



UK Visas and Citizenship Services Factsheet: December 2018

What are the new services?

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) is transforming the experience for customers in the UK applying to extend their stay, or applying for citizenship. Roll-out of new UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service Centres (UKVCAS) began in November 2018.

When will the new services start?

The majority of customers who are applying to extend their stay in the UK, or applying for citizenship, are able to use the new UKVCAS core centres now, or the Premium Lounge in London. 42 of the 50 enhanced service centres are open; the remaining 8 will be open by early 2019.

Customers can choose to continue using the existing process of submitting their biometrics at their local post office during the transition phase.

A small percentage of customers who may require more support with their application will continue to use the existing process until new Service and Support Centres open in early 2019.

Why has there been a delay in roll-out?

During early roll-out of VCAS centres, some centres were performing sub-optimally. We have therefore revised the roll-out plan and extended the transition phase to allow us to work with Sopra Steria to address these issues.

What is the main change for customers?

The main change is that customers will now have a streamlined online journey, transitioning seamlessly from their application form on Access UK to our partner Sopra Steria's website, where they can book their appointment; add services to tailor their experience; and upload their supporting documentation. The new process is quicker, secure and easier for customers.

Why have you made this change?

This is part of a global programme to improve the operations and delivery of UKVI services. These new services will deliver an improved experience to customers, such as allowing customers to retain their supporting evidence, and choose services to tailor their experience; as well as enabling UKVI to step towards a fully digital process, bringing efficiencies. The new service is more in line with the experience we offer to customers overseas when they make an initial application for a visa to travel to the UK for a visit, or to work or study.

Where are the core UK VCAS centres?

The core centres are in Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Croydon, Cardiff and Belfast. There is a Premium Lounge in London; and an additional 50 enhanced service centres across the UK, available to customers for a £60 charge.

Will customers know what to do and where to go?

Yes. Customers will be guided through the new process online and transitioned to the Sopra Steria website if appropriate, or directed to the existing process for the small number of customers unable to use UK VCAS.

Will processing times or priority services change?

Service standards for standard applications will not change. Current Super Premium applications will be delivered by Sopra Steria and be known as On Demand VIP or pop-up services.

UKVI will continue to review service standards while opportunities to extend priority services will be explored.

How long will customers have to wait for an appointment?

Customers can choose a core UK VCAS centre to attend for a free appointment within 5 days of their application being submitted.

I have heard some customers are having to wait longer than 5 days, why is this?

This has been the case unfortunately but this has now been resolved. During the transition phase our partner, Sopra Steria, did not have capacity to meet demand. We have worked with them to increase capacity since then. We are committed to ensuring all customers are offered an appointment at a core service centre within 5 days of submitting their application.

Can customers bring a legal representative to the appointment?

Yes, customers can bring a representative to the appointment. Applications may or may not require an interview – customers will be informed whether this is required after they have submitted their application. If an interview is required, customers can bring a lawyer or representative if they choose to.

Will this make it harder for customers to remain in the UK?

No, these new services are about supporting UKVI's vision to be a world-leading immigration service. There is no change to the decision-making process or criteria as a result of this new process.

The new process will make it easier for customers to apply to remain in the UK, or apply for citizenship, with an easier, more accessible online application form; ability to upload supporting documentation from home, or take it to their appointment; continued free appointments; and additional services for convenience or ease.

Will all UKVI customers use this new system?

No. In reviewing our services we recognised that some customers may require more support from UKVI, including during the application process itself. Therefore, in early 2019 we will be opening dedicated Service & Support Centres (SSCs) for customers whose applications or circumstances mean they need more assistance with their application

Which customers will use the Service & Support Centres?

Some customers applying under family and private life routes; to join as a dependant; for Family Reunion; on the basis of statelessness; those who qualify for a fee waiver or fee exemption; and some customers who are required to only enrol their biometric information

Will customers who are not able to use the UK VCAS centres still be able to use the 24-hour service?

Customers who are applying online for leave based on family or private life who are not able to use the UK VCAS centres but would like to use UKVI's 24-hour decision service will have access to a limited number of appointments at existing Premium Service Centres until January 2019.

Are fee waivers available?

Yes. Customers will be able to apply for a fee waiver on particular routes using an online form. If a customer's application for a fee waiver is granted, UKVI will send the customer a digital code that allows them to complete their online form without paying. [Guidance is available on gov.uk.](#)

What if customers don't have digital access or lack confidence applying online?

The Assisted Digital Service aims to ensure that nobody is excluded from making an immigration application due to lack of digital skills or access to a computer. Eligible customers are offered telephone support, or face to face support at a library or their home, to help them access and complete the online form. This service does not provide immigration advice. [Further information is available online](#)

How do customers access the Assisted Digital Service?

Customers can call 03333 445 675, text the word VISA to 07537416944, or email visa@we-are-digital.co.uk (Customers should include a telephone number they can be contacted on if possible).