

LET US LEARN (LUL) 1

- 1.1 When I filled out a paper form, if the section was not relevant to me, I would simply state N/A. My application was based on private life so I knew that anything related to family life was not applicable to me. I never gave an additional note to explain why it was not applicable.
- 1.2 When I have applied for a visa in the past, such as a US visa or Schengen Visa, I was allowed to move forward and save the application. Although you can save the biometrics (and add to it at a later point), the system does not allow you to move forward without completing each part of the form.
- 1.3 When I applied for my biometric card, I received an acknowledgement of payment. I had to call them. It wasn't really a receipt. Calling them took two weeks of my time and they said the acknowledgement was the confirmation. I was like, this is the confirmation?! Just because it says that they are taking the money, you can't assume that it is meant for that purpose.
- 1.4 If you have to call the Home Office for help about anything, you have to call about 10 different numbers.
- 1.5 It's like a game of "pass the parcel". I was just being referred to different people all the time. I was like, someone needs to help me as I had to get my biometric by the time I went on holiday. I was like, what is the point of this service? I was even thinking of paying to go fast track as I really wanted to go on holiday, which didn't even happen. But fast track didn't have an available slot for months. This isn't fast track. So, I tried to call to find out what was going on but it was messy, there was no one to answer my question.
- 1.6 It doesn't make sense how they can lose people's passports.
- 1.7 A lot of people can't afford lawyers on top of everything else. But if you have to pay £2.50 per minute for a helpline, you may as well get a lawyer.
- 1.8 I think we would find the online application system OK if you don't have complicated situations and you either fit the Rules or not.

LUL 2

- 1.9 I didn't apply as someone who fits the Rules, but outside of the Rules on exceptional circumstances. There was no way I could make the application without a lawyer. I went through everything online and although it explains some of the exceptional circumstances, they then tell you it is not exceptional enough when you make the application. Every reason you give, they will tell you it's not enough. I think they should say that they have something that allows people a route outside the Rules. Imagine you don't have a lawyer. There is a section where you have to explain *why* your situation is exceptional. My lawyer had to go through all the legal sections, human rights law. A lay person who doesn't

know about human rights law is going to be unable to make this application. Also, the Home Office do this amazing thing of keeping your passport during the application process. I can't then do anything. My lawyer tried to get my passport. However much they simplify the system you will still need a lawyer for this kind of case.

- 1.10 When the Home Office rejected my application, they didn't tell me. When we tried to reach them, they just said "we rejected your application 2 weeks ago." I think this is because they wanted the period I had to appeal to run out. This is really not fair as you have spent loads of money on your application. The refusal was in December but we called them one month later in January. We appealed now so it's still going on. They then sent a refusal letter after everything and the date on the letter was in December. The letter they had sent me in December though just said that my application was progressing. They've now taken the decision back because of the reasons of rejection so they want another 3 months. If I didn't have a lawyer going back and forth with them, I would be done. I wouldn't even know my application was rejected a year after.

LUL 3

- 1.11 There should be a document for the university or workplace which says that even though this person does not have a physical biometric card, they are eligible to study or work. My university did bother me a bit as I didn't have the biometric but they actually offered to go to the Home Office on my behalf to ask about the progress of my application. I said OK but a friend was too scared that if they hounded the Home Office on her behalf, this would affect the progress of her application. My university eventually said that if I couldn't produce my biometric in 3 days, I was "out". Luckily, mine came the next day. If you're not going to tell me how long my application will take, at least give me something to carry on with my life.
- 1.12 When you try to navigate the gov.uk page, there are so many acronyms and codes, and so many things you have to get through to get to the right application. It would be nice if there was a tick list to narrow this down and get to something that applies to you. Even a guide. It's very much on your own and there's a lot of trial and error, and if you don't know how to use the internet well, you're screwed.
- 1.13 I want to know if it is a bad thing to keep badgering the Home Office for the status of your application.

LUL 4

- 1.14 I applied for renewal by myself in 2016 on paper and that I inserted N/A for parts that were not applicable to me. I had to print out two application forms from gov.uk as I realised, just in time, that the first printed form I had completed was not the most up to date. When I realised this, I printed out another form and did

not submit the old one. The form had updated while I was filling out the application. The form was 60 pages long and I was completing 10 pages a day. I didn't have a lawyer for the entire process other than right at the end where they checked the form for half an hour for £150. Even though this was a renewal, I resubmitted everything from my first application, including a letter from school. It was not clear that I did not have to do this.

- 1.15 I waited 10 months to get her renewal back. I was on the phone endlessly and I maybe had to wait for 30 minutes. I submitted the leave application on time but didn't get an acknowledgement until weeks after my leave expired. An online system could be great if the acknowledgement was instant, even before they took my money. Also, like when you buy things online, and it shows you the progress of your order, there should be something that can tell you that they are looking at it or something, and where your documents are. This would help for ease and peace of mind, especially if I'm calling them and not getting the right information.
- 1.16 There should be something for people with the right to study to show this right continues while your renewal application is pending. I was on a scholarship and the university said that they had to apply rules to see if I am lawfully able to study in the country. I was hounded for 10 months while I waited for the Home Office to decide my application and I had nothing to give them. Your life shouldn't have to stop when you are in transition.
- 1.17 We had a lawyer helping us on our first application. The Home Office would answer calls "better" when it was the lawyer communication. But it shouldn't be like that. It was my life.
- 1.18 My mum and sister's applications needed them to pay the NHS surcharge. The Home Office said they didn't have enough money in their accounts to do this. So, we had to write a letter that said we had enough money. We couldn't get the bank statement in the proper form as we needed to change our address, but they were unable to do this at the bank as the Home Office had our passports. We were stuck. My friend submitted an application without filling in the NHS surcharge but that they were given more time to do this (14 days).
- 1.19 We put in an application for indefinite leave to remain and the Home Office told us they lost all our legacy files from 2007 to 2012. My mum and sister automatically got granted.

LUL 5

- 1.20 When I called to find out about my mum's application, the Home Office said they could not give advice on individual cases. I could not find out information about how the case was going.

- 1.21 When I went to my MP my voice was heard louder and quicker. The MP said it was unfair and they basically took it off me and then called the Home Office for me. It's a free service.
- 1.22 Some decisions are computer errors. When I applied to university, the university offered me a bursary, but because I was not entitled to student finance, there was nothing for the university to "go on". This shows what happens when the computer says no. Systems need to work together.

LUL 6

- 1.23 I completed my application form online. It was OK. The online form was basically the same as the paper form, but the online form was harder to complete as you cannot skip sections as you can on the paper form, or cross-refer to other parts of the form. I got help from a caseworker. They sent the form knowing that they were sending in more evidence than the Home Office needed. The anxiety about missing something out and being refused is so great that they put in everything that had gone in for the first leave application just in case.
- 1.24 The online form does not let you go to the next step if you do not put in the right or relevant information. Also, every time you go to the next stage, the system reminds you that everything must be accurate. And some things aren't straightforward, such as knowing whether the head of the household is the landlord or an individual who resides in the household. I had to go back to change things that were not completely correct before I could carry on. Some people might just start completing the form and say, "I don't have this information, I can't go forward" so they give up at that point if they don't have a caseworker or a lawyer. It is a good thing that there is no time limit on the form once you have started completing it.
- 1.25 What was different before is that when you applied, it took a while to be told that you needed to do your biometrics. You can get that immediately now but I am not sure the time window is the same.
- 1.26 There's an issue that a few people have problems with. One of my friend's mum made an application and her application was being considered. But, her job fired her because her biometric residence permit had expired and they didn't want to take the risk. They should probably have a letter that comes with every application that says, "the application is being considered and here is what your employer needs to know". So many people either have to take time off, or go back when it's sorted.
- 1.27 You need to be able to show universities that your application is being considered if you are in transition waiting for an extension of leave. Even a card showing that your leave is being renewed would be OK.
- 1.28 If it's your first application, you always need a lawyer. It would be better even if you just needed a lawyer for two hours or so, rather than going through a whole long process with them. We are all scared though as we don't know if we are doing it right, and if you do it wrong, you face serious consequences. It's not like a driving licence. It would be useful if the law could be broken down into questions, and then those questions were used for the application form.

LUL 7

- 1.29 I helped my mother and sister when my family was in the process of renewing their leave. We printed out the application forms, went through the relevant sections to work out what we needed, and went to free legal advice which advised us what to do. Once we had gone through all of that, we started to fill the form out.
- 1.30 We found the paper form easier than the online forms now because we could ask the decision-maker to refer back to a particular page which included relevant information. If there were sections which were not applicable to us and that we could not fill in, we could explain why in an attachment letter.
- 1.31 My sister lost her biometric letter and had to apply for a replacement. When she sent the money, she was not clear if the Home Office had received it so she had to screen shot the page and call them to ask if they had her money. She did not want to be rejected for no payment. She got the receipt eventually but it was not clear what it was for. It also took a long time to get the receipt.
- 1.32 I couldn't give my passport in with my family's application because I was applying for citizenship. The lawyer said that my passport would be sent on by the Home Office to link it with my family's application. My family got their passports back but I didn't. We sent a letter to the Home Office and they said they did not have it. And I couldn't apply for a student loan without a passport. And then it came with no apologies. If there was an online tracking system we could have seen where it was and when it moved.
- 1.33 I trust Amazon and the Post Office more than I trust the Home Office.
- 1.34 I think we don't make as many mistakes as the Home Office does. We are too scared to make a mistake. You double check it. I once accidentally printed out the wrong form and started filling it out. Luckily I noticed.

LUL 8

- 1.35 On the day my mum went to one of the new appointment centres, she brought passports for the whole family. They copied my brother's passport alongside all the others and then lost it. How is that possible? The woman asked if we were sure we brought it. My mum wasn't leaving until they found it. This was on the 8th April 2019. They found it eventually but it took them 3 hours. My mum had enough.
- 1.36 I was ok with the online application. I found it quite smooth.
- 1.37 The first time I applied I did not know what form to use.
- 1.38 I don't think everyone will be able to use the online system. Some people are old or do not have computers.
- 1.39 The Home Office makes loads of mistakes. In my mum's initial application, they had to fight to get the no recourse to public funds condition lifted. Then she got a letter to say it was rejected but the card didn't say this. So, I had to explain this to the lawyer who then looked at past cases and called the Home Office who said the letter was wrong but the card was right.

LUL 9

- 1.40 I called the Home Office to check if they had received the information I sent. I thought it was a teenager who answered the phone. I asked her the question and she said, "I don't know sorry". She gave me another number who then referred me straight back to her.
- 1.41 The EU settlement scheme works so much more smoothly. They get an automatic acknowledgement as soon as they apply. It shows that the system discriminates against people of colour.
- 1.42 I know somebody who did not hear back for 3 years. They were only informed that they had been granted leave in the summer, but this was because the Home Office had lost the whole file.
- 1.43 Online application systems could be risky if they just tell you to go down one route and don't also explain that there might be another. If you are under 18, you might be able to apply for citizenship. The system should show all the alternatives, or tell applicants to seek legal advice.

LUL 10

- 1.44 I did fast track with my family and we were missing a document on the day that we attended. I didn't know the system had changed so I thought it was all over, but they have a delayed application system on fast track where you can upload the document later if you don't have it. This is £800 now for the premium service but it was amazing to have this option. They were very helpful. Though £800 could pay for a whole extra application.

LUL 11

- 1.45 Everyone should know about section 3C. It should be in the Rules.
- 1.46 When I applied to one university, they told me I was not eligible and I had to explain why I was eligible for student finance. I knew much more than they did.

LUL 12

- 1.47 When I was applying for my mum's renewal, I initially thought I had the right form which I did in the end anyway but my mum was saying that her friend who recently did a renewal didn't have these questions that she was getting. This made me really scared as her leave was about to expire especially when I found out there were two forms, and the names were so similar. Thankfully I was able to be put in contact with a lawyer who clarified what the names of the forms meant.
- 1.48 When I made an application to the Home Office, I knew there was a guidance but it never actually occurred to me that I could use it or that it would help me with the form itself. I had assumed that the guidance wouldn't be relatable or understandable.
- 1.49 I feel like the online process was quite smooth, it was convenient for me to save where I was in the form and come back to it. On the other hand there were questions

that I felt like I could skip if it was on paper but being online you had to answer them before being allowed to move on which made the process longer.