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Welcome to the November edition of our bimonthly update. The aim of this regular update is to keep partners informed on key developments.

The Home Secretary, Theresa May, gave her first major speech on immigration to an audience of key partners on 5 November at London's Policy Exchange. During her speech she committed to shaking up immigration policy. The Government's objectives are to manage numbers in the economy's interest and ensure that only the brightest and the best can come to the UK. The Home Secretary reiterated the coalition's commitment to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands by the end of this Parliament. She also announced the previous government's proposed policy of earned citizenship will not be implemented (**Page 4**).

Following its recent consultation the Migration Advisory Committee has published its report to the government on the level of the annual limits on economic migration to the UK under Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the points-based system for 2011/12. Further information and the full report is available on our [website](#).

You will be aware of the package of measures which the government announced on 23 November aimed at both getting immigration down to sustainable levels and protecting those businesses and institutions

which are vital to our economy. You can find out further information on [the UK Border Agency website](#). I want to thank all of you who took the time to either respond to our consultation, meet with us face to face or both. I hope that you feel that the final proposals reflect the fact that we did consult widely and listened to a range of views. We look forward to continuing the dialogue on the forthcoming student consultation.

Our Minister, Damian Green, announced on 2 November the French and British government's commitment to work together to stop illegal migration and tackle abuse of the asylum system. Both the UK and France have announced new measures, share more information, increase return flights and tackle organised immigration crime (**page 10**).

On 20 October the government announced the outcome of its spending review. The overall reduction in Home Office expenditure is of 23% in real terms by 2014/15. I want to assure you that securing the border and controlling migration are our continued priorities while we play our part in reducing the public deficit. The agency will be reducing our budget by up to 20% over the next 4 years. The agency will inevitably be smaller, we will be more efficient, and we believe we will still be able to deliver on our commitments (**page 3**). In the same week the Strategic Defence and Security Review was announced which established a clear direction for border security, including an ongoing commitment to eBorders.

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Finally, on 8 November the **Home Office business plan (2011-2015)** was published. This sets out the scale of reforms that the government is undertaking. It will change the way that the Home Office and the UK Border Agency are held accountable for putting policies into practice. It aims to give the public a greater level of detail on our work. The business plan includes a vision, new objectives and the specific priorities which need to be delivered, along with details of departmental expenditure and transparency agenda.

The plan sets six new objectives for the Home Office replacing all previous objectives and priorities. They are to:

1. Empower the public to hold the police to account for their role in cutting crime
2. Free up the police to fight crime more effectively and efficiently
3. Create a more integrated criminal justice system
4. Secure our borders and reduce immigration
5. Protect people's freedoms and civil liberties
6. Protect our citizens from terrorism

Full details of the agency's commitments can be found in section 4 of the plan.

We hope you find this edition both informative and accessible, and we welcome any further comments you might have. For general enquiries please write to the **Partnerships & Engagement Team**. For specific enquiries please see the contact details under the relevant article.



Lin Homer

Lin Homer
Chief Executive
UK Border Agency

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Spending Review

On 20 October the government announced the outcome of their Spending Review. The agency's priority remains to keep the border secure and to control migration whilst we play our part in reducing the public deficit. We will be reducing our budget by up to 20% over the next 4 years which will mean tough choices on expenditure affecting all parts of the agency. It will inevitably also mean a reduction in staff.

We will balance funding from the tax payer with income from fees for migrants and visitors to the UK. While meeting our international obligations we will also drive down the cost of asylum support. The agency will make greater use of technology to focus efforts on the greatest risks and to improve productivity. We are cutting overhead costs by over a third over the spending review period. The agency will save around £500m in efficiencies by reducing support costs, improving productivity and value for money from commercial suppliers.

The Spending Review Settlement for the UK Border Agency will also mean that we need to reduce our staff numbers by about 5200 by 2015. The agency will be smaller, but more efficient, and we believe we will still be able to deliver commitments promised in the coalition agreement by:

- using intelligence so that we can target the resources we have

- making full use of technology, increasing automated passport gates; using eBorders to check passengers against watch lists; using targeting systems, biometrics and providing more services online, including on-line applications
- being on track to conclude all the remaining legacy asylum cases by summer 2011, which will lead to significant asylum support savings. We are also looking at how we can speed up processing of asylum applications which will help to reduce our costs

In summary, our immediate tasks are clear and some are already well underway:

- reducing net migration to the levels of the 1990s to tens of thousands per year
- working with the police and SOCA to create a border police command within the new National Crime Agency
- ending the detention of children for immigration purposes
- stopping deporting asylum seekers whose sexual orientation or gender identification puts them at risk in specific countries
- implementing changes to speed up processing of asylum applications
- strengthening the system of granting student and spouse visas
- supporting e-borders and re-introducing exit checks.

We will continue to update you as further information about the impact of the spending review is known to us.



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Home Secretary speech on immigration

On 5 November, in her first major speech on immigration, the Home Secretary Theresa May committed to shaking up government policy, managing numbers in the economy's interest, and ensuring that only the brightest and the best can come to the UK. Speaking to an audience of key immigration partners at London's Policy Exchange, she reiterated the coalition government's commitment to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands by the end of this Parliament. She also announced the previous government's proposed policy of earned citizenship **would not be implemented**; In the interim, the current rules and requirements for obtaining settlement and citizenship will remain in place.

Among the Home Secretary's priorities are:

- encouraging more entrepreneurs and investors to come to the UK
- putting a stop to abuse of the student route
- cutting the link between those who come here temporarily and permanent settlement

Concluding her speech, the Home Secretary admitted that it would not be easy to reduce net migration from the current level of hundreds of thousands to tens of thousands. To read more on the speech please visit [UK Border Agency | Theresa May vows to restore public confidence in immigration system](#)

European Return Fund 2011: call for proposals

The UK Border Agency has announced that the call for proposals for the European Return Fund 2011 is now open. Up to a maximum of £17m is available - £7m from the European Return Fund and £10m from the UK Border Agency - to fund the management and delivery of an Assisted Voluntary Returns (AVR) service for those who wish to return voluntarily to their country of origin.

Applications for funding will only be considered if they meet the requirements and eligibility rules of both the European Return Fund and the UK Border Agency. To assist bidders in preparing their applications, a one-day workshop will be held on 3 December and limited spaces will be available on a first come, first served basis. The closing date for completed applications is 4pm on Tuesday 4 January 2011.

Eligible applicants include NGOs, charities, academic institutions, inter-governmental organisations, limited companies and any partnership made up of these organisations. Under EU Funding rules, the successful provider must not expect to make a profit.

Further details about the call are available on the [UKBA website](#). The application pack and workshop registration form are available via the Home Office Emptoris e-procurement site. To register for Emptoris please contact EUfunding@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

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Home Office consultation on transparency

The Home Office is doing a public consultation seeking views on the transparency section of its Business Plan (pages 27 to 34). The transparency section contains its information strategy for making our data and information publicly available. It includes a proposed list of input and impact indicators which can be used to assess their performance in key priority areas. The Home Office will use the feedback from this consultation to ensure that it contains the most relevant and timely information and technically robust indicators. The Home Office business plan is online at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/corporate-publications/business-plan-2011-15/?view=Standard&pubID=840851.

To respond to the consultation go to:
www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/non-personal-data/corporate-data/transparency-sec-of-bus-plan/.

UK Border Agency names ‘Reliance’ as new escort services provider

On 29 October the decision was made to award a new contract for escorting people detained by the UK Border Agency. Reliance Secure Task Management will be responsible for escorting detainees, both in the UK and also on removal flights to home countries. The company already manages several contracts for Her Majesty’s Prison Service. Reliance will begin its 4 year contract in May next year. In the meantime, current contractors G4S will continue to manage escorts for the UK Border Agency.



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Engagement with the European Union



Home Office Ministers attending EU Ministerial meetings since May have emphasised the need for practical cooperation on immigration and asylum. The new government has stated that it intends to work with those Member States that are under pressure, for example Greece, to help them improve their asylum systems and deal with the claims they receive. It sees the new European Asylum Support Office (to be based in Malta) as crucial in this work and will actively support preparations for its inception in January 2011.

At the latest Council meeting, held on 8-9 November, James Brokenshire MP highlighted that the Greek Action Plan for asylum reform would need to be supported with strong Commission leadership and proper EU funding. In the right circumstances, the UK might be able to send asylum caseworkers to support Greece. The UK also continues to support negotiations on the revised Dublin and Eurodac Regulations (measures which determine which EU Member State has responsibility for processing asylum claims).

The government is also making the case for an EU Directive on Passenger Name Records (PNR), arguing that early publication of a Directive that covers intra-EU as well as external flights is vital to the security of EU citizens.

You are spoiling us - Hazel appointed ambassador

As part of the celebrations of the centenary of the founding of the Girl Guides in the UK, 5,000 people recently attended a Centenary Camp near Leeds. Included in this total were around 600 visitors from 42 countries – many requiring visas.

Hazel Duddy, from the agency's International partnerships and engagement team played an integral role in Girlguiding UK's (GUK's) event planning. In the run up to the event she was able to explain the visa process to GUK, and prepare guidance for posts that were likely to receive applications. She also liaised closely with GUK on applications that had been lodged at post and alerted them on impending refusals.

"Hazel made sure that our centenary celebrations at the camp were truly international. She was invaluable in helping us achieve our centenary goal and helping to demystify the visa process," said Rebecca Cook, Deputy Director International for the Centenary Camp. "We also welcomed the single point of contact – Hazel was our guide throughout handling our questions in a professional, timely and open manner. This ensured that information given to all applicants was consistent, clear and accurate. In doing so we maximised the number of overseas participants. We couldn't have done it without her."

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As thanks for all her work on the event, Hazel – who visited the Camp to see the scale of it and what was on offer – was appointed a ‘Girlguiding UK Ambassador’ which is an award for people who have shown support for the organisation in some way. Ambassadors come from all walks of life and help raise awareness of the opportunities available through modern guiding.

On the money

New York entry clearance manager Hannah Bakehouse and her team were recently applauded for helping Goldman Sachs staff transfer to the UK. The excellent service was highly appreciated by programme representatives who wrote to express their thanks.

As well as processing visas for the staff who were part of the company’s City Fellowship programme, the team offered advice and liaised with representatives from the programme, which gives young US professionals the chance to enhance their knowledge of global financial markets.

The agency’s work internationally is key in supporting the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) aim to increase trade and investment in Britain. Goldman Sachs is strategically important to the UK economy, employing over 5,000 people in the UK, and their European headquarters is based in London. The quality of service provided by the agency to all customers sends out an important message that Britain is open for business.

Carriers Liaison Section - event takes off

Over 200 carriers are key partners for the agency’s International Liaison and Intelligence Directorate (ILID). Working with airlines is essential to driving down the number of passengers who arrive in the UK without the correct documentation.

The Carriers Liaison Section within the RALON Operations Centre oversees the administration charges of £2000 for any passenger who arrives in the UK without a valid passport and a UK visa if required. These charges are not meant to be punitive, but to encourage robust document checking. The agency’s Carriers Liaison Section works with air and sea carriers to give them the practical help, advice and training they need to prevent these passengers from travelling. This approach has contributed to a continuing reduction in inadequately documented arrivals to the UK and has disrupted illegal migration.

ILID hosted a very well-attended liaison event for air carriers toward the end of September where carriers’ achievements, and close co-operation with RALON staff at hundreds of airports overseas was publicly commended by ILID director Tony Walker. The airlines universally welcomed recent changes to the Approved Gate Check (AGC) scheme (see below) which have led to a sharp increase in applications from carriers keen to be granted official status. Delegates were also keen to hear at first hand about the future direction

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of agency policy. We provided reassurance that engagement with carriers remains a priority during this unprecedented period of change and austerity. Following a final presentation on child trafficking several major airlines agreed to incorporate training into their cabin crew induction programmes and to report on cases of concern.

Approved Gate Check (AGC) Status

AGC status is granted in return for an audited high standard of document checking and security procedures at a port of embarkation, a good level of cooperation from the carrier and a satisfactory record in paying outstanding charges. Once granted on a specific route, carriers are not liable for a charge for passengers who arrive either without a valid document or if they hold one, a mutilated document. Recent enhancements to the AGC scheme now also allow for two technical waivers (no visa, expired or deferred visa) per route per quarter.

AGC has proved to be an extremely effective tool in encouraging carriers to ensure that passengers travelling to the UK are correctly documented. For example inadequately documented arrivals (IDAs) on Egyptair dropped by 66% following security improvements to achieve AGC. Status is only granted following a comprehensive inspection by an agency official. Performance is monitored and the status may be withdrawn from carriers who fail to maintain high standards.

Mobile biometric clinics - the future of biometric enrolment

The question of how the agency can provide services to applicants in the furthest flung parts of the world with so much pressure on budgets is a difficult one. A recent initiative in the Americas may well provide a blueprint.

In place of expensive fixed centres, UK Border Agency staff have developed and implemented mobile biometric enrolment centres. Still run by our commercial partners, these have the added benefit of extending our coverage to more remote locations that, previously, we had been unable to reach. For example, we are now able to enrol biometrics in the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands. This saves the customer time and money by taking away the need to travel to enrolment centres in other nearby countries.



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The equipment has also been used on campus for students in places like Newfoundland and Syracuse in sessions which have proved very popular with students and teachers alike. In Venezuela, the use of mobile biometric enrolment allowed for the efficient handling of over 200 applications from the world renowned Venezuelan Youth Orchestra. 212 sets of biometrics were taken in less than six hours and the visas were considered and issued in good time for the orchestra to make their performances in the UK.

Most importantly this new approach helps reduce regional operating costs. Just one example of this comes from the changes made in Halifax, Canada, where a fixed VAC was closed and replaced with a flexible applicant funded enrolment centre at a saving of more than £100,000 to the agency.

It has been a complex process to deliver this solution but now other regions and indeed other visa issuing countries are considering replicating this model as part of their network changes to achieve both regional efficiency targets and improved customer service offerings.

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Joint declaration on immigration at UK-France summit

On 2 November the French and British governments confirmed their commitment to work closely together to stop illegal migration and tackle abuse of the asylum system. Both have announced new measures to build on this cooperation by sharing more information, increasing return flights and tackling organised immigration crime networks. The two countries have vowed to work together to tackle illegal immigration before it even starts, by working with countries outside Europe to educate people about the reality of being in a country illegally. To read more about this story please visit [UK Border Agency | Joint declaration on immigration at UK-France summit](#).

The declaration sets out how the UK and France will continue the fight against illegal migration and against the traffickers who exploit migrants and organise the trade in human beings. It covers:

- the implementation of commitments agreed at the Evian summit
- new initiatives to reinforce the security of the UK-France border, with a particular view to making it impervious to illegal immigration and trafficking networks
- a preventative approach to illegal immigration in the principal countries of origin and transit

- joint work to mobilise partners at an international and European level within a framework of concrete and operational cooperation

You can download the full declaration at [UK Border Agency | UK-France joint declaration on immigration](#)

More than half a million pounds found in hand luggage

More than half a million pounds in cash has been seized from 2 Nigerian men as they tried to enter the UK through Heathrow Airport. Our officers discovered the money, which was in €500 notes and US\$100 bills, when the pair were stopped as they arrived on a flight from Paris on Wednesday 20 October.

The money was detained under the Proceeds of Crime Act and will only be returned if they can provide proof that it came from a legitimate source. Anyone entering or leaving the UK with more than £1,000 in cash may be asked to provide evidence for the source and intended use of the money or face having it detained. This is to prevent the money made from criminality being hidden in bank accounts or other assets overseas, and to prevent the theft of money from the public purse through unpaid tax. To read more about this story please visit [UK Border Agency | More than half a million pounds found in hand luggage](#). Details of other cash seizures are also to be found on the news section of our [website](#).

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Seven stowaways found in Blackpool bound lorry

On 26 October seven foreign nationals were stopped from entering the country after one of our ‘sniffer’ dogs found them hiding in a lorry heading for Lancashire. The would-be illegal immigrants were discovered by our officers, who work with body detection ‘sniffer’ dogs at the ferry port in northern France. As officers checked vehicles bound for Dover, our ‘sniffer’ dog found the 5 men and 2 women from Eritrea hiding amongst the load in a lorry destined for Blackpool. The stowaways were taken off the vehicle, fingerprinted, photographed, refused entry to the UK and then handed over to the French Frontier Police (Police Aux Frontier). To read more about this story please visit [UK Border Agency | Seven stowaways found in Blackpool bound lorry](#). Details of other detections are also to be found on the news section of our website.



Agency updates human trafficking guidance

Two pieces of updated guidance have been launched to help UK Border Agency frontline staff and trafficking experts deal effectively with human trafficking victims.

The guidance, which has been developed by the central policy unit, includes information about how staff can refer into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is the UK’s process for formally identifying victims, sharing information and facilitating victims’ access to advice, accommodation and support. The new guidance for the agency’s trafficking experts, known as competent authorities, provides information on the process for identifying and handling trafficking cases within the NRM.

Victims of trafficking may not always be forthcoming with information and the guidance for front line staff explains the key indicators they should be aware of. In referring and identifying victims of trafficking using the NRM, the agency is making a vital contribution both to the protection of victims and to the disruption and prosecution of traffickers.

To access new guidance for the agency’s trafficking experts go to the UK Border Agency [website](#).

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One million cigarettes seized at Immingham

More than 1 million cigarettes have been found inside concrete blocks at Immingham docks by our officers. Officers uncovered the haul on Wednesday 27 October following checks on lorry freight arriving from the continent. During a search officers became suspicious of a consignment of concrete blocks and used sledgehammers to break open the blocks to uncover the haul of Chinese made cigarettes. The lorry has been seized and the owners may now be liable to a fine or even have the lorry confiscated. Enquiries are continuing into the illegal shipment of cigarettes. This is an excellent result and shows the dedication of our officers that help to make our border controls at ports so robust.

The border force, is a dedicated team of officers exercising powers for immigration and customs functions working as a single force side-by-side to prevent illegal migration and smuggling of illegal goods at the UK border; interviewing arriving passengers to identify possible immigration offenders and are equipped with the latest hi-tech equipment, including x-ray machines and detector dogs to identify smuggled goods in passengers' luggage.

Anyone who suspects that people may be involved in drug smuggling should contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 where anonymity can be assured. Details of other illegal goods detections are also to be found on the news section of our [website](#).



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e-Borders

The e-Borders Programme continues to run a live service and deliver significant benefits. Partners will be aware that the government emphasised the importance of making full use of technology to secure the border, highlighting e-Borders, following both the Spending Review and the Strategic Defence and Security Review. We are currently progressing e-Borders through two main strands:

- Live Service and Transition - Work continues on managing the transition and exit arrangements with Raytheon to ensure minimal disruption. The National Border Targeting Centre is currently checking the movements of about 55% of all international passenger and crew journeys in and out of the UK and in 2010 alone the system has helped lead to over 2,400 arrests. We are also involved in the Smart Zone trials at Calais and Luton, which aim to speed up the travel for pre-cleared, low risk coaches and flights. We are continuing to add new carrier data to support these processes.

- Future Services - This is the development of future services to build on our existing capabilities. We are progressing this through agreement of the strategic business case following engagement with potential new suppliers.

Progress is being made on transition arrangements with Raytheon and the development of our future services; at the same time, we continue to run a service that helps to keep the border secure.

We will keep our partners up-to-date on all significant developments, including the EU free movement and data protection issues. If you have any queries on any of the above please contact e-Borders at: ebct@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk



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Highly skilled migrants should do highly skilled jobs, says Immigration Minister

On 27 October the UK Border Agency published a study which looks at the jobs being done by migrants who are in the UK under Tier 1 of the points-based system. Tier 1 is for highly skilled workers, investors and entrepreneurs, but the study reveals that around a third of the 1,184 people sampled are being employed in lower-skilled jobs such as shop assistants and supermarket cashiers. To find out more about this story, please visit the UK Border Agency [website](#). You can find the full study in the [Statistics section](#) of our website.

New immigration and nationality fees

Revised immigration fees set at or below the cost of processing came into effect on 1 October 2010. The new fees were **announced** on 9 September 2010. They are listed in the UK Border Agency fees table which you can find in the [fees for our services](#) section on the website. In line with the new fees, the agency has published new versions of the following application forms and guidance:

- NTL form and guide
- TOC form and guide
- Tier 5 (temporary worker) form
- Points-based system (PBS) dependant form
- Tier 4 (help text leaflet form) (G)

These can be found on our website.

Biometric residence permits for highly skilled and temporary workers

Regulations have been laid before Parliament which will require more migrants to apply for biometric residence permits if they want to extend their stay in the UK. The permits will replace the stickers (known as 'vignettes') which these migrants currently hold in their passports. Subject to parliamentary approval of the regulations, migrants who apply to extend their stay in the UK under Tier 1 or Tier 5 (temporary worker) of the points-based system will need to enrol their biometric information (fingerprints and photograph) as part of their application from 14 December 2010. The UK Border Agency has published an impact assessment and an equality impact assessment for the changes. You can find these on the [biometric resident permits - impact assessments](#) page.

Changes to sponsor guidance come into effect

The UK Border Agency has published revised guidance for sponsors and would-be sponsors under Tiers 2, 4 and 5 of the points-based system. You can find the revised guidance documents, with a list of changes to the Tiers 2 and 5 guidance, on the [points-based system: guidance for sponsor's page](#). The only change to the Tier 4 sponsor guidance relates to the increase in the fee for a sponsorship action plan from 1 October 2010.

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New English test set to go live

New tests will be launched for migrants applying to come to the UK to join or marry their settled partner. From 29 November 2010 any Non-European Economic Area migrant who wants to enter or remain in the UK as the partner of a British citizen or a person settled here will need to show that they can speak and understand English. For many this will mean taking an English language test with one of our **approved test providers**.

The rules apply to anyone applying as the husband, wife, civil partner, unmarried partner, same-sex partner, fiancé or proposed civil partner of a British citizen or a person settled in this country. The mandatory test also applies to people applying from within the UK as well as visa applicants from overseas.

To mark the launch a **YouTube video** has been produced to explain some of the mechanics of the process as well as to outline some of the benefits for migrants wishing to settle in the UK. Overseas applicants required to take a test will need to do so before they apply to come to the UK.

Update to the Tier 2 policy guidance for skilled workers

The UK Border Agency has published revised policy guidance for Tier 2 of the points-based system (version 10/10). You can download the policy guidance and the table of changes at the UK Border Agency **website**.

New online services

The agency's website now carries a direct link on the home page to new 'apply online' services. This page offers customers a tool which directs them to the right interactive application form. Customers can then download interactive electronic forms, with in-built guidance, to ensure they submit fully completed, typed and more legible applications.

From next summer, starting with student (Tier 4) applications, we will also be offering an online customer account facility to enable customers to securely apply and track the progress of their application.

Enabling customers to apply online will improve the customer's experience, by only asking them to complete relevant sections of the online form it will also improve data quality, ensuring we receive all the information we require, at the correct time, to consider a person's application. In addition to providing new online services, we are also standardising our case working processes and considering where we can simplify our rules to ensure the system is fairer, faster and easier to navigate for both our customers and caseworkers.

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Requests for additional certificates of sponsorship: refined criteria

The UK Border Agency published refined criteria which will be applied to Tier 2 (general) sponsors' requests for additional certificates of sponsorship on 1 November 2010. The criteria have been refined to give sponsors greater certainty, by ensuring all requests will be approved if they relate to an extension for a work permit holder or Tier 2 (general) worker already employed by a sponsor. The refined criteria will also help the agency to meet the ongoing recruitment needs of sponsors while maintaining the overall interim limit introduced in July 2010. To find out more about refined criteria, please visit the UK Border Agency [website](#).

Checking service pilot for settlement applications

Customers applying for settlement on application form SET (M) now have the option of submitting their application via the settlement checking service (SCS) which is being rolled out to 12 local authorities by November 2010.

The settlement checking service pilot builds on the success of the nationality checking service by extending the service to settlement applications from spouses, civil partners, unmarried partners or same-sex partners of British citizens or persons settled in the UK (SET (M)).

The service provides assurance to customers of a complete / valid application, while expanding the service remit of local authorities and creating efficiency and productivity benefits for the agency.

The pilot has commenced roll out in 12 local authorities, selected because of their experience in providing the nationality checking service. Five local authorities are now live with the service. The remaining seven local authorities will be live by the end of November. Customers are informed of the new services via the UK Border Agency website ([settlement pages](#)).

Early indications are that the service is well received by customers and the new process is operating effectively. Local authorities have found training and helpdesk assistance provided by the UK Border Agency, very useful in enabling a seamless service.

The settlement checking service is a 12 month project that will be reviewed at six months with a view to extending it to other local authorities and to other types of settlement application.

Information about settlement checking service is available on the UK Border Agency website. We will provide an update on the progress of the pilot in the next UK Border Agency bimonthly update.

For further information please contact Hilary Norbury
0151 237 5525

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I-Search accelerates DVLA checks

Local immigration teams (LITs) are beginning to use a new tool, I-Search, at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). I-Search is part of the immigration case work (ICW) programme's INTEGRITY IT system which allows caseworkers to search and identify individuals by cross-referencing information stored on different computer systems.

Simon Elwell, programme director for the immigration case work (ICW) programme, which is transforming the agency's case working by simplifying processes and modernising IT, said: "Making new IT tools available on portable devices will greatly benefit those agency staff whose main jobs are carried out in the field. I can see how enforcement officers among others will gain real benefits from having up-to-date information at their fingertips."

I-Search is currently being rolled out to local immigration teams around the country.

New version of application form EEA4

The UK Border Agency has revised application form EEA4, which should be used by the non-EEA family members of EEA nationals who want to apply for permanent residence in the UK.

The revised form (version 09/2010) should be used for all applications made on or after 30 September 2010.

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UK Border Agency's summer enforcement brings nationwide success

This summer saw an intensified period of nationwide enforcement activity by the UK Border Agency. Agency officers worked with the Serious Organised Crime Agency and police forces across the country to crack down on a range of immigration offences. These included illegal working, sham marriages, bogus colleges and organised crime.

The campaign, codenamed Operation Golding, brought together all of the agency's law enforcement and investigation capability, both inland and at the border, to focus on a coordinated and sustained period of action.

The agency's immigration crime teams undertook a series of operations - targeting and disrupting organised criminals involved in facilitation, human and drug trafficking and arms smuggling through arrests and prosecution. They also sought to disrupt their activities further by stripping them of their cash and valuable assets.

Overall, over 400 operations across the country between July and September have resulted in over 800 arrests with over £500,000 cash seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act. Many of these investigations are ongoing.

The agency is determined to build on this summer's successes and is currently implementing the winter phase of the campaign. This will use intelligence gathered from the coordinated summer activity to target the organisers, perpetrators and beneficiaries of immigration crime. This will include the abuse of immigration law by white collar professionals and targeting criminal networks involved in the importation of drugs and firearms. The activity is scheduled to begin in November 2010.

For more information on our ongoing activities in this area please visit [UK Border Agency | News and updates](#)



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Fiddles, Cheats and Scams

The first programme of a new series of ITV1's 'Fiddles, Cheats and Scams' featured the UK Border Agency's operations to disrupt sham marriages.

Part of the programme on 19 October 2010, showed how those intent on cheating the system are brought to justice and focused on the agency's work in combating sham marriages. This was a major part of this summer's campaign against immigration crime, where agency officers worked with the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and police forces across the country to crack down on a range of immigration offences. These included illegal working, sham marriages, bogus colleges and organised crime.

The programme also featured the first televised sham marriage arrest in a church, following assistant director Sam Bullimore and his team concluding their **operation in Tilbury**.

Detective Inspector Andy Cummins of the London immigration crime team also featured in the programme. He talked about his team's work on the recent **Alex Brown case** in which a Sussex vicar was convicted of conducting 360 sham marriages.

New updated comprehensive guidance for employers on preventing illegal working

On 2 November new guidance for employers on preventing illegal working was published which will help employers understand the law on illegal working and what they need to do to comply. The new document is an update of the original comprehensive guidance, which was published in February 2008 at the start of the illegal working civil penalty regime. It includes details of document checks that employers are advised to undertake, and provides up-to-date images of the documents, stamps and endorsements that may be presented by migrant workers as evidence of their right to work in the UK. To read more about the new guidance please visit [UK Border Agency | New updated comprehensive guidance for employers on preventing illegal working](#).

You can download the updated guidance from the [preventing illegal working - guidance and documents page](#). For general enquiries regarding illegal working, contact the Sponsorship and employers' helpline, 0300 123 4699.



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Local immigration team holds advice surgeries in Sikh gurdwaras

A local immigration team (LIT) in the Midlands and East region is tackling immigration crime by working closely with the Sikh community.

Sarah Bahara and Rekha Devi-Kauldhar, immigration officers from the West Midlands LIT, first pioneered holding immigration surgeries in Sikh places of worship, or gurdwaras, 18 months ago.

The surgeries, which are being held at gurdwaras in Smethwick and Wolverhampton offer advice on returning home. They have been well attended by the local community.

Laramie Morris, the area's LIT Leader, said: "In August 2010, 12 people in a single surgery came forward to be repatriated and have since been removed, with a further 11 having now been removed. An additional five removals have been set up for November 2010.

Laramie commented: "It's important to see this work with the Sikh community in context of our local strategy as a whole. It is the final stage in a process and builds on our illegal working operations, and our focus on issuing civil penalty notices to local businesses employing illegal immigrants. We are also seeing failed asylum seekers coming forward. This means more people wanting to go home, and we are facilitating this."

Following the roll-out of the existing surgeries, the project is being extended to other gurdwaras in the region, including Wednesfield, West Bromwich, Willenhall, Birmingham and Coventry.

Piara Purewal, one of the founder members of the Smethwick gurdwara, who is playing a key role in introducing the agency to other Sikh places of worship, commented: "Holding immigration surgeries such as these reassures potentially vulnerable people and encourages them to speak to the agency about making arrangements to return home."



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Enforced returns to Zimbabwe will resume

A written ministerial statement was given by the Minister for Immigration, Damian Green, on 14 October 2010, announcing that the agency would resume enforced returns of failed asylum seekers to Zimbabwe. Enforced returns to Zimbabwe were suspended in September 2006 because the unstable political situation in the country meant that their safety could not be guaranteed. Since the formation of the Inclusive Government in 2009, the country is now considered stable enough to receive returnees. This means that all Zimbabweans living in the UK illegally now face enforced removal. For further information please visit our [website](#).

Home Affairs Select Committee - Legacy case resolution

Lin Homer updated the Home Affairs Select Committee on 1 November 2010 with the agency's progress on clearing the backlog of older asylum cases lodged before 5 March 2007. It was reported that as of 30 September 2010 it had concluded 334,500 cases, of which 42% were grants, 11% were removals and 48% were conclusions for another reason (i.e. duplicates or errors). For further information please email caseresolution@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

Corporate partners have their say at the Asylum Improvement Project (AIP) workshop

The Asylum Improvement Project (AIP) held a workshop on the 28 October 2010 which was attended by a range of voluntary sector corporate partners and the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Corporate partners were invited to attend the event to provide their views on possible enhancements to the asylum process, to improve both its speed and quality. The AIP is focusing on three main themes to improve performance. These are:

- generating greater productivity and efficiency in the asylum process
- delivering better, more sustainable decisions
- assisting with removals performance

The workshop was important to gain partner feedback on the agency's current thinking and how the new proposed approaches will work in practice. The team will continue to consult with corporate partners throughout the process and adapt and change the plans as necessary. Following a suggestion made at the workshop, the project will also consider joint workshops between corporate partners and UK Border Agency staff in the future.

Dan Hartropp, who leads the project, said: 'It is essential we engage with corporate partners who have



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a wealth of experience and knowledge of our asylum system. Their feedback will help shape how the system is delivered in the future. It was particularly encouraging that corporate partners and our staff came up with many similar ideas.”

The project’s current work includes a number of pilot initiatives. These include an allowed appeals project in west London, the use of a resource management tool called Chronos in Leeds, and a number of initiatives across the country to reduce the length of UK Border Agency decision letters.

Commercial and Operational Managers Procuring Asylum Support Services (COMPASS) supplier conferences – A Success

On 12 and 15 October 2010, the COMPASS Project hosted two successful supplier events in Leeds and London, providing potential suppliers with the opportunity to find out more about the project and the re-tendering of contracts going forward.

The COMPASS Project was launched in July 2009 and its overall aim is to provide ongoing contract provision for Asylum and Refugee support services, in accordance with government policy, beyond the

current arrangements which are due to expire during 2011/2012. The following services are currently within the scope of COMPASS:

- initial / dispersed accommodation and associated services for asylum seekers
- advisory and support services, and
- transport for asylum seekers

The October conferences were well attended by a cross section of organisations, all keen to find out more about the project and the new contracts. Feedback from suppliers was extremely positive, with the majority embracing the opportunity to network with agency staff and other suppliers. Following the conferences a large proportion of the suppliers signed up to attend one to one meetings with members of the COMPASS project. These meetings will be taking place during the first three weeks of November and will allow for more detailed discussions around the procurement process.

Ian Galloway, Deputy Commercial Director stated, “These conferences were the first in a series of engagement that will be taking place with suppliers. Over the coming months, we will be facing a great challenge in finalising a suitable solution for the contract re-procurement and these conferences provided the initial step in ensuring success”. For further information please contact Compass@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk



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UNHCR asks agency to mentor two European countries

The UK Border Agency is working closely with Hungary and Romania as part of a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) scheme to promote quality in asylum decision-making among a number of European countries.

The Further Developing Quality (FDQ) Project is funded by the European Refugee Fund (ERF) and was launched in June 2010 at a conference in Budapest. The agency, which is playing a lead role in the project, was asked to give a presentation on quality assurance processes at the launch event.

Partnership working is already underway and representatives from the nations have visited agency offices on a fact-finding visit and agency representatives are to make EU-funded return visits to Bucharest and Budapest in November 2010.

Quality assurance plays a central role in asylum decision making at the agency and ensures that high standards for decision making are maintained. This is achieved by regularly assessing a random 10 per cent sample of decisions, identifying areas of improvement, providing feedback, focused training and recommendations.

The UK welcomes the first group of Somali refugees from Kenya

The first group of Somali refugees from Kenya arrive in the UK under the Gateway Protection programme. The agency's Gateway Protection Programme resettles some of the world's most vulnerable refugees, referred to the UK by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). In October, the UK welcomed the first groups of Somali refugees who had fled to Kenya as part of the initial mass influx in 1991 and 1992 caused by the inter-clan civil war in Somalia in the early 1990s.

Helen Gray and Bill Brandon from the agency's Refugee Integration and Resettlement Team were fortunate to be able to follow two families from their arrival at Manchester Airport as they travelled to their new homes in Bolton with resettlement support workers from Refugee Action, one of our partner NGOs. It was great to see the refugees react to their first taste of western living, a world away from the refugee camp in Kenya.

The day also included a visit to the home of two Sudanese refugees who were resettled to Bolton in 2005/6 and a presentation by a 'Women's Group'. It was wonderful to hear how these individuals' lives had changed since their arrival in the UK and the women in particular were inspirational in the way they had found confidence in each other and provided support to other newly resettled refugees.

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Helen Gray – Head of Refugee Resettlement Programmes Unit said “This visit was a great insight to the arrivals process and to see at first hand how the Gateway Protection Programme has such a positive impact on the lives of these exceptionally vulnerable refugees.” For further information please see our [website](#)

Agency updates asylum gender guidance

Newly revised gender guidance, **gender issues in the asylum claim**, has been issued by the UK Border Agency for caseworkers.

The revised guidelines draw on the expertise of key corporate partners including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Asylum Aid and the Independent Law Practitioners Association (ILPA).

The new guidance is more comprehensive and up-to-date in respect to case law and practices and reflects the agency’s support for campaigns like Asylum Aid’s ‘The Charter of Rights of Women Seeking Asylum’.

Matthew Coats, head of immigration and board champion for gender issues, commented: ‘This revised guidance reflects the agency’s very real commitment to achieving a truly gender-sensitive asylum system.’

Voluntary departures for former unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs) in the Yorkshire & Humber (Y&H) region

Since March four young people from the Yorkshire & Humber region have opted to leave the UK on voluntary departures to Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan after their UASC Discretionary Leave expired, demonstrating the success of UK Border Agency staff promoting the Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR) scheme.

All of the young people had entered the UK as unaccompanied children and were granted Discretionary Leave on the basis that adequate reception arrangements were not available for them in their own country. When their leave expired at 17.5 years old, two of the young people chose to withdraw their applications for further leave before deciding to depart voluntarily, reducing costs to the local authority, who in many cases have a duty to support care leavers until they turn 21 years old.

Three of the young people chose to return through the AVR scheme offered by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), qualifying for a personalised reintegration package worth up to £1500 which they can use to achieve a successful return to their home country, such as setting up their own business, or continuing in education or training.



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A further young person made arrangements to return to their home country at their own expense after their application for further leave had been refused, avoiding the cost of their removal to the taxpayer.

Sam Brewer AVR lead for the Y&H region “This demonstrates success in the agency working with young people and those responsible for their care in ensuring that young people are aware of all the options available to them.”

These examples demonstrate our commitment to ensure that young people who enter the UK are equipped with the knowledge to enable them to make informed decisions about their future, and also to provide a dignified return option for individuals who have no further leave to remain in the UK. Building on these successes, case owners from the Leeds Minors and Families Team are delivering presentations to local authority children’s services in conjunction with enforcement colleagues and IOM to increase partnership working and educate social workers on the options available to young people who enter the UK.

New LGBT asylum guidance

A new lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) asylum instruction (AI), sexual orientation and gender identity in the asylum claim has been released for considering asylum claims brought on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender.

The AI, made pressing in light of recent Supreme Court judgements, is seen as giving the agency the chance to formally internalise a number of recommendations made by Stonewall in their report “No Going Back”.

The AI, which follows interim guidance issued in July 2010, was developed in association with key corporate partners, including Stonewall, UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group, Independent Law Practitioners Association (ILPA) and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

The new guidance includes a useful glossary, examples of persecution and the application of recent case law for lesbians, bisexual and/or transgender persons as well as gay men.

An important element of the new AI is the design of its interviewing and assessment of credibility section. This supports decision makers in conducting an objective and sensitive enquiry in order to gather best evidence on which to reach a justifiable decision.

Emma Churchill, Director of Asylum, commented: ‘This new guidance, and the recently updated AI on gender, shows that the UK Border Agency are not only committed to making the system more efficient, but are also determined to help caseworkers ensure their decisions are fair. A vital part of this is being sensitive to the different circumstances people face.’

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National Asylum Stakeholder Forum (NASF) – 30 September

At the last NASF, which took place on 30 September 2010, the UK Border Agency discussed the asylum improvement project (AIP) which aims to reduce the overall asylum support spend, achieve a lower level of un-concluded cases and reduce the unit cost of asylum case working.

Maurice Wren from Asylum Aid discussed the importance of gender sensitivity in the asylum system, particularly in regard to the rights of women seeking asylum. He referred to some of the positive outcomes of improving asylum seeking women's rights, including an agreement that pregnant women could apply by phone and the launch of maternity grants. The UK Border Agency had also recently issued an **asylum gender instruction** which was well received by corporate partners.

There was an update on proposals to deal with victims of torture and a discussion on issues for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in the asylum system.

For further information please email **Adam Whisker** or **Sheelagh Warde**.

Children's Sub-group – 13 September

On the removal of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) under Dublin 2 Regulations, the agency explained its policy on providing limited notification of removal directions had been suspended. This means that no UASC are currently being returned through the 'same day' process previously applied to some third country unit cases.

Looking to the future, the agency is still discussing how to manage the return of non-compliant UASC and is looking at the review being conducted on ending the detention of children for immigration purposes to see if there are strategies or processes that can be applied to UASC.

The third country unit is moving forward its initiative to provide more information about the care and support systems in EU member states and thereby help social services and the child better understand what to expect on transfer and consequently feel more reassured.

In addition, corporate partners were provided with an update about work to start returning a number of Afghan UASC aged 16 and 17. The tender process to identify suitable service providers in Afghanistan has now closed and bids from potential suppliers are being evaluated.

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Finally, the UK Border Agency summarised progress in relation to ending the detention of children for immigration purposes and informed the group of the ongoing pilots to look at alternatives to detention and how the family wing at Yarl's Wood will soon close.

For further information please email [Sheelagh Warde](mailto:Sheelagh.Warde@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk).

Upcoming meetings with corporate partners

Partner Group	Date of Next Meeting	Contact
Scottish Asylum Stakeholder Forum (SASF)	11 November 2010	Pauline.Meenan@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
National Asylum Stakeholder Forum	18 November 2010	Adam.Whisker@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Children's Sub Group	2 December 2010	Sheelagh.Warde2@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
National Migration Group	8 December 2010	Adam.Whisker@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Gateway Steering Group	8 December 2010	Helen.Gray@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Voluntary Returns Steering Group	8 December 2010	Eileen.Gough@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Case Resolution Sub-group	9 December 2010	Caseresolution@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Corporate Partner Group	13 January 2011	Carl.Padgett@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
Detention User Group (DUG)	24 January 2011	Carolyn.Seaman@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk
National Asylum Operational Forum (NASOF)	2 February 2011	Adam.Whisker@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