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## UK Visa and Immigration Service Faces Backlash Over Delays and Poor Complaint Handling

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August 8, 2025

– Categories: *Breaking News*



Frustration is mounting among applicants dealing with the United Kingdom Visa and Immigration (UKVI) service, as increasing reports highlight significant delays and inadequate responses to complaints. Many individuals are left waiting for weeks without resolution, with some compelled to instruct solicitors at considerable expense. The Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA), a professional body representing immigration lawyers, has warned that such failings undermine confidence in the agency's

ability to perform its core duties. Victoria Welsh, co-convenor of ILPA's digitalisation working group and head of business immigration at the law firm Taylor Rose, criticised the practice of redirecting complaints rather than addressing them, remarking: "We're not a charity, we're here to make money, but it's not right that people have to instruct lawyers to help solve these problems." An automated notice issued by UKVI on 23 February 2025 admitted that the service is "overwhelmed" with inquiries and unable to meet its published response times, confirming the scale of the backlog.

Concerns have also been raised about the accuracy of UKVI's performance data. Andrew Tingley, partner at Tingley Dalanay and fellow co-convenor of the ILPA working group, questioned whether the agency is fully recognising the extent of the difficulties applicants face. He stated: "This calls into question whether the statistics collected are accurate. There does not appear to be any institutional acceptance either by civil servants or ministers of the major issues that people are facing." Such remarks point to a culture within parts of the public sector where accountability is often lacking, even in the face of persistent operational failings.

For those caught in the delays, the consequences can be severe. Welsh noted that applicants have, in some cases, lost their accommodation, faced restrictions on opening or maintaining bank accounts, been refused entry to the United Kingdom, and even been prevented from boarding flights. She stressed that any scale of such problems should be treated with urgency. These setbacks can have long-term consequences, not only for the individuals affected but also for businesses and institutions that depend on timely immigration decisions to fill skilled roles.

Critics from a range of professional backgrounds argue that the situation reflects a broader issue within certain government-run agencies: entrenched bureaucracy, slow decision-making, and a lack of direct accountability for poor performance. In the private sector, repeated failures on this scale would lead to swift intervention; yet in public services, the same inefficiencies can persist for years with little consequence for those responsible. From a governance standpoint, this is a costly problem, one that wastes taxpayers' money and undermines public trust.

Calls for reform are growing louder. Legal experts and policy commentators are urging ministers to overhaul processes, cut unnecessary layers of administration, and focus on efficiency rather than institutional expansion. They argue that UKVI should operate to the same standards of responsiveness and accuracy that citizens expect from any essential

service. Without decisive action, there is a risk that law-abiding applicants will continue to face unnecessary hardship, and that confidence in the nation's immigration framework will erode further. For many, the answer lies in restoring a system that values efficiency, fairness, and accountability, principles that should be at the heart of any public service funded by the taxpayer.