and the NHS, including use of tariff payments to ‘top up’ rents, claims for primary and secondary health care, and use of the ‘exceptional costs’ budget.

⁴⁵ Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 3.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

- g. The benefits and risks of different integration delivery models, including an assessment of the Northern Ireland ‘Welcome Centre’ reception model.⁴⁸

The Government partially accepted this recommendation. In terms of documentation, it argued that the Home Office relied on UNHCR to conduct identity and nationality checks when registering refugees and that it saw “no reason to change this approach”.⁴⁹ It added that the Home Office monitored UNHCR processes as part of its assurance work and would take into account the costs and benefits of any changes in how the scheme was operated as part of post-2020 resettlement planning. However, the Home Office would also “review internal processes in terms of the documentation required to facilitate the issuing of UK visas in resettlement cases”.⁵⁰

Regarding the other areas covered by this recommendation, the Government argued that:

- existing guidance was sufficiently clear in providing that further questions, including the commissioning of DNA testing, should only be used where the conclusions reached by UNHCR were not adequately evidenced;
- guidance on handling referrals of families with more than six members or other complex cases would, as a priority, be made clearer and more comprehensive;
- guidance and staff training on how to handle cases that involve pregnant women would be strengthened to further emphasise that there should not be an automatic assumption that they should not travel, though such cases would not be prioritised over other vulnerable cases based on this factor alone;
- consideration of MHAs in respect of accommodation and support requirements was already happening;
- issues around ‘exceptional costs’ would be clarified, but would continue to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis; and
- mechanisms to identify and share best practice were already in place.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 12.

⁴⁹ Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 3.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, pp 4–5.

Recommendation 4: Use of Pre-departure Period

The report's fourth recommendation proposed that the Home Office should:

Explore with IOM, and other 'upstream' partners if appropriate, how to make more effective use of the period between a refugee's acceptance onto the scheme and their departure from the 'host' country, to improve their integration 'journey' (for example, providing predeparture English language tuition), to manage expectations and improve the geographical matching process, and to reduce anxieties while awaiting a departure date.⁵²

The Government accepted this recommendation in full. It stated that the Home Office would "consider whether there are any changes that could be made to make more effective use of the time between a refugee's acceptance onto the scheme and their resettlement in the UK".⁵³ However, the Government cautioned that the implementation of any changes would "depend on the establishment of a credible evidence base for changing the current process and timescales", as well as being subject to a cost/benefit assessment.

Recommendation 5: Contact with Local Authorities

The report's fifth recommendation urged the Home Office to:

Maintain closer, more continuous contact with participating local authorities, either by refocusing Contact Officers or reinforcing the Allocations Team, so that time is not lost in turning firm offers of accommodation and support into arrivals.⁵⁴

The Government partially accepted this recommendation. It stated that it did not accept that "time is lost turning firm offers into arrivals", but would "ensure that there is continued engagement between Contact Officers and the Allocations Team to make sure that they are all clear on their roles and functions".⁵⁵

⁵² Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 12.

⁵³ Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 5.

⁵⁴ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 12.

⁵⁵ Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 5.

Recommendation 6: Communications

The report's sixth recommendation stated that the Home Office should:

Review the scheme's communication strategy, paying particular attention to:

- a. UNHCR and IOM, clarifying as far as possible the Home Office's requirements of both after sufficient refugees have been referred to the scheme to meet the 20,000 target.
- b. Local authorities, clarifying whether further pledges are required, including from 'new' local authorities, and dealing with concerns about the fair distribution of 'complex' cases.
- c. Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Health Boards, so that available funding is utilised to provide specialist medical provision for refugees.
- d. Resettled refugees, providing reassurance about continued support (at least until Year 5) with their integration, especially with accommodation, English language tuition, access to employment, and any special health or educational needs.⁵⁶

The Government partially accepted this recommendation. It argued that the Home Office:

- was aware of the need to keep operational partners informed about plans beyond May 2020, and that this was already happening through a series of workshops and targeted consultation and communications;
- was already reminding local authorities of the importance of delivering against pledges, and was encouraging new partners to join the scheme;
- would provide more contact sessions with bodies such as Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Health Boards to raise awareness of funding; and
- intended resettled refugees to become independent as quickly as possible, so would not be providing tailored integration support beyond an initial 12-month period.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 13.

⁵⁷ Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration's Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 6.

Recommendation 7: Government Coordination

The report's final recommendation stated that the Home Office should:

Ensure that, where the scheme is dependent on support from, or affected by the decisions of, other government departments (for example, Department for Work and Pensions and Department of Health and Social Care), ministers are sighted on any misalignments, and that where these exist practical solutions are found.⁵⁸

The Government accepted this recommendation in full. It stated that the Home Office had “good” connections across government and that Home Office officials engaged with other departmental officials “regularly on a bilateral basis and through officials’ groups”.⁵⁹ It added that consideration was currently being given to the “best inter-ministerial forum” in which to take forward discussions on possible misalignments.⁶⁰

5. Further Reading

- Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018; and ‘[Inspection Report Published: Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#)’, 8 May 2018
- Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, [Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper](#), 14 March 2018; and ‘[Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper](#)’, 14 March 2018
- National Audit Office, [Home Office: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme](#), 13 September 2016, HC 626 of session 2016–17; and ‘[Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme](#)’, 13 September 2016
- House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, [Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme](#), 13 January 2017, HC 768 of session 2016–17; ‘[Lack of Clarity on Refugee Resettlement Poses Threat to Long-term Success](#)’, 13 January 2017; and [Government Response](#), Cm 9429, 9 March 2017
- UNHCR, [Towards Integration: The Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the United Kingdom](#), 9 November 2017

⁵⁸ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, p 13.

⁵⁹ Home Office, [Home Office Response to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration’s Report: An Inspection of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#), 8 May 2018, pp 6–7.

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p 7.

- Centre for Social Justice, [*The Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Resettlement Programme that Meets the Needs of the Most Vulnerable*](#), February 2017
- House of Lords Library, [*Syria: Humanitarian Crisis*](#), 23 March 2018
- House of Commons Library, [*UK Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*](#), 14 June 2017