

Afghan Settlement Support Video Transcript

Hello and welcome to this Bridge to Unity presentation looking at some of the key aspects of resettlement in the United Kingdom.

We understand that the last two years and in particular the last few months have been a very difficult and emotionally challenging time for many of you. We also understand that finding accommodation outside of bridging hotels can be an uncertain and worrying time.

We hope that by the end of this video to have alleviated some of your concerns about moving on from bridging hotels, as well as providing you with information about how we, as an organisation, are able to help and support you when you move to communities throughout the United Kingdom.

Bridge to Unity was founded in 2021 and works to support those with refugee status in communities throughout the UK. We have been working closely with ARAP and ACRS families since our formation and have already helped many individuals find accommodation, employment and education.

Our Founders Matt and Alexandra have already met many of you at bridging hotels over the last two years and are committed to serving and supporting you all. As well as this, Matt is an RAF Veteran, having proudly served alongside many of you in Afghanistan and he holds this time in his life very close to his heart. The whole of the Bridge to Unity team are aware of the sacrifices you and your families have made to support British Forces and we thank you for this. We hope now that we can offer you support in *your* time of need.

Through our team of dedicated volunteers and support networks we are able to offer you support and advice around finding employment and starting education, as well as day-to-day help with practical support such as transport routes and facilities in the areas you move to. Whatever you need now and in the future we are here to help.

Although we have met many families who are now happily settled in communities throughout the UK, we understand that the worries of moving from hotels remains at the forefront of many of your minds.

We understand many of you will have become used to the communities surrounding your bridging hotels but there are a great number of places throughout the UK that offer so many opportunities. We hope by sharing this video with you, to offer reassurance that no matter where you are offered accommodation in this country there will be an abundance of opportunity for happiness and success.

Living in bridging hotels was never intended to be a long-term solution and by remaining in hotels we believe you are being held back from establishing your roots and building a prosperous lives for yourselves.

We believe, that by leaving bridging hotels, you will be met with a better standard of living, more job opportunities, and a chance to have your own home and meet new friends, all of which will create a brighter future for yourselves and your families.

We encourage you to accept offers of accommodation wherever they are, as we believe that no matter where you live in this country, there will be an abundance of opportunity.

The UK is known for its rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks, and diverse communities. It's a melting pot of different cultures, traditions, and cuisines, offering a unique and vibrant living experience.

In 2019 there were 79,000 Afghans living in the UK, with a further 24,000 resettling here as of the end of 2022, meaning wherever you settle you will find Afghan communities within easy reach.

The UK boasts some of the world's most prestigious universities and educational institutions and no matter where you live you will be entitled to free healthcare through the National Health Service (NHS), meaning you can be sure of access to round the clock, high quality healthcare at zero cost.

The UK has a robust and diverse economy, offering a wide range of job opportunities in various sectors, including finance, technology, healthcare, creative industries and more.

As well as this, throughout the UK there are well-developed public services and infrastructure, including efficient transportation networks, reliable utilities and modern amenities.

This map shows just a small proportion of the country's travel network. The UK has one of the most robust public transport systems in Europe that connects the entire nation from the outskirts of Scotland to the centre of London. Wherever you live in the UK you will be able to stay connected with friends and family through the vast network of trains, buses and roads.

Another question we are commonly asked is where in the UK is the most affordable to live.

As a general rule the North is the cheapest and most affordable. However, there are plenty of areas in the South that also offer affordable options. Many families we have met have understandably wanted to stay in London because it is a city they recognise and are familiar with, however, the cost of rent and daily living in the country's capital means that, for now, looking to the more affordable towns and cities throughout the UK will provide you with a better quality of life.

Another question we are frequently asked is whether there are Afghan and Muslim communities throughout the UK

With many tens of thousands of Afghans living in the UK and nearly 7% of the UK population comprising of Muslims, we are confident that wherever you relocate you will be able to find support from communities that offer familiarity and holistic support. As well as the national organisations shown on this slide, our dedicated team can help you find these connections in your local area, wherever you live.

There are over 5000 halal food outlets in the UK and websites like Zabihah will help you find those closest to your new homes. With over 1500 masjids you can be sure to find a place of worship wherever you move that suits you.

We appreciate that concerns around access to education are often at the forefront of your minds, particularly when your children may already be settled in schools.

There are over 32,000 schools throughout the UK, meaning wherever you live you will have access to education for your children and the average distance children in the UK travel to school

is 2.5 miles. All schools are graded by an external organisation called Ofsted with the highest accolades being outstanding and good. The blue dots on this map show the distribution of these high-grade schools across the UK which you can see are plentiful.

As well as schools, our universities offer some of the best education in the world. There are over 166 universities throughout the UK and virtually every county has one. If you are already in education and are required to relocate to a different geographical location, many courses can be transferred meaning you can continue your courses when you move.

We understand for some of you that have found employment around your bridging hotels that the idea of having to relocate is upsetting, due to concerns you will struggle to find further employment, and we can understand why you feel like this.

However, there are thousands of jobs throughout every geographical location in the UK and we are confident that with the right support and mentoring you will find employment wherever you live. Job adverts are readily available via the internet and recruitment agencies and through our extended network of organisations across the UK we can help you build CVs, find work and develop your future careers. As well as this, by moving out of hotels and into permanent accommodation, employment will become a lot more accessible.

We know that we cannot entirely remove the worry that many of you are experiencing but we hope this video has provided you with some reassurance that although many of you will be required to move to areas of the UK that you are not familiar with, wherever you live you will be welcomed by communities ready to help you settle in to your new lives.

All the team at Bridge to Unity are ready to help and support you with anything you may need and if you would like to know more about how we can help you, please visit our website or contact us via phone or email.

We look forward to supporting you and your families during this journey now and in the future, wherever you may live!