
THE DIGITAL STATUS CRISIS

NEXT STEPS:

How you can support accessible,
inclusive and reliable proof of
immigration status

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SCAN ME



the **3** million

1

To address the issues with the eVisa system, the government must:

Immediately and substantially **increase resources to fix the foundations of the current eVisa data** held by the Home Office on ten million people, before this data forms the basis of a new mandatory digital ID system. This includes:

- **helplines** that allow eVisa holders to speak directly with Home Office staff who can fix their problems on the spot, or otherwise within hours, rather than webchats or error forms that leave people in limbo for weeks or sometimes months.
- far greater efforts to **proactively address technical problems** and eVisa data inaccuracy.
- vastly **improved development processes** to avoid repeats of computer bugs, and insufficient testing of fixes for those bugs, that affect thousands of statuses.

2

Provide proof of digital immigration status that is inclusive and reliable:

- any form of digital status must be **stable, reliable and secure**.
- it must be possible to prove status even when **not connected to the internet**.
- it should be possible to **print it as a backup**, just like a boarding pass that can be scanned.
- the Government must provide it **in card form** to those who need it and are digitally excluded.

3

Conduct a **full independent review** into the eVisa system and increase transparency on the volume and range of errors reported to the Home Office.

4

Demonstrate that **the lessons of the critical failures of the eVisa system have been learned** before mandatory digital ID is further rolled out.

The Government must conduct meaningful engagement with relevant stakeholders, such as the people who are using and are impacted by the eVisa system.

EDM 1279: DIGITAL-ONLY IMMIGRATION STATUS

The motion raises concerns about the UK's digital-only immigration status system, mainly:

- fails to provide individuals with **secure, tangible, offline and independently accessible** proof of status.
- Creates serious **accessibility barriers** for digitally excluded and vulnerable individuals.
- Has shown alarming failures of data integrity, including corrupted records displaying incorrect photographs, biodata, or status details.

It calls on the government to:

- Launch an independent review of the implementation of digital-only status.
- Consult affected communities as part of that review.
- Consider secure and reliable alternatives to digital-only proof.
- Provide compensation to those who have suffered losses because of system failures.

Sign the EDM:



<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/63656/digitalonly-immigration-status>

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

To demand Government transparency and accountability on the implementation of the eVisa system, MPs may wish to table Written or Oral Questions. Below are some sample questions.

Education

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many students were initially charged international fees but subsequently corrected to home fees.

Health and Social Care

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment has been made of the mental health impact on individuals who face repeated difficulties accessing NHS services due to digital-only immigration status.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, how many individuals have been charged for NHS services because they had missed the deadline for applying to the EU Settlement Scheme, and what was the total amount charged to these individuals.

His Majesty's Government

To ask His Majesty's Government, what cross-departmental coordination exists to address the impact of digital-only immigration status on access to (a) healthcare, (b) education, (c) welfare benefits, (d) local authority services including housing, (e) HMRC online services, (f) driving licences and (g) employment.

Home Office

Travel

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many individuals with valid immigration status have been prevented from travelling back to, or re-entering, the UK due to issues accessing their digital status.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many calls were made to the Carrier Support Hub each month since January 2024.

Accessibility

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what consultations were undertaken with disability rights organizations before implementing the digital-only immigration status system.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of digital-only immigration status on elderly and vulnerable individuals who may lack digital literacy or access to technology.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the impact of digital-only immigration status on individuals who lack capacity.

Economic impact

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has been made of the economic impact of eVisa system errors that prevent individuals with legal work rights from contributing to (a) tax revenues, (b) National Insurance, and (c) the wider economy.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment has been made of the additional time and costs incurred by businesses and public services in verifying digital-only status compared to physical documents.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many requests were made to the Employer Checking Service each month for the last two years, and of these, how many returned a positive verification and how many did not return a positive verification.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many requests were made to the Landlord Checking Service each month for the last two years, and of these, how many returned a positive verification and how many did not return a positive verification.

Legal protections

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what legal protections exist for individuals who face negative consequences due to inability to access their digital status through no fault of their own.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what data her Department holds on the frequency and duration of eVisa system outages or technical failures in the past year.

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many complaints have been received regarding difficulties accessing eVisa accounts due to (a) lack of digital skills, (b) disability-related barriers, and (c) language barriers in the past 12 months.

Digital Glitches

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what quality controls her Department has put in place to help ensure that people accessing their digital immigration status receive accurate information.

Independent Inquiry

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she will commit to establishing an independent inquiry into the implementation and impact of digital-only immigration status.

Digital IDs

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what lessons have been learned from the implementation of digital-only immigration status that will inform the development of any Digital ID card system.

Public Services

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance has been issued to public services on handling situations where digital-only status cannot be verified due to technical failures, and how many such incidents have been recorded.

THE IMPACT OF EVISA FAILURES

“The Digital Status Crisis” report analyses over 1,870 reports received by the 3million directly from people who have suffered due to eVisa failures.

These reports are only the tip of the iceberg. From the limited data available, we are estimating nearly 940,000 people could be impacted, struggling to prove their rights in the UK.

Behind each report there is a story of injustice, of a person being confronted by a “computer says no” error and struggling to get help.

These are some of their stories, in their own words:

Mark Johnstone’s story - “For months, I couldn’t access my eVisa. It caused so much stress, anxiety and frustration.”

“My name is Mark Johnstone. I was born in New Zealand. I’m a qualified solicitor now retired.

I entered the UK in 1983 and was granted ILR status 5 years later. No BRPs existed then nor was I issued with one subsequently. I married a UK citizen and we have 3 children.

I made a “no time limit” application in October last year. The HO affirmed my ILR status under the Windrush Policy in April this year. I created my UKVI account, completed the ID verification process, and received an email saying UKVI were linking my eVisa. I heard nothing further.

After several weeks, I called the Resolution Centre and was told to repeat the process. A few days later, I received confirmation that my eVisa was ready to view. Sadly, it wasn’t.

I called the Resolution Centre many times, used their chatbot, and, when all failed, lodged a formal complaint.

I also involved my local MP, Paul Kohler. I then came across the 3million, completed their “eVisa problem” report, and they offered to escalate my case. Within 24 hours, miraculously, my eVisa was available to view.

Two key takeaways from my experience:

- Firstly, poor communication: There appeared to be no coherent communications strategy to raise awareness of the transition to the digital eVisa system—no features on TV/Radio, no information posters at airports. I only became aware of it last October by chance.

Between submitting my NTL application and receiving the decision letter, my concern was around my ability to re-enter the UK. The HO provided no comfort or guidance, so I carried a whole file of documents in case I was denied boarding. I followed all procedures to escalate matters but nothing happened; just silence and going around in circles with the Resolution Centre.

- Secondly, its impact on me: The process caused much stress, anxiety, and frustration over many months and countless wasted hours on the phone. I felt powerless. Without the3million's intervention, I doubt my case would be resolved even now. I should not have had to rely on them.

Finally, when travelling overseas, we are advised to carry original proof of ILR status, still acceptable per HO guidance. Had I known what I now know, I probably would not have gone down this route. I do question whether this transition to digital eVisas has achieved its purpose. There must be a better and simpler way."

Shingai Mabhumbo's story: *"Three times in the space of 8 months, my right to live and work was compromised by system errors I had no power to correct myself"*

"In November 2023, I logged into the GOV.UK "Prove Your Right to Work" service to generate a Share Code for a new job.

Instead of my own photograph, I saw three passport images of another person attached to my name and details.

The last time I used the service, in July 2022, everything was correct. But now, the system that employers rely on to confirm my identity had effectively erased me.

I contacted UKVI immediately. They confirmed that internally they could see my correct image - but not the incorrect ones I was seeing online.

At one point, I was even asked if I knew the person in the photographs, perhaps a relative.

That was devastating. I had reported a system error, yet I felt treated as a suspect rather than supported as a citizen.

The case was referred to a technical team, but no timeframe was given. "Only after intervention by my MP and the3million charity was my image restored in December 2023."

In January 2024, it happened again. My Biometric Residence Card was flagged as invalid — marked "expired" or "lost/stolen."

When I called UKVI, I was told their records showed I had naturalized in 2021. That was simply wrong. What happened in 2021 was that I was granted refugee status. Once again, my MP and The3million intervened to resolve the error.

In **June 2024**, while raising awareness within the **Eritrean community in Leeds** about share code errors, I checked my own record again using the Home Office link from the previous rectification. My image had **vanished again**, replaced by an **error code**. After repeated login failures and clearing my browser cookies, I finally regained access to my account.

Three times in the space of 8 months, my right to live and work in the UK was compromised by system errors I had no power to correct myself. I stayed in my job because I feared that if I left, I might never be able to prove my right to work elsewhere.

The lesson is simple: no one's legal status should exist only online.

What's needed is clear:

- **Physical proof of status** must be reinstated as a safeguard.
- **Transparent correction routes** must exist, with accountability and timelines.
- **Independent oversight of data integrity** is essential, so errors are not hidden or minimized.

If we want trust in digital identity, we must design it to withstand failure — and never leave people to disappear inside broken systems.”

Helen Jubb: “My vulnerable client’s data was completely merged with someone else’s”

“North East Law Centre is the only Law Centre in the North East of England and we offer predominantly free advice to many clients across the region across most areas of social welfare law.

We were contacted in May 2025 by Newcastle City Council to help them with legal advice for a vulnerable family they were supporting. The client has given her permission to tell her story.

There was a great deal of uncertainty around her status and that of her two young children due to her complex immigration history and ongoing physical and mental health issues. Her support workers contacted the Home Office and were told she held Refugee status, but her children did not.

We understood from the information given that she had an eVisa that would show her status and proceeded to help her with accessing this to clarify the situation.

We were still unable to access her visa and in a call to the Resolution Centre we followed the instructions to reset the account information. This was successful, however, the photograph and national insurance number of this eVisa were not in fact our client. It then became clear that there had been a major error and two individuals' data had been merged together – having the same name and date of birth.

This caused our client immense distress as she understandably believed that she had valid leave in the UK. Later that day our client received two abusive phone calls from the other individual on the e-visa account accusing her of fraud. It became apparent that our client's personal phone number and possibly other personal data had been shared by the Home Office which caused considerable concern.

In order to try and establish the chain of events that led to this, we submitted a Subject Access Request to clarify her situation; this was returned to us with merged details of both individuals. We reported this as a data breach but to date have heard nothing further.

We have also reported this to the Resolution Centre with no response and lodged a complaint with the Home Office and have requested an urgent review of the very brief response.”

Emily D'Owd: *“Vulnerable people, victims of abuse and older people struggle to independently prove their rights through the eVisa system”*

“Through our work at the North East Law Centre, we have found accessibility issues and a lack of digital literacy to be significant problems in relation to eVisas. Older individuals and other vulnerable groups often struggle to navigate the system due to limited digital skills. While we can assist with setting up eVisa accounts, this does not mean people can access or manage them independently in the future.

There is also widespread confusion about what an eVisa is. Many are unaware of its existence or mistakenly believe that applying for an eVisa is the same as applying for further leave. We have supported clients whose Leave to Remain expired for this reason, and others with historic documentation proving indefinite leave who only discover the need for an eVisa when asked to provide a share code.

Subsequent No Time Limit applications pose additional challenges, particularly for vulnerable individuals who have lost historic documents and cannot otherwise prove their status. This issue is common among people experiencing mental health difficulties, including those in hospital or recently discharged.

We have also encountered cases where perpetrators of abuse set up eVisa accounts using their own contact details, leaving victims unable to access them.

With support from the eVisa Resolution Centre, we have helped clients regain control without alerting perpetrators. However, as this service is only available to grant-funded organisations, individuals cannot resolve such issues independently.

Similar problems affect care-experienced young people whose accounts were created by former carers. Frequent placement changes often result in lost documents, and video verification requirements can feel intimidating.

Finally, the inability to evidence Section 3C leave on an eVisa creates further accessibility barriers by leaving individuals unable to prove lawful status whilst their application is pending.

This, in turn, prevents access to essential services such as housing and welfare benefits, and leaves them unable to prove their legal right to work and study. For many of our clients this has had a significant impact on their livelihoods and has placed many already vulnerable people at further risk of harm.”

Shoba Haridas: *“Mistakes happen. But the terrifying part here is that there was no way to fix it - no escalation, no accountability, no service for errors of the Home Office’s own making.”*

“I never imagined I’d have a problem with my eVisa.

I hold Indefinite Leave to Remain. My Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) expired in 2023, so I renewed it well before the deadline and created my eVisa account as required by the Home Office’s 2024 digital transition. I followed every rule, every instruction.

Then, in 2025, I received a notice saying I needed to link a new ID document to access my eVisa, because my BRP was “expiring.” No problem, I thought – I used my passport, the same one I used for my BRP renewal. That’s when everything began to go wrong.

The system repeatedly rejected my application (I applied about 10 times) to link my passport, claiming the name on my passport didn’t match my eVisa. But the names were identical – character for character.

Thinking this would be an easy fix, I called the Home Office helpline. It wasn't. It became a 4 month ordeal. At one point, I called every day for two weeks. Every conversation followed the same pattern:

- Staff confirmed that my names matched. No one could explain why the system was rejecting it.
- A few even suggested I apply again and pretend I'd changed my name – in other words, lie – just to bypass their system error.
- When I asked if anyone could simply review my documents and fix the mistake, the answer was always the same: “Sorry, there's nothing more we can do if the system won't accept it.”

The stress was enormous. I worried that I'd lose access to my eVisa entirely – meaning I'd have no way to prove my right to live and work in the UK, despite holding ILR. I wouldn't be able to change jobs. I couldn't travel. My life here could effectively be frozen because of a computer glitch.

Mistakes happen in any organisation. But the terrifying part here is that there was no way to fix it – no escalation route, no accountability, no service for errors of the Home Office's own making.

When I pressed for a solution, I was finally told to send in my passport. But that raised even bigger problems:

- There was no guarantee of when it would be returned. I was told it could take three months to a year. Would you send an important document of yours with that vague timeline?
- My passport is my only form of ID and the only way to prove my status in the UK.
- My father is unwell abroad. I may need to travel at any moment. Sending my passport away for an unknowable period of time is not an option and shouldn't be used by the Home Office.

This isn't just an inconvenience. It's a systemic failure – one that leaves lawful residents powerless.

When a government department wields such control over people's lives, it must also bear a duty of care and accountability. There needs to be a clear, human process to resolve Home Office errors or even hold them accountable.

It took 3million to finally intervene to get my case resolved. I spoke to one of them, sent them all relevant details and within 5 minutes, my eVisa was linked to my passport. I'm always grateful that someone put me in touch with them.

Otherwise, I'd still be here today, unable to travel and stressing about what to do if I need to prove my identity in the UK.”

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