Asylum: Children

Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to accelerate the process of family reunification for unaccompanied refugee children in Europe.

Robert Goodwill The Minister for Immigration

The Government began work to implement the 'Dubs amendment' immediately after the Immigration Bill gained Royal Assent. Over 30 children who meet the criteria in the Immigration Act have been accepted for transfer since it received Royal Assent in May, the majority of these have already arrived in the UK.

We continue to work with the French, Greek and Italian authorities and others to speed up existing family reunification processes or implement new processes where necessary for unaccompanied children. We have seconded a UK official to Greece, we have a long-standing secondee working in Italy and will shortly be seconding another official to the French Interior Ministry to support these efforts.

We have established a dedicated team in the Home Office Dublin Unit to lead on family reunion cases for unaccompanied children. Transfer requests under the Dublin Regulation are now generally processed within 10 days and children transferred within weeks. Over 120 children have been accepted for transfer this year from Europe.

We also continue to consult local authorities about the transfer unaccompanied refugee children from Europe to the UK, where it is in their best interests.

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