

Dubs Campaign Pack

challenging the closure of the Dubs route for child refugees

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'Today Theresa May put Britain on the wrong side of history. To our country's shame, she has decided to shut down the Dubs Scheme, which promised child refugees a safe future in the UK. We fought tooth and nail to win this last year. I won't let it slip away. Join me in saying YES – I want Britain to rescue the most vulnerable child refugees. The Dubs Amendment was a promise to us – to honour our proud British tradition of welcoming those most in need. I saw that compassion and courage in Sir Nicholas Winton, who rescued me as a child from the Nazi regime, along with 669 Jewish children. Acts of heroism like this define our country. They characterise the values we hold dear. Now we are faced with another such turning point in our nation's history. Will we choose to follow Trump, or to honour our tradition of generosity, compassion and courage? Begin by signing a petition to keep the Dubs Scheme alive. Forward it widely. We won't stop there. We'll need to fight harder than ever, organising our communities in the days to come. In the streets, in the offices of MPs, by joining local actions. We've won before. We will win again.'

– Lord Alf Dubs, responding to the closure of the Dubs scheme, Feb 2017

Key lines

- ❖ Closing the Dubs route after less than six months in operation is neither within the letter nor the spirit of the Dubs amendment, and is a shameful decision.
- ❖ The government's commitment to bring 350 children in total is a start, but the UK wants to and can do much more in future years.
- ❖ Closing this new safe and legal route to protection for some of the most vulnerable refugees will mean more children resorting to illegal and dangerous trafficking routes, and leave many children across Europe at greater risk.
- ❖ The Prime Minister should listen to the calls by councils, communities, faith leaders, and politicians of all Parties to keep the Dubs Scheme open, and work with councils to help more children over the coming years.

Action

The Government's key argument for closing the Dubs route is that communities aren't able to help more children.

We believe Britain is better than this. We have helped child refugees in times of crisis before and we can do so again.

Now it is up to all of us to prove the government wrong, and demonstrate loud and clear that communities across the country are willing and able to help more children.

We are therefore calling for the Dubs route to be kept open beyond April, and for local authorities to be re-consulted about their capacity.

We want to encourage councils to **speak up** and say that they will support the government in keeping the scheme open, and that they will **commit more spaces** in their area for vulnerable children to be given sanctuary under the Dubs route.

It is important to note that local councils are not ultimately the decision-makers on this policy. Our aim is to **encourage** them to support a future scheme, rather than to polarise.

Write to your councillors

Key asks:

- ❖ Support the call to keep the Dubs scheme open,
- ❖ Pledge to make further spaces available for children.

On the next page is a template letter that you can use – feel free to edit it to make it relevant to your context.

You can find out how to contact your councillors at: <https://www.writetothem.com/>.

It is also worth checking to see whether they signed up last year to pledge they would support child refugees: <https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/campaigning/protect-refugee-children/councillors-pledge-support-refugee-children>, as it may determine the tone of your letter.

You could alternatively ask for a meeting with the responsible councillors to make these asks face-to-face.

Feedback

It is crucial that we keep track of the responses from councils so we can demonstrate to the Prime Minister and Home Secretary the strength of council and community support.

Please let us know when you have written/met with your council and the response you get by emailing hannah.gretton@citizensuk.org.

Do also let us know if you have information on how many Dubs children your council pledge to take (if any), and how many have arrived.

Suggested Letter Template:

Dear [councillor/council leader],

We are deeply concerned at the news that the Government plans to close the Dubs scheme for unaccompanied child refugees by the end of the financial year, and are writing to ask for your leadership.

Last year the British government accepted Lord Dubs' amendment to the Immigration Act, which established a safe route to sanctuary in the UK to unaccompanied children.

The amendment didn't call for Britain to help all unaccompanied children in Europe, but for us to do our bit. At the time, many councils supported the call and pledged to work with Government to establish the scheme.

Now, once again, we ask you to show leadership on this issue and join other councils across the country in pledging your support for keeping the scheme open.

Lord Dubs is himself only alive because of the efforts of our grandparents and the Kindertransport programme, which saved 10,000 Jewish children fleeing Nazi persecution. His campaign united both parliament and the country, calling us to live up to the high bar set by previous generations.

To date, around 200 children have been transferred to the UK under the Dubs amendment. Yesterday, the government announced that only 150 more will arrive from the freezing camps of Greece, before the programme is closed along with the financial year.

At this critical time, we ask you to commit to keeping the scheme alive beyond this financial year, and to offer to work to identify further spaces for eligible children.

We know the consultation process nine months ago was rushed, and of course your capacity is dependent on the financial resources central government is prepared to make available for these children.

However more can and must be done. The support of councils is key to the government's ability to make this happen. Now is not the time for Britain to be pulling up the drawbridge, but rather to be opening our arms to welcome refugee children as our grandparents did years ago.

Please stand with us on the right side of history.

Thank you,

[name]

[on behalf of group ____, location]

Organise a public action

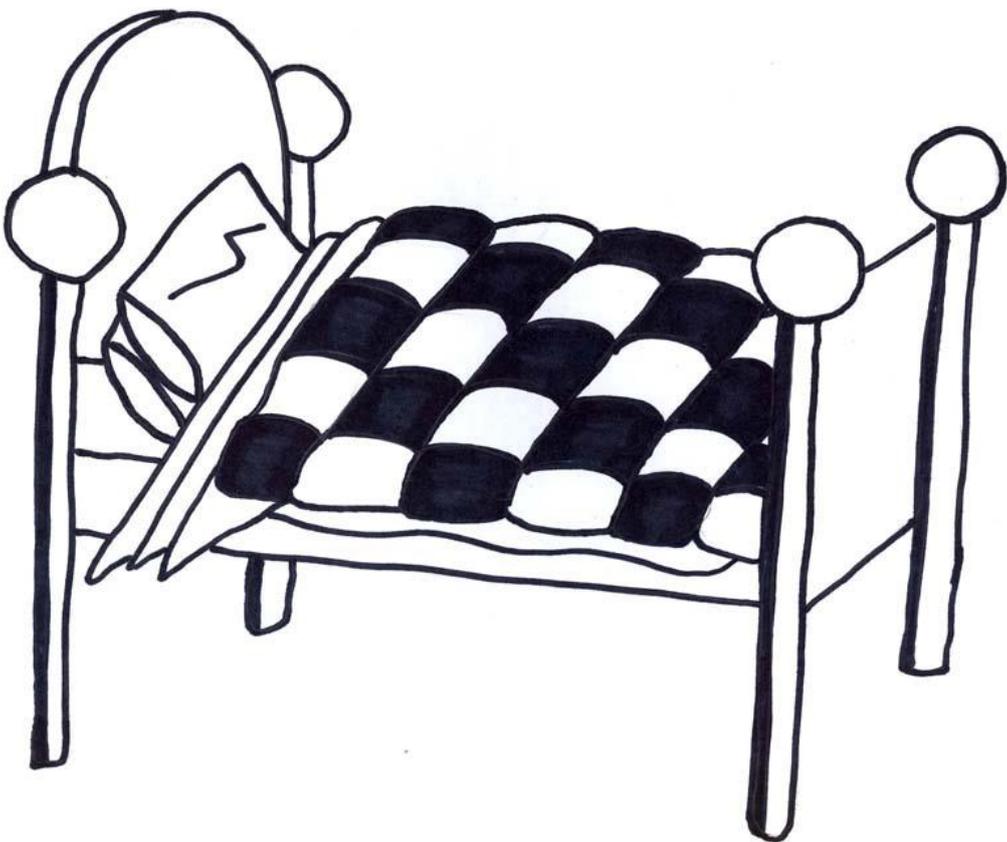
It takes a whole village to raise a child. As communities, we must show councils they are supported in welcoming more child refugees under the Dubs scheme.

Ideas

- ❖ Organise a queue, on the steps of your local council house, of 30 people who one after the other offer any assistance they can to the council to help them welcome more child refugees (e.g. 'I can teach English', 'I can foster one child'). On the next page is a poster you could print out, or you could get creative and make your own. You could even prepare welcome packs to symbolise your offer of support.
- ❖ Host a special service about child refugees in local place of worship, or a special assembly in a local school – and invite the council leader.

Please let us know the actions you are organising, so we can publicise them widely. We also encourage you to contact your local press.

ROOM AT THE INN



Helping your council to say yes

Councils are under a lot of pressure financially, and will be worried that committing to welcome additional children under the Dubs scheme will put a strain on their resources.

Here are some ideas for practical support that might help increase your council's capacity, and demonstrate that you are a group your council can work with.

Help to recruit new foster carers

- ❖ If there is a shortage of foster carers locally, you can encourage potential new carers through local faith, education and civil society groups. Host an event to bring together interested people, including those interested in fostering a refugee child. Invite your local council and Home for Good (<http://www.homeforgood.org.uk>) to join you to share the process of becoming a foster carer. Just recently a local refugee welcome group hosted a fostering information evening for their council, and the council upped their commitment for hosting Dubs children as result.
- ❖ Do remember that fostering is a serious commitment, and those considering it should consult the council or Home for Good for advice and support.

Encourage schools to welcome refugee children

- ❖ Schools have an obligation to support children, but helping ensure they do a good job of welcoming and helping them settle is important. You can encourage local schools to stand up and say – especially to the council – that they will welcome refugee children.

Engage with youth services

- ❖ Survey what youth services are already on offer within the local community, and see which would be willing to play a role in supporting these children.

Confusion!

Your council may refer to how many unaccompanied children they have taken or pledged to take in total under the National Transfer Scheme – but this is different to the children they may or may not have accepted under the Dubs scheme. The consultation with local authorities tied the two together, but it is important that councils pledge specific places for the Dubs scheme, alongside their other commitments. See background on page 8 for more details of different schemes.

Background

The Dubs amendment (Section 67)

The Dubs amendment (Section 67 of the Immigration Act) was passed in May 2016. It was spearheaded by Lord Alf Dubs, who himself arrived in the UK as a refugee as one of 10,000 children brought over on the Kindertransport. The amendment reads: *'The Secretary of State must, as soon as possible after the passing of this Act, make arrangements to relocate to the United Kingdom and support a specified number of unaccompanied refugee children from other countries in Europe.'*

The Dubs amendment is separate from Dublin legislation (which enables unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in Europe to be reunited with family members elsewhere in Europe). Of the almost 1000 unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors who were brought to the UK last year, around 200 were under the Dubs route (all from Calais), and the rest were family reunification (Dublin) cases.

The number of Dubs children is also additional to any other resettlement pledge, such as the Children at Risk scheme (re-settling 300 at-risk Syrian children from camps in the MENA region), or the National Transfer Scheme (which relieves the pressure on counties with large numbers of 'spontaneous' arrivals, by transferring children to other areas of the country).

The *'specified number of unaccompanied refugee children'* was to be determined in consultation with local authorities, but the number 3000 was widely used by charities and politicians as a benchmark.

Closure

On 8th February 2016, the government announced they would be bringing only 150 more children through from Greece and Italy, before closing the Dubs route by the end of this financial year (April). Ministers, at the time of the vote and since, repeatedly assured Parliament they planned to follow not only the letter of the law, but the spirit as well. However, this move goes directly against that promise.

The government argues that council capacity limits the number who can access the Dubs route. They say 400 places were pledged by councils for 'Dubs' children, but 50 of those have been taken up by 'Dublin' children (family reunification cases) who are now unable to live with their families. With 200 'Dubs' children having already arrived in Autumn, 150 places remain.

The 400 figure is significantly lower than the number of children – 669 – that Sir Nicholas Winton alone brought the UK in 1938-39, as part of the 10,000 who were rescued in total as part of the Kindertransport.

And this number pales in comparison with the number of children in need of sanctuary – nearly 90,000 unaccompanied children arrived in Europe in 2015 alone.

In **Greece**, there are an estimated 2,300 registered unaccompanied minors, 1,050 of whom are street homeless and the Greek government's shelters struggle to meet demand. While the UK cannot be expected to assist all children, we are the only country in Europe to have opted out of a broader and much larger EU wide relocation scheme, and so, to date, have taken no refugee children from Greece (beyond seven who have come to reunite with family members, six of whom were assisted to do so by Safe Passage).

Over 25,000 unaccompanied children arrived in **Italy** last year. A report by UNICEF found arrivals of younger children and girls have been rising with particular risk of sexual exploitation and trafficking. However, to date, *not a single child has been brought over from Italy under the Dubs scheme*.

In **France**, it is estimated that 50 unaccompanied children are back in the mud and squalor of Calais, now living rough following the demolition of the camp. In Dunkirk, more children are arriving on a daily basis, with a serious risk of exploitation. With no durable solution achieved by the British and French Governments, unaccompanied children are simply back in the mud and prey to traffickers.

Rushed consultation

The Home Office's consultation with local authorities last year was rushed, and the Dubs route was poorly explained. The consultation is also now nine months out of date, with capacity in children's services constantly changing.

Many councils (including Hammersmith and Fulham, Ealing, and Hounslow) have indicated to Safe Passage and Citizens UK a willingness to take more children under the Dubs scheme than are accounted for in the 400 figure.

This is why we are calling for the Dubs route to be kept open beyond April, and for local authorities to be re-consulted about their capacity.

Citizens UK and the Safe Passage programme



Citizens UK is the national home of community organising – a network of over 350 faith groups, schools and colleges that work together for the common good.

We have been campaigning on the refugee crisis for over 18 months, and created www.refugees-welcome.org.uk to help coordinate the public's response. So far, these efforts have persuaded 44 councils to offer 3,097 places for Syrian families under VPRS. We have identified 700 private landlords who are offering properties, persuaded a dozen universities to offer £3.5 million of scholarships for refugees, and in 2015 successfully challenged the Prime Minister to resettle at least 1,000 people before Christmas.



Safe Passage is a programme of Citizens UK. The mission of Safe Passage is to open safe and legal routes to protection through, through collaboration, community organising, and strategic legal work.

We believe that no one who has a legitimate claim to asylum in the UK should risk their lives trying to get here.

For more information, see www.citizensuk.org and www.safepassage.org.uk.