



Dame Diana Johnson MP
Chair, Home Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

05 May 2022

Dear Dame Diana,

Thank you for your letter of 20 April to the Home Secretary, with questions relating to the support we are providing for the people of Ukraine.

As the Minister supporting the Home Secretary with delivering visas services as part of the Government's Ukraine response, I am responding on her behalf with regard to the questions you asked. I have set out the answers to each of your questions in turn below:

1. Please set out the process for notifying applicants when their visa is ready for collection?

Customers who enrol their biometrics at a Visa Application Centre (VAC) are notified by the VAC once their visa is available for collection. Those who applied via bio-delay with a valid international passport and uploaded their passport image via the app, their permission to travel letter will be sent via email to the main email address used on their application shortly after a decision has been made.

2. Can you confirm whether UKVI is obligated to explain why an application has not met the requirements?

Once an application is refused, the Home Office has a legal obligation to notify customers with information about why their application has not met the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

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?

We are continuing to develop existing and new technology to help build on recent improvements and move away from a paper-based system. We are streamlining and

digitalising the case working process to enable more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making and we are looking at ways to improve how we notify customers in response to this point.

4. Can you explain reports that some applicants are receiving longer visa terms, up to 10 years?

Leave granted under the Homes for Ukraine and Ukraine Family Scheme, is for a maximum of 36 months.

Some customers may have chosen to apply for a 10-year visitor visa to UK over one of our schemes. However, we have not seen any specific cases where leave validity under the schemes has been beyond 36 months.

If you are able to provide further details and reference numbers, we will investigate these specific cases further.

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?

Currently, the Permission to Travel letter contains the below information:

“How to provide biometrics

“Once you are in the UK, to provide your biometrics within 6 months you need to visit gov.uk. This page will go live from 25 March 2022. Once we have received your details, we will tell you how to provide your biometric information to us. This might be by using the [ID Check](#) app on your phone or by visiting one of our centres in the UK. You should do this as soon as possible and you must do this within 6 months to enable you to stay in the UK for 3 years.

“You can call the free 24/7 helpline on 0808 164 8810 if you are in the UK for help with any questions about the scheme.

“When you made your online application, you provided an email address that we could use to contact you. Please make sure you keep checking the email address you provided (and your junk folder) as we may use that to send you other important information.

“We look forward to welcoming you to the UK.”

We are working to update the Permission to Travel letter to ensure that it contains the appropriate links to guide customers to the relevant part of the GOV.UK webpage. Once customers are in the UK, they will need to complete the relevant form and upload their biometrics. Further information can be found on the GOV.UK webpage: [Ukraine Scheme BRP \(visas-immigration.service.gov.uk\)](#)

6. Will the Home Office commit to nominate a designated person in each Visa Application Centre as responsible for supporting unaccompanied minors?

We recognise the deeply troubling circumstances faced by all Ukrainians who are caught up in this conflict, including unaccompanied children, and the role many countries will need to play to safeguard those children. It is generally in the best interests of a child to be reunited with their family members wherever possible.

The Homes for Ukraine sponsorship Scheme offers a route to those who want to come to the UK who have someone here willing to provide them with a home.

It enables individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to volunteer accommodation and provide a route to safety for Ukrainians, and their immediate family members, forced to escape their homeland. The scheme is open for adults and children within family units.

However, unaccompanied children and orphans will not be transferred to the UK under this scheme as it is not designed for unaccompanied children who would generally require a local authority care placement taking into the account our domestic law and practice on safeguarding and specialist care needs. The consent of the relevant Ukrainian Authorities is also required for a transfer to the UK for placement “into the care of foreigners” of a Ukrainian Child.

Minors under the age of 16 attending a Visa Application Centre (VAC) have to be accompanied by a responsible adult. VAC staff receive safeguarding training and flag concerns like unaccompanied minors to UKVI.

The policy changes the UK government has already introduced will enable thousands of children to come to the UK to join extended family members.

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?

All Ukrainians, including children, who do not have a valid Ukrainian international passport must attend a Visa Application Centre in person and provide their biometric information, as they will need a secure Entry Clearance document which will convert to permission to enter upon arrival at the UK border.

This means we can properly identify a child brought into the UK and link them to their parents or carers and help to prevent child exploitation and trafficking, which is an essential safeguard for children crossing international borders. Even more so at times of major displacement.

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?

As set out in the Home Secretary’s statement to the House on 1 March, a fee free, bespoke Ukraine Family Scheme has been introduced. The route allows both the immediate family members (spouse, civil partner, durable partner, minor children) and extended family members (parent, grandparent, adult children, grandchildren, siblings, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, in laws and their immediate family) to join their relatives in the UK. The UK-based sponsoring relative must be a British citizen, a person who is present and settled in the UK (including those with settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme), a person in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection or an EEA or Swiss national in the UK with limited leave under Appendix EU (pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme). This route was launched on 4 March.

People in the UK who are granted an extension to their stay under the Ukraine Extension Scheme, who have not acquired settled status will not be permitted to sponsor a relative under the Ukraine Family Scheme. However, on 18 March the Government launched the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, which enables individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to volunteer accommodation and provide a route to safety for Ukrainians, and their immediate family members, forced to escape their homeland. Ukrainian nationals' resident in the UK with at least six months' leave can qualify to sponsor under this scheme if they are able to offer suitable accommodation and pass security checks. Further information about the Homes for Ukraine Scheme has been published here:

<https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/>

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?

Homes for Ukraine was designed as a route to safety to the UK for those fleeing Ukraine. There are other options available for those already in the UK. This includes the Ukraine Extension Scheme, under which Ukrainians already in the UK, along with their family members, will be given three years' leave as well as full access to work, study and public funds.

With my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Foster', with a large flourish at the end.

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Safe and Legal Migration