Request for use of available capacity within the UK for welcoming Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, in accordance with Britain’s history of compassion to refugees.

We call upon the Home Secretary to open safe and legal routes into Britain for child refugees from northern France and Greece, to fill the 1400 unused places pledged by Local Authorities in 2019, and to re-open the Dubs scheme for completion of its original 3000-place target. The “Our Turn” scheme, launched by Lord Dubs, asks LAs to take in three UASC each per year for ten years to reach the number brought to Britain in 1939 by the Kindertransport. We ask the Government to support this scheme and provide funding for participating LAs.

We thank the government for reviving the National Transfer Scheme in autumn of 2020 to enable Kent County Council to send some child refugees from Kent to the care of other LAs when Kent was full, and for some children newly arrived to bypass Kent directly to other regions, leaving KCC with some future flexibility. This operation needs to be permanent so that future crises in Kent are avoided.

Since migrants have a right under international law to seek asylum, such that attempts to prevent them are illegal, we anticipate further young arrivals in the Spring***,*** coming by unsafe routes. In view of vigorous Home Office opposition to exploitation by traffickers we urge you to save the cost to the British taxpayer of measures aiming to prevent unannounced arrivals, which have failed for over five years, and instead to open safe and legal routes for claiming asylum in Britain. This would continue Britain’s reputation for compassion shown by the wartime Kindertransport, and since. Now, as then, the electorate surely distinguishes between overall immigration policy and the humanitarian duty of care for children.

The Government has shown compassion with the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, which has rescued so many Syrian families. Those families surely cannot be more vulnerable than children without their families, especially in winter, children who still think their dreadful journeys, destitution, and hope-extinguishing wait for recognition are worth enduring for the welcome they imagine Britain will provide. Since the 2016 destruction of “The Jungle” camp in Calais it has been well documented, though denied by the Home Office in 2017, that scores of those children who lost hope and fled were lost, not even listed. We ask you to rescue lone child refugees now with invitation and safe passage to Britain.