



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
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**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
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Dear Leader and Chief Executives

HONG KONG BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS) UK WELCOME PROGRAMME

I wrote to you on 5 March to provide information that my Department is leading work across government to welcome Hong Kong British National (Overseas) (BN(O)) status holders arriving via the Government's new visa route. I undertook to set out more information on our integration plans as soon as possible. I am therefore very pleased to confirm that MHCLG has today announced **a new UK wide welcome programme to support Hong Kong BN(O) status holders backed by an initial £43.1 million.**

My department has worked across Government, local government and civil society to develop the Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme to provide support for BN(O) status holders who make the life-changing decision to start new lives in the UK.

I know many local authorities are already playing a vital role working with local partners and communities to ensure BN(O) status holders have the necessary support to successfully integrate into their new communities. This is not the first time you have supported the settlement of new arrivals into your areas, and I recognise the wealth of experience you have in this field.

To support your work, over **£30m will be made available to local authorities in England to provide targeted support to BN(O) status holders** who need additional English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and/or destitution support. Since Hong Kong BN(O) status holders will be free to settle in any part of the UK, we have designed this targeted fund to be available on a retrospective, per-capita basis. I believe this will provide all areas welcoming new arrivals from Hong Kong with the resources required to put support in place for BN(O) status holders.

A further **£5.1m** will be used to establish **12 Welcome Hubs** across the whole of the UK, utilising the existing local architecture of the Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMP) to coordinate preparations to welcome BN(O) status holders and provide practical advice and assistance. Funding will be weighted against the predicted numbers of arrivals in each area – but will be kept under review. The new Welcome Hubs will work closely with local partners to share resources, triage requests for support and assist with joint commissioning between areas.

Welcome Hubs in England will be allocated a share of the **£5.1m for local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) activity** to provide locally bespoke support to help BN(O) status holders settle into their new communities and understand the services available to them. We are also expecting the new Welcome Hubs to work with partners to tackle hate crime should it arise; therefore, **an additional £300,000** will be available to address BN(O) related hate crime in 2021/22.

MHCLG is also launching an **£986,000 national VCSE grant scheme** to cover broader projects, to support employment, mental health and wellbeing. As part of this scheme, MHCLG will work with resident communities and VCSE partners to develop dedicated Hong Kong educational resources for schools so that


they can teach young people about our historic connection and commitment to Hong Kong and its people and celebrate the contribution of the Hong Kong-British and Chinese-British diaspora to the UK.

Further information on the welcome package as well as bespoke resources and guidance for local authorities is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hong-kong-uk-welcome-programme-guidance-for-local-authorities>.

Today we are also publishing an **online Welcome pack on GOV.UK**, translated into Cantonese, including information on key public services and practical advice such as how to register with a GP or set up a business, as well as general advice on life in the UK. This initial welcome pack will be built upon in the months ahead to provide ever more detailed guidance and useful links.

Finally, we have created a new Inter-Ministerial Group with representatives from all relevant Government Departments, which I will chair, to enable us to quickly address any challenges the BN(O) community or local areas face. Whilst MHCLG is leading on the overall Hong Kong UK Welcome Programme, individual departments are already developing plans for ensuring issues, such as schools' places, are addressed. We are also setting up a Hong Kong BN(O) Taskforce comprised of local authority and civil society representatives and representatives of these new arrivals to help shape this work in the coming months.

I look forward to working closely with local authorities to ensure we both welcome and support those who choose to take advantage of the new Hong Kong BN(O) visa route.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP