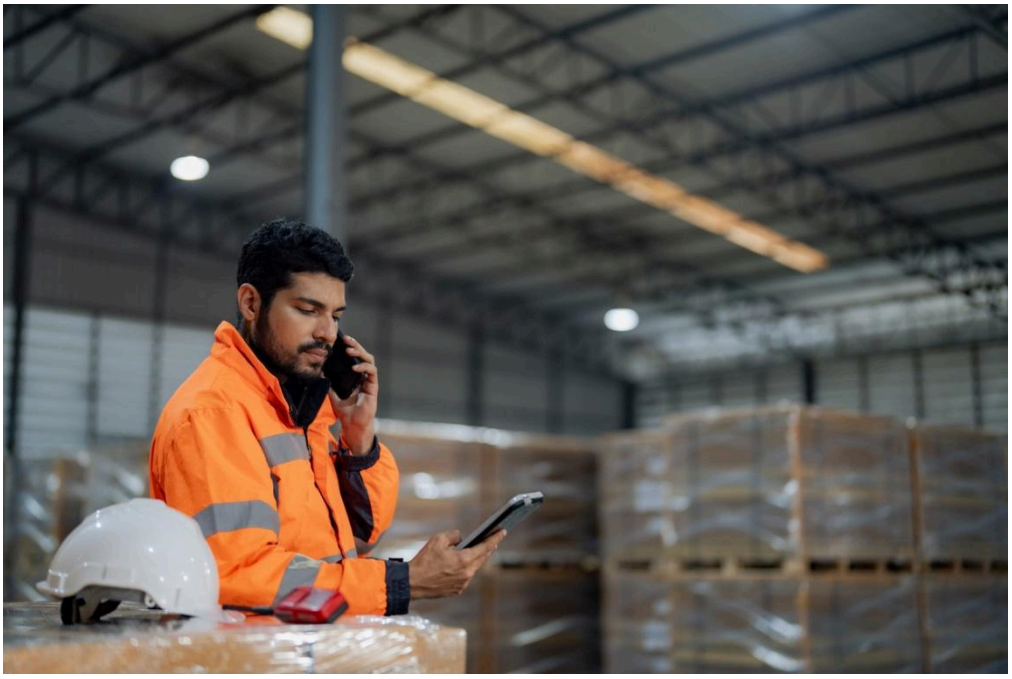
INVESTIGATION INTO PROBLEMS WITH E-VISAS



CITIZENS ADVICE TEIGNBRIDGE RESEARCH AND CAMPAIGNS

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INTRODUCTION

The government has been gradually introducing e-visas over the last six years, replacing physical immigration documents for many people.

Since 2024, people with biometric residence permits (BRPs) and older documents have been encouraged to create an online UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) account to access e-visas – an electronic only record of someone's immigration status. This can then be used to share information about their status with a potential landlord or employer, to allow them to access jobs, housing and housing benefit in the UK.

Anyone who has Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK can continue to use their stamped passport or vignette as proof of their rights, but 18 months after these expire, they are encouraged to apply for E-visas.

Although the government funds charities and organisations in parts of the country to help people who need to create e-visa accounts, none of these cover the rural Devon area.

The Home Office also provides a Resolution Centre for "help and support to anyone seeking to create a UKVI account to access their eVisa" but this has proved very hard for people to contact and doesn't offer a translation service.

A story in Computer Weekly found: "...an inordinate amount of stress (for e-visa applicants) associated with not being able to reliably prove their immigration status has been made worse by a lack of responsiveness and help from the Home Office, which they accused of essentially leaving them in the lurch". Computer Weekly - June 2025

THE PROBLEMS

CA Teignbridge has identified a number of problems people have experienced with e-visas, including:

Difficulties for those who are digitally excluded (including those who have little or no IT skills or capability, or who have no access to smartphones or computers).

Lack of understanding about the system, the need to open a UKVI account and how to go about it, especially for those with limited literacy skills.

Technical issues encountered with the e-visas

Lack of recognition of e-visas by some landlords and employers

Issues for people from some cultures who only have a first name

Increased stress and anxiety for clients when travelling internationally

Risk of being denied boarding or delayed at UK or foreign borders due to lack of understanding of digital ILR status

Additional reliance on family members or support workers to navigate the process

Potential for missed flights, fines, or entry issues, creating broader social and economic consequences.

Addressing these issues and improving the process for applicants will not only solve problems and avoid stress for applicants for e-visas, they will also save government time and money spent on correcting problems.

It will also ensure those with the right to work are not prevented from doing so by inefficient processes which will also contribute to economic growth.

CASE STUDIES

These case studies are from people who have sought help from Citizens Advice Teignbridge. Names changed to protect identities.

Oksana is a 17-year-old student from Ukraine currently studying at a local college. She applied under the Ukrainian Visa Extension Scheme in May 2025.

Despite submitting all required documents, her application became entangled in repeated technical issues with the Home Office eVisa system.

These issues prevented her from progressing crucial applications. Exeter College requested proof of her right to study, and she will be unable to submit her UCAS application, due by 14 January 2026, without confirmation of her visa status. Delays were compounded by confusion over multiple email addresses used during submission, and by the fact that her previous passport had expired and she does not yet have a Ukrainian ID.

Communications from the Home Office were inconsistent and confusing. The family received requests for documents they had already submitted, and the application remained unresolved despite raising two separate escalation cases and filing an official complaint. The lack of clarity left both the student and her family anxious about the risk of refused applications and the potential impact on her education.

Even with internet access and support from advisers, navigating the digital process proved burdensome. The family had to repeatedly check emails, provide evidence, and liaise with the Home Office and her MP to try to secure confirmation of her status.

This case highlights the particular challenges faced by young people and families relying on digital immigration systems, especially when technical errors prevent them from accessing, verifying, or progressing essential applications. Delays and errors in eVisa systems can have serious consequences for education, future opportunities, and wellbeing, even when applicants act promptly and provide all required information.

Immigration Status: Ukraine Scheme (Ukraine Permission Extension)

Olga experienced difficulties photographing and uploading her son's documentation as requested to open an e-visa account. She then faced a long delay of three months causing her much stress and confusion.

Immigration Status: Ukraine Scheme (Ukraine Permission Extension)

Charlie is an elderly American citizen in poor health who has had indefinite leave to remain for around 30 years. He has no smartphone or email address or BRP. He needed help from our adviser to upload the required documentation to open an e-visa account and was given an appointment to give his biometrics in Leeds. He and his wife were confused about the situation and what they had to do. Following action by the adviser, he was given an appointment in Exeter to provide his biometrics instead.

Their stress about the situation was made worse because they had inadvertently made two applications and were given two verification numbers. They received an email via his wife's account saying one application was invalid because they hadn't provided biometric details, although they had for the other application.

When our adviser checked Charlie's new UKVI account, there was no e-visa shown and also no way of checking the status of his application.

Charlie was eventually given an e-visa after five months of trying with help from Citizens Advice Teignbridge.

People like Charlie, with limited digital experience, may struggle to access and use their UKVI eVisa. This includes logging into the UKVI portal, generating a share code, and understanding travel requirements.

Even when a client has access to a tablet or internet, the complexity of the instructions can cause confusion, stress, and risk of missing travel deadlines.

Immigration Status: Indefinite Leave to Remain

Hila, who does not speak English, needed help from CA Teignbridge because when she opened UKVI accounts for herself and her children as

the new e-visas did not record their surnames. The information had been carried over from their BRPs, which had the original omission. Although the error was reported twice, there was no reply from UKVI. At the time of writing, Hila is unable to apply for travel documents while she is waiting for a correction.

Immigration Status: Refugee (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme)

Habib is a refugee with Indefinite Leave to Remain who lives with his wife and three children. The family experienced repeated problems with their UKVI eVisas when incorrect details appeared on almost every family member's digital status. Several of the children's surnames were missing, and both parents were unable to view their own eVisa records at all.

These issues prevented the family from progressing important applications. They were unable to apply for their children's Refugee Travel Documents, and one child's BRP replacement could not move forward because the UKVI system kept requesting biometrics linked to the wrong personal details. Another child's travel document application was delayed when UKVI incorrectly recorded an impossible date of birth, leading to an email warning that the application might be refused with no refund.

The family found these communications extremely confusing and stressful. They received repeated emails asking for documents or corrections, even after supplying evidence multiple times. They also struggled to understand why the parent's travel documents had been approved while their children's documents were still held up by errors in UKVI's own records.

Although their Citizens Advice adviser reported the eVisa errors several times, corrections were slow, and in the meantime the family had to obtain additional letters from schools, doctors and support workers simply to prove their children's names. They were also warned that applications could be rejected if deadlines were missed, despite the delays being caused by UKVI systems rather than the family.

People like Habib and his family, who rely heavily on support services, may struggle to manage the complexity of eVisa corrections. The digital process requires navigating multiple portals, understanding technical instructions, tracking several applications at once, and responding to official emails that are often unclear. Even when the family had internet access and support, the process remained confusing and burdensome, leaving them anxious about refusals, lost fees and their ability to travel or prove their status.

This case highlights the particular challenges refugee families face when digital immigration systems contain errors that they cannot correct themselves, and the stress and delays that follow when eVisa information is inaccurate or inaccessible.

Immigration Status: Refugee (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Improved helpline service for applicants including access to translations
- Information readily available in range of languages
- More communication from UKVI about the status of e-visa applications and accounts
- A better outreach service to digitally excluded communities including physical paperwork for those who can't access or use online services
- Clearer guidance and communication to landlords and employers about accepting eVisa share codes
- Translation and multilingual support services for inquiries
- Regular monitoring to track acceptability of eVisas by public bodies, employers, landlords, airlines and benefits providers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND SOURCES:

UK Stonewalls Questions on How Often its Post-Brexit eVisa System Malfunctions **Politico** 7 Aug 2025

https://www.politico.eu/article/home-office-questions-uk-evisa-system-malfunctions-glitch-immigration/

Up to 700,000 Migrants do not have UK eVisas Days Before Deadline

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Home Office E-Visas Factsheet

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