



Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
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By email only

20 April 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

I have met with Immigration Law practitioners who are supporting Ukrainians making applications under the UK Government schemes. I was concerned to hear many examples of poor communication between the Home Office and visa applicants. Firstly, that some applicants are being told they need to wait for further contact from UKVI when in fact their visas have already been granted and are ready to pick up. This causes unnecessary delay and stress for applicants. Families are spending their entire life savings on lengthy hotel stays waiting for a decision. Secondly, that rejected applicants are not provided with information from UKVI about why they do not meet the requirements. Rejected applicants are therefore unable to understand the decision or identify a rejection which is a result of inadvertent errors in the form. Thirdly, there are reports that some applicants are being granted 10 years and it is not clear how, or why, these applicants are being differentiated. In response to this letter please respond to the following points:

- 1. Please set out the process for notifying applicants when their visa is ready for collection?**
- 2. Can you confirm whether UKVI is obligated to explain why an application has not met the requirements?**
- 3. Home Office emails often do not contain reference numbers. Lawyers, who are submitting multiple applications, often do not know which visa application an email from the Home Office relates to. This is very impractical. Could you issue guidance requiring the relevant reference number to be put in all correspondence?**
- 4. Can you explain reports that some applicants are receiving longer visa terms, up to 10 years?**
- 5. There is a lack of clarity on what steps successful applicants (who did not give their biometrics abroad) need to do once in the UK to give their**

biometrics. The decision letters contain no instructions. Can you clarify?

The Committee also heard serious concern about the lack of support for unaccompanied minors who are attempting to navigate the visa process. In one case recently brought to my attention, an unaccompanied child returned back to their parent in Ukraine due to confusion regarding the process.

- 6. Will the Home Office commit to nominate a designated person in each Visa Application Centre as responsible for supporting unaccompanied minors?**
- 7. Often children are named on their parent's passports but only individuals with their own passports can apply. In practice, this means that families have to undergo an arduous journey in order to submit biometrics and wait (sometimes weeks) for a decision. Could you explain what security concerns this is addressing?**

While I welcome the recent announcement of the Ukraine Extension Scheme which will provide some Ukrainians, who were in the UK before the outbreak of war, with access to work, study and benefits for up to 36 months, significant gaps remain. The scheme does not apply to Ukrainian visa overstayers from before 2022, whose only option for obtaining legal status will be via the asylum system. Furthermore, those eligible for the Extension Scheme, such as Ukrainians on skilled worker visas, remain unable to bring their family to the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme. I would also like to draw to your attention that I have heard reports of Ukrainians, already living in the UK, leaving the UK in order to apply for visa routes externally. The delay putting in place viable routes for those already in the UK has led to unnecessary confusion and trauma.

- 8. Will the Home Office empower Ukrainians, who are already established in the UK, and have applied via the Extension Scheme, to bring family members to the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme?**
- 9. The Homes for Ukraine Scheme is only open to external applicants. What is the policy rationale for barring Ukrainians already in the UK, who have friends and family here ready to sponsor them, or who have crossed the Northern Irish land border from Ireland, from applying to this scheme?**

I would appreciate a response by 4 May 2022.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dame Diana Johnson MP

