

Joint Press Release from ILPA (Immigration Law Practitioners' Association) and UKLGIG (UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group)

IND/UKVisas, the two main Government departments which deal with UK immigration, are attempting to backtrack on their announcements earlier this year that entry clearance visas to enable individuals to register under the same-sex Civil Partnership regime will be issued from Monday 14 November.

Having expressly announced in October that "Entry Clearance for the Purpose of Registering a Civil Partnership will be available from 14 November;" they are now saying that only those individuals applying for temporary Civil Partnership visit visas will be able to do so on that date. They appear to have altered their original announcement this week to reflect this change.

UKLGIG and ILPA members are aware of several hundreds of people around the world who are intending to make applications for Proposed Civil Partnership visas (i.e to live in the UK with their UK based partner after their ceremony) on Monday.

Many of these people, having relied on the earlier announcements, have incurred great expense in returning to their home countries to file their application on Monday. Many British and settled partners of prospective applicants have taken time from work and traveled to support their loved one, incurring the associated expenditure. Many couples have eagerly planned to be amongst the first wave to register their partnerships, having already booked ceremonies and planned their receptions.

There are also emotional aspects to these applications in that a large number of couples have been separated for a long period of time because there has previously been no such official recognition in the UK of same-sex relationships. These couples have closely followed announcements and are anticipating making their applications on Monday. Most are oblivious to the fact that IND/UKVisas are seeking to renege on their promises and that their applications may in fact not even be accepted by British consular posts.

ILPA and UKLGIG are presently pressing the Government to change its position and issue visas in line with their previous promises.

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