

More Afghan interpreters to move to the UK as scheme extends

Courageous Afghans worked side by side with British forces as translators in extremely dangerous situations on the frontline in Helmand Province between May 2006 and December 2014.

The Ex-Gratia Scheme was initially set up in June 2013 to recognise the Government's huge debt of gratitude for the service of Afghan interpreters. Under the scheme, interpreters could choose to either relocate to the UK, receive 5 years of training and a monthly stipend, or receive the equivalent of 18 months' salary.

Through the Ex-Gratia Scheme, 445 former staff and their families have chosen to relocate to the UK, meaning a total of 1,319 Afghan interpreters and their families have already been supported as they create new lives here.

Over 100 former translators are expected to come to the UK once the existing scheme is broadened under new legislation announced today by Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Home Secretary Priti Patel.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Interpreters played a vital role in supporting our Armed Forces in Afghanistan and we owe it to them to make sure their sacrifice is properly rewarded.

For the first time, today's legislation puts in place similar requirements for those who resigned and were made redundant, recognising the unique pressures and circumstances faced by locally employed Afghans.

This fair and simple system will offer dozens more courageous individuals who served alongside British troops the chance to build a new life in the UK.

Last month, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Home Secretary Priti Patel confirmed more former interpreters would be eligible to apply for an existing relocation scheme in recognition of the Government's huge debt of gratitude for their service.

It was announced that an additional cohort of interpreters – those who resigned on or after 01 May 2006 after serving a minimum of 18 months on the frontline – would be allowed to apply to move to the UK.

Today the Government has gone even further and laid legislation to allow those who resigned after serving a minimum of 12 months to apply.

This brings the length of service required for those who resigned in line with those made redundant.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

We are committed to righting wrongs when we see injustice in our immigration system and are making the necessary changes to fulfil our promise to the courageous Afghans who worked side by side with our Armed Forces.

Today we are giving those who supported our armed forces overseas the thanks they deserve by helping them relocate to the UK with their families.

The Ministry of Defence and the Home Office will continue to seek ways to go further to support this cohort and others who have supported the British Armed Forces.