

Written Evidence submitted by the3million (HAR2847)

Executive Summary: Lessons from the eVisa

We submit this written evidence to bring to light the current failures of mandatory digital identity programmes in the UK, primarily the eVisa scheme. This written evidence outlines how the current eVisa scheme is not fit for purpose, due to design flaws that have left individuals unable to prove their immigration status. We are increasingly concerned that, in its current form, digital status risks creating another Windrush-style scandal in the sense that people who have residence rights in the UK are unable to prove those rights and therefore fall victim to the regulations set up by the Hostile Environment. The eVisa scheme is already showing similar patterns of poor data quality, miscommunication, flawed implementation of technology and inadequate Home Office mitigation measures. Before any further rollout of digital identity systems, the failures of the eVisa scheme must be recognised as a critical lesson.

This submission focuses on Question One and the current data practices and errors of the eVisa. We then provide evidence on how digital status has increased friction of eVisa holders when travelling in and out of the UK. For Question Two we outline how the current practice of digital right to work checks have been plagued with technical and implementation errors. For Question Four we highlight the existing privacy and security risks for eVisa holders' data due to the inaccuracy of personal information presented on accounts. Finally, we outline the difficulties the eVisa has created for people in accessing public services.

Who We Are:

the3million is a non-partisan grassroots organisation of EU citizens¹ in the UK, formed after the 2016 EU referendum to protect the rights of people who have made the UK their home. As the first form of mandatory digital-only identification was rolled out for EU citizens applying for status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), we have extensively investigated the eVisa scheme. We created online tools for people to self-report to collect the experiences of EU citizens² and other immigration status holders who had difficulties accessing their digital status.³

Introduction:

We welcome the Home Affairs inquiry into the potential digital forms of identification. the3million urges the committee to fully evaluate the implementation of the eVisa scheme as core learnings before there is any further Government rollout of digital IDs. This written evidence will focus on the Home Office's existing digital form of immigration status, the eVisa, to bring to light the necessary changes to design, implementation and communication needed if there is to be any further digital ID. the3million urges the Home Affairs Committee to learn from the failings of the eVisa schemes, rushed rollout and technical errors that have resulted in people essentially stripped of their immigration status. Digital identity schemes must have a holistic, people-centred approach to considering the delivery, deployment and maintenance of data quality and technical systems.

The eVisa is an electronic record of immigration status accessed through Home Office websites using a UKVI (United Kingdom Visas and Immigration) account. From November 2024 successful visa applicants, who used to receive a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), were invited to create a UKVI account to access an eVisa. Past holders of physical forms of immigration proof were told by the Home Office to set up a UKVI account in order to gain access to their eVisa. This did not apply to non-EU citizens with status under the EUSS, who were already given an eVisa alongside a

¹ the3million uses 'EU citizens' as shorthand for EU, EEA and Swiss citizens who were resident in the UK before 31 December 2020, and their family members (of any nationality) with derived rights.

² the3million. December 2020. Report It! | Giving a Voice to EU Citizens in the UK.

<https://the3million.org.uk/report-it>

³ The3million and ILPA. June 2024. Report problems with your eVisa. <https://www.evisa-problems.org.uk/>

Biometric Residence Card (BRC) at the time of their grant of status under the EUSS. An eVisa is required for the majority of UK immigration status holders to prove the right to work, rent, travel, and access public services. The Home Office has said that about seven million people⁴ now have an eVisa as their proof of immigration status, although a more accurate estimate might be at least ten million people.⁵ Initially the eVisa scheme was scheduled to become the sole proof of immigration status for the majority of people at the start of 2025, as most existing BRPs and BRCs expired on 31 December 2024. However, for travel purposes the Home Office had a 'grace period' that allowed people with expired BRPs and BRCs to use these physical documents as proof of immigration status until 31 March 2025. The travel grace period was then extended by another two months until 1 June 2025 because the eVisa scheme had implementation and accessibility issues for people migrating to UKVI accounts.

Since April 2022, BRP and BRC holders have had to prove their right to work and rent via digital means, even if they did not yet have a UKVI account or eVisa. Those without a UKVI account can continue using these digital services to prove their right to work or rent for up to 18 months after the expiry date on their BRP. The Home Office estimated that at the end of April 2025, approximately 300,000 people still needed to register for a UKVI account in order to access their eVisa⁶. From the reports sent into the 3million by eVisa holders the challenges many faced were from technical issues in setting up a UKVI account and proving their identity, and from the resulting UKVI account not successfully giving access to the eVisa that should have been set up by the Home Office. From our research a core issue with the eVisa system is the design to have proof of immigration status mediated via the internet.

The Committee Must Learn from the Failures of the eVisa Design:

The design of eVisa represents a fundamental shift in how immigration status is held, away from the traditional individually granted, durable status. The current design is a **transactional, online-only system** vulnerable to outages, lockouts, and miscommunication of acceptable proof of status. The entire structure of the eVisa scheme is digital-only with no backup physical document, apart from a few exceptions of legacy proof that is still accepted, such as those with vignette stickers in their passports. Currently, refugees still awaiting an asylum decision continue to receive a physical Application Registration Card (ARC). The design of the eVisa makes the system less of a **digital document** (for example the NHS Covid Pass may have been understood to be a digital document, held by the individual) and more of an **online process** (that requires repeated logging in to a website to obtain temporary permission tokens).

Gaining initial access to the eVisa first requires a person, whether they hold an existing Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) or more recently they are applying for or have been granted a visa, to create a UKVI account. This involves submitting an email address and a mobile telephone number, and verifying their identity with a smartphone app "UK immigration: ID Check" to scan their identity document and upload a photo of their face. After creating a UKVI account the visa holder must link to the eVisa which the Home Office needs to have previously created on their services. Once the UKVI account is set up and correctly linked to the eVisa, ongoing access to the eVisa relies on two interlinked services; 'View your eVisa and get a share code to prove your immigration status'⁷

⁴ Home Office, *Home Office 2030 Digital Strategy*, published 9 July 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-2030-digital-strategy/home-office-2030-digital-strategy>.

⁵ Home Office estimates 5.8 million people have status under the EUSS, and these people will have eVisas. Home Office also estimates 4.3 million people have created a UKVI account to access an eVisa <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-immigration-status-evisa-ukvi-account-creation-data/online-immigration-status-evisa-ukvi-account-creation-data>.

⁶ Home Office, Estimated number of people who still need to create a UKVI account: methodology note <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-immigration-status-evisa-ukvi-account-creation-data/estimated-number-of-people-who-still-need-to-create-a-ukvi-account-methodology-note>.

and ‘Update your details in your UKVI account’⁸. A person will need to (repeatedly, on an ongoing basis) generate share codes to prove their right to work, rent in England, study, open a bank account, or access other services if automated inter-governmental APIs do not work. These services include receiving treatment from the National Health Service (NHS), applying for welfare benefits or student finance, and applying for or renewing driving licences. Share codes are a string of nine-digits that will then need to be passed to a third-party checker, who in turn must choose the correct Home Office website to input the share code along with the visa holder’s date of birth for their immigration status to be verified. Production and checks of share-codes rely on internet connection.

When the design of the ‘View and Prove’ service was first piloted for EU citizens there were concerns from the Home Office equality impact report that right to work and rent checks being carried out digitally could potentially indirectly discriminate against elderly and disabled people, women and Roma people, with the main proposed mitigation being the Resolution Centre providing help and support.⁹ The 3million has received many reports saying that it is increasingly not possible for individuals to speak to a staff member at the Resolution Centre, instead all attempted contact routes resulting in automated messaging and redirections to a web chat, an error reporting form, or to guidance videos.

Q(1) How effectively is data relating to individuals currently being used and shared by the Home Office and its agencies?

a) Current Data Practices of the eVisa Scheme

The Home Office states that of April 2025: 4,305,068 UKVI accounts had been created by individuals using the Standalone Account Registration process¹⁰. A further large cohort including but not limited to EUSS status holders have UKVI accounts that were created as part of the application for immigration status. Data displayed in the UKVI account includes: a photo, passport number, name, date of birth, nationality, national insurance number, visa conditions, passport expiry date, visa expiry date, sign-in details and contact details. Data collected as part of the visa application includes far more, including proof of residence and family relationships, previous visa applications, and sometimes fingerprints. It is not clear where or for how long this data is stored, or who it can be shared with. The UKVI data forms the base for all digital identity verification across government systems. Data associated with the eVisa differs from what is displayed in the UKVI account, what is displayed when using the View & Prove service, and what is displayed for the third-party checkers, including landlords¹¹ or employers¹² who input the share-code and the date of birth into one of three checking services hosted on GOV.UK. The View & Prove system presents special category data including a person’s nationality and a photograph for identification purposes, and requires the third-party checker to have knowledge of the eVisa holder’s date of birth¹³.

⁷ Home Office. *View and Prove Your Immigration Status (eVisa)*. <https://www.gov.uk/evisa/view-evisa-get-share-code-prove-immigration-status>.

⁸ Home Office. *Update Your Details in Your UKVI Account*. <https://www.gov.uk/evisa/update-ukvi-account>.

⁹ Home Office, *Equality Impact Assessment: Biometric Residence Cards (BRC) and Biometric Residence Permits (BRP)*, March 2022, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62b2ff358fa8f5357a677f31/20210917_BRC_BRP_EIA_word.pdf.

¹⁰ UK Visas and Immigration, *Online Immigration Status (eVisa): UKVI Account Creation Data*, published 4 December 2024; last updated 22 May 2025, accessed 4 August 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-immigration-status-evisa-ukvi-account-creation-data/online-immigration-status-evisa-ukvi-account-creation-data>

¹¹ Home Office, *Right to Rent: ‘View Right to Rent’ Service*, GOV.UK, <https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-rent>.

¹² Home Office, *Check a Job Applicant’s Right to Work: Use Their Share Code*, GOV.UK, <https://www.gov.uk/view-right-to-work>.

¹³ Home Office. August 2025. Digital Status “View and Prove” Data Protection Impact Assessment. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-status-view-and-prove-data-protection-impact-assessment>.

b) Failures in Data Accuracy and Upkeep

Since December 2020 the3million has been collecting reports by users of digital status to better understand the errors and issues occurring for people. From these reports the consistent problems still derive from the data quality and technical errors that occur for eVisa holders. The Home Office's data quality practices have been previously criticised as not fit for purpose and have been exacerbated due to the change of major administrative systems.¹⁴ Last March the *Guardian*¹⁵ reported that a core data platform for the Home Office, the Person Centric Data Platform (PCDP), had errors for 76,000 people resulting in their eVisa displaying incorrect biographical information. In practice, an eVisa that shows a different person's photo, incorrect status, nationality or passport number renders the digital status unusable and the person's status insecure. The Home Office confirmed that the data presented on 'View and Prove' is retrieved from the PCDP system and recognised the risk of the system inadvertently sharing or presenting inaccurate data for users.¹⁶ The integrity of this data platform is crucial for people to prove their legal rights in the UK. Incorrect data being displayed for eVisa users remains an issue.

On 6 March 2025, the3million sent a letter to the Home Office about another large-scale incident of incorrect information on UKVI accounts. The Home Office confirmed this was as a result of a flawed software release in their reply of 2 April 2025¹⁷. On 6 August 2025, the3million and ILPA jointly wrote to the Home Office about an eVisa bug that downgraded EUSS settled status to pre-settled status¹⁸. In addition to the data errors there are reports that the crucial features of the UKVI website are not functional. eVisa holders encounter numerous error messages when attempting to update their linked identity documents, such as passports, or when logging into the website. Issues of access to the UKVI website and updating crucial information to ensure people do not encounter issues whilst travelling underscores the design to maintain a live status is not fit for purpose. People who encounter error messages do not have the ability to prove their status if asked to produce evidence on the spot. As the intended design of the eVisa is to be a 'live' status of the person, this means that people who are experiencing these errors will feel the effect of their inability to prove their status instantly. On 11 August 2025 the UKVI website 'View and Prove' was unavailable for all eVisa holders for several hours. For the website that is the crucial link for people to prove their immigration status to be 'unavailable' means for ten million people they are not able to demonstrate their right to work, rent or live in the UK. Systematic errors like the inaccessibility of View and Prove evidence the need to redesign the eVisa scheme to allow for there to be a stable token that holds a person's immigration status. the3million proposes redesigning the eVisa scheme to be held on a digital stable token, like a Secure QR code, that is under the status holder's control, does not require the status holder to have access to the internet, and that can be accessed via an app for a third party check.¹⁹ A Secure QR code would mean people would have a choice to use only digital means to prove their status, or could print out the code.

¹⁴ Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI). March 2023. Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/641ac5a5e90e0769eead1457/ICIBI_Annual_Report_for_the_period_1_April_2021_to_31_March_2022_Web_Accessible.pdf.

¹⁵ Walker, Peter. "Home Office Immigration Database Errors Hit More Than 76,000 People." *The Guardian*, 14 March 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/mar/14/home-office-immigration-database-errors-hit-more-than-76000-people>.

¹⁶ Home Office, Digital Status "View and Prove" Data Protection Impact Assessment. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-status-view-and-prove-data-protection-impact-assessment>

¹⁷ Seema Malhotra MP, *Home Office Response to the 3million Regarding Incorrect Identity Document Details on UKVI Accounts*, 2 April 2025, <https://the3million.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/HO-reply-t3m-UKVIAccountsIncorrectLinkedIdentityDocuments-02Apr2025.pdf>.

¹⁸ Joint Letter from the3million and ILPA, 6 August 2025, <https://the3million.org.uk/publication/2025080601>.

¹⁹ the3million. July 2024. *Our Proposal for Fixing the Digital Status*.

Q2(a)(ii). Manage Border Entries and Exits

a) Evidence from the Report-it Tool

Between April and mid-August 2025 the3million received 228 reports through our Report It tool. 42% of these reports referred to travel related problems. Issues with travel include people who were wrongly denied boarding, asked to produce expired travel documents or increased anxiety about their ability to travel. According to the Home Office's official website advising eVisa holders on travelling with an eVisa, a person is not *required* to show a sharecode.²⁰ The Home Office suggests that a person can produce a sharecode and save this information in case they are asked, but it is essential that the eVisa holder UKVI account is up to date and linked to their relevant identity documents before travelling. As evidenced above eVisa users can encounter problems when attempting to access or update their UKVI account. Lack of access to the UKVI account, or an inability to link a new identity document to the UKVI account, means that travellers have encountered difficulties at airports abroad in proving their right to enter the UK.

b) Specific Failures

Miscommunication from the Home Office to airlines have caused several implementation issues in international airports. The twice extended grace period for allowing people to travel on expired BRPs meant that the airlines were required to stay abreast of ever-changing status requirements. We are seeing from reports that the burden of proof is frequently falling on eVisa holders to be allowed to travel. A clear example of contradictory accepted forms of digital status is Finnair's policy of **not** accepting share codes as a means of proving immigration status to board a UK bound flight.²¹

There are reports that travellers, having already cleared their initial check in at airports, are asked to produce share codes on the spot in the departure lobby. People have expressed frustration when their attempts to log into the UKVI website are hindered by inconsistent internet connection, and by a refusal by airport staff to log into themselves to check the share code. It exacerbates issues for people who do not have a smart phone, do not have access to WiFi or to broadband data when abroad, or are not digitally literate. Those whose status is suffering from a Home Office glitch are at increased risk of being denied boarding altogether.

Another contributing factor to passenger's issues proving their status is the new Electronic Travel Authorisation Scheme (ETA). The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme that the UK has introduced, requiring all travellers to the UK to have 'permission to travel' is also subject to a grace period, where the Universal Permission to Travel (UPT) requirement is not set to be enforced until an as yet unannounced date in 2026. However, the UK Carriers' Liability rules remain in force in the sense that even though carriers will currently not be fined for allowing someone who requires an ETA but does not have one to travel to the UK, carriers are still held liable for the cost of returning passengers who are refused entry at the UK border. This has meant that there is a wide variation of routines and procedures among different airports, airlines and sub-contracted ground staff.

Q2(a)(iv). Support Labour Market Enforcement

Policy proposals for digital ID, such as the Labour Together call for a mandatory 'Britcard', and current government support have claimed that digitalisation of identity would help curb the 'shadow economy'²². Under current UK policy almost all right to work checks are already conducted digitally for migrants, and about ten million people currently hold digital-only status. Our research

<https://the3million.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/t3m-proposal-FixingDigitalStatus-22Jul2024.pdf>.

²⁰ Home Office. *Travel with Your eVisa*. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/evisa/travel-with-evisa>.

²¹ Finnair, *Travel Documents to the USA, UK, Canada and Australia*, <https://www.finnair.com/gb-en/travel-documents/travel-documents-to-the-usa--uk--canada-and-australia>.

²² Labour Together. June 2025. *BritCard: A Progressive Digital Identity for Britain*.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64f707cf512076037f612f60/t/6841899eee8b0741ea8756a7/1749125534854/Final_BritCard_Labour%2BTogether.pdf.

has found that the current design and implementation of digital status can create barriers for people to access employment opportunities and prove their legal right to work.

a) Current Enforcement Policy

When the Home Office piloted the digital right to work checks in 2018, an assessment from the Government Digital Services recognised that online identity verification must consider the risk for digitally excluded and vulnerable people.²³ Recent research from the Migration Observatory found that people with an eVisa and permission to work in the UK experienced the greatest difficulty proving their status to employers compared to British citizens.²⁴ People have reported that there are cases that even an individual can produce a share code, the employer does not know about digital status or does not want to check the share code produced.

The Government has stated in its immigration White Paper that eVisas will make it easier to identify those who try to work in the UK illegally. However, we would argue that digital status is not a panacea for monitoring employment in the UK, and rather that eVisa data failures and errors are harming those who do have the right to work in the UK. Barriers to employment are punishing those with immigration status who are attempting to be compliant with employment restrictions. An example of the instability of digital status was reported to the3million involving a woman who was immediately suspended without pay from her job at a major company employing over 11,000 people in the UK, after UKVI records incorrectly listed her name as her sister's. After over three years of employment at the company, the incorrect data generated by the share code on the Home Office website caused her employer to conclude she did not have the legal right to reside in the UK. This Home Office error wrongly revoked her right to work, leading to an abrupt job loss and financial hardship. This is just one of many cases where technical errors in the eVisa system have had devastating real-life consequences.

Q2(a)(v). Administer the Asylum System

The creation of a UKVI account is dependent on holders being able to link their identity documents for the purpose of verifying their identity. For travel purposes, the Home Office requires UKVI account holders to maintain their account by linking new identity documents. There have been consistent errors for people attempting to link identity documents, from the technical inability for the system to match the passport to the listed name, or from the status holder being entirely unable to create or access their UKVI account. This causes a disproportionate impact for refugees who may not have access to their identity documents as they are fleeing their country of origin. In such cases the Home Office should create the UKVI account using a reference number instead of an identity document number, however this process is frequently subject to errors and delays. Refugees without identity documents are able to apply for Travel Documents, however these Home Office-issued Travel Documents are still not able to be linked to a UKVI account, and it is not clear when this functionality will be delivered.

From reports to the3million we continue to see the largest group impacted by eVisa difficulties being those with refugee and protection status. For eVisa holders that are permitted access to public funds (such as DWP benefits), including refugee holders, the inability to access and maintain a UKVI account is detrimental to their ability to receive support. This call for evidence asks how digital status can help administer the asylum system, yet the current digital form of ID is failing this very population.

Q4. What potential risks does the adoption of new forms of digital identification have for individuals, including risks to privacy and security of personal data?

²³Home Office. July 2018. *Prove your right to work – beta*. <https://www.gov.uk/service-standard-reports/prove-your-right-to-work-beta>.

²⁴Brindle, Ben, and Mariña Fernández-Reino. November 2024. *Migrants' Experiences of the UK Immigration System*. <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/reports/migrants-experiences-of-the-uk-immigration-system/>.

The eVisa scheme has demonstrated the potential risks that can be introduced from digital only status and at times breaches General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). As the wide-scale incidents mentioned above show, thousands of eVisa accounts were effectively tampered with and displayed incorrect biographical data. The recurrence of eVisa data being incorrect shows the risk to the personal data that can be introduced with digital status. Data quality errors for eVisa holders have real-life impacts. Inaccurate eVisa information displayed via the View & Prove services has caused the loss of employment and rental opportunities, and the inability to travel, open bank accounts, obtain student finance or access welfare benefits. Almost all those who reported to us spoke of experiencing stress and anxiety when trying to go about their daily life, caused by eVisa failures. Under GDPR Article 5(1)(d) the Home Office is obligated to ensure that records are “accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date; every reasonable step must be taken to ensure that personal data that are inaccurate, having regard to the purposes for which they are processed, are erased or rectified without delay.”²⁵ Those affected by errors where their eVisa has displayed a mixture of their own and another’s data have expressed concern that their personal information, including name, status, passport and photo are being displayed on an unknown account. Sensitive data, like immigration details, should be treated with greater care. Some people have reported to us that even after seven months of requesting their personal data to be fixed, such as their visa expiry date, they have still not had their records corrected. The issue of ‘merged identity’, as it is referred to by the Home Office, exemplifies the risk of centralising data of people into technical systems. The errors can occur from software updates, human error or technical failures. Personal information cannot be altered and shared without your consent if it is held securely on a physical ID card. We have spoken to several individuals whose data - including names, photographs, and legal representatives’ contact details - was shared with a stranger without their consent, which is a clear breach of their privacy and data rights.

Security of personal information is protected under GDPR and affects not only the data of eVisa holders but their ability to prove their rights. Under 5(1)(f) data must be “processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures”.²⁶ The incorrect information displayed for eVisa holders demonstrates that there are not sufficient appropriate safeguards for the security of confidential data. The lack of access to associated eVisa services, like ‘View and Prove’, in essence is a loss of data for people and a lack of the means to prove their rights.

The issues of privacy and security of personal data on the eVisas is worsened by the UKVI ‘Exclusionary Liability’ clause in which they do not accept responsibility for “any direct, indirect, or consequential loss, any inability to use the UKVI account, any disruption to access to the UKVI account, any information that is lost or corrupted while data is being transmitted, processed or downloaded from the UKVI account.”²⁷ With the main data controller denying responsibility for the security and integrity of the eVisa ecosystem, a critical question arises: who is responsible? The Home Office has justified the roll-out of the digital status by claiming that unlike a physical document, eVisas cannot be lost, stolen or tampered with. If this is the case such an Exclusionary Liability should not be needed. There is a paradox and a gap of accountability that must be rectified to ensure the ten million people currently using eVisas are protected from further state-caused barriers to accessing their rights.

²⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2016/679/contents>.

²⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2016/679/article/5>.

²⁷ Home Office. February 2024. *UKVI Account Terms and Conditions*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukvi-account-terms-and-conditions/ukvi-account-terms-and-conditions#exclusion-of-liability>.

Q6. How could the adoption of new forms of digital identification improve efficiency and interactions between the Home Office, law enforcement agencies, and other Government departments?

Data sharing between the Home Office, its agencies and other UK governmental departments has been a priority for immigration policy since 2010. The decision to expand and formalise immigration checks throughout the UK including schools, private housing, the NHS, employers and governmental departments is now referred to as the 'Hostile Environment' (or renamed by the Government in 2018 to the 'Compliant Environment'). The consequences of the Hostile Environment are best conceived in the result of the Windrush Scandal that impacted thousands of UK citizens, primarily from Caribbean descent, who were wrongly stripped of their rights. The Windrush Lessons Learned Review critiqued the Home Office's data quality practices and recommended the department create a 'Triple Lock' protocol before data is sent to other departments to ensure data integrity.²⁸ The current issues with the data quality and thus the sharing of information from the eVisa scheme have similarly concerning patterns of practices. In the 2025 Immigration White Paper²⁹, the Home Office promised that the eVisa system would make data sharing and identity verification of immigrants more efficient. In practice, the rollout and data errors have created roadblocks for eVisa holders in accessing critical services. From publicly available information the3million is increasingly mapping out how the technical systems of UK governmental departments are connected to the eVisa system.

National Health Services (NHS) and Home Office:

Regulations for charging and identifying overseas visitors who need to pay for the NHS have been operational for decades. The introduction of Hostile Environment policies formalised data sharing between the NHS and the Home Office. While the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the NHS Digital and the Home Office ended in 2018 the sharing of non-clinical data has continued. The Home Office stated they were planning on developing further automatic system to system checks with the NHS, meaning an eVisa holder would not have to produce evidence of their status.³⁰ The proposed integration would rely on the eVisa holder's UKVI account being up-to-date and accurate. As detailed above, accuracy of this data has been prone to technical errors. NHS staff are required to ensure all patients are entitled to free healthcare which is done so on residency guides. A person must prove their right to live in the UK and their 'ordinary residence' in the UK. Currently there is an integration between the NHS' Spine, that holds patient records and the Home Office's data to produce 'chargeable' banners on patient records.³¹ There is a mechanism by which the Overseas Visitor Management (OVM) team can request bulk data from the Home Office through the Message Exchange for Social Care and Health (MESH) tool by submitting NHS numbers and dates to the NHS Spine.³²

²⁸ Home Office. *Windrush Lessons Learned Review* (independent review by Wendy Williams). Published 19 July 2018; updated 31 March 2020.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e74984fd3bf7f4684279faa/6.5577_HO_Windrush_Lessons_Learned_Review_WEB_v2.pdf

²⁹ Home Office. May 2025. White Paper: Restoring Control over the Immigration System.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6821f334ced319d02c906103/restoring-control-over-the-immigration-system-web-optimised.pdf>.

³⁰ Kate Osamor. 30 May 2025. *Written Question to the Secretary of State for the Home Department on eVisa Access Contingency Measures*. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-05-30/55551>.

³¹ NHS England Digital. March 2024. *Chargeable Status* <https://digital.nhs.uk/services/national-care-records-service/user-guidance/chargeable-status>.

³² Department of Health & Social Care. December 2024. *Charging Overseas Visitors in England: Guidance for Providers of NHS Services*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-cost-recovery-overseas-visitors/charging-overseas-visitors-in-england-guidance-for-providers-of-nhs-services>.

If an NHS staff member asks a person to produce evidence of their immigration status this is now done through 'View and Prove' by producing a share code. As established, access to and maintenance of the data held on the UKVI account or eVisa can be faulty. For people with access to their eVisa and able to produce a share code there have been incidents where the NHS OVM team did not accept digital status as proof. A woman was singled out in an NHS trust and forced to produce excessive proof of residency after debating with the staff on the validity of her eVisa. This same woman was wrongly charged for her medical services and issued a bill. All of these mistakes occurred with accurate and stable digital status, and the core issue in this case is the implementation and training of third-party checkers.

His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and Home Office:

For applications to the EUSS, the Home Office and HMRC used automated data sharing to confirm the length of time an applicant had lived in the UK, using primarily National Insurance (NI) numbers. From the inception of using NI as a means to confirm residency, the3million has expressed concern that this type of data sharing would exclude vulnerable groups, indirectly discriminating against people who have gaps in employment, such as women who took leave for childcare responsibilities.³³

Since 2021 the guidance on using a UKVI account included that "Some government departments and public authorities can automatically access your immigration status information. Currently, this includes the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)".³⁴ In 2021, HMRC and DWP used mass email write-outs to contact individuals who they believed were in the UK without lawful status and needed to make an application to the EUSS, threatening termination of benefits. Due to data quality issues, many people who already had EUSS status incorrectly received these letters, as detailed in correspondence from the3million.³⁵

Another aspect where implementation of digital identity verification is failing people, is in the creation of Government Gateway accounts to access essential HMRC and DWP services to manage income, tax, benefit and pension data and payments. The3million has received many reports from non-British citizens that they are unable to open HMRC gateway accounts due to the fundamental design of the identity checking app: [GOV.UK ID Check](#). This app, just like the two apps used in EUSS applications (EU Exit: ID Document Check) and eVisa identity checking (UK Immigration: ID Check), has not accommodated for the various ways people's names are recorded in the Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) in international passports. In practice, people attempting to set up a Gateway account, who cannot prove their identity through having several documents from a list including a British passport, a UK driving licence, or existing tax documents, must use this app and scan their non-British passport to verify their identity. If their name in the MRZ is different from their full name, due to issues such as name truncation to fit within the MRZ character limit, diacritic transliteration to satisfy MRZ rules, or the MRZ stores only the birth name rather than a married name in accordance with relevant national legislation, the HMRC app is not able to verify their passports. the3million has engaged with the Home Office on the issue of the MRZ and passports as the inability to upload and connect documents effectively locks people out of these services.³⁶ HMRC repetition of not considering the variety of identity documents highlights the need to evaluate and fully apply equality standards before rolling out a digital-by-default UK government.

³³ the3million. September 2019. EU Settlement Scheme – On The Ground (4th Edition).

<https://the3million.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/t3m-briefing-EUSSOnTheGround4-17Sep2019.pdf>

³⁴ Home Office. 1 July 2021. *Using Your UK Visas and Immigration Account* (archived).

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20210701173831/https://www.gov.uk/guidance/using-your-uk-visas-and-immigration-account>.

³⁵ the3million, Letter to Home Office, 23 August 2021, <https://the3million.org.uk/publication/2021082301>.

³⁶ Home Office. 15 February 2024. *Response to the3million on UKVI Account Linked Identity Documents*.

<https://the3million.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/HO-reply-t3m-IdentityDocumentsLinkedToUKVIAccount-15Feb2024-2.pdf>.

Department of Welfare and Pensions (DWP) and Home Office:

The DWP is listed as a governmental department that can automatically access immigration status as shared by the Home Office. In a joint letter with Migrant's Organise and the3million, signed by 68 other organisations, raised that misunderstanding of held data on leave expiry dates has caused vulnerable populations to be wrongly denied benefits.³⁷ DWP responded that automatic checks of immigration status are conducted through an API (Application Programming Interface) and by enquiries to the Status Verification and Enquires Checking Team.³⁸ Another example of the devastating impact of errors in UKVI is when an asylum seeker who was recently granted refugee status wrongly had 'No Recourse To Public Funds' condition on their eVisa, and was denied homelessness support as a result. These errors mean that people can be made homeless, financially devastated and put into risky situations. Data sharing between the Home Office and DWP include non-automated checks.

DWP promised that if there is the need for further evidence of immigration status, the claimant will be contacted. A woman with settled status contacted the3million after repeatedly being asked to prove her immigration status by the DWP over a period of many months. The consistent need to prove her status was making her nervous that there were issues with her eVisa, which otherwise looked in good working order. Already struggling with a health condition the person was asked in her Universal Credit journal to prove her immigration status by providing her passport details every month. After several months she submitted a message in her journal including a share code and pleading with DWP to use this share code to view her immigration status. The current state of DWP and integration with eVisa is an early warning sign of what can occur if there is a further rollout of digital status, exacerbating default exclusion, digital isolation and impacting the most vulnerable groups.

Conclusion:

the3million believes that, in its current form, the eVisa as a form of digital ID is not fit for purpose. There is clear evidence of the impact that the lack of access or usability of the eVisa is currently having on the ten million people relying on the eVisa system. This submission to the call for evidence outlines the current poor data practices and lack of access to a stable form of proof of immigration status. We highlight the core implementation issues that are causing delays and denied boarding at airports. In the current form of digital right to work checks, people with the right to work are being failed. We raise concerns that digital ID has resulted in refugees struggling to access core support in the form of public services. The core privacy and security concerns for personal data are exacerbated by the Home Office's Exclusion of Liability that protects the department from the current data breaches that have occurred. We sketch out the current design and implementation issues that have occurred for eVisa holders when trying to prove their rights to access UK public services, to warn of the pitfalls of digital ID and cross-departmental data sharing. The current harms and issues that are resulting from the eVisa scheme have echoes of a Windrush style scandal, in the sense that people who *have* rights are unable to *prove* those rights. We urge the Committee to learn from the eVisa system and ensure any digital ID system does not repeat the same design errors. We encourage a people-led scheme that ensures that the voice of communities is heard when designing a government digital programme. We encourage more robust testing and greatly improved transparency standards. Before any further rollouts of digital identity, the3million urges the

³⁷the3million and Migrants Organise. 25 October 2024. *Letter to the Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions Regarding eVisa Digitalisation*.

<https://the3million.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/t3m-MigrantsOrganise-letter-DWP-EvisaDigitalisation-25Oct2024.pdf>.

³⁸Department for Work and Pensions. 2 December 2024. *Response to the3million and Migrants Organise on eVisa Digitalisation*. <https://the3million.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/DWP-reply-t3m-MigrantsOrganise-EvisaDigitalisation-02Dec2024.pdf>.

Committee to help reform and fix the current eVisa scheme to ensure no further harm is done by supporting a redesign to a stable token of immigration status, held by the status holder.

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