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Impact of Changes to the Ukraine Visa Schemes on Ukrainians in the UK: Addendum

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Key Recommendations

1. *Grant an automatic extension of 18 months to all Ukraine Scheme visas, avoiding the costly application process that is causing significant emotional and material harm.*
2. *Grant Ukraine Scheme visa holders the right to settlement after 5 years, as for all other humanitarian routes.*

Introduction and Background

This document should be read in conjunction with the main interim report *Impact of Changes to the Ukraine Visa Schemes on Ukrainians in the UK*.¹ It provides a summary of the free-text responses to a survey completed by 1133 Ukrainians across the UK.

The responses were provided in response to the question: “If you would like to share more about your experience regarding the visa status of Ukrainians in the United Kingdom, please do so here”. Of the 1133 respondents, 228 chose to answer this question. Their responses can be broadly divided into 5 categories: employment, housing, education, finances, and mental health. The examples provided here are illustrative of key trends; systematic analysis of this data will be published in future reports.²

Employment

Respondents are experiencing serious difficulties securing employment, retaining jobs or having their contracts renewed, and advancing their careers.

They report that employers are reluctant to take them on or to continue their employment because of the short-term nature of their visas. Some report missing out on promotion and advancement opportunities for the same reason.

- *My employer expects confirmation of my right to work in July, a month before the visa expires. The 28-day period is too short for this.*
- *I am studying for a master's degree in Health Psychology, trying to change jobs now, but due to the visa expiration, I am not considered a candidate.*
- *Employers do not want to hire at all when they see the visa expiration date.*
- *I moved from hosts to private rent and wanted to find a different job because I don't have a driver's*

¹

<https://postsocialistbritain.bham.ac.uk/outputs/28/>

² Some responses have been slightly shortened for the purposes of space, or edited to ensure confidentiality; however, in all cases, the core meaning has been retained.

license, it's difficult for me to get to my current job location. But 2 different companies just refused me because my visa is ending soon.

- I have been working full-time in London since my arrival and until July 2024, currently I'm volunteering and looking for a new job, however, the employers and recruiters don't want to deal with anyone whose visa expires in two months unfortunately. They also don't want to listen about the extension scheme because they need an employee who can stay and work for a long period of time.*
- My work contract was not extended, they said because less than 2 months remain, and when I extend it, they may do it, but not 100%.*
- The employer takes advantage of the vulnerable status and has not reviewed the salary for 2 years, although the workload has tripled during this time. Finding another job is complicated by the fact that employers do not see a future with a candidate whose visa expires in a few months and will be extended for 18 months.*
- It is very difficult to find a job, even when you have experience. Employers do not want to hire Ukrainians with their type of visa. And even when you say that the*

visa can be extended for another 18 months, it is not an argument for them.

- My candidacy is not considered for promotion, and the employer is not interested in improving my qualifications. They have already started asking questions about when the visa will be extended, and I am afraid of problems when the visa expires, and there is still no decision on the extension. I am afraid of being left without a job and with children on the street.*
- It was hard to explain to the employer about 3C leave, and there is no reassurance for the employer that the new UPE visa will be granted. It is much easier for the employer to hire someone local or settled than to clarify Home Office rules for Ukrainians.*
- I work in a school as a teacher. My contract finishes on May 25th because my visa finishes on the same day. The school doesn't prolong the contract.*

Housing

Our respondents are experiencing considerable challenges securing or renewing tenancy agreements due to the limited time remaining on their current visas. Some report unethical behaviour on the part of landlords, including increases in rent and demands for large deposits.

- *I have to move out of the current place and I'm afraid I won't be able to rent a new place officially because my current visa expires in a few months, while the minimum tenancy requirement is 6 months. This is very worrying.*
- *The agency used the imminent expiration of the visa, knowing that no one would sign a new lease for me, to raise the payment 3 times more than last year's amount and demanded to pay everything in advance.*
- *There is a probable problem with extending the lease agreement, which ends probably before receiving a decision on extending the stay in the UK. Without having a decision in hand, it is impossible to extend the long-term lease of housing.*
- *Some agencies or landlords refuse to continue communication due to the lack of sufficient rental permission duration.*
- *It is impossible to find housing, there is no visa confirmation.*

Education and Family

Parents responding to our survey are concerned about the potential further disruption to their children's lives if they are forced to return to Ukraine. They are worried about the impact on their children's education, given that many have settled into the UK school system,

or wish to continue into university in the UK. Other respondents are aiming to gain further qualifications themselves and are struggling to secure places and financing.

- *My daughter received an invitation to enter the university but only as an international student, and since her visa is expiring, they do not consider her as a local student.*
- *My son, who studied here for 3 years and is doing his A-levels in summer 2026, will lose his chance to study at university as the Extension visa will expire in Autumn 2026.*
- *My application form to the university was rejected due to visa issues. I hope to be able to submit the documents again after receiving UPE, as I planned to start studying for PGCE from September 2025.*
- *I am worried that my 15-year-old son will not be able to finish college. He is graduating from school this year.*
- *I was refused acceptance into the [AI technology] training program, which starts in March '25 because the program lasts 18 months, and my current visa expires earlier (May '25). I met all other criteria and was accepted.*
- *My son is finishing sixth form next year, and the extended visa expires in six months. We*

planned to enter the university, but now we don't know what to do next, as the visa expires and he may be refused admission, and they will not give a loan for education.

- *We started a new life here, my daughter cannot imagine that in 18 months we will have to return to Ukraine and change school and friends again.*
- *My applications for apprenticeship weren't considered due to visa length.*
- *I cannot enter a doctoral program at the university because one of the conditions is the ability to reside in England during the study period (3 years).*

Mental Health

As indicated in the quantitative results, a significant proportion of respondents are suffering severe stress and anxiety, caused by uncertainty about the future and the prolonged temporary status.

- *It is psychologically very difficult to live without certainty. When you live somewhere temporarily for one year and just wait to return home, it is bearable. When you live a temporary life for the FOURTH year, it is sometimes unbearable.*
- *Intense nervous overload, I have not been able to sleep normally for a long time, depression. I feel like a non-human who will just be*

thrown out on the street when the visa expires

- *Fear for my future because I, my husband, and my little child are from Mariupol.*
- *A lot of anxiety and stress because the extension is only for 1.5 years, which is very little. The employer and all services do not understand whether I will still have a visa. The e-visa often gives errors or does not work.*
- *Severe stress, anxiety. 1.5 years is very little. Because the Home Office says that the visas are temporary, that they are unlikely to give a real path for longer settlement, I am very afraid for the future of myself and my family. I am afraid that we will be in danger again, that our rights will be neglected again.*
- *The mental state is also very unstable, the feeling that you are superfluous here and should go to Ukraine, but the point is that there is nowhere to return, I am from Pokrovsk.. and it is sad to leave the rented housing here again, everything that I have "acquired" in 3 years, and go into the unknown.*
- *There is nowhere to return, and I need to start all over again.*
- *I do not know how to plan the next year, let alone plan life in general. Uncertainty, fear that we*

will be forcibly sent back to Ukraine.

- *Difficulties arise due to an unclear future. I am already taking antidepressants. There is nowhere to return. [...] The level of stress is very high. Especially for children.*
- *Great stress because I have no home anywhere. And I will be expelled from this country and forced to live under Russian occupation.*
- *I always try to think positively, I can support and motivate other people, but this period of time I feel really disappointed and it impacts my mental health. I started my life from zero here, we ran from the war under explosions (Irpin city), and once I started to feel settled here, I*

really feel like my life was put on pause again.

- *Like other Ukrainians, I live, not sit waiting for the end of the war. We are putting down roots here. But we know that this is not for long. And in a few years, we will have to leave everything again, return to Ukraine, and start all over again. I am not sure that most people can imagine what it is like to start life from scratch in a foreign country. It is difficult when you do it according to your decision. It is much harder when forced. We left our country because there was no opportunity to stay.*
- *My home in my city in Ukraine was destroyed, my close ones and family suffered, and on top of that, I had to face such humiliation here.*

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