

Home Secretary update on support for Ukrainians

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to update the House on the government's humanitarian response to Putin's depraved war on Ukraine.

As the House knows, the UK's humanitarian support for Ukraine has been developed following close consultation with their government and governments in the region.

On 4 March, I launched the Ukraine Family Scheme. It applies to immediate and extended Ukrainian family members and everyone eligible is granted 3 years' leave to enter or remain.

Today, I want to set out further changes I am making to the process to make it quicker and simpler. I have 2 overarching obligations: first to keep the British people safe. Second to do all we can to help Ukrainians.

No Home Secretary can take these decisions lightly and I am in daily contact with the intelligence and security agencies who are providing me with regular threat assessments.

What happened in Salisbury showed what Putin is willing to do on our soil. It also demonstrated that a small number of people with evil intentions can wreak havoc on our streets.

This morning I received assurances which enable me to announce changes to the Ukraine Family Scheme. Based on the new advice I have received, I am now in a position to announce that vital security checks will continue on all cases.

From Tuesday, I can announce that Ukrainians with passports will no longer need to go to a Visa Application Centre to give their biometrics before they come to the UK.

Instead, once their application has been considered and the appropriate checks completed, they will receive direct notification that they are eligible for the scheme and can come to the UK.

In short, Ukrainians with passports will be able to get permission to come here, fully online, from wherever they are; and will be able to give their biometrics once in Britain.

This will mean, Mr Speaker, that Visa Application Centres across Europe can focus their efforts on helping Ukrainians without passports. We have increased the capacity at those centres to over 13,000 appointments per week.

This streamlined approach will be operational as of Tuesday 15 March, in order to make the relevant technology and IT changes.

I will, Mr Speaker, of course update the House if the security picture

changes and if it becomes necessary to make further changes to protect our domestic homeland security.

Threat assessments are always changing, and we will always keep our approach under review.

In the meantime, Mr Speaker, I once again salute the heroism of the Ukrainian people.