



Home Office



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**Lord Richard Harrington**  
*Minister for Refugees*

**Home Office and Department for  
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Diana Johnson MP  
House of Commons  
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12 July 2022

Dear Diana,

Thank you for your letter bringing to my attention concerns raised by Ukrainian MPs you recently met with. I had the pleasure of meeting with at least some of them cohort the following day and am pleased to update you on matters raised and outcomes of the meeting.

Without specific details of the case you mention I will not be able to report in more detail at this stage, however if provided I can look into any matter.

### **TLS**

I am not aware of any accounts of staff at Visa Application Centre selling expedited visa services for an additional 300 Euros, and this has not been raised at all through any customer channels. Our Commercial Partner, TLS, has been working hard to support Ukrainian customers during this crisis. For all customers applying for a UK visa under the Ukraine Family Scheme or Homes for Ukraine scheme, the service is free of charge, including document scanning and Keep My Passport services.

We closely monitor and manage the contract with TLS and robustly review any security, safeguarding or integrity issues to ensure they are addressed, investigated and resolved. If there are specific details of where this has happened, any case details or further information, I would be very happy to investigate further.

### **Unaccompanied Minors**

With regards to the issues that are being faced in getting unaccompanied minors out of the country, as you will know, children who have already applied for a Homes for Ukraine Scheme visa will now be allowed to travel to the UK without a parent or legal guardian, subject to strict sponsor checks. As part of a robust safeguarding regime, applicants must also have notarised parental consent and the sponsor should be personally known to the parents, in most circumstances.

After working closely with the Ukraine Government and MPs, these changes will enable a child to apply for a visa if they have proof of parental consent. This must be certified by an authority approved by the Ukraine Government such as notary authorities or Ukrainian consul abroad. Extensive sponsor checks will also be carried out by local authorities ahead of any visa being granted, with councils being able to veto any sponsor arrangements they deem unsuitable. The sponsor should also ordinarily be someone who is personally known to the parents.

This policy will initially apply to the 1,000 children who have already applied to the Home Office but are unable to travel as they are not travelling or reuniting with a parent or guardian. This week, the Ukraine visa casework command has been writing out to the sponsors of all deferred applications to advise them that their application is still under review and to check that their contact details are up to date. This will enable us to continue to process those applications that are still awaiting an outcome. Full details are available in my Written Ministerial Statement here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2022-06-22/hlws123>

I have always advocated to make the application process as easy and as smooth as possible, and I am pleased our new AUK2 application system is both quicker and facilitates better communication. We are prioritising speed and volume in processing these applications, but in the minority of cases where issues are highlighted every step is taken to ensure they can be resolved as quickly as possible. I am very proud in particular of the support the Portcullis Hub has been able to provide in this respect, and I thank you and all of our Parliamentary colleagues who have raised issues with them.

More than 85,000 Ukrainians have reached safety in the UK and that number grows every day. While I am not complacent, I am very pleased that the Homes for Ukraine and the Ukrainian Family Schemes have been able to bring them to safety.

**With all my very best wishes,**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Richard".

**Lord Richard Harrington  
Minister for Refugees**