

15 October 2018

Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
SW1P 4DF

Dear Mr Javid

I am writing to ask you to intervene in the threatened deportation of the Atkinson-Phillips family. The family live in Newcastle where Sunderland-born Alison works at Newcastle University. Alison's Australian husband Jeff arrived in February 2018 and recently applied for leave to remain. Their two children are UK citizens.

Jeff's application was rejected on the grounds that there were no "insurmountable obstacles" to the family returning to Australia. The rejection letter gave him 14 days to appeal or leave the country.

Alison was born in Sunderland and moved to Australia as a teenager in 1989. She returned to the north-east with her family in January 2018 to take up a research post at Newcastle University.

Whilst based in Australia, Alison made regular visits to the UK (twice to live and at other times of short holidays) and considers herself British. She has been married to Jeff since 2002 and for the first two years of their marriage they lived in Manchester. They returned to Australia because of the ill health of Jeff's father in 2004.

Alison's wage at Newcastle University meets the required income threshold, so there would be no cost to the government should they be allowed to remain in the UK. Their son has a job in a local pub and their daughter is happy and settled in her new school.

Deportation would mean that either the family has to leave their schools and jobs (with Newcastle University losing a newly-appointed member of staff), or split the family up, with Jeff forced to return to Australia leaving Alison as the sole parent in the UK.

Apart from the personal distress the decision is causing the Atkinson-Phillips family, I hope you can recognise how the case risks sending the very worst message out to the rest of the world that the UK (and higher education in particular) is closed for business and that the Home Office still operates a hostile environment.

This is the second case this year where academics in the north-east have been threatened with deportation, following the case of Dr Ernesto Schwartz-Marin and Dr Arely Cruz-Santiago who were initially refused indefinite leave to remain because of time spent abroad for research. We wrote to your predecessor about this case and the decision to deport them was overturned.

The Atkinson-Phillips family has submitted a formal appeal against the deportation and I hope you will look urgently into the case to ensure the family can continue to live and work together in the UK.

Yours sincerely

Matt Waddup,
Head of policy and campaigns
University and College Union