



*UKRAINE
PERMISSION
EXTENSION
SCHEME*

Focus Group Feedback



“

It's a victory when the weapons
fall silent, and people speak up.

Volodymyr Zelensky

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On Thursday, February 29th at 8pm a special live webinar was hosted by Sanctuary Foundation to discuss the government's announcement offering an 18-month extension to UK visas for Ukrainian refugees.

300 attendees joined and were able to raise questions about the extension scheme. A summary of those questions and comments from the webinar is attached below, along with some suggested proposals.



Top 10 Questions

1. What are the conditions for visa extension and refusal?

This was the most common question, with attendees seeking clarity on the criteria for being granted the extension and the reasons why an application might be rejected.

2. What are the pathways for Ukrainians to get settled status?

Many attendees enquired about whether there is the possibility for Ukrainian guests to obtain permanent residency in the UK, and what steps they would need to take.

3. Can Ukrainians make an asylum claim to remain in the UK?

Several attendees asked about the availability of asylum or other refugee routes citing fear of violence and discrimination should they return.

4. What are the specific conditions and processes for the 18-month visa extension?

Attendees sought details about the specific requirements for the application of the 18-month visa extension. For example, would applicants retain the right to free movement and be able to travel back and forth to Ukraine as needed?

5. What are the financial implications for Ukrainians on the visa extension?

Enquiries were made about whether Ukrainians could buy property during the extension period and when they might be eligible for mortgages. Other financial implications might include access to benefits, educational programmes, and the right to work.

6. Is there any inter-government coordination?

Attendees questioned whether the visa update scheme was being coordinated with the Ukrainian government, and what the Ukraine government's response is to the scheme.

7. Are there accessible Biometric data collection processes for people with disabilities?

Attendees wanted to know if people with disabilities could still submit their biometric data using their passports, as was previously allowed, or if they will be required to visit the Visa Centre.

8. Is it possible to extend the Biometric Residence Permit if the holder has returned to Ukraine?

Extending the validity of a BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) might be pertinent if the holder is in Ukraine but plans to return to the UK within the timeframe.

9. Are applications still being accepted for the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme?

Attendees were interested to know if the original sponsorship scheme was still in place and if there had been any changes to that scheme.

10. Could the scheme be adapted to enable Ukrainian children to complete their education in the UK?

Concerns were raised about the impact on children and their education. The short-term nature of the scheme could have a detrimental impact on children who are working towards completing a degree, a key stage, SATS or other examinations and qualifications.

11. Will government support be the same after the initial 3-year period?

Attendees wanted to know if host payments would continue and if the government would continue to give financial support to local authorities for supporting Ukrainians.

12. How will this affect right to rent and work?

Attendees were concerned with only 3 months to apply for an extension, and uncertainty around whether it would be approved, that they may be denied housing and employment due to the uncertainty of their visa status.

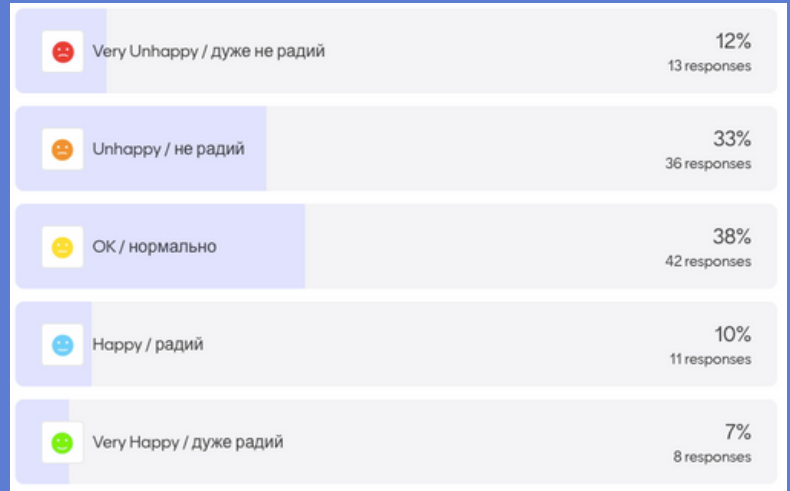


**How attendees are
feeling**

How attendees are feeling...

...about having to wait until 3 months before their visa runs out to apply for the extension:

Very Unhappy	12%
Unhappy	33%
Ok	38%
Happy	10%
Very Happy	7%



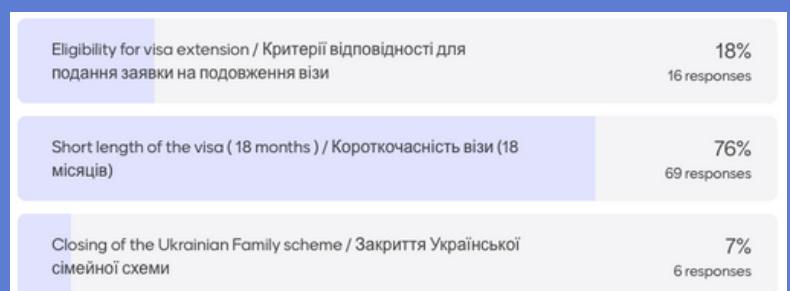
...about being offered an 18-month extension:

Very Unhappy	4%
Unhappy	22%
Ok	34%
Good	23%
Very Good	17%



...about what worries them the most:

Eligibility for visa extension	18%
Short length of the visa (18-months)	76%
Closing of the Ukrainian Family Scheme	7%



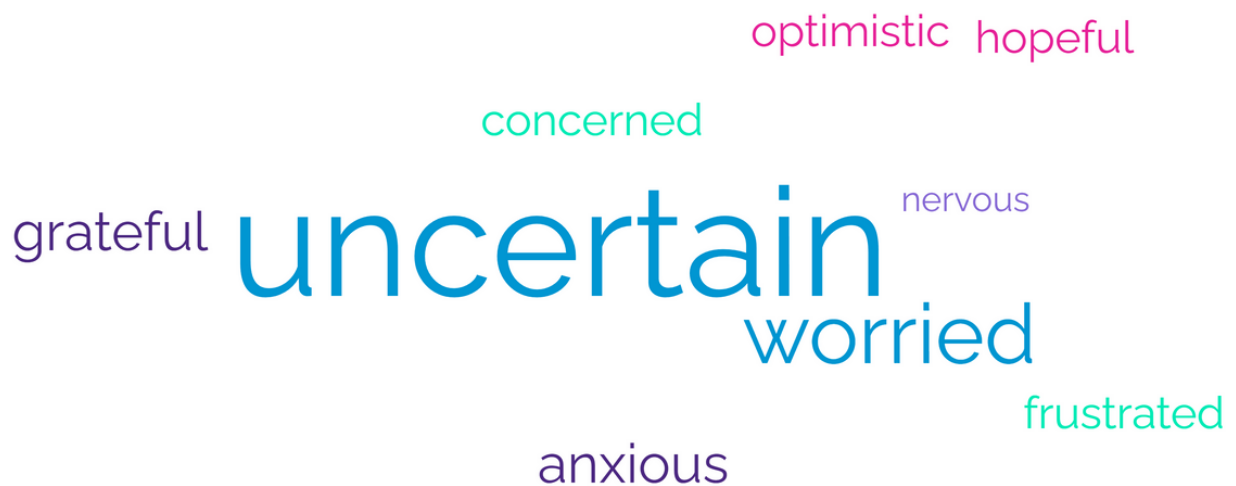
...about whether the UK should offer indefinite leave to remain:

Yes 93%
No 7%



...about the visa situation (in one word):

Uncertain 26
Worried 15
Anxious 7
Grateful 5
Nervous 5
Concerned 4
Frustrated 4
Hopeful 4
Optimistic 4





Attendee Statistics

294 Attendees

47% Ukrainian

53% UK host

57% participated in survey
questions





Comments from attendees

“We all do appreciate the work you have done and still doing. Thank you very much. But a lot of Ukrainians have property and families back in Ukraine, therefore will not want to stay in the UK. However, young people, especially from now, territories under Russian control, do not have anything back there, as myself. I, personally, do not own anything back then + **my hometown is destroyed. I have lost all opportunities in Ukraine and therefore I want to stay in the UK and develop the opportunities I have here right now.**”

““I’m happy because I was able to move my 5 children to a safe place and **I appreciate any day of safety.** I didn’t expect to live here, I remember we are refugees and guests, we are not residents so I respect this time and appreciate and am happy for this time.”

–On why you’re happy about the extension

“I live very close to the Russian border in Ukraine, I can't go back. My child is happy here and it will be dangerous for him back in Ukraine.”

“It'd be really much appreciated if the government provides a proper instruction/implementation guidance in advance (now) so that people can actually understand the process and get prepared.”

“How long will the notice period be for those who are not granted extension?”

“Thanks billions times for support.”

“Where can I return with my children after 4.5 years if my home is no longer there – it is destroyed, but my family is calm and happy here. What will happen to us in the future?”

“Will a different government approach this differently?”

““The extension is hard – it gives less certainty to people with kids and have nowhere to go. Knowing what’s happening back home, they don’t have that certainty, especially knowing that this extension isn’t going to be the route to relocate and stay here. It makes people more paranoid and stressed. The family scheme closed in one day. Where is any reassurance that that isn’t what’s going to happen with the Homes for Ukraine scheme? **Things change with such a speed you can’t plan for any future ahead.** Most people have PTSD.”

–On questions for the government

Proposals

Don't leave refugees in limbo

MAIL-BOX

Homes for Ukraine

MAIL-BOX



Proposals

There was a wide range of opinions expressed during the webinar. Many felt very grateful for the UK's hospitality and the extension of the permission to remain in the UK. Many others were feeling destabilised by the lack of clarity and the short-term nature of the visa. The rapid closure of the Family Scheme without much warning or explanation was also destabilising.

Reflecting on the live event and the responses Sanctuary Foundation recommends the following:

- **1) Provide a friendly and warm communication piece that celebrates the friendships that have formed between the UK and Ukraine at a country level and the friendships that have formed at a household level. Clearly explain as much information and the rationale for policy decisions in the context of this friendship.**
- **2) Provide as much clarity as possible on the criteria for acceptance or rejection for the UPE.**
- **3) Open the application for the UPE as early as possible rather than waiting till the final three months.**
- **4) Provide assurance to Ukrainian young people that they will be given a visa that will cover them to finish their education in the UK.**

- 5) Give some indication of what is likely to happen at the end of the 18-months UPE if the war is continuing on or if homes are destroyed or under occupation.
- 6) Explain the reasoning behind not offering indefinite leave to remain.
- 7) Provide details of a route and its conditions should Ukrainians decide to apply for asylum or indefinite leave to remain.
- 8) Provide guidance on family reunification and caring for vulnerable relatives following the closure of the Family Scheme.



Sanctuary Foundation

Sanctuary Foundation exists to provide compassionate service to vulnerable people through catalytic partnerships between government, churches, civil society groups, the media and individuals.

Sanctuary Foundation was launched in February 2022 with a rapid response initiative to inspire families, individuals, churches, community groups and businesses to welcome Ukrainian refugees. It became a registered charity in April 2022.

Sanctuary Foundation is involved in informing government and shaping policy, inspiring and resourcing civil society and mobilising churches, faith groups and communities.

Sanctuary Foundation's work to date has focussed on refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan as rapid response support and innovation was needed which harnessed both public and government response.

Over the past year Sanctuary Foundation has produced and distributed over 29500 welcome books for Ukrainian children arriving in the UK. It has delivered over 2970 care packages to refugee mums from Ukraine and Afghanistan. It has helped train and inspire over 16000 people through live and online events. Over 2550 households are active users on our online refugee support course. Over 8000 Ukrainian refugees receive regular updates and inspiration from our mailings and over 31000 hosts and supporters are on our mailing list. Further resources can be found on their website

Sanctuary Foundation remains committed to help Ukrainians and Afghans but also stands ready to respond to new emerging crises.





We can overcome
hostility with hospitality
and war with a
wave of compassion.

Dr Krish Kandiah