



Home Office

Policy equality statement (PES)

UKVI CONTACT CENTRE PROCUREMENT

Background

UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) currently has a mixed provision for its contact centre services. Service provision differs across the providers with differing service level agreements in place. The external provision of Contact Centre Services is currently delivered through two contracts with two suppliers, Hinduja Global Solutions (HGS) and Sitel. HGS handle international enquiries whilst Sitel handle overflow from UKVI contact centres. Both contracts have operated through to full term with the final extension being to 31/05/17 which means, for the purposes of preserving business continuity to enable customers to contact UKVI, it is business critical that a new service launches on 01 June 2017.

A procurement exercise, via Crown Commercial Services Framework RM988, for a single new two year contract for UKVI Contact Centre Services, took place 2015-2017. The objectives of the procurement, and the changes the new contract seeks to deliver, are to preserve business continuity whilst securing cost savings for UKVI in customer contact through improved pricing and charging mechanisms. The emphasis is on developing a model which meets the needs of the business, reduces avoidable customer contact, increases first contact resolution, increases use of digital / electronic channels while maintaining data integrity and managing reputational risk.

Stakeholders including Home Office Commercial, Home Office Security, Home Office Digital, Data and Technology (accreditor, business analysts and business architects), UKVI International operations, Crown Commercial Services and Cabinet Office / Government Digital Services have been engaged to ensure due diligence in the project. Significant engagement has taken place throughout the procurement process including the development of the Statement of Requirements, the Invitation to Tender, evaluation and contract award phases.

The full business case was quality assured by UKVI Contact Centre Project Board and approved by Commercial Assessment Board, Portfolio & Investment Committee and Cabinet Office. On 06/01/17, Sitel were awarded the single, two year, contract for both the international and in-country contact centre services.

Timing

- The new service provision needs to be operational from **01 June 2017**.

Delivery option

Four potential delivery options were considered:-

- **Option 1 do nothing (in-house plus extending existing contracts)**
 - Advantage: service already in place
 - Disadvantage: does not improve the customer experience; does not represent value for money; greater potential for legal challenge
- **Option 2 in-house only (all in-scope contact, including International, undertaken in-house)**
 - Advantage: potential to improve the customer experience
 - Disadvantage: does not represent value for money
- **Option 3 commercial partner (no in-house provision)**
 - Advantage: value for money; improves the customer experience
 - Disadvantage: providing third party access to Home Office databases is not feasible within the timeframes
- **Option 4 blended approach, combination of in-house and commercial partnerships with extended remit (commercial partner provides first line service provision; in-house provides escalation services)**
 - Advantage: value for money; improves the customer experience
 - Disadvantage: potentially greater savings could be achieved via Option 3 once issue with third party access to Home Office databases is resolved.

UKVI Contact Centre Procurement full business case recommended **Option 4** as this option meets both key objectives of improving value for money and improving the customer experience. Option 3 (commercial partner) was discarded at this stage as unrealistic given the investment required to enable access to systems/data and their associated lead-in times, but we will work towards this as part of the planned joint procurement with HMPO in the longer term. Options 1 and 2 were both feasible but neither met the key objective of improving value for money.

To facilitate a reduction in costs, UKVI Executive Committee agreed that we sought bids from suppliers based on a reduction in the number of language services provided. The rationale for this is that although the current international service is offered in 20 languages, more than 75% of customers choose to speak to an agent in English. Furthermore, only 7-8 languages are requested more than 5k per annum.

In addition, the overseas service will be delivered on a cost-neutral basis which is likely to see charges against all overseas contact (e-mails are currently provided on a free to use basis). The assumption is that because all the information is available on GOV.UK, (and indeed, agents use GOV.UK to respond to queries), GOV.UK will now be the no cost option.

UKVI are working with Foreign & Commonwealth Office to monitor the impact of the two disbenefits, namely language reduction and email charges.

A **mobilisation plan** has been put in place to ensure no disruption to services for customers or UKVI staff. A copy of the mobilisation plan has been developed and shared with key stakeholders. The mobilisation plan does not contain any protected data or information, i.e. there are no implications for staff and customers, e.g. in terms of protected characteristics. Providers will be required to comply with security accreditation standards and adhere to UKVI data handling standards and green agenda.

As the **project develops**, there will be improvements to the customer journey, including increased ability to self-serve, and for those using the contact centre services, increased first contact resolution, lower call waiting times and increased percentage of calls answered. Improvements to the customer journey, including their delivery and how they will be measured and tracked, will be discussed and agreed at the UKVI Service Manager's monthly review boards with the selected supplier. Tracking of improvements will also be monitored via UKVI Service Manager's monthly review boards.

A copy of the project plan has been attached at Annex 1.

Summary of the evidence considered in demonstrating due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Public sector equality duty

The public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- The equality duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marital and civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality); religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.
- The project assumption is that the international enquiry service will be offered on a cost-neutral basis which is likely to mean that all contact types could potentially be chargeable. If customers do not wish to use the chargeable services, they will be able to find the information on GOV.UK There is a very small possibility that the following groups might not have access to or be comfortable using the website:
 - a) customers in the older age range;
 - b) customers with disabilities; and
 - c) customers in lower income groups.

The situation will be monitored via the UKVI Service Manager's monthly review boards with Sitel UK.

- Given the very low take-up of the current language provision (less than 25%), it is likely that there will be a reduction in the number of languages offered by the international enquiry service. There is a very small possibility that certain of the smaller ethnic groups will not have sufficient understanding of English to be able to communicate with an agent. While this is considered unlikely given the customer base, further research will be undertaken with colleagues in International Operations to determine the potential impact and identify if further action, other than the provision of the information on the GOV.UK website, e.g. expanding the proposed language provision, is required. The project will be liaising with Strategic Communications to identify how this risk can be mitigated.
- UKVI Contact Centre Procurement has included the provision of assisted digital services for all contact types coming within scope of the contract. Specifically, the Supplier shall:
 - deliver this support in a manner that improves the digital skills of Customers and encourages them to self-serve on-line for their next contact with the Authority;
 - operate a service that reflects the varying requirements and preferences of the Authority's Customers, including changes to the assisted digital services, as a result of Customer Insight gained;
 - ensure its Agents:
 - summarise and explain next steps including for those Customers with assisted digital or specific needs (including mental health issues or accessibility issues);
 - carry out the assisted digital triage appropriately;
 - provides appropriate support for assisted digital Customers in line with most recent Authority assisted digital guidelines; and
 - accurately completes management information records in relation to the call (in line with the provided Measuring Assisted Digital Transactions).
- UKVI Contact Centre Procurement will be improving first contact resolution and increasing avoidable contact by enabling customers to self-serve rather than having to contact the contact centre. If more digital services are introduced, there is a very small possibility that the following groups might not have access to or be comfortable using the website:
 - a) customers in the older age range;
 - b) customers with disabilities; and
 - c) customers in lower income groups.

While this is considered unlikely given the customer base, to reduce any potential adverse impact, an assisted digital service will be available to supplement on-line services. In addition, no channels will be withdrawn unless the proposal is evidenced by customer research and UKVI has given approval for its withdrawal.
- As per the Statement of Requirements, training for supplier staff and in-house teams will include assisted digital, safe-guarding and providing support to vulnerable adults. In addition, the Supplier shall manage the service in collaboration with the Authority's Contract Manager and Service Manager to monitor compliance with Home Office values ([Equality and diversity - Home Office - GOV.UK](#)).
- Further work will be undertaken as UKVI Contact Centre Procurement progresses to gather and analyse customer insight on service provisions. In particular, the new contract states that the selected supplier shall:
 - a) ensure any proposals to withdraw or add a particular channel are supported by a clear justification and customer insight, and are approved by UKVI before they are withdrawn or added; and
 - b) analyse customer issues, trends, complaints, compliments and escalations to help drive better Customer service and responses;
- A Staffing and Restructuring Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to identify impacts on staff currently working within the UKVI in-house contact centres and an action plan to ensure the recommendations are taken forward has been produced.
- A Privacy Impact Assessment has been undertaken. No personal information will be published.
- UKVI Contact Centre Procurement will publish data on financial spend over £25k and GPC expenditure over £500 as part of the government's transparency commitments.
- Following a Freedom of Information request, UKVI released the 2014 customer satisfaction report to www.whatdotheyknow.com and committed to proactively publishing a report on 2014/15 customer

<p>feedback by the end of this calendar year. Any data that is published is scrutinised to ensure that personal data which could breach an individual's right to privacy is not published.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focus groups and workshops will be held with stakeholders, including the FCO to consider and address equality considerations as UKVI Contact Centre Procurement develops. ➤ The views of staff support networks, Trade Unions with regards to Equality Duty implications will also be sought. ➤ UKVI are working with Foreign & Commonwealth Office to monitor and where possible minimise any negative impacts of the two disbenefits, namely language reduction and email charges. 			
SCS sign off	31/05/17	Name/Title	redacted,- Senior Responsible Owner
<p>I have read the available evidence and I am satisfied that this demonstrates compliance, where relevant, with Section 149 of the Equality Act and that due regard has been made to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations.</p>			
Directorate/Unit	Head of Performance and Customer Service	Lead contact	redacted
Date	31/05/17	Review Date	01/12/17

Retain the completed PES for your records and send a copy to [Redacted](#) and your relevant business area Equality and Diversity Lead.