

Routes to settlement in the UK for Afghans

Background

At the end of August the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated rapidly. According to UNHCR, [over half a million people have been internally displaced in the country in 2021](#). Reflecting this, there have been some changes in policy and in rules for people entering the UK. The most significant of these is the introduction of a new resettlement scheme which will come into force before the end of 2021. Existing schemes give priority to those at particular risk in the country, such as Afghans who have worked with the British government or are from minority groups. There are also a number of people who have arrived on evacuation flights.

Resettlement Schemes and Who is Eligible

ACRS

This is the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme. It is a Resettlement scheme for people at risk, such as those who worked with the British government or vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities or people from the LGBT community, who are at particular risk from the Taliban. This also includes people who had been called forward to evacuate but weren't able to.

This scheme will take in 5,000 people in the first year, and a total of 20,000 over the years to come. This scheme is not yet opened (information correct September 2021).

See [here](#) for more information about ACRS.

Everyone who arrives through the ACRS or ARAP scheme will receive indefinite leave to remain (ILR) and have full access to work and benefits in the UK. They will be able to apply for full British Citizenship after five years.

ARAP

This is the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy. This is a scheme for anyone who has worked for the British government and is at risk as a result. The British government has removed the requirement for applications to be submitted from Afghanistan, recognizing the changes in circumstances in the country.

This scheme has been open since April 2021. The aim is to resettle 5,000 people by the end of 2021.

See [here](#) for more information about ARAP.

The Situation in the West Midlands

Around 200 people have arrived in the region on the ARAP scheme since it began. The local areas in the region which have committed to the ACRS include Warwickshire, Telford, Staffordshire, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, and Birmingham. There is already an Afghan community in the West Midlands, with several voluntary organizations particularly in Birmingham providing support before the crisis escalated. There is [a comprehensive list](#) provided by BARMS of groups operating in the area, with services including support for those at risk of destitution, English language lessons, legal advice, and befriending networks.

Main issues

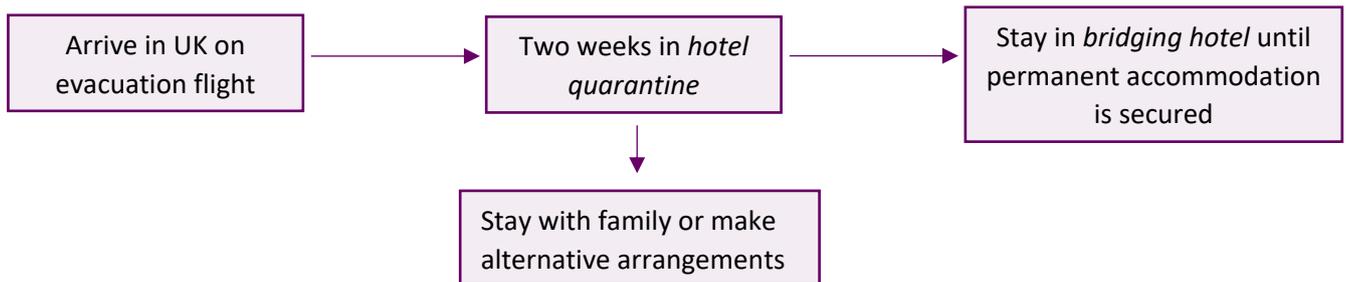
The main issue which is expected to impact newly arrived Afghans is the availability of housing. There is a portal for property owners or organizations to offer whole houses [here](#). There is also concern about COVID-19 vaccine take up however the vaccine will be offered free of charge to all. Some groups have expressed concern about the small scale of the schemes, compared with the number of people in country in need.

What happens once a person or family arrives in the UK?

People arriving in the UK on evacuation flights or on either scheme will undergo a two week COVID quarantine in a hotel. They will then be placed in a bridging hotel, unless they have family in the UK that they can stay with, or they can make other arrangements.

There are also approximately 2.5-3k Afghans currently within the UK asylum system. There have been no specific changes to their asylum cases considering the recent events, nor have these been expedited. However, forced returns to the country have been halted.

Process for people arriving on evacuation flights



What further support is being provided?

- There will be 300 scholarships made available for Afghans wishing to study at university in the UK.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will be available for all, free of charge.
- All Afghan citizens resettled in the UK will be able to register with a GP and access primary and secondary healthcare.

The full details of this pledge of further support can be found on the government website, [here](#).

FAQ's

What services are provided in bridging/quarantine hotels?

- The DWP are acting as the face of government and central point of contact for those in hotels. They can provide information and signpost people to further information, services and voluntary organizations.
- Representatives are attending each hotel for around 2hrs each day.

What should someone who is still in Afghanistan do?

- There is information from UNHCR about help available for people still in Afghanistan [here](#).

I have family in Afghanistan, but I cannot get in touch with them. What should I do?

- The Red Cross provide family tracing which is still running a limited service. See [here](#) for more information.

Where can I get further information?

- The links on this page can provide further advice.
- [This](#) document from the government provides detailed information for a range of different circumstances.
- There is also a helpline for Afghan nationals including those already in the UK: 02475 389 980.

Please note that this document is not intended to be used in place of legal advice; always speak to a qualified legal expert first.