**Briefing: Availability of travel assistance for reuniting families**

6 February 2024

In 2023 6114 family reunification visas were granted to the family members of refugees living in the UK. Over the same period the Red Cross supported around 1000 individuals and Together Now provided travel assistance for 340. This amounts to around 20% of those granted a visa receiving support through one of these programmes.

Currently families are only likely to receive support if:

* There are unaccompanied children travelling or parents joining an unaccompanied child in the UK.
* They need specialist support to travel; for example, require medical assistance to travel or have faced issues with immigration on previous attempts.
* There is specific, serious and immediate risk to the family. Unfortunately, this does not include all families travelling from conflict zones.

To better prepare families for the challenges in arranging travel we want to encourage immigration advisors to prepare sponsors for there not necessarily being charitable support for their family’s travel available.

This might include:

* Ensuring that the exit requirements for the departure country can be met, for example what exit permits are required and whether the family will need passports rather than an FAV to be able to depart.
* Encouraging the sponsor to understand early on how much travel may cost them and how they will fund this if and when there is not charitable support available.
* Considering deferring the visa start date if there is a clear timescale needed to resolve exit issues.

Those who have families to refer for travel assistance should consider whether they will meet the above criteria and manage the expectations of the family and the sponsor accordingly. Considering the information above we are open to discussing individual families with extenuating circumstances. We really hope to be able to offer increased capacity soon and welcome anyone contacting us with other options for families wanting to reunite.

We are also aware that families often struggle to find the lowest cost flights and face other pitfalls booking independently. There is some information on booking flights on our website here: [togethernow.org.uk/advice-booking-flights/](https://togethernow.org.uk/advice-booking-flights/)

We will continue to update our website with any developments: [togethernow.org.uk/apply-for-travel](https://togethernow.org.uk/apply-for-travel).