



The Rt. Honourable Theresa May, MP
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

22 May 2019

Dear Prime Minister,

On 12 May 2016, section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 became law, giving unaccompanied refugee children in camps, shelters and on the streets of Europe life-changing access to a legal route to safety in the UK. Since then, councils and foster carers across the country have welcomed over 220 children under section 67, while organisations on the ground in Europe have worked tirelessly to ensure children are able to access this legal route.

But today, many children in acutely vulnerable circumstances are still waiting for one of the 480 places available under section 67, while there are thousands more who will not be given a place. Three years after section 67 became law, we are writing to ask you to increase the total number of places available under this life-changing legislation and ensure that this is backed up by adequate funding, which in turn will help enable the accelerated transfer of children out of the harmful situations within which they are trapped.

We are deeply concerned that the number of places allocated to the scheme is simply not sufficient to deal with the urgent need that exists in France, Italy and Greece. We have been made aware that all section 67 places for unaccompanied children in France may now have been allocated. Yet, as human rights groups and aid organisations continue to highlight¹, hundreds of children remain in complete destitution in the Northern France area, exposed daily to the risks of trafficking and abuse. Unless the government increases the number of spaces available under section 67, these children will be stuck in limbo, with no hope of rebuilding their lives in the UK.

We remain alarmed by the length of time that children are left awaiting transfer, often in harmful situations. We therefore ask you to set a meaningful timeframe and commit to filling the current 480 places by October 2019 – three years after the first relocations took place. In recent months, Safe Passage and their supporters have worked with councils to secure over 20 local authority spaces for children relocated under section 67. This makes clear the potential for filling places at speed and we hope that you will take the opportunity to build on this momentum. We also firmly believe that the allocation of additional funding will enable councils to bring more children to safety, faster.

¹ https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/child-refugees-calais-france-border-immigration-home-office-a8876391.html?amp&fbclid=IwAR3s2OPhv8uKdEQjgVISuT8XhkcN0xFWxIC905bwpCMHMVYU4qErNAPc_Ug

We note the recent announcement of an increase in funding for local authorities to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and hope that this will enable councils to bring more children to safety faster. To this end, we urge you to ensure that sufficient funding is made available to enable new transfers under section 67.

Without the help of the UK government, unaccompanied children in Europe face an uncertain and dangerous future. Increasing the number of places available under section 67, as well as speeding up the rate of transfers, will not only ensure that children in acutely vulnerable circumstances are able to swiftly reach safety, but will ensure that the UK continues to uphold its longstanding commitment to the rights of the child and to protecting some of the world's most vulnerable. We would be delighted to further discuss our proposals with your office and remain at your full disposal.

In the meantime, we will continue to support unaccompanied children and protect them from avoidable harm, including potential slavery and sexual exploitation. We hope to soon be able to give them the good news that a route to lasting safety remains open for them.

Sincerely,

Safe Passage International
Refugee Rights Europe
Refugee Youth Service
Help Refugees
Refugee Info Bus
L'Auberge des Migrants
Utopia 56
Care4Calais
Legal Shelter
Secours Catholique - Caritas France Délégation Pas-de-Calais
Refugee Women's Centre