

New measures to support Ukrainians

Home Secretary Priti Patel has today announced changes to the Ukraine Family Scheme to make the process quicker and simpler for those fleeing Putin's barbaric invasion of Ukraine.

From Tuesday, Ukraine passport holders will no longer need to attend in-person appointments to submit fingerprints or facial verification before they come to the UK, after the Home Secretary received assurances that the necessary national security checks could be maintained while not requiring biometrics for the initial application.

The remaining checks continue to ensure we provide the robust scrutiny required for all applicants.

Confirmation of permission to travel to the UK will also be provided, meaning the majority of applications can be completed entirely online without ever attending a visa appointment centre, speeding up the process and allowing people to come to the UK faster.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The Ukraine Family Scheme provides an immediate pathway for those Ukrainians with family already settled in the UK to come to our country. It is designed to allow as many people as possible to come to Britain and gives them immediate access to the support they need to not just survive but to thrive.

The scheme was developed in close consultation with Ukrainian leaders and the diaspora community and we continue to work with them to make changes as necessary. That is why we are now making the process quicker and simpler by removing the need to physically visit Visa Application Centres for many of those who are making the perilous journey across Europe. This will mean we can welcome more families here more swiftly.

Given the real and varied threats we face, we must consider national security alongside our humanitarian instinct and desire to help as many people as possible in the shortest possible timeframe. I can reassure the British people that the changes announced today have been made in close consultation with relevant officials and agencies so as to ensure our national security is not compromised.

Under the new application process passport holders will apply online and be granted 6 months' leave to enter the UK outside of the rules, enabling them to work, study and claim benefits immediately. Once they have submitted biometric data in the UK they will have their leave extended to 36 months.

This applies only to passports – not ID Cards – however this will be kept

under review, in line with security advice.

The changes are designed to get as many people their visas as quickly as possible, while reducing pressure on visa application centres and ensuring those who pose a threat to the UK are prevented from entering.

The Home Office has already ramped up visa application capacity in other countries bordering Ukraine, including Hungary, Romania, Poland and Moldova. A new pop-up Visa Application Centre in Rzeszow, Poland, has been opened, while the combined total number of appointments across Europe has increased from 2,000 to 13,000 appointments.

The Ukraine Family Scheme allows people settled in the UK to bring immediate and extended family members from Ukraine to the UK. This week the eligibility was increased to include aunts, uncles and in-laws.

The Ukraine Family Scheme is part of a series of measures that have already been announced:

- Last month the Home Secretary confirmed that flexibility would be available to support Ukrainians who are on work, study or visit visas to switch to different visa routes extending their stay and those on seasonal work visas would have their leave temporarily extended.
- The Prime Minister also announced that we are working at pace to establish the Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukrainians with no ties to the UK to come here. The uncapped route will allow sponsors, such as communities or local authorities, to bring people to the UK. Sponsored individuals will be able to work and the sponsor would provide housing and integration support.

The routes and changes to visas come alongside the UK's ongoing efforts to tackle the emerging humanitarian crisis, which were bolstered this week by additional funding, with total emergency and aid support for Ukraine now at £400m, alongside the 1,000 troops who are on standby to help those forced to flee.

[Customs easement to help Ukraine aid exports](#)

Moving aid and donations to the people of Ukraine will be made easier thanks to a customs easement, the UK Government announced today.

The simplification of customs processes will apply to goods intended to support those affected by the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine which are exported from Great Britain. Provided the goods are not exported to, or through, Russia or Belarus, then these simplified processes apply to

qualifying goods regardless of the destination to allow maximum flexibility to get aid to where the need is greatest.

The government still recommends that organisations and people, who would like to help, donate cash through trusted charities and aid organisations, rather than donating goods. Cash can be transferred quickly to areas where it is needed and individuals and aid organisations can use it to buy what is most needed.

However, businesses, charities and community organisations sending aid from British ports will be able to make a customs declaration by speaking to customs officers or simply by the act of driving through a port.

They will no longer need to complete and submit electronic customs declarations to HMRC before exporting these goods, and smaller movements will not need to use the Goods Vehicle Movement Service to pass through ports where it is in operation.

The easement will also remove other customs formalities, such as needing to notify HMRC when the goods have been exported.

The Rt Hon Lucy Frazer QC MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said:

People and businesses across the UK have already responded with immense generosity, donating millions of pounds to support those forced to flee their homes as a result of the war in Ukraine.

Government advice remains that the best way to help the Ukrainian people is to donate money through the Disasters Emergency Committee or other trusted charities.

However, we appreciate that people and businesses may still wish to donate aid directly to the region, so this new customs easement will ensure that humanitarian aid is fast-tracked from Great Britain to help those most affected.

The easement, which excludes all controlled goods and dual use goods, will be in place for a limited time, which will be announced in due course.

The easement [comes into effect immediately](#).

Anyone requiring advice about transporting humanitarian aid to Ukrainian refugees can [contact the free-to-use Export Support Service \(ESS\)](#) or ESS helpline 0300 303 8955 which can be used by individuals, businesses or charities.

Government advice remains that the best way to help the Ukrainian people is to donate money through the Disasters Emergency Committee or other trusted charities.

The UK has committed a £220 million humanitarian aid package for Ukraine to

help aid agencies respond to the deteriorating situation, creating a lifeline for Ukrainians with access to basic necessities and medical supplies. Our humanitarian aid takes the UK's overall support for Ukraine during the current crisis to nearly £400 million, after a [£100 million economic package for Ukraine was announced last month](#).

New legislation set to make digital identities more trustworthy and secure

- Organisations will need to gain a new trustmark to show they can handle people's identity data in a safe and consistent way.
- New Office for Digital Identities and Attributes established to oversee strong security and privacy standards for digital IDs

People will be able to easily and quickly prove their identity using digital methods instead of having to rely on traditional physical documents, under new plans unveiled by the government today.

Following a public consultation, the government has announced it will introduce legislation to make digital identities as trusted and secure as official documents such as passports and driving licences.

Digital identities, which are a virtual form of ID, reduce the time, effort and expense that sharing physical documents can take when people need to provide legal proof of who they are, for example when buying a home or starting a new job.

A new Office for Digital Identities and Attributes (ODIA) will be set up in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as an interim governing body for digital identities.

Digital identity solutions can be accessed in a number of ways such as via a phone app or website and can be used in-person or online to verify a person's identity. It will be for people and businesses to decide what digital identity technology works for them to prove their identity, should they choose to create a digital identity at all.

For example, if a person wants to prove they are over 18 to buy age-restricted products, they could create a digital identity with a trusted organisation by sharing personal information such as their name and date of birth. This digital identity could then be used to prove to a retailer they are over-18, without the need to reveal the personal information used to create the digital identity, boosting users' privacy, unlike physical

documents which may disclose date of birth, name and address.

The ODIA will have the power to issue an easily recognised trustmark to certified digital identity organisations, to prove they meet the security and privacy standards needed to handle people's data in a safe and consistent way.

The ODIA will ensure trust-marked organisations adhere to the highest standards of security and privacy.

Digital identities can also help tackle fraud, which hit record highs with an estimated [5 million cases in the year ending September 2021](#), by reducing the amount of personal data shared online and making it harder for fraudsters to obtain and use stolen identities.

The government intends to bring forward the necessary legislation when parliamentary time allows to:

- Establish a robust and secure accreditation and certification process and trustmark so organisations can clearly prove they are meeting the highest security and privacy standards needed to use digital identities.
- Create a legal gateway to allow trusted organisations to carry out verification checks against official data held by public bodies to help validate a person's identity.
- Confirm the legal validity of digital forms of identification are equal to physical forms of identification, such as physical passports

It is committed to ensuring digital identities are not compulsory and people will still be able to use available paper documentation.

Data Minister Julia Lopez said:

This government is committed to unlocking the power of data to benefit people across the UK.

The legislation we're proposing will ensure that there are trusted and secure ways for people and organisations to use digital identities, should they choose to.

Heather Wheeler MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office, said;

The government is delivering a number of ambitious and interlinked policy initiatives to prepare the UK for the digital world, and to improve the lives of businesses and citizens.

These initiatives, alongside enabling legislation, will help ensure the UK is able to take full advantage of the opportunities that digital identities and the wider digital economy have to offer.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation

exercise. By working together, and sharing knowledge, experience and expertise, we will continue to deliver transformative digital policies.

In advance of the proposed legislation, landlords, letting agents and employers will be able to use certified new technology to carry out the right to work and the right to rent checks online from the 6th April, 2022 and prove their eligibility to work or rent more easily.

Sue Daley, Director for Technology and Innovation, techUK said:

Today's announcements are a positive step forward in the UK's implementation of digital identity. techUK has welcomed DCMS's efforts in working with industry to get us to where we are today.

Given the next steps now being taken, continued cooperation between industry and government remains the best chance for a successful implementation of a digital identity ecosystem in the UK. However, we must also ensure we bring citizens on this journey with us: building public trust and confidence in Digital ID must be a key priority as we move forward.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Please find a link to the digital identities and consultation response [here](#)

Greater Manchester man has sentence for child cruelty increased following referral to the Court of Appeal

News story

A man from Greater Manchester has received an increased sentence for child cruelty after his case was referred under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.



A man from Greater Manchester has received an increased sentence for child cruelty after his case was referred to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP.

The offender, who cannot be named for legal reasons, engaged in a course of extensive physical and emotional abuse against the victim, which amounted to a case of cruelty to a person under 16 years.

This abuse included regular beatings, with one assault resulting in the victim suffering a fractured finger. To conceal their actions, the offender intentionally acted to isolate the victim and would forbid them from attending school or seeing friends when they had visible bruising.

On 15 December 2021, the offender was sentenced to 3 years and 4 months' imprisonment at Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court.

Following the sentencing, the Solicitor General referred the sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme.

On 10 March 2022 the Court of Appeal found the original sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 6 years' imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP said:

Cruelty to children is cowardly and abhorrent. This increased sentence reflects the severity of the offences that occurred and demonstrates that any act of cruelty against a child will be met with robust punishment.

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[Addressing the continuation of](#)

disinformation on chemical weapons in Syria

Mr President, I thank High-Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Just ten days ago we discussed Syria's chemical weapons in this Council. It was clear then that Syria remains uncooperative. The serious outstanding issues on its chemical weapons declaration, which include the fate of thousands of chemical munitions and hundreds of tonnes of chemical agents, remain unresolved. The terms of resolution 2118 continue to be breached. We therefore call on the Syrian regime – as we do every month – to cooperate with the OPCW and return to compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr President,

In the ten days since we last met, Russia has continued its war of aggression against Ukraine. Besieging cities, killing civilians indiscriminately, forcing millions to flee in search of safety. The parallels with Russian action in Syria are clear. Regrettably, the comparison also extends to chemical weapons, as we see the familiar spectre of Russian chemical weapons disinformation raising its head in Ukraine.

Russia has a long history of deflection, denial and obstructive behaviour when it comes to chemical weapons. In 2017, Putin claimed the Khan Shaykhun attack, for which the expert and impartial OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism found the Assad regime responsible, was staged by the West.

Russia has offered more than 40 different narratives about the chemical weapons attack its military agents carried out in Salisbury four years ago, and we have seen nothing but obfuscation and falsehoods in relation to the Novichok attack on Alexei Navalny.

So colleagues,

As you listen to the Russian statements during this session, I ask you to consider – who should we believe? Should we believe the state with a track record of using chemical weapons, that has denied and deflected questions about attacks by its client, the Assad regime, whether in Khan Shaykhun, Ltamenah or Saraqib? Or should we believe the independent, impartial international organisations that have conducted rigorous investigations, attributing responsibility based on clear evidence?

This Council has heard enough lies about chemical weapons from the Russian Federation. We must stop pretending that the Assad regime is acting in good faith. We should stand up for the rules we have all agreed, look those who break them in the eye and hold them to account for their actions.

Finally Mr President, I note that Libya is on our agenda for next Wednesday – I look forward to discussing it then.

Thank you.