



Civil Service
Fast Track
Apprenticeship

Fast Track Assessment Centre (FTAC) Guide 2018

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Congratulations

You've reached the Fast Track Assessment Centre (FTAC).

This guide tells you what to expect there and what happens afterwards. This guide is for Candidates who have been invited to attend a Fast Track Assessment Centre after passing the online tests.

What is FTAC?

FTAC is a half-day assessment centre that selects **non-graduates** with the calibre and potential to join the Fast Track Apprenticeship program. Research shows that assessment centres make more accurate predictions about how you will perform at work than other recruitment methods.

Fast Track standards are high and to have reached the assessment centre is a significant achievement. You now have the chance to show that you have the skills and personal qualities to be a successful Fast Tracker. Our aim is to measure each candidate's skills, aptitudes and abilities against set criteria. You will complete a variety of exercises, including a group exercise, in which you'll be working with 3 to 5 fellow candidates from a wide range of backgrounds.

You will attend FTAC either in Newcastle or London.

Who are the assessors?

Each group of candidates will be seen by specially selected and trained assessors. These are mainly experienced civil servants. A trainee assessor, senior assessor, or a visitor might accompany the assessors to observe this process, but will take no part in your assessment. If you are uncomfortable about a trainee or visitor sitting in on any of your exercises, please feel free to say so – this will not affect your assessment in any way. However, most candidates don't mind an extra observer in the room.

What will be assessed?

Fair and open recruitment is important to us. We will assess you solely on your performance in the exercises.

The assessors will have no information on you except your name. They will not have seen your application form or your scores from earlier stages in the selection process. They will not know which school or college you attended or are attending. Nor will they know whether you have applied before. Also, the Civil Service is committed to equal opportunities, so your socio-economic or ethnic background, gender, appearance, age, sexual orientation, accent, political views, religion, personal beliefs, or previous employment play no part in our final decision. We want you to feel free to express your point of view throughout the assessment.

You will be assessed against the following competencies, grouped into 7 areas:

Changing and Improving

You will be innovative and seek out opportunities to create effective change. You learn as much from what has worked as well as what has not. You are open to change and improvement, and working in 'smarter', more focused ways.

Making Effective Decisions

Effectiveness in this area is about using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to arrive at accurate, expert and professional decisions and advice. For all staff it's about being careful and thoughtful about the use and protection of government and public information to ensure it is handled securely and with care.

Leading and Communicating

At all levels, effectiveness in this area is about showing our pride and passion for public service, communicating purpose and direction with clarity, integrity and enthusiasm. It is about championing difference and external experience, and supporting principles of fairness of opportunity for all.

Collaborating and Partnering

People skilled in this area are team players. It requires working collaboratively at all levels, sharing information appropriately and building supportive, trusting and professional relationships with colleagues and a wide range of people inside and outside the Civil Service, whilst having the confidence to challenge assumptions.

Building Capability for All

Effectiveness in this area is having a strong focus on continuous learning for oneself, others and the organisation. For all staff, it's being open to learning, about keeping one's own knowledge and skill set current and evolving.

Motivational Fit

You will show enthusiasm and motivation in order to reach the best solution. You will have researched Fast Track Apprenticeships and will be enthusiastic to join the program and be a part of the Civil Service in general.

Delivering at Pace

Effectiveness in this area is focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for quality outcomes. You will work to agreed goals and activities, and deal with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

Group Exercise

The Group Exercise is designed to test your ability to make decisions, to work with others, to show leadership and communicate well, and to give value for money. You will be given approximately 10 minutes to prepare for the exercise by yourself.

The following gives a flavour of this exercise – the actual exercise differs in content each year. In your group of 4, 5 or 6, you will be presented with a fictitious scenario where you and your colleagues are tasked to arrange an event, such as a Civil Service seminar, or organising the itinerary for visiting dignitaries on a fact finding mission to a Civil Service department. You will be

given several options, such as agreeing a keynote speaker, or organising a day trip to a suitable government department. The group will have about 40 minutes to agree which of these should be recommended to your Line Manager and to provide some supporting advice.

At the start of the exercise, you will receive a brief which summarises the overall scenario, and gives detailed information on the main options for the section of the brief that you will be organising. All group members will have the same information about the scenario and the options. Each group member will also have an individual, assigned brief, setting out a different options and some supporting material. Your task is to identify the best option from the ones presented to you and to ensure that the final choice is cost effective.

Group members are regarded as equal and groups are told not to appoint someone to chair the meeting. Not only will you be expected to present a strong case, you will also need to listen to what the other candidates have to say and then negotiate to come to an agreed position. All members of the group are expected to contribute to the discussion on all of the projects. You are advised to keep to the information in the briefs, remembering that the scenario is fictitious and you should avoid introducing information or assertions that contradict evidence from the papers. You should not feel that you are competing with other members of your group. You should seek to establish co-operative relationships within your group, rather than try to score points off other participants.

Overall, your assessor will be evaluating your performance against 5 competency areas:

Making Effective Decisions
Leading and Communicating
Collaborating and Partnering
Building Capability for All
Motivational Fit

An example of the type of scenario you can expect in the group exercise:

Example - Civil Service Evolution Network

You and the other candidates work for a new Civil Service body called the 'Civil

Service Evolution Network'. The purpose of this new body is to encourage sharing of information and best practice within the Civil Service, and to foster partnerships with organisations outside the Civil Service. To do this, the Civil Service Evolution Network uses publications, events and other initiatives.

You and the other candidates have been asked to work together to scope out organising a conference titled **'Digital Solutions for a Digital World'**. The main aim of this event is to help Civil Servants to better understand how digital solutions (e.g. engaging with the public on-line, using social media, use of apps and mobile devices to deliver services to the public) are used in other organisations, and to share knowledge and expertise in this area to promote innovation and efficiency in the Civil Service.

The event will cover the following themes:

1. Why 'digital solutions' are important and what value they can add.
2. Show how digital solutions are relevant in meeting the challenges of the Civil Service both now and into the future.
3. Improve Civil Servants' awareness of what digital solutions can offer to their own business area, and their own day-to-day jobs.

The conference and exhibition will run for **two days** and have enough tickets for **500 attendees**. The event is planned for exactly **five months from now**. It will include:

- a. **Four keynote speeches** on the topic of digital solutions (two on each day) in the main conference hall.
- b. An **exhibition** by several private sector suppliers to showcase their products and services. This is open to attendees on both of the days of the conference.
- c. Several training **workshops** to run throughout the two days of the conference. Delegates can choose which workshops they want to attend, and **six workshops** will run **at the same time** in separate rooms throughout the conference (these workshops will be run by the Civil Service Digital & Technology profession at no cost).

The Head of the Civil Service is keen that this conference is designed to be **self-funding**. That means it must generate funds to cover all financial costs (e.g. from private companies sponsoring the event and charging for tickets). The event must also seek to try and get as large an attendance to the conference

and exhibition as possible from Civil Servants, whilst trying to ensure food, travel and accommodation costs are kept as low as possible.

Your tasks as a group

One member of your organisation, Humaira Answer has done some initial work on organising the conference and exhibition. However, she has now gone on maternity leave. Before she left, Humaira produced a one page summary for each of the **six tasks** needed to organise the conference and exhibition. These tasks are:

- 1. Ticket allocation**
- 2. Venue**
- 3. Sponsorship**
- 4. Advertising**
- 5. Conference speakers**
- 6. Staffing**

Each one page summary contains some options on how address each of these tasks.

Your manager has assigned you one of these **six tasks** to lead on; the task assigned to you is on your Candidate Information Sheet. You manager has asked you all to meet together and agree which options you will recommend **as a team** for each of these six tasks. Some aspects of organising the event will **cost money**. Other aspects of organising the event will **generate money**.

As a group, by the end of the meeting you need to be able to show that any costs that you incur in organising the event can be covered so that it is indeed **self-funding**. The good news is that 30 companies have now registered for the exhibition part of the event - generating funds of **£90,000** towards covering the costs of the conference and exhibition.

During the group part of this exercise, you are expected to join in all aspects of the discussion – not just the one you have been given in your Candidate Information Sheet. However, **you must not introduce information outside of the scenario from your wider knowledge** and only make decisions based on the information given to you. It is **not** the purpose of the exercise to test your understanding of digital solutions, and no prior knowledge at all is required in this subject. Instead, this exercise focuses on how well you contribute in a team to achieve an outcome.

Written Exercise

The written exercise lasts 40 minutes and contains 2 tasks. You will be presented with a Written Exercise Candidate Information Pack and asked to complete two written administrative tasks.

Overall, your assessor will be evaluating your performance against 5 competency areas:

Changing and Improving
Making Effective Decisions
Leading and Communicating
Collaborating and Partnering
Delivering at Pace

An example of the type of scenario you can expect in the written exercise

Example - Flight of the Drones

This exercise is set in the future and is entirely fictitious. No specialist knowledge or experience of the subject is required or beneficial. For the purpose of this exercise, the date is **13 June 2020**.

Following negative and well-publicised incidents, in which Unmanned Aerial Vehicles - also known as 'Drones' – flown by members of the public, have threatened the safety and privacy of members of the public, the government decided to pass a law to regulate their use. The new Drone Air Safety Law requires that by **1 September 2020**, depending on the category of Drone, individuals flying Drones outdoors in the UK will need to have:

- a. their Drone registered, and a unique identification number clearly displayed on the drone itself;

- b. for some categories of Drones, operators must also possess a valid drone Pilot Licence.

In this exercise, you work for the Unmanned Aircraft Civil Regulation Authority (UACRA). Your role is part of the Drone Registration and Licencing Team (DRLT) which is responsible for reviewing applications from the public for Drone registrations and licences, awarding Drone registrations and licences where applicable, and responding to queries from members of the public about the new law.

You have been asked by your manager to review correspondence from a member of the public (Ray Simpson) and respond to his enquiry. Your manager's view is that there is enough information in the letter to give him an informative response on most of the points he raises.

In particular, on the basis of the information you have available, your manager asks that you:

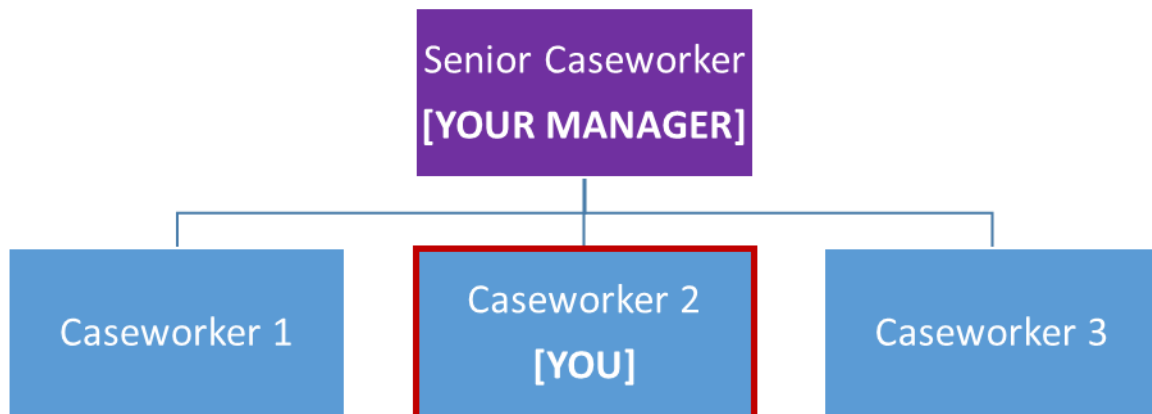
1. Give guidance in relation to whether Ray requires a Drone Pilots Licence and whether he is required to register his drone.
2. Give guidance on what costs Ray is likely to incur.
3. Try and address any misconceptions Ray may have about the new Drone Air Safety Law.

When drafting a response to Ray, you should take care to justify the guidance you give against the evidence you have available to you.

DRLT keeps in-depth records of all customer communication for future reference, and caseworkers are required to respond to each enquiry from the public using the letter template provided. This template contains the identifying details (i.e. name, address) for the customer, and provides you with a box in which you write a response.

Your Senior Caseworker has also asked you to consider whether the information given in the **Press Release on the UACRA website** (which is the only information the public currently have) could be improved, and any ideas you have about improving the information given to the public about the new Drone Air Safety Law.

Chart showing the Drone Registration & Licencing Team



Your Task

All of the information that you need to undertake this exercise can be found in your **Written Exercise Candidate Information Pack**. You will have a total of **40 minutes** to read through this pack and complete two tasks:

- **Task 1:** Draft a response to Ray Simpson on the **Task 1 Response Sheet**.
- **Task 2:** Draft a response to the Senior Caseworker (your manager) on the **Task 2 Response Sheet**.

It is up to you how you manage your time, but it is recommended you spend around **30 minutes** on Task 1, and around **10 minutes** on Task 2.

Interview

The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. You will be asked approximately a dozen competency based questions (two or three questions per competency). You will have 1-2 minutes to provide a response for each question. We are looking for your natural responses, rather than overly rehearsed answers.

Overall, your assessor will be evaluating your performance against 5 competency areas:

Changing and Improving
Leading and Communicating
Building Capacity for All
Motivational Fit
Delivering at Pace

How can I prepare?

What you Need to Bring

Remember: The Fast Track Assessment Centre is a formal interview and you should treat it as you would any other interview situation (i.e. formal dress).

You are **not** eligible to join the Fast Track Apprenticeship program if you already hold a **degree**. If you are not sure if you hold a degree, please contact the Fast Track team **before** you attend the Fast Track Assessment Centre.

All FTAC Candidates **must** bring the following documents with them to the Fast Track Assessment Centre:

1. One main form of ID – This can be a full UK birth certificate, or valid passport
2. One additional form of ID – e.g. Where you have provided your birth certificate for requirement **1**, we can accept a valid passport for requirement **2**. Where a passport has been provided for **1**, we can accept a valid photo driving licence for requirement **2**
3. One passport sized photograph, signed by you on the back. We will countersign this on the day to confirm your identity
4. One utility bill in your name dated in the last 3 months, showing your current address and some form of financial activity – This can be a utility bill (gas, electric, water, council tax bill etc.), a bank statement posted to your home or printed in branch (we **cannot** accept online bank statements), or a P45, P60, or National Insurance letter
5. The email from the Fast Track team confirming your Assessment Centre appointment

6. Evidence of 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C (9-5 under the new scoring system), or equivalent level 2 qualifications, including English Language and Maths
7. Where you have applied for a scheme that has an additional requirement of 2 A Levels, or equivalent level 3 qualifications, to be eligible for the scheme, you should also bring copies of these certificates, or predicted grades, with you to the Fast Track Assessment Centre.

NB: We can only accept documentation from an examination board as proof of your level of qualification, not from your school or college. If you are taking exams this year, we can accept a statement of predicted results in the interim, but we will need to verify your level of qualification before we can accept you on to the program.

If you have any doubts about your level of qualification, please contact the Fast Track team **before** you attend the Fast Track Assessment Centre. A useful guide on what are equivalent level 2 and level 3 qualifications can be found here:

<http://eal.org.uk/support/document-library/7-uk-qualifications-comparison-table/file>

The burden of proof is upon you to demonstrate that you meet the entry requirements to join the Fast Track Apprenticeship program. We reserve the right to reject any qualification that does not adequately meet our entry requirements. We also reserve the right to turn away from the Fast Track Assessment Centre anyone who does not produce the above information when requested.

Before you arrive

There's a limit to what you can do to prepare for FTAC, but here are a few pointers.

- Try to remember the competencies and have those in mind during the FTAC to help direct your performance
- Read this guide carefully. It sets the scene and gives examples of the exercises you'll come across during your day with us

- Find out as much as you can about what civil servants, and particularly Fast Trackers, do. The Fast Track website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service-fast-track-apprenticeship>) has some information on this
- Get a good night's sleep

Travel information - London

There is a Fast Track Assessment Centre (FTAC) held at the Civil Service Fast Stream Assessment Centre, at the headquarters of HMRC. The address is:

100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

FTAC has a dedicated entrance around the corner on King Charles Street. You'll find the door beneath the arch which spans the end of King Charles Street. It's clearly marked and there's a link to Google Maps [below](#).

If you are unable to come or are delayed on the day, please call us (messages can be left on the answerphone outside office hours). Our telephone number is: 0207 4518222

London travel information

Visit tfl.gov.uk/

All London mainline stations are within Travel Zone 1 – ask at the ticket office for the best travel card to buy.

London Underground

You need to travel to Westminster station.

Euston or King's Cross St. Pancras

Take the Victoria line to Victoria, change to the Circle or District line for Westminster.

Liverpool Street, Paddington or Victoria

Take the Circle or District line to Westminster.

Waterloo

Take the Jubilee line to Westminster (1 stop).

The walk to FSAC from Westminster Underground station takes about 5 minutes

Map of FSAC, King Charles Street:

(click to open new tab in internet browser)

[https://www.google.co.uk/maps/dir/Westminster+Station+Parliament+Square+\(Stop+G\),+London/King+Charles+St,+London+SW1A/@51.5018799,-0.1290455,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x487604c4545ad9eb:0xbf6faa4e39b16e59!2m2!1d-0.1259886!2d51.5015333!1m5!1m1!1s0x487604c51f40121f:0x76f713267450d16!2m2!1d-0.127725!2d51.5022199!3e3](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/dir/Westminster+Station+Parliament+Square+(Stop+G),+London/King+Charles+St,+London+SW1A/@51.5018799,-0.1290455,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x487604c4545ad9eb:0xbf6faa4e39b16e59!2m2!1d-0.1259886!2d51.5015333!1m5!1m1!1s0x487604c51f40121f:0x76f713267450d16!2m2!1d-0.127725!2d51.5022199!3e3)

Travel information - Newcastle

There is an assessment centre in Newcastle at Tyneview Park. The address is:

Fast Stream Assessment Centre, D Block
Tyneview Park DWP
Whitley Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE12 9RZ

Upon reaching the site, please report to the Tyne View Park Security Gatehouse. There's a map [below](#). Our telephone number is **0207 4518222**.

If you are unable to come or are delayed on the day, please call us as soon as possible.

Newcastle travel information

Visit www.nexus.org.uk

By Train

Newcastle Central Station is the nearest mainline station.

By Metro

Take the Metro to Benton on the Tyne and Wear Metro Yellow line

By Bus

Bus stops are located nearby, further details can be found on:
www.nexus.org.uk/bus

Park and ride

Park and ride facilities are provided at various Metro station, further details can be found on www.nexus.org.uk/metro/metro-park-and-ride-stations.

By Car

(There are no parking facilities available and car parking fees are not reimbursed)

Northbound from A1(M)

- Follow A194(M) just past Washington Moto Service Station
- Continue to A19 Northbound towards Tyne Tunnel
- Continue through the Tyne Tunnel (Toll £1.70) and follow A19 North
- Take Exit for A191/A186 from A19
- Follow A191 towards Gosforth
- Tyne View Park entrance is situated approximately 100 yards past Blue Flames Leisure Centre on the left

Southbound from A1(M)

- Exit A1(M) at Seaton Burn/Fisher Lane Interchange and follow signs for A19 Southbound
- Continue southbound and take exit for A191/A186 from A19
- Follow A191 towards Gosforth
- Tyne View Park entrance is situated approximately 100 yards past Blue Flames Leisure Centre/Whitley Park on the left 16

Taxis

Please contact the Operations Team on 03000 553194 if you require local taxi firm details **Please note that taxi fares will not be reimbursed.**

The **walk** to FSAC from Benton Metro station takes around 10 minutes.

Directions to FSAC, Tyneview Park

(click to open new tab in internet browser)

<https://www.google.co.uk/maps/dir/Newcastle+Central+Station,+Neville+Street,+Newcastle+upon+Tyne/NE12+9RZ,+Newcastle+upon+Tyne/@54.9915582,-1.6257898,13z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m14!4m13!1m5!1m1!1s0x487e70b4574f321b:0x7407b8d89d1e44b!2m2!1d-1.61615!2d54.96912!1m5!1m1!1s0x487e71a80c8383a1:0x21bacb7e7065e8fe!2m2!1d-1.5657826!2d55.0058529!3e3>

Map of FSAC, Tyneview Park



(Image taken from Google Maps)

While at FTAC

- Stay relaxed and try to enjoy the day.
- Be yourself. There is no such thing as a typical Fast Track Apprentice. The Civil Service is committed to increasing the diversity of the Fast Track intake.
- Remember that assessors can only give credit for what you say and do. They are not trying to trip you up; they want you to do well and show what you are capable of.

- Remember that you are not competing with others in your group. You are all being assessed against an independent standard. All of you may be successful, or none of you.
- Go into each exercise with a positive frame of mind. It is hard to do well in every exercise. In any case, you may not be the best judge of your own performance and the process is designed so that, if you do badly at one exercise, you have a chance to perform better in another.
- Read the instructions carefully and follow them to the letter. If you are not sure of anything, ask before the exercise begins. You will not be disadvantaged for doing so.
- All the exercises require you to work at speed. This is to reflect the demands of Fast Track jobs. Make sure you keep an eye on the clock and use your time as effectively as possible.

What happens after FTAC?

You will receive a report on your performance, regardless of whether you are successful or not. This will contain feedback on how you did in each exercise and a list of the strengths and areas for development. You should be able to access this via your Fast Track online account once the feedback has been uploaded by our Assessors. You will receive a notification email once this feedback is available for viewing.

If you are successful you will receive detailed information about what happens next, including a formal job offer and how your pre-appointment checks will be completed and how you will be placed in post.

Claiming expenses

Candidate expense policy – travel and accommodation

Terms and conditions

You have a maximum of 30 days from the date of incurring an expense to submit your claim online and send in the expense claim form with any original receipts to the Fast Track Travel Inbox:

fasttrack.travel@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

If you require travel or accommodation booking in advance, please submit your completed Travel Booking Form to the Fast Track Travel Inbox no later than two working days (48 hours) before the date on which you wish to travel. We will not action any travel booking request received less than 2 working days before the date of travel.

NB: We do not pay subsistence costs, except for breakfast included in the price of a hotel room, in line with our set price limits for each Assessment Centre location (see below - 'Overnight').

You can claim the amount of your actual travelling expenses from the place where you normally live, work or study to the test/assessment centre. Our Travel Booking and Expense Forms can be downloaded from the Fast Track Apprenticeship website.

Your journey should be by the most economical method of travel. Please retain all original travel/hotel/accommodation receipts and return them with your completed claim form, as without proof of expenditure it will not be possible to refund your claim. However, where an overnight stay is unavoidable and you stay with friends or relatives, you may claim a flat rate sum of £25.

We **cannot** pay for tube fares, local bus fares, taxi fares, or tickets on the Metro system at Newcastle.

Rail

We can only reimburse standard class fare. However, please take advantage of any available cheap or discounted fares by booking ahead and use discounted rails card where possible.

Private Car

You will be refunded at a rate of 26 pence per mile. Mileage cannot be claimed if you are a passenger in another candidate's car. However, the car driver can claim a passenger supplement of 5 pence per mile for the first passenger and 1p per mile for any additional passengers.

Please note: Car parking fees are not reimbursed and the Fast Track Assessment Centre in London is within the London Congestion Charging Zone. Any charges or fines incurred will not be reimbursed.

Motorcycle

You will be refunded at a rate of 24 pence per mile.

Air

Air fares will be refunded only where they are cheaper than the cost of travelling by a surface route, including overnight expenses where necessary. However, you may claim the tourist air fare (please send air tickets in with your claim) if at the time of your interview or test you reside in:

- Shetland or Orkney
- Isle of Man
- Inner or Outer Hebrides
- Isles of Scilly
- Northern Ireland
- Channel Islands

Overnight

You will be refunded any actual expenses subject to the following:

- FTAC held in London - up to £130 per night* (breakfast only where it is included in the price of the room)
- FTAC held in Newcastle - up to £90 per night* (breakfast only where it is included in the price of the room)
- Sleeping berth on a train or boat - cost of berth plus £10 per night

*We will only reimburse overnight accommodation costs if the journey time to your Assessment Centre location exceeds 2 hours.

Candidates travelling from abroad

You may claim travelling expenses, as above, only between the place of arrival in the United Kingdom and the interview or test centre. We cannot reimburse the cost of entry into the UK.

Exceptionally, candidates' expenses direct from Eire may be refunded if this is cheaper than the costs of travelling from the nearest point of entry in the UK. You may not claim overnight expenses for nights spent in the UK because flight or sailing times do not match the interview date or because departures are delayed.

Candidates requiring assistance with mobility

Should you experience difficulty with travelling arrangements, please consult the Fast Track team using the message system on the Fast Track Candidate portal. Important: We reserve the right to refuse to pay a claim that does not comply with these terms.

Good luck!

Fast Track Apprenticeships