



Department of Health & Social Care

*From Ashley Dalton MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Public Health and Prevention*

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Dr Simon Opher MBE MP

By email to: simon.opher.mp@parliament.uk

1 September 2025

Dear Simon,

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 August to Wes Streeting, co-signed by a number of your Parliamentary colleagues, about the evacuation of children from Gaza for medical treatment.

I appreciate your shared concerns.

The suffering and starvation unfolding in Gaza is unspeakable and indefensible. While the situation has been grave for some time, it has reached new depths and continues to worsen. We are witnessing a humanitarian catastrophe.

Alongside partners, we continue to call for Israel to immediately and permanently lift all barriers on aid into Gaza, allow it to be distributed safely, allow non-governmental organisations and humanitarian agencies to carry out their essential work, protect civilians, aid workers and medics, and protect civilian and health infrastructure.

As the Prime Minister announced on 25 July, we are now taking forward plans to evacuate children from Gaza who require urgent medical care, including bringing them to the UK for specialist treatment where that is the best option for their care. We are working at pace to get this scheme up and running as soon as possible so that these children can receive the specialist medical treatment they require. We have created a cross-Government taskforce, which is working urgently to pull the scheme together.

The UK Government has partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO), which plays a critical role in supporting medical evacuations from Gaza. Clinical leaders in the NHS are now working to match Gazan children on a priority list, provided by medical specialists in Gaza to the WHO, of those needing specialist medical care with where there is capacity within the NHS to treat them. This is a considered process to ensure that treatment in the UK is in the best interests of each individual patient.

Children will be accompanied by their immediate family. By this we mean their parents or guardians, and any siblings under the age of 18. For children being medically evacuated to the UK as part of the Government scheme, the Home Secretary has agreed to grant leave to stay for up to two years with the ability to access public funds, including treatment and wraparound support in the UK. The Government recognises that these children and their families are not asylum seekers. They have been granted leave to remain for up to 24 months while the NHS provides the life-changing and life-saving treatment unavailable in

the region. Should these individuals and their families wish to remain in the UK after they have arrived beyond the initial 24 months, they can apply for further permission to stay under existing routes within the immigration rules.

All individuals who enter the UK as part of this scheme will be subject to robust security checks and will have to submit their biometrics, in a third country, ahead of travel to the UK. This is a vital way of protecting the UK public from individuals who pose any external national security, criminality or safeguarding risks. The time taken to do this has been factored into the evacuation plans.

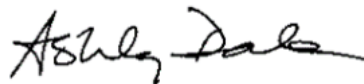
We will work with local authorities to ensure those who arrive in the UK receive the help and support they need during their stay. This includes involving the voluntary and community sector in logistics and support for patients and families when they arrive.

There is no set figure for the total number of children over the lifetime of the scheme. The final size and details of the scheme are still being determined. Costs associated with the scheme will not be known until we know which patients will travel to the UK and how many patients will travel. Departments will share the cost of the scheme by funding their specific areas of responsibility.

Since you wrote to me, we have provided more information on the scheme, which can be found at www.gov.uk/government/news/update-on-gaza-medical-evacuation-scheme. I also expect to update the House when Parliament returns.

I hope this reply is helpful, and I would be grateful if you would share it with your co-signatories.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Dalton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ASHLEY DALTON