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The publication of our [annual reports and accounts on 14 July](#) are a good point to take stock of our performance and of the achievements and developments of the past year.

Over the last 12 months we have made huge progress in delivering our reducing net migration programme. We have introduced a limit on non-European Economic Area economic migrants entering the UK; reshaped Tiers 1 and 2 of the points-based system to increase selectivity and skills requirements; started implementing changes to Tier 4, the student visa system.

On 9 June the agency launched a 3-month consultation on employment-related settlement, Tier 5, and the overseas domestic worker routes into the UK looking at breaking the link between economic migration and settlement, and on other temporary work routes (Page 16). On 13 July we published a consultation on family migration with proposals aimed at tackling abuse, promoting integration and reducing burdens on the taxpayer (Page 16).

We have also published a report on progress made by the asylum improvement project. The project has made a good start by ensuring we can take a more

sophisticated approach to scheduling each part of the process, being more consistent in how we approach each task and making robust analysis of outcomes. Taken together, these things will ensure that we have a balanced system and continually improve our performance (Page 27). We have committed to the publication, beginning this summer, of regular information on our new performance framework, including key statistics so that any member of the public can scrutinise what we are achieving. (Page 27). The new framework will cover all aspects of our work.

As we look back at our past performance we are also looking ahead. On 8 June the Home Office published the National Crime Agency (NCA) Plan, setting out the structure, role and purpose of the new agency. A new Border Policing Command (BPC) will be created in 2013 within the NCA. This will enable all the law enforcement agencies operating in and around the border to work to mutually agreed priorities, informed by a shared understanding of the threats and vulnerabilities. We will be important partners of the NCA, and as one of the UK's largest law-enforcement organisations, we already play a vital role in tackling crime overseas, at the border and in the UK. We will continue to work closely with colleagues during the development of the NCA and will keep you updated on developments and progress (Page 4).

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The Home Office Strategy, Immigration and International Group (SIIG) has been established. This group is a new cross-cutting policy centre, bringing together, strategic immigration and border policy with responsibilities for international, governance, ministerial strategy, civil liberties and public protection; and is headed up by a new Director General, Mike Anderson. A new Immigration and Border Policy Directorate launched on 18 July as part of SIIG, aims to provide excellent policy advice to support our core objective of reducing migration and protecting the border. Staff will work in partnership with colleagues from agency and across the Home office and wider Government to ensure that we make deliverable policies that reflect the Home Secretary's agenda (Page 22)

I would like to thank those partners who worked so closely with us in the run up to the industrial action on Thursday 30 June and also on the day itself. We appreciated your help in communicating with and reassuring your customers. We made every effort to minimise disruption and keep you informed throughout. We have received positive feedback about how things went on the day, and I am pleased to report agency officers also found approximately 100 kilos of heroin, 15 kilos of cocaine and 250 kilos of cannabis with a

combined estimated street value of the drugs is £5.8 million on the day (page 13). We continue to welcome your thoughts on what worked well and anything we could have done better. I would like to explore how we can develop partnership communications. We will therefore be inviting you to participate in further discussions on how we can work together for our mutual benefit.

I am pleased to announce that Barbara Woodward has been appointed by the FCO as Director General Economic and Consular, succeeding Nick Baird. Barbara will be the senior FCO official on Europe, International Economic, Migration and Consular issues, and will lead the FCO's work on emerging powers and commercial diplomacy. I am grateful to Barbara for everything that she has delivered for the agency during her time with us, having overseen many important changes in the way we deliver our business overseas. Most important of these is her success in ensuring that we have an improved, more stable overseas visa operation in which our key partners have greater confidence. We are planning how to manage Barbara's departure and we will keep you informed of developments. For now I'm sure you will all want to join me in extending our congratulations to Barbara on her new role.

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Finally, I am pleased to inform you that, Rob Whiteman has been appointed as the new chief executive of the UK Border Agency. Rob had been the chief executive of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for five years before becoming managing director of the Local Government Improvement and Development Agency last year. He takes over at a key time for the agency and is taking on one of the most demanding roles in Whitehall. He brings with him a great deal of experience that is relevant to our work here in the Home Office. We will inform you of the date that Rob will take up post once this becomes clearer. I know you will join me in welcoming Rob to the agency and doing everything we can to support him as he takes up his new role

We hope you continue to find this product both informative and accessible, and we welcome any further comments you might have. For general enquiries please contact the [Partnership & Engagement Team](#). For specific enquiries please see the contact details under the relevant article.

Jonathan Sedgwick
Acting Chief Executive
UK Border Agency

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Home Affairs Select Committee report

On 6 June the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) published a report into the work of the agency. Criticisms of the agency in the report were widely reported by the media however our performance and achievements did not receive the same level of coverage.

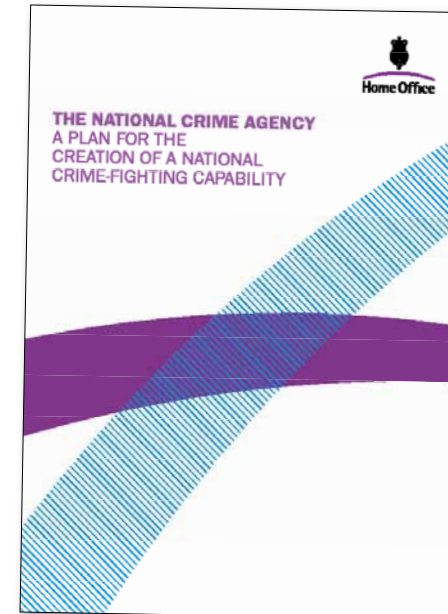
We are radically reforming the points-based system and other routes of entry that have been subject to widespread abuse. We are making greater use of intelligence to remove people with no right to be here and are concluding individual cases faster. Specifically we have:

- introduced an annual limit on economic migrants, sweeping changes to the student visa system, and started a shake-up of the family and settlement route.
- completed our review of all the outstanding “legacy” cases and we reduced the cost of asylum support by over £100m from the 2009/10 total, delivering substantial savings to the taxpayer.
- last year we removed over 5,000 foreign national prisoners from the UK.
- we have launched two nationwide campaigns to close bogus colleges, tackle illegal working and reduce sham marriages. Using intelligence from a variety of sources, including members of the public, we carried out 1,400 arrests, 330 prosecutions and 260 removals.

Significant improvements have been made but we have always been clear that there is more to do. We are working to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands, and clampdown on immigration abuses. We are committed to ensuring there are no new backlogs. We have also committed to the publication, beginning this summer, of regular information on our new performance framework, including key statistics so that any member of the public can scrutinise what we are achieving.

The creation of the new National Crime Agency (NCA)

On 8 June, the Home Office published the National Crime Agency Plan, setting out the structure, role and purpose of the new NCA as the national centrepiece of the reformed policing landscape. The new agency will have distinct commands for organised crime, border policing, economic crime, and the child exploitation and online protection centre. Each command



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will be led by an experienced senior individual and will manage its own priorities and risks.

The command which will be of most relevance to the agency is the new Border Policing Command (BPC), which will be created in 2013. The Border Policing Command will enable all law enforcement agencies operating in and around the border to work to clear mutually agreed priorities, informed by a shared understanding of the threats and vulnerabilities.

The agency will not change in structure as a result of the NCA being created. We will continue to focus our efforts on controlling migration and securing the border.

What will change is that we will work more closely with our partners to a shared agenda with more sharing of intelligence, joint operations and coordination of our efforts.

We are committed to supporting the NCA, and as one of the UK's largest law-enforcement organisations, we already play a vital role in tackling crime overseas, at the border and in the UK. We have been heavily involved in the NCA programme, supporting the development of the new structure and ensuring that our existing skills, experience and responsibilities are reflected in the NCA Plan.

We will continue to work closely with colleagues during the development of these plans will keep you updated on progress.

Launch of immigration and border policy directorate

On 18 July responsibility for immigration and border policy transferred to a new group, the Strategy, Immigration and International Group in Home Office HQ, led by Mike Anderson. Staff in the new Directorate will continue to work closely with operational colleagues in the agency. The Directorate consists of 5 Units;

- Migration Policy
- Asylum, Criminality and Enforcement
- Border Security
- Legal Strategy team
- Migration Advisory Committee Secretariat

Our objective is to help provide ministers with immigration policy and operational advice in the round and to ensure even greater connections with policing and counter-terrorism. Policy leads and contacts will for the most part remain the same and can still be contacted at the same addresses and contact numbers. If you would like an up to date contact list please email IBPDsecretariat@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

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Olympic & Paralympic Games – One year to go

It's one year to go until the official opening of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our work to ensure a safe and secure games continues. We are working with our partners in the Olympic Development Authority to prevent unlawful or unauthorised employment at the Olympic site by providing identity assurance support; this has to date identified 293 cases of identity abuse.



host government directorate of the Olympic and Paralympic Games

In order to maintain a strong border and protect the public we have also developed and are currently testing our processes on the capture of biometrics from accredited visa national Games Family Members (GFMs) at the UK border. GFMs are competitors, games officials, coaches and accredited journalists.

We have put in place a workforce strategy to ensure service standards are maintained whilst we deploy the maximum possible number of staff to the border for peak arrival periods; with flexibility to manage surges of traffic at different ports.

While we move towards testing and our operational response, planning continues - we are working with partners to develop specially designed lanes at ports for arrivals and departures and are looking at ways to capture biometrics overseas to provide speedier entry for GFMs.

With one year to go, we also look forward to the opening of the Olympic Clearing House in October which will be capable of processing up to 500,000 applications for accreditation.

For further information please contact Lauranne Tiramani on 020 7035 1994

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Website integration and improvement

A major project to integrate the visa services web pages into the main agency site is nearing completion. As part of the project, over 200 commercial partner and FCO Embassy/High Commission websites, which contain 'how to apply' visa information specific to each country, will be replaced by individual country 'microsites' on the main agency site.

A number of partners have fed back to us that the previous online arrangements were confusing and often provided inconstant information. Benefits of the integrated site will be:

- A smoother and more user-friendly online customer journey
- Accurate, consistent information reducing the need for enquiries to call centres, visa application centres and FCO missions
- Support for online applications which is important as we move to a more "online by default" business approach
- Easier access to information on border controls and customs requirements for visa applicants
- Lower operating costs.

The new integrated site, including new homepage and navigational structure, is scheduled to go live in September 2011. We have undertaken user testing to ensure that the new site is easier to navigate.

MPs briefed on agency business at Westminster

Members of Parliament and agency staff attended an event organised by our MP Liaison Unit at the Palace of Westminster on 21 June. This was the third such event since May 2010, and the first at the Houses of Parliament.

Agency board members and senior staff attended the event to update on agency business including asylum and managing migration. This was followed by a question and answer session with the immigration minister Damian Green, acting chief executive Jonathan Sedgwick and other senior staff. Topics raised included data protection, legacy cases, college sponsorship, removal policy, appeals and visa applications. The minister promised to clarify data protection issues and wrote to MPs on 14 July enclosing an information fact sheet on data protection issues. Feedback showed the event was helpful in providing face to face updates and enabling discussions on agency policies and business.

The agency receives the largest number of letters from MPs of any government department, and 79 per cent of the total number of MP letters written to the Home Office. We have driven up performance against a 20 day response target from 78 per cent in 2009 to a position where it has met the 95 per cent target in five of the last six months.

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Olympic and Paralympic visa

The Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 will attract thousands of spectators. In addition, there will be around 75,000 members of the Olympic and Paralympic families. These are people from the wide range of organisations that make the Games ‘happen’ – from athletes, team officials, technical officials, members of the press, TV and radio crews and members of national Olympic and Paralympic committees. Around a third of these will be visa nationals.

In all, some 200 countries will be providing official delegations to the Games. Many of the larger delegations, including Russia, China, Cuba, and Ukraine will come under the visa national banner. Our objective is to capture as many biometrics abroad as possible in advance of the Olympics to make it easier for visitors at the UK border during the peak arrivals period.

To help with this, International Group’s Olympic project team launched the Olympic/Paralympic visa in November 2011. The visa costs the same as a six month visa, but allows visa national GFM’s to apply for a multiple-entry visa to the UK valid until 8 November 2012. The key benefit of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Visit visa is that it allows GFM’s to attend events from now up until after the Games including pre-Games briefings, training camps and competitions.

Memorandum of Understanding between UK and Malaysia

On 14 July the Home Secretary, Theresa May signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Malaysia. This will provide a platform for the UK and Malaysia to work together, strengthen and further develop co-operation in tackling crime; including international terrorism, organised crime, organised immigration crime, narcotics and chemical precursors, money laundering, cyber-crime and all forms of smuggling.

The MoU takes into account both countries’ international obligations under international treaties and shared standards of the United Nations, including those on human rights. We will continue to work closely with the Malaysian Government to implement the MoU and identify specific opportunities for closer working in this area.



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Tackling immigration crime

As part of its ongoing work to tackle illegal immigration the agency was recently involved in two successful overseas enforcement operations.

On 8 June three members of an Italy-based criminal gang, were arrested following successful cooperation between the UK Border Agency, the Italian authorities, and Ryanair. The 3 men, an Italian, a Brazilian and a Senegalese citizen, were arrested by Border Police at Malpensa Airport. They are suspected to have assisted Brazilians in Italy by providing forged Italian identity cards and arranging travel to the UK. For further details please see [UK Border Agency | Joint UK-Italy operation cracks down on illegal immigration gangs](#)

On 23 June a suspected visa forgery ring in Bangladesh was smashed following an investigation by the agency and local police. A large haul of fake visas, stolen passports and immigration stamps, which could have been used to attempt to illegally enter the UK, was uncovered when police swooped on a forgery factory. Eight people were arrested after a fake visa, discovered by an agency officer in the capital Dhaka, was traced back to the forgers' base in the city of Sylhet in north east Bangladesh. For further details please see: [UK Border Agency | Eight arrests as Bangladesh visa forgery factory is shut down](#)

Working with the tourism sector through Visit Britain

Destination Britain and Ireland 2011 is Visit Britain's flagship event for 2011. It brings together representatives from the UK tourist industry with suppliers and providers from markets across Asia Pacific, the Gulf, South Asia and Africa. The event operates on a rolling programme of back to back business meetings with additional networking.

Whilst the agency is not directly involved in promoting travel to the UK, we continue to support Visit Britain by offering accurate customer information at their events. Agency representatives attended Destination Britain and Ireland 2011 in Bangalore in May to advise on the visitor visa process. Around 40 meetings took place with regional companies wishing to understand visitor visa requirements.



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Home Secretary visits Calais

On Monday 6 June the Home Secretary, Theresa May, made her first visit to our border controls in Calais. She was shown the technology and techniques used to detect crime at the border, including how the agency uses intelligence to select passengers suspected of smuggling goods. There was also a visit to Joint Operational Coordination Centre (JOCC) where French and UK officers work together to tackle the threat posed by organised immigration crime. She met her French counterpart, Minister Claude Guéant, French and UK police, and representatives from the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA).

Thanks to increased coordination between French and UK officers the UK has seen a significant drop in the number of illegal migrants attempting to evade the controls over the past year.

During her visit agency officers, working with a dog team, discovered an Iranian stowaway hiding in a vehicle; a further ten individuals attempting to evade UK border controls were also discovered that morning.

The Home Secretary praised the work of UK Border Agency staff as she acknowledged the work of the agency in Calais and the real impact made in stopping illegal migrants entering the UK.

e-Borders moves forward

Since the last edition, we have signed the first contract to provide technology platforms and service management for the e-Borders systems.

The programme will continue extending its coverage, capturing 100% of non-EU aviation data by April 2012 and supporting the reintroduction of exit checks by 2015.

The programme has also continued to play a key role in supporting Smart Zones, the pre-clearance facility for low risk passengers. Trials are currently operating at Luton, Calais, Gatwick, Birmingham and Leeds Bradford. Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester and Heathrow are also in scope and a successful one-off Smart Zone at Stansted was introduced in order to help process 7,000 Barcelona fans for the European Champions League final.

The trials are currently being evaluated and the results will inform the strategy for further roll out of Smart Zones. Approximately 200,000 passengers have been processed in this way to date and feedback has been extremely positive from passengers, carriers and staff.

For further information please contact Nimisha Green on 0208 745 2139

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ePassport Gates coverage extended

eGates recently went live at Heathrow Terminal 3 and will soon go live at Gatwick South meaning a secure self-service border control will be available to UK/EEA passengers with chipped passports arriving at 15 major UK airports. Providing a self-service option for these passengers enables the agency to focus more resources on targeting those people who pose a risk to the UK.

Passengers will soon be able to take advantage of the convenience of automated border controls at all of the UK's major airports. ePassport Gates provide a secure, self-service alternative to conventional border controls. They do not require pre-enrolment and be used by UK/EEA passengers with a chipped passport.

The gates are an important part of how we're using technology at the border. We aim to develop trusted-traveller services which allow fast-track clearance for pre-checked, low-risk, regular travellers. And we are continuing to trial Smart Zones, a process that allows us to pre-check people on low-risk routes and provide a faster, lighter-touch, screening of passengers at the port.

The airports:

- Birmingham Terminals 1&2
- Bristol
- Cardiff
- East Midlands
- Gatwick North & South
- Luton
- Manchester Terminals 1&2
- Heathrow T1, T3, T4, and T5
- Stansted

We're taking forward a variety of promotional activity to raise awareness of the gates to help passengers pass through the border safely and with less delay. We're keen to work with partners to promote the gates so please feel free to get in contact to discuss further.

For further information please contact
Mark McMahon on
07901 103701.



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Offensive weapons campaign launched at Glasgow airport

Air passengers carrying knives and offensive weapons in their luggage to Scotland are being targeted in a campaign to prevent banned weapons from reaching the streets of towns and cities across the country. The agency is working with the Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland (ACPOS) and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) in a joint effort to make Scotland safer.

The campaign was launched on 1 July at Glasgow airport with a display of the type of weapons, often legal in other countries but banned in the UK, that have been seized from air travellers by our officers in Scotland. The campaign covers all of Scotland's 5 major airports and is a reminder to people going on holiday abroad that we will adopt a zero-tolerance approach - including the prospect of prosecution - if they bring offensive weapons back.

For further information please visit our [website](#).



New rules mean it will be easier and cheaper to travel abroad with pets

Defra have announced the harmonisation of UK pet movement rules with the rest of the European Union. From 1 January 2012 the UK's Pet Travel Scheme will be brought into line with the most recent science. The UK will maintain its high level of protection against animal diseases after the changes, which have the potential to save pet owners around £7 million in fees.

Forcing pets to spend six months in quarantine, a practice dating from the 1800s, is no longer necessary because of vastly improved rabies vaccines and treatments. All pets will still need to be vaccinated against rabies. Pets from the EU and listed non-EU countries such as the USA and Australia will no longer need a blood test and will only have to wait 21 days before they travel. Pets from unlisted non-EU countries such as India, Brazil and South Africa will be able to enter the UK if they meet certain strict criteria to ensure they are protected against rabies, including a blood test and a three-month wait before they enter the UK.

For further information please contact Mark McMahon on 07901 103701.

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£5.8 M Drugs haul found on lorry

A man has appeared in court charged with attempting to smuggle heroin, cocaine and cannabis into the UK. Officers stopped a Dutch registered lorry on 30 June at the inward freight controls of Dover's Eastern Docks. When they searched the vehicle and its load of frozen chips, they found approximately 100 kilos of heroin, 15 kilos of cocaine and 250 kilos of cannabis. The combined estimated street value of the drugs is £5.8 million.

Otto LANDMAN, from Eesveen in the Netherlands, appeared at Dover Magistrates Court on Saturday 2 July where he pleaded not guilty and was remanded in custody. Enquiries by agency investigators are continuing.

This is an excellent example of how agency officers work tirelessly to detect and prevent drugs from being smuggled into the UK. We are determined to crack down on this terrible trade which can have such a destructive impact on the lives of so many.

For more information on recent seizures at the border visit: [UK Border Agency | News and updates](#).



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Public Accounts Committee report

Immigration Minister Damian Green responded to a House of Commons report saying that it highlights exactly why the government is making radical changes to the immigration system. The Public Accounts Committee report into the government's points-based system looked at how the agency keeps track of migrants, and whether the different visa routes into the UK work sufficiently.

It also examined the intra-company transfer (ICT) visa route under Tier 2 of the points-based system, which allows multinational businesses to fill temporary skills gaps by bringing their existing foreign staff to the UK. Since the committee's investigation last year, the new government has overhauled the system, with tough enforcement against rule-breakers and a shake-up of the work and student routes into the country.

The full story is available on the [UK Border Agency website](#).

New customer facilities in Liverpool

On Monday 18 July, our customer reception facilities in Reliance House moved to brand new premises in The Capital Building, 6 Union Street, Liverpool L3 9AF.

The new facilities, designed with the customer in mind, encompass the Public Enquiry Office, Reporting Centre and Further Submissions Unit. The premises are now more convenient and accessible for all callers. The new Public Enquiry Office is open plan with screen less enquiry desks to provide customers with a friendly and pleasant environment. There are a number of car parks close to the new facility, together with shops and cafes in the immediate vicinity. Visitors to our customer reception are seen by appointment only.

For all other enquiries, customers are asked to check the relevant pages of our website [UK Border Agency | While you are in the UK](#).



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UK Border Agency working closer with the Chinese community in London

The agency continues to build closer links with partners and recently joined the Chinese Information and Advice Centre (CIAC) and the Metropolitan Police in Chinatown to provide help and advice on immigration matters. We helped organise the event, an “UK Immigration Awareness Workshop”. Thirty people from the local Chinese community attended and heard firsthand about the points-based system as well as the issues surrounding human trafficking, a session on “You and Your Rights” and a Q&A session on immigration issues.

Attending the workshop proved very beneficial developing relationships with the Chinese community. The agency is keen to work with partners like CIAC and the Met’s Human Trafficking Unit to educate people on the issues around immigration and the law. Also ensuring they are aware of the unscrupulous methods criminals will go to make money out of their misery. This type of event shows the human face of both organisations and that we are approachable and want to help.

Whilst at the workshop the team displayed an advice letter they have developed; explaining why agency staff are attending premises and what they need to do; this will be trialled throughout London over the next six months. The letter was well received and will further help communication between different communities where language is a real barrier; it is also available in Portuguese, Twi and Yoruba. The team are looking to develop closer working relations with organisations representing speakers of these languages.

For further information please contact
Neil Lands 0207 324 6638



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Employment-related settlement consultation

On 9 June the agency has launched a 3-month consultation on employment-related settlement, Tier 5, and the overseas domestic worker routes into the UK. Key proposals under consideration in the 12 week consultation are as follows:

- re-branding Tier 2 (the skilled worker route) as temporary, ending the assumption that settlement will be available for those who enter on this route
- allowing certain categories of Tier 2 migrant, for example those earning over £150,000 or occupations of a specific economic or social value to the UK, to retain an automatic route to settlement
- creating a new category into which, after three years in the UK, the most exceptional Tier 2 migrants may switch and go on to apply for settlement
- allowing Tier 2 migrants who do not switch into a settlement route to stay for a maximum of five years with the expectation that they and any dependants will leave at the end of that time
- introducing an English language requirement for adult dependants of Tier 2 migrants applying to switch into a route to settlement
- restricting the maximum period of leave for Tier 5 Temporary Workers to 12 months; and
- closing or reforming routes for overseas domestic workers.

Please visit our [website](#) to complete the online survey, and to find out more about the proposal. The final date for responses is 9 September 2011.

Family Consultation

The government is reforming the immigration system to bring immigration back to sustainable levels and to bring a sense of fairness back to the system. It has already introduced a limit on non-European Economic Area economic migrants entering the UK; has reshaped Tiers 1 and 2 of the points-based system to increase selectivity and skills requirements; has started implementing changes to Tier 4, the student visa system; and is currently consulting on breaking the link between economic migration and settlement, and on other temporary work routes.

On 13 July the Government published a consultation on family migration which, in the year to September 2010, accounted for around 17 per cent of all non-EEA immigration to the UK. The consultation sets out proposals aimed at tackling abuse, promoting integration and reducing burdens on the taxpayer. A contribution to reduced net migration would be welcome but is not the primary goal. The focus is on delivering better family migration: better for migrants, for communities and for the UK as a whole.

A summary of the key proposals can be found on our [website](#) and we hope that you will share your views with us as part of the consultation. The final date for responses is 6 October 2011.

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Launch of the ‘Exceptional Talent’ Route under Tier One of the points-based system

On 19 July 2011 we launched the new route for exceptionally talented migrants in the fields of science, humanities, engineering and the arts who wish to work in the UK was launched. The route will be operational from the 19 August 2011. This forms part of the work we are doing to reform the UK’s immigration system to ensure that we make provision for the brightest and the best who can make a valuable contribution to come here at the same time as we seek to bring migration back down to the tens of thousands.

The route is open to those who are internationally recognised as world leaders in their field; and also to those migrants who show exceptional promise and who are likely to become internationally recognised world leaders in their field. Migrants seeking entry under the Tier 1 Exceptional Talent category will not need sponsorship by an employer but we will require the endorsement of the appropriate Designated Competent Body for their particular field.

The Arts Council, the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the British Academy have been designated as Competent Bodies for Tier 1 Exceptional Talent purposes. The role of the Competent Bodies will be to vouch, that in their opinion, the migrant is exceptionally talented. As a brand new route, each Designated Competent Body has been

allocated a number of places within the limit, but if with experience, a particular body has less demand for places, it will be open for the Bodies to transfer additional places to those with more demand if this becomes necessary.

Full details of the route, as well as the criteria for each of the Designated Competent Bodies can be found on our website at [UK Border Agency | UK opens its doors to exceptionally talented migrants](#).



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Changes to student visa rules are now in force

Significant changes to the Tier 4 student route of the points-based system came into effect on 4 July. The agency has revised the Immigration Rules in order to:

- restrict work entitlements, by only allowing students sponsored by higher education institutions (HEIs) and publicly funded further education colleges to work part-time during term time and full-time during vacations
- restrict sponsorship of dependants to those of students sponsored by HEIs on postgraduate courses lasting 12 months or longer, and of government-sponsored students on courses lasting longer than 6 months
- require institutions to confirm that courses represent genuine academic progression from any previous courses studied by the student in the UK
- create a streamlined application process for low-risk nationals sponsored by Highly Trusted sponsors.

These changes are aimed at delivering a strong migration system which tackles immigration abuse while allowing genuine students to study at genuine colleges. We have also revised the application forms for Tier 4 (general), Tier 4 (child) and dependants under the points-based system. The [new versions](#) of these forms should be used with immediate effect.

The changes to the Immigration Rules were laid in Parliament on 13 June. A [previous news story](#) gives full details of all the changes and associated amendments that came into force on 4 July.

The latest revisions follow the [Home Secretary's statement to Parliament](#) about student visas, and the [publication of a statement of intent](#), in March 2011.

Educational oversight of Tier 4 sponsors: enhanced role for QAA and ISI

In March 2011 the Home Secretary announced changes to Tier 4 of the points-based system for student visas.

A key part of the reforms is to strengthen the conditions which an education provider has to satisfy before they are allowed by the agency to 'sponsor' an international student to study in the UK. This involves the oversight of their education provision and their compliance with immigration requirements.

As regards educational oversight, the agency announced that from the end of 2012 all sponsors would need to have had a satisfactory inspection or review by one of a number of specified bodies who are involved in the delivery of the regulatory framework for educational standards in the UK ('the educational oversight bodies').

The full story and a list of approved educational oversight bodies can be found on the [UK Border Agency website](#).

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Clarification of English language requirement for Tier 4 sponsors and students

Following the recent announcement of changes to the English language requirements for students under Tier 4 of the points-based system, the agency has produced a document clarifying the requirements for students and sponsors.

You can download the document, which provides answers to some frequently asked questions, from the [UK Border Agency website](#). The agency hopes that sponsors and students will find it helpful.

Extension of stay for skilled workers formerly in closed work routes

The agency is setting up new arrangements for skilled workers who came here under work routes that have now closed, so that they can extend their stay in the UK to a total of 5 years.

When the agency introduced Tier 2 of the points-based system in 2008, it made transitional arrangements so that migrants in closed work categories could apply to extend their stay under Tier 2. The agency intended that their permission to stay (known as 'leave to remain') under Tier 2 would take their total stay in a work category to 5 years, but the agency is aware that some migrants

may have been granted an incorrect extension owing to technical restrictions.

The agency will soon introduce arrangements for these migrants to get additional leave to remain, taking their total stay to 5 years. This additional leave will be granted free of charge.

To find out who is eligible and how to apply, please go to the [UK Border Agency website](#).

Restrictions on 'new evidence' at points-based system appeals

From 23 May 2011, Section 19 of the UK Borders Act 2007 restricted the evidence that an applicant can rely on at an appeal hearing. Any evidence submitted must have been produced at the time when the application was made. Section 19 will apply to all appeals heard for the first time on or after 23 May against refusals of applications to remain in the UK under a points-based system category. Appeals that have been part-heard or fully heard by the First-tier Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) by this date will not be affected.

Any new evidence submitted at an hearing for the first time after 23 May will only be allowed if it is being used to prove, for example, that a document originally submitted was genuine, or if it is in support of grounds unrelated to the scoring of points under the points-based system.

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The commencement of Section 19 was **announced** on 19 May by Immigration Minister Damian Green. You can find the text of the UK Borders Act 2007 on the **[Office of Public Sector Information website](#)**.

EEA premium service update

The agency's application fees for 2011/12, which were announced in April 2011, included the provision to charge for the premium consideration of EEA 2, 3 and 4 applications at our public enquiry office in Liverpool. The agency is still considering the introduction of this service, and will publish more information on the website as it becomes available. Please do not contact our call centres to ask about the service, as no other information is available at this time.

All EEA applications will continue to be processed by post, free of charge. An EEA or Swiss national applying for a registration certificate may continue to do so free of charge and by appointment at Croydon public enquiry office.

Visits by artists and musicians: UK Border Agency response

The agency has responded to media coverage about the points-based system's effect on visits to the UK by world-class artists and musicians.

Creative artists from across the world are welcome to come and perform in the UK. As part of our commitment to the industry, we work with organisers of international events to ensure they are aware of the application process and are able to help facilitate urgent cases. However, as with any visitors to the UK, we expect individuals to meet our entry requirements.

The agency has published an **[information leaflet for artists and entertainers who are planning to travel to the UK](#)**.



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Immigration & Asylum Biometric System

At the end of 2011 the Immigration & Asylum Biometric System (IABS) will replace the agency's current fingerprint system and will also support biometric capture at the border for Olympic and Paralympic Games Family Members.

IABS will use the latest biometric matching technology to record, store and match biometrics with improved matching accuracy. It will be used for immigration purposes and will establish the identity of those applying for Biometric Residence Permits, asylum seekers requiring Registration Cards, and those applying for Biometric Visas. In this way the agency will continue to ensure that identity continues to be reliably established, whether at the border or within country.

Additionally IABS technology will capture the biometrics of all visa national Games Family Members (GFM) entering the United Kingdom for the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012. GFM include athletes, coaches, sporting officials, sponsors and the media, travelling on Accreditation Cards.

IABS will go-live at the end of 2011, with GFM mobile biometric capture going-live at the end of March 2012. IABS Olympic technology will run throughout the whole period of the Games and will be decommissioned by October 2012.

For further information please contact Janis MacLennan on 0203 014 4297



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Government Strategy on Human Trafficking published

Improved support for victims of human trafficking and stronger action to disrupt organised criminal networks are at the heart of the government's new strategy: Human Trafficking: The Government's Strategy, published on 19 July.

The strategy builds on the UK's reputation as a world leader in tackling trafficking by setting out the intention to act earlier in cooperation with source countries and bring better coordination of law enforcement agencies in the UK.

From 2013 the new National Crime Agency (NCA) will play a fundamental role in gathering and sharing intelligence to pursue organised trafficking gangs. The UK Border Agency alongside other law enforcement at the border will continue to have an important role in identifying trafficking assisted by better information and intelligence sharing. Other key actions include:

- a review of the current legislation to ensure that traffickers receive appropriate penalties for their crimes
- a targeted focus on the major source countries of trafficking and raising of awareness among potential victims

- reinforcing the UK's multi-agency victim identification process, the National Referral Mechanism through expanding the list of those that can refer victims, greater awareness raising and regular auditing of the quality of decisions
- extending the use of current powers to seize the profits of traffickers and make it less attractive
- establishing closer relationships with overseas law enforcement agencies to carry out joint operations across borders.

For Further information please visit the main Home Office [website](#).

Employer compliance and enforcement crack-down

We are stepping up nationwide activity to tackle immigration abuse. It will bring together all of the agency's law enforcement capability, both inland and at the border in a coordinated and sustained period of action.

Protecting the public and businesses lies at the very heart of the agency's objectives; deterring and disrupting criminal behaviour is an essential part of that role.



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From July, the agency and its partners across the country will be stepping up our work to tackle organised criminals and businesses in a concentrated effort to crack down on a range of immigration offences and encourage employers to be compliant.

We realise that most businesses take care and check that all their employees have the right to work in the UK. The agency will visit various employers, who don't take care, and stop them from gaining an unfair advantage in business.

Employers are required by law to apply necessary checks before allowing an employee to start work. Checks should include permission to work by examining original documents such as ID cards, passports and visas where details of the individual's conditions will be endorsed.

We enforce a penalty of £10,000 for every illegal worker discovered or where necessary employment checks were not followed correctly. The agency will also share information HM Revenue & Customs and Department for Work and Pension to prevent tax and benefits fraud.

Fact sheets which explain how to stay compliant are available on the UKBA website – Preventing Illegal Working. [UK Border Agency | Preventing illegal working - guidance documents for employers](#). They also give contact details for questions about checking and the penalty regime.

Tier 4 scam thwarted in North West

A cross agency operation has prevented Nigerian nationals gaining illegal entry into the UK through a North West university.

The university's suspicions were aroused by two Nigerians applying to undertake a short course. The university, which has been awarded Highly Trusted Status under the Tier 4 Sponsor Licence, contacted their Sponsor account manager in the UK Border Agency, who in turn liaised with intelligence colleagues. The resulting investigation identified 40 individuals involved in an immigration scam and numerous suspicious financial transactions. It also established that some individuals had used forged university enrolment letters.

This case highlights the importance of working with sponsors to deliver effective intelligence on which we can act. All of the identified individuals have now been flagged on agency systems. Entry Clearance Officers and Border Force officers will be alerted should any of them try to gain entry again.

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Working in partnership with councils and the police

Our local immigration teams continue to work with local partners to tackle community-based challenges. For example on 19 April agency officers from Greater Manchester Local Immigration Team assisted the police and Stockport Council in a joint operation targeting a store in Marple, Stockport.

Over a 12-month period the police had received reports of anti-social behaviour outside the premises and the sale of alcohol and cigarettes to children. The intelligence also alleged that some staff were foreign nationals working illegally.

Stockport Council seized several items of alcohol for their own investigations. Two Pakistani men were arrested by UK Border Agency officers. One had overstayed his student visa and has since been removed to Pakistan. The other one has left the UK for Pakistan of his own accord.

The operation was conducted overtly enabling the local community to see action taken in regards to their complaints and allegations. It also highlighted that illegal working can take place in all areas of the UK and not just in city centres.



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Pilot ends as new family returns procedure takes effect

In June 2009 the agency, Glasgow City Council and the Scottish government, set up a pilot family return project in Glasgow. This sought to explore a method of managing the return of failed asylum seeking families who had exhausted all appeal rights without using detention.

The project centred on actively engaging with the families to encourage voluntary return. This included providing intensive support to help them make sense of their stay in Scotland, confronting issues that were delaying a return and by building up skills in preparation for a voluntary return.

On 16 December 2010 the UK government set out plans for ending the detention of children for immigration purposes in a way which protects the welfare of children while ensuring the departure of families who have no right to be in the UK.

Those plans reflect a fresh approach to managing family returns which comprises the following four stages: decision-making, assisted return, required return and ensured return. The aim is to engage more effectively with families from the outset and to encourage those whose claims are unsuccessful at the decision-making stage to take responsibility for their own departure and to leave at either the assisted or required return stages, without the need for enforcement action.

Those families who do not take up this opportunity move to the ensured return stage of the process when the agency considers appropriate enforcement action, drawing on a range of options which have been developed for this purpose. An Independent Family Returns Panel (see below) provides independent advice to us on the method of removal from the UK of individual families, when an ensured return is necessary.

The new family returns process was rolled out nationally on 1 March 2011. A report on the results of the Glasgow pilot commissioned from ODS Consulting has concluded that, with the introduction of the new UK family return process, the need to continue with the Scottish project was no longer justified. The project partners agreed and a phased closure has taken place.

The full story and details of the new family returns procedure and independent panel can be found on the [UK Border Agency website](#).

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Independent Family Returns Panel

The Independent Family Returns Panel was established on an interim basis to support this process and we are now seeking to make substantive appointments by means of an open recruitment process. The new public appointment vacancies to the Independent Family Returns Panel are being advertised from 6 July on the Cabinet Office website. You can access via the following [link](#). The closing date for the receipt of applications is 31 July.

New immigration removal centre opened in Lincolnshire

A new immigration removal centre, Morton Hall, was officially opened by the Immigration Minister Damian Green on 1 June 2011, increasing capacity in the detention estate as the government intensifies enforcement activity across the country.

Once full, the former prison will accommodate 392 men in order to facilitate their removal from the UK. They will include illegal over-stayers and failed asylum seekers as well as foreign national prisoners.

A tough system of enforcement and removal is one of the cornerstones of our reformed immigration system.

The full story can be found on the [UK Border Agency website](#).

New immigration removal centre opened in Northern Ireland

The UK Border Agency's first ever residential detention facility officially opened in Northern Ireland on 5 July. Larne House, north of Belfast, will be operated as a short-term holding facility capable of holding up to twenty-one men and women for no longer than seven days. Previously, illegal migrants were held in police cells until they could be transferred to removal centres on the mainland.

Having a detention capability in Northern Ireland will increase our capacity to return ex-foreign national prisoners, failed asylum seekers and other illegal migrants Larne House will be managed by Reliance Secure Task Management Ltd.

If it becomes necessary to hold an individual for more than seven days, then he or she will be transferred to an IRC in Britain where facilities are more appropriate for longer periods of detention.



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Home Secretary and Immigration Minister mark Refugee Week

The Home Secretary and Immigration Minister both met refugees in June as part of annual Refugee Week (20-26 June); a national annual event which explores refugee experiences. The start of the week coincided with World Refugee Day on 20 June, promoted by United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), to get international recognition for all displaced and stateless people across the world. This year is also marked the 60th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Celebrations included undertaking a “Simple Act” to recognise the contribution of refugees to the UK. The Home Secretary participated in this campaign by having tea with a small group of refugees who have made the UK their home over the past 60 years. She acknowledged the privilege in meeting these inspiring individuals and hearing about the contribution they have made to life in the UK, having played a vital part in shaping Britain in the last 60 years.

Immigration Minister, Damian Green visited a Gateway resettlement project in Sheffield. Sheffield was the first Local Authority to participate in the programme and, together with the Refugee Council and funding from the Home Office, has helped resettle 558 refugees from Liberia, Burma, Iraq, DRC and Somalia since 2004. The visit on 15 June was very successful and was a positive introduction to the launch of Refugee Week.

For further information please contact Helen Gray, Head of Refugee Resettlement Programmes Unit on 0208 196 0751

Asylum improvement project publishes progress report

The agency has published a report on progress made by the asylum improvement project. The project was set up to explore new ways to speed up the processing of asylum applications. The report outlines the progress we have made so far on 25 elements of the project and explains the next steps for asylum reform. It is too early to make a robust assessment of the impact of all 25 elements of the project, but we will do so over the coming months, as part of the next phase of asylum reform.

The project has made a good start by ensuring we can take a more sophisticated approach to scheduling each part of the process, a more consistent approach to how we approach each task and robust analysis of outcomes. Taken together, these things will ensure that we have a balanced system and continually improve our performance.

You can download the progress report from the [reports section on the UK Border Agency website](#).

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North West celebrates Refugee Week

On Wednesday 22 June agency staff in the North West celebrated Refugee Week by hosting an “around the world lunch” for settled refugees who are now working at Refugee Action. The informal lunch gave staff the opportunity to put their culinary talents into practice as well as time to share and reflect on the experiences asylum seekers go through before becoming a settled refugee.

Workers from Refugee Action talked openly, giving a perspective of asylum seekers who arrive in the UK having fled their countries and family, not knowing the language or the asylum process. They acknowledged benefits of the agency now having end to end case ownership, improving the experience of someone going through the process and how reassuring it is to have a dedicated case owner looking after an individual case.

The lunch strengthened the good working relationship between North West Asylum and Refugee Action. We continue to build on those relationships through collaborative working, open communication and a joint effort by all to achieve the right outcome for individual asylum seekers; fully embracing initiatives such as the Key Worker Pilot, and jointly promoting Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR).

For further information please contact
Jo Wentworth on 0151 237 0227

COMPASS Project Update

10 organisations have been invited to bid to provide housing and a range of other services for asylum seekers under the COMPASS (Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services) Project. The second stage of the procurement process, request for proposal (RFP), launched on 1 July.

The COMPASS contracts are due to be awarded in February 2012 and will be effective from May 2012. The final contracts awarded will replace contracts and grant agreements with private providers, local authorities and the voluntary sector.

The COMPASS project is currently holding bidder events to support organisations as they proceed to RFP stage. The events will also enable discussions between the agency, key regional corporate partners and bidding organisations.

For further information please contact Anahita Avari,
Project Management Office, 0161 261 1158



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National Asylum Stakeholder Forum (NASF) – 26 May

On the 26 May, NASF was transformed into a marketplace of activity and information sharing between the agency and its corporate partners.

The event hosted by the Greater London Authority (GLA) was attended in the morning by Dame Helen Ghosh, who explained changes in the agency and how its focus was on getting policies to work, working with partners, creating communities, as well as regenerating people and their opportunities. She emphasised the agency's commitment to issues around asylum seekers.

During the course of the day attendees were split into groups where presentations were given and discussion took place on a wide range of issues. The morning sessions included the Refugee Council's Own Language Telephone Advice Service, Assisted Voluntary Return, Gateway, Integration, Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES), the Early Legal Advice Project (ELAP) and the Key Workers Pilot (KWP). The afternoon sessions included Chronos, Structured Decision Making, Overturned Appeal, Protection Gap, Quality and Children's Work.

The afternoon was highlighted by a keynote address by Immigration Minister, Damian Green, who was introduced by Richard Barnes AM, Deputy Mayor of London and chair of the London Strategic Migration Partnership. In the Minister's speech, he took stock of the agency's achievements over the past year and shared the agency's thinking about the future of the asylum system. The Minister's speech is available on the [Home Office website](#).

The next meeting will be held on 4 August 2011 at Lunar House, Croydon. Please contact [Sheelagh Warde](#) for further information.



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Children’s sub-group – 8 June 2011

At the 8 June Children’s sub-group, Kristian Armstrong updated the group on the role of the Office of the Children’s Champion, which is set out in the statutory guidance of section 55. He explained that the team was internal-facing and did not do casework. The office promotes best practice, holding teams across the UK to account. The office maintains a number of safeguarding leads and is responsible for the more detailed training of caseworkers so they understand section 55 and promote the culture that supports it.

Kristian Armstrong provided an update on the independent family returns panel, a process rolled out on 1 March (see above).

This was followed by a short update on returns by Simon Bentley, who advised that the agency was giving some thought to putting in place additional safeguards so that decisions to return would take full account of the individual’s best interests.

The next meeting of the sub-group will be held on 22 September, hosted by The Children’s Society. Please contact [Sheelagh Warde](mailto:Sheelagh.Warde2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk) for further information.

Upcoming meetings with corporate partners

Partner Group	Date of Next Meeting	Contact
National Asylum Stakeholder Forum (NASF)	4 August 2011	Sheelagh.Warde2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
National Migration Group (NMG)	14 September 2011	Sheelagh.Warde2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Children’s Sub-group	22 September 2011	Sheelagh.Warde2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk



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Local news within your region of interest

London and South East

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/?area=LondonandSouthEast

Midlands and East of England

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/?area=MidlandsandEastofEngland

North East, Yorkshire and Humber

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/?area=NorthEastYorkshireandHumber

North West

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/?area=NorthWest

Scotland and Northern Ireland

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/?area=ScotlandandNorthernIreland

Wales and South West

www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-and-updates/?area=WalesandSouthWest

