

# Written Ministerial Statement

*The content of this written ministerial statement is as received at the time from the Ministers. It has not been subject to the official reporting (Hansard) process.*

## The Executive Office

### CHANGES TO THE UKRAINE VISA SCHEMES BY HOME OFFICE

*Published on 28 March 2024.*

**Mrs O'Neill (The First Minister) and Mrs Little-Pengelly (The deputy First Minister):** We wish to advise you that Home Office have recently made changes to Ukraine Visa schemes including changes to the immigration rules which apply from 3pm on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024. These primarily change the routes for Ukrainians to seek sanctuary here and the length of time for which they can stay. They will not impact the conditions granted under permission to stay, with the schemes continuing to provide the same rights and entitlements to access work, benefits, healthcare and education that Ukrainians' have benefitted from under the existing schemes.

#### **Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPE)**

On 19 February 2024, The Home Office announced that existing Ukraine scheme visa holders will be able to apply for permission to remain in the UK for an additional 18 months under a new Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme. It is set to open in early 2025 with the first Ukrainian scheme visas due to start expiring in March 2025.

#### **Homes for Ukraine (HFU)**

People submitting Homes for Ukraine visa applications after 3pm on 19<sup>th</sup> February will be granted 18 months permission rather than the previous 36 which aligns to the period for the UPE. Applications made after this time are also subject to the previously disapplied paragraphs of General Grounds for Refusal to the Ukraine schemes rules.

Additionally, changes were also made to the guidance on approved sponsors to require that new sponsors of Homes for Ukraine applications must be either British or Irish citizens or have indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in the UK and commit to a minimum 6-month sponsorship period.

#### **Ukraine Family Scheme**

The Ukraine Family Scheme closed to new applicants on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

#### **Ukraine Extension Scheme (UES)**

The Ukraine Extension Scheme will close on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024 but under the changes announced, it will remain open beyond this date for children born in the UK to parents who hold permission under the Ukraine schemes.