

OISC newsletter: spring 2022

Message from the Commissioner

Welcome to the spring edition of the OISC newsletter.

This quarter has been a landmark period in the history of the OISC as we have transitioned to our new regional structure and our reimagined OISC.

We have seen the move to separate national and regional teams and the introduction of the Customer Service Unit - a first and important step in taking the OISC forward and putting the advice seeker at the heart of the organisation.

To get to this point has taken a lot of work and I thank all of our registered organisations for supporting us through this period of change.

This newsletter highlights some of the changes which have taken place and gives you the latest news and updates.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

Best wishes

John Tuckett

Immigration Services Commissioner

The OISC's new regional approach

Friday 1 April saw the OISC move from from a national approach for the regulation of immigration advice to three regional teams – north, central and south – enabling a more tailored approach.

This change was necessary to adapt our services to the changing landscape of immigration and

will allow us to match supply with demand, putting our staff where they are needed. It will also help us to better understand local issues and local needs.

Advisers now have the support of the whole regional team rather than a dedicated caseworker. Our customer service unit, which can be contacted via **0345 000 0046** or info@oisc.gov.uk now deals with all enquiries in one place and should be your main point of contact.

OISC adviser conference

Thank you to those of you who joined us for the OISC adviser conference on Tuesday 29 March.

We had over 400 advisers attend the online event to listen to important updates and developments from the OISC around the new regional approach. The event also saw David Ramsbotham from the Home Office join us to give an update on the Ukraine scheme.

If you were unable to join us, or if you'd like to watch the conference again, you can find a link to the recording on YouTube [here](#).

Thematic reviews

In October 2021 we reported that we were conducting two thematic reviews of compliance alongside a remote/premises audit programme for regulated organisations.

The first of these was a thematic review on continuing professional development (CPD). The review looked at how organisations and advisers are meeting the requirements of the current CPD scheme. Organisations were asked to provide a CPD plan and CPD record for one of their advisers. 150 organisations were selected at random, and 134 organisations provided the requested information.

The review concluded that the current CPD scheme remains fit for purpose and that

organisations and advisers are generally meeting the requirements. What is most encouraging is that most organisations demonstrated an understanding of the importance of having a CPD scheme with 90% confirming that the training needs of individual advisers were assessed and 88% indicating the training needs of the organisation were assessed on a yearly basis. 78% of organisations had records that detailed these processes. Budgets for individual members of staff ranged from £200 to £2,000 annually.

More concerning was that 52% of organisations confirmed that there was no training budget. From the feedback provided by organisations, the pandemic has not adversely affected the access to CPD courses as the majority of such courses have been delivered online.

The second thematic review involved a review of organisation's client care letters. The purpose of the review was to establish whether organisations are meeting the requirements with regards to the information contained in their client care letters. Organisations were asked to provide a client care letter issued to a client, the initial attendance note for that client, evidence that the client care letter had been signed and provide evidence of the date the application was submitted to the Home Office. 100 organisations were selected at random, and 87 provided the requested information.

The review concluded that most organisations (83%) were issuing a client care letter and compliance with the various aspects of Code 26 of the Commissioner's Code of Standards was generally good. The review looked at whether the client care letters contained the following information: client details, immigration history, current immigration status, immigration instructions, immigration advice, agreed action and confirmation of fees estimated or agreed.

The review found that with regards to fees, organisations need to ensure that client care letters contain information about holding money on behalf of a client and details around any additional costs clients may become liable for.

A number of organisations involved in the review failed to provide the appropriate initial attendance note and therefore the Commissioner was unable to assess whether the advice given in the initial attendance note was reflected in the client care letter issued to the client.

The review concluded that more work needs to be done by organisations to ensure that before any substantive work is undertaken on a case, the client care letter has been signed by an individual adviser and the client.

OISC fee increase

The Home Office has announced that from Tuesday 24 May, the fee for an organisation to register with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) is increasing. This is for both initial registrations and continued registrations.

The Immigration Services Commissioner (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 were laid in Parliament on 15 March 2022 and will amend the existing charging regulations to increase the level of the fees charged.

The fee level charged to OISC registered organisations is set by the Home Office and all monies received for those fees are remitted back to the Home Office.

Organisations will be subject to the new continued registration fee when their current registration expires on or after 24 May 2022.

You can view the fees and some frequently asked questions on our [website](#).

Unsolicited calls

We would like to remind advisers that the OISC does not conduct 'spot checks' over the telephone.

If you receive a call from someone claiming to represent the OISC but who refuses to share their details, do not continue the conversation and please make the OISC aware by contacting the Customer Service Unit.

Ukraine

As you will all be aware the conflict in Ukraine has deteriorated, resulting in millions of Ukrainians fleeing their country and seeking refuge abroad.

In response to their plight, the Home Office has introduced immigration concessions aimed at protecting the family members of British citizens in Ukraine, Ukrainians already in the UK and those who wish to come to the UK.

We have produced advice and guidance to organisations about what work they may undertake at OISC Level 1: [Guidance for advisers: Ukrainians seeking to enter or remain in the UK - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-advisers-ukrainians-seeking-to-enter-or-remain-in-the-uk) (www.gov.uk).

Satisfaction survey

Thank you to those of you who completed our recent satisfaction survey. Your views are important to us and we are now reviewing the results to see how we can improve the information and services provided to you.

Advertising online - unregulated advisers

We continue to act against those who use websites and social media to unlawfully advertise immigration advice and services. This has resulted in some websites being closed down and content amended on others.

Please work with us and tell us about any information you come across, which you suspect may be unlawful. We rely on information from our registered advisers and the wider public to allow us to take action. You can let us know by emailing info@oisc.gov.uk or phoning 0345 000 0046.

In the news...

The OISC continues to look at new and exciting ways to reach stakeholders and the general public to share our core message shared above in the Commissioner's Message.

In late May/early June, the BBC are airing a news package on the issue of unregistered immigration advice particularly as it is growing through the use of social media. The package which will be running on BBC News24, BBC Radio and the BBC website will feature an interview with Immigration Services Commissioner, John Tuckett.

Free Movement also met with John Tuckett for a podcast which went live in March 2022. If you missed it, you can listen to the interview here: [Give me more enforcement powers, says Immigration Services Commissioner - Free Movement](#).