



HM Government

# **New Plan for Immigration: Legal Migration and Border Control**

July 2022

CP 706





# New Plan for Immigration: Legal Migration and Border Control

Presented to Parliament

by the Secretary of State for the Home Department

by Command of Her Majesty

July 2022

CP 706



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# Ministerial Foreword by the Home Secretary

For the first time in decades we have full democratic control of our borders. Secure and efficiently-run borders are central to our safety, to our prosperity and to our very sense of nationhood.

I am pleased to introduce this document setting out the vision for our border and legal migration system of the future. Since this Government ended freedom of movement, we have implemented a global points-based system which has gone from strength to strength, with visa application numbers above those of pre-pandemic levels.

Over the next few years, we are bringing in more improvements to ensure we continue to have a world-leading border and legal migration system. These range from visible changes such as improved customer service before you apply to invisible changes such as better targeting and watchlisting at the border.

Our border will be slicker and more efficient, with a greater number of customers using eGates. We have a bold ambition for contactless travel for British citizens and our most trusted overseas partners.

Our flagship permission to travel scheme will mean that it is easier for our friends to come to and contribute to the UK, but harder for those we do not want to come here. Electronic Travel Authorisations will enable us to tackle problems upstream and we will know more about those who use the system to come here.

These schemes alongside those tackling illegal migration, such as our Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda represent further proof that this Government takes our borders seriously.

The changes we are making to the system will bring benefits for all our customers, from British subjects in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to industry partners and businesses, to our hugely successful science, research and creative sectors and legitimate travellers from abroad.

I am optimistic that the developments outlined in this document will lead to a stronger, more secure and prosperous Union.





# Context

1. Our strategy for legal migration and border control is underpinned by a clear ambition to put in place the **world's most effective and secure border system**: one that enables and supports growth and prosperity for the UK; one that is simple to understand and operate; and one which prioritises public protection, by making our borders more secure. Our transformation of the border will provide benefits for all our customers, the public, industry and visitors.
2. This strategy forms part of our comprehensive **New Plan for Immigration**. At the heart of our plan is a simple principle: fairness. We have taken back control of our legal migration system by ending free movement and introducing a new points-based system. This strategy sets out our position to go further by focusing our system on individual circumstances for those who arrive in the UK. We will welcome those who are returning to the UK or arriving to support our prosperity. We will strengthen our border against those who should not be in the UK.
3. This document builds on the **New Plan for Immigration: Legal Migration and Border Strategy**<sup>1</sup> which was published in May 2021 and sets out our vision for radically transforming the legal migration and borders system and how we will achieve this. We are enhancing our immigration and border system by streamlining processes through embracing technology, which provides greater efficiency for our customers, our economy and our border operations.
4. To **support growth and prosperity** we have successfully delivered a new points-based immigration system that supports the UK in attracting the skills and talent we need, making it fairer and easier for people to come to the UK and thrive here as part of the Government's Plan for Growth measures<sup>2</sup>. Our system works in the interests of the whole of the UK – England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – and prioritises the skills a person has to offer, not where their passport comes from. The Government's Plan for Jobs<sup>3</sup> is focused on helping people across the country retrain, build new skills and get back into work, with migration policy supporting this drive, not providing an alternative to it.
5. Our **points-based system** supports a wider package of interventions that make up the Government's long-term approach to the labour market and rebuilding our economy by supporting businesses to grow and get people back

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-plan-for-immigration-legal-migration-and-border-control>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth/build-back-better-our-plan-for-growth-html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/plan-for-jobs>

to work. We must see long-term solutions delivered by employers through improved training and hiring and better pay and working conditions and we must invest in our domestic workforce before reaching for migratory levers. Our system was designed to be able to flex to meet the needs of the economy and it has done that successfully over the past year, reacting well to changes in the labour market and world events. We continue to keep our rules under review as the UK economy and labour market adjust post-pandemic.

6. To ensure our new system is simple to understand and operate, **we are putting the customer at its heart**, ensuring it is easier to navigate and digital by default. It is a global system that treats its customers as individuals, making it fairer and simpler while continuing to ensure that the opportunities for legal migration to the UK are not abused. We live in a digital age, in which businesses and customers expect a swift, user-friendly experience. Many of our customers already benefit from a fully digital journey, including over six million applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). The changes we have already made enabled us to quickly adapt to meet the needs of those impacted by major international events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine. We want to go further, with customers experiencing a slick digital interface akin to their daily interactions with businesses or services.
7. Transformation of our legal migration system will also deliver our commitment to a fair and firm system, by offering **safe and legal routes** to the UK for those in need of protection. This builds on our long history of helping people directly from regions of conflict and instability. On January 31 2021, we introduced the Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) visa for those people from Hong Kong. As of 11 July 2022, we have welcomed 95,400 Ukrainians to the UK, with an increasing number able to apply without needing to attend a Visa Application Centre in person. We were able to introduce this at pace, in response to the humanitarian crisis, by expediting processes introduced through our transformation agenda.
8. Our system will **prioritise public protection, by making our borders more secure** and transforming the border with visible changes to security measures, queue times and passenger experience. We will achieve this by understanding more about people coming to the UK before they travel, enabling us to manage flow and interventions at the border based on individual circumstances and reduce queues.
9. We will maximise the use of pre-travel interventions to prevent harmful people reaching our border in the first place. Most people crossing the UK border will experience an eGate style arrival using automation as their only point of contact at the border. Eventually we want the border experience to be contactless for the majority of people. This will allow our highly skilled Border Force Officers to focus on those who pose the most harm or are at the most risk and creating efficiency savings for the public purse.
10. It is right that we will put the customer at the heart of our new system and this includes protecting the public and our security at every stage. We continue to

ensure compliance with tougher immigration rules relating to criminality and our new digital approach will strengthen our ability to identify those who pose a risk to our security and prosperity. Compliance with UK immigration laws and rules is an essential part of an immigration system that operates fairly, robustly and with integrity. We have clearly set out our expectations for those wishing to come to and remain in the UK and the consequences of not complying with our laws and rules. Those who comply with our rules will be welcomed to the UK with an easier process to apply for leave and cross our border. Those whose presence in the UK is not conducive to the public good will find it harder to reach our border.

11. All of these major changes in the migration and borders system sit alongside and complement the package the Prime Minister announced on 14 April 2022 to tackle unsafe and illegal migration.<sup>4</sup> Delivering against this strategy is a central element of the **Home Office's Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP)**, which includes the outcome to “enable the legitimate movement of people and goods to support economic prosperity”.<sup>5</sup> We are innovating and deploying new technology to improve our processes, strengthening security at the border while attracting global talent. This means we can deliver a more user-friendly customer experience.

## Controlling migration

12. **With the launch of the new points-based system in December 2020 we now have full democratic control of the immigration system.** The Government has taken collective decisions on the UK's migration offer, balancing the action required to support economic recovery from the pandemic and resolve short term supply challenges, alongside ensuring that employers are drawing on and upskilling the domestic UK workforce. Our system has contributed to one of the fastest economic recoveries from Covid amongst the G7 and it has allowed us to respond to world events in Hong Kong, Afghanistan and Ukraine.
13. **We have ended free movement.** More highly skilled workers are here contributing to the UK economy, and the British people are finally in control of the UK's legal migration policy. In the 12 months to end March 2022 we issued over 182,000 skilled worker visas, 3,500 global talent visas and 466,000 student visas. Our migration policy allows the right migration to the UK, while avoiding arbitrary and unrealistic targets. We have taken back control and can now decide who has permission to access the points-based system. In light of the manifesto commitment to reduce overall numbers, we are keeping these trends under review.
14. **We will adopt a whole of government approach to supporting the labour market to avoid immigration routes being seen as the go to solution for a wide range of labour market issues.** This statement provides the opportunity

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-on-action-to-tackle-illegal-migration-14-april-2022>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-outcome-delivery-plan/home-office-outcome-delivery-plan-2021-to-2022>

to work together with other government departments and reaffirm our commitment to a firm and fair immigration system.

# Our successes

## The Points-Based System

15. The UK's points-based immigration system provides a simple, effective and flexible way for businesses and educational institutions to get access to wide-ranging talent from around the world. It was built on the strong foundations developed in our hugely successful European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS).
16. The system ensures we are an attractive global destination for highly skilled people that help the UK to prosper. Our system is:
  - **Fairer** because we welcome people based on the skills they have to offer and how they will contribute to the UK, not based on their nationality or passport.
  - **Firmer** because we have control of our own borders and can decide who comes into the country, adjusting our rules if required to tighten migration.
  - **Skills-led** because we have access to the skills our economy needs, with people awarded points for a job offer at an appropriate skill level, meeting the appropriate salary threshold and if they speak English to an appropriate level.
17. These principles ensure that UK citizens and others who are in the UK legally have confidence in the effectiveness and efficiency of our system. We are committed to openness and transparency in understanding the impact of the points-based system and published a revised Equality Impact Assessment<sup>6</sup> in February 2022. We continue to review equalities impacts in relation to the new system. Robust evaluation will continue ensuring our approach to policy and delivery is led by the evidence. To protect the vulnerable, we also continue to engage with those working to tackle modern slavery, including the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. Modern slavery and human trafficking have absolutely no place in our society and we are committed to fortifying our immigration system against these heinous crimes, whilst ensuring victims are protected and offenders prosecuted.
18. The points-based system is performing well, despite the inevitable impact of the global pandemic. The routes launched have supported UK businesses, our science, technology and education sectors to bounce back with strong post-pandemic economic recovery, by giving them access to talent from around the world. We have created a system which can adapt and meet the needs of a changing labour market if needed. Over the last twelve months we have

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-impact-assessment-of-the-points-based-immigration-system>

welcomed scientists, plumbers, chefs, doctors, nurses, film directors, engineers, architects, musicians, butchers and senior care workers via the Skilled Worker Route. The number of visas issued across work and study routes is now exceeding pre-pandemic levels with 749,000 in the year ending March 2022 compared to 598,000 in the year ending March 2020.

19. We have successfully delivered the following routes:

- **Skilled Worker Route** – allows employers to recruit people with a job offer in an eligible skilled occupation from a Home Office-approved sponsor, to work in the UK in a specific job.
- **Student route** – provides simpler and more streamlined pathways for students and ensures the UK remains competitive in a changing global education market.
- **Graduate Route** – provides students with the opportunity to stay in the UK to work or look for work after they graduate.
- **Innovator route** – allows those seeking to establish a business in the UK based on an innovative, viable and scalable business idea (which they have generated or significantly contributed to).
- **Global Talent Route** - allows those aged 18 or over in the field of science, engineering, humanities, medicine, digital technology or arts and culture who can demonstrate exceptional talent or exceptional promise.
- **Health and Care Visa** – allows clinical professionals to work in an eligible job with a health or social care employer.
- **Global Business Mobility Routes** – provides a consolidated, simplified and expanded offer for overseas businesses who need to temporarily send employees to the UK for a specific purpose.
- **High Potential Individual Route** – provides a short-term work visa for graduates or postgraduates from the top 50 non-UK academic institutions. This route is for international graduates who have been awarded an eligible qualification at an overseas university that appears on the [Global Universities List](#) in the 5 years immediately before their application

20. We have had further success with the introduction of online applications and digital evidence of immigration status (eVisa). Over six and a half million applications for the EUSS were made online and we have built on these foundations with the introduction of the digital Hong Kong BN(O) route. The introduction of digital status for this route meant applicants can apply without attending a Visa Application Centre (VAC), speeding up the process.

## New and reformed immigration routes

21. The evolution of the points-based system ensures we remain in control of who

comes to the UK. This year we will launch another new route and continue to reform existing routes, including:

22. **Scale-up Route (22/08/2022)** - A scale-up business must have ten or more employees and be growing at 20% more in turnover every year, for three years. These businesses contribute £1 trillion to the UK economy every year and there is strong international competition. The new route will enhance the UK's visa offer, with a bespoke sponsored worker route for those recruited into eligible roles within leading UK scale-up companies.
23. **Family and Settlement** - During the rest of 2022 and into 2023, we continue to simplify the family, private life and settlement routes. There are several family routes and paths to settlement; to simplify this for customers, we will introduce a more streamlined application process and consistent evidence requirements. This work is underway with the launch of the settlement routes for those on the Innovator route and the ten-year family and private life routes this year.

## Safe and Legal Routes

24. The UK has a proud history of helping those in need. The points-based system is intentionally flexible, and implementation of the new routes has provided us with the building blocks to respond effectively and introduce several safe and legal routes:
25. **Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) route:** We introduced a bespoke route for Hong Kong BN(O)s and their families using a digital application process and innovative identity verification capabilities. This recognised our historic commitment to the people of Hong Kong who elected to retain ties to the UK. Over 92,000 BN(O) visas were granted between 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
26. **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme:** The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme which provides 20,000 women, children and others at risk with a safe and legal route to resettle in the UK. We expect to exceed our initial aim of resettling 5,000 through the scheme in the first year.
27. **Ukraine Schemes:** The Ukraine Family Scheme and Homes for Ukraine Scheme, launched in March 2022, are now both fully digital and constitute one of the fastest implemented, and biggest visa programmes in UK history. We launched the Ukraine Extension Scheme on 3 May 2022 giving Ukrainians already in the UK three years' permission to remain and full access to work, study and public funds. 187,800 people have successfully completed the application process for our Ukraine schemes (52,200 people for the Ukraine Family Scheme and over 135,600 for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme).
28. We will implement commitments made during the passage of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 including for Hong Kong armed forces, for Chagossians



(British Overseas Indian Territories) and reforms to nationality laws to tackle historic unfairness.

## Simplification

29. To ensure our customers can navigate the system easily, get what they need and understand how to comply with our rules, we are simplifying our Immigration Rules and implementing the recommendations of the Law Commission. This will cut through complexity and make the Rules clear, consistent and accessible, to encourage those who have the skills or talent that will benefit the UK and crack down on illegal migration and remove those who abuse our hospitality by committing criminal offences.
30. This approach ensures the right foundations are in place for a simple, resilient, and reformed future border and immigration system. The new rules have been structured so the requirements for each route are generally in one place, making them easier to find. The rules have been written in plain English, so they are easier to understand for those using our system. We are working with the Law Commission on the consolidation of immigration legislation to make the legal system easier to navigate and understand for all users.

## Our Vision: A streamlined, digital system which responds to customer needs and enhances the security of the UK

31. This strategy statement sets out our ambition for transformational change for everyone using our systems and crossing the UK border. We will deliver a fully end-to-end digital customer experience from the way people apply for permission to travel, how they prove their identity to meet the relevant entry criteria, how they receive and prove their status to cross the border and how they demonstrate their entitlements in the UK.
32. Our customers will experience a better and more innovative service, building on the range of public services we already offer online. They will understand the terms of their visa and know what they need to do to comply. We want to be world-leading and set the standards for a modern border. We are committed to making the system great for those that are compliant, and compassionate for those that need it. Yet we must ensure that the system safeguards against those who pose significant threat or risk and minimise avenues of exploitation. By 2025 we will have a customer-centric border and immigration system with improvements including:

### Planning to come

- Simpler customer guidance on gov.uk to help people navigate the system more easily and understand how to comply with our rules.



- ❑ Transformed **customer contact channels**, including call centres and digital self-service, helping people get the information they need, what to expect from the application process and how to ensure they comply with our rules.

### Applying to come

- ❑ More streamlined and seamless **digital application processes**, including innovative identity capture and verification, to improve the customer experience.
- ❑ A transformed **sponsorship system** to speed up the process for customers and sponsors.

### Travelling to the UK

- ❑ Permission to Travel, including the introduction of an **Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme**, enabling more upstream security checks to prevent more harmful people getting to the UK border in the first place.
- ❑ Roll out of **eVisas** - digital immigration status information accessed via an intuitive, user-friendly online system or system to system services.

### Crossing the Border

- ❑ Using what we know about people to inform flow and interventions at the border, better informed **“counting in and counting out”**.
- ❑ Innovative technology **increasing automation** for everyone travelling to the UK across all modes of transport, proof of concepts in place to test full “contactless travel” options.

### Living in the UK

- ❑ Further implementation of customer accounts, eVisas and View & Prove giving users the ability to demonstrate their rights in the UK via simple online services.
- ❑ Reduce the need for people to prove their rights and entitlements when accessing public services by **increased data sharing** with other government departments, building on the systems already in place with DWP, HMRC and NHS England and Wales.

### Cross system improvements

- ❑ Increased use of **innovation of biometrics** to confirm the identity of our users and recognise them as individuals at different points in the system.
- ❑ More **innovative partnership** with industry, including all types of carriers and ports, to drive the best experience for all customers.
- ❑ A streamlined **digital case working** process for more effective workflow, appointment booking and decision-making to benefit customers and caseworkers.

# Planning to come to the UK

## Overview

33. For those **planning to come to the UK**, we are making it simpler and more intuitive for people to understand if they are eligible for a visa, what steps they need to take to apply and, if granted, the conditions of their stay in the UK. This will be achieved through clearer guidance and content on gov.uk, including new customer support tools.
34. We are transforming the end-to-end customer journey and have already delivered a number of improvements. We implemented the 'Check if you need a UK visa' tool to help customers easily find out what visas they are eligible for.<sup>7</sup> This tool is the most high-traffic visa content on gov.uk.
35. To support customers applying on the Skilled Worker route we have launched a new intuitive and interactive tool - the Skilled Worker Eligibility Checker.<sup>8</sup> This tool makes it easier for both workers and employers to understand if a particular job is eligible simply by answering a series of questions relating to their job and circumstances, using drop-down menus populated with specific data sets to provide an immediate indication of eligibility.

## Future Customer Journey

36. We will have a seamless, fully digital, end-to end journey for customers interacting with the immigration system by 2025. It will provide simpler guidance and be intuitive by design with easy to use products which will reduce the number queries from customers. For those customers who still need to contact us, queries will be resolved via digital self-service support that will take them directly to the content they require. We are developing chatbot and voicebot functionality with a view to launching this digital support from 2023, giving customers the means to resolve their queries effectively, without needing to wait to speak to an agent. This will mirror the efficient and effective customer service that the public are accustomed to receiving from businesses.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>

<sup>8</sup> [Check if you are eligible for a Skilled Worker visa \(visas-immigration.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/visas-immigration.service.gov.uk)

37. We have already started work on more simple and tailored guidance on gov.uk, with the first set of simpler guidance for work visas is due later in 2022. We intend to use more 'how to' videos to show step by step how the system works and help users successfully complete tasks such as applying for an ETA, proving their identity or registering as a sponsor. These developments will benefit the customer, but also help them to understand our expectations when it comes to compliance with the immigration rules.

# Applying to come to the UK

## Overview

38. We have radically transformed the way people **apply for visas** to come to the UK, making it simpler and easier for our customers to apply. The application form is online for most of our customers and millions of applicants can now upload their facial biometrics using a smartphone. Many people now receive an eVisa – a digital version of their immigration status which they can access via an online account. Over the next two years this “digital by default” application process will be rolled out to more customers. We are developing our digital customer support model and agents in our resolution centre will have access to a single view of the immigration system to support customers regardless of their query.

## Digital by Default

39. In the 21st-century, people increasingly rely on digital services from banking apps rather than physical cards, to paying their taxes online and we want our customers to have access to immigration services in the same way as for other government transactions.

40. The immigration system is no exception with applications for all new routes taking place online, increasingly replacing physical and paper-based products with accessible, easy to use online and digital services. This includes enabling many people to use a smartphone to provide facial biometrics to establish or verify their identity and enabling reuse of fingerprint biometrics that have previously been captured. This, along with the introduction of eVisas, has reduced the need for people to go to a Visa Application Centres (VACs) to give biometrics or collect a physical visa. Applications can now be successfully completed from the customer’s own home.

41. We have successfully demonstrated the benefit and ease of a digital immigration system having processed over six million applications online for the EU Settlement Scheme. We built on these foundations with the introduction of the streamlined Hong Kong BN(O) route, enabling applicants to apply without attending a VAC to enrol their biometrics and receiving an immediately accessible eVisa, rather than having to wait for a vignette to be issued before they could travel.

42. The digitisation of how we capture, verify and assure the identity of a customer, including their biometric information, is a key part of our border of the future. In 2022 and 2023, this will include extending re-use of biometric data already held by the Home Office to more routes, so that customers will not need to provide their fingerprints again. This means we maintain the security of our systems, as well as improving the customer experience.

## Digital Customer Accounts

43. Customers applying through the points-based system now have a digital customer account to access their eVisa and relevant information about their rights and entitlements. During 2022 and 2023, there will be further improvements to the digital customer account, including more seamless integration and more intuitive navigation between services. We will work with partners across government, including the One Login programme to look at opportunities to join up government services.

44. For customers with existing immigration status, we will provide guidance and support to help them convert to an eVisa which will give them access to the full range of online account features and services. By the end of 2024 they will be able to interact with a digital immigration system removing the need to obtain a replacement physical document.

## eVisas

45. Millions of our customers already have an eVisa - digital evidence of their immigration status - and use it to enter and live in the UK. Their up-to-date immigration status information can be viewed and checked online as soon as their permission is granted. These eVisas will remove the need for customers to go in person to a VAC to collect a physical visa, reducing the physical touchpoints with the immigration system and the burden on individuals.

46. This digital approach will result in physical evidence of immigration status, in the form of vignettes and Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs)/Cards, gradually being phased out by December 2024. We are conscious of the lessons learnt from Windrush and are committed to ensuring that all customers, including the most vulnerable, are properly supported as we transform our immigration system. Nobody should be left behind as a result of our digital transformation. Should customers have difficulty accessing their eVisa online or experience any technical issues, our dedicated Resolution Centre will be on hand to support them. Customers will also continue to receive written notification of immigration status alongside an eVisa, which they can retain for their own records.

47. To ensure customers with historic and paper-based evidence of their immigration status can take advantage of the benefits digital status brings, we will provide guidance on how to register for a digital customer account and

convert to an eVisa. We are planning further communications activity aimed at this group to advise them what they need to do, by when. We will also endeavour to reach vulnerable people who are less digitally confident through collaboration with other Government departments and stakeholders.

## Customer Support

48. To better support customers we have a dedicated Resolution Centre, which is open seven days a week for telephone and email enquiries. The centre now provides telephone and email support to customers with an eVisa or using the online immigration status services. This includes customer support to:

- Access or recover a digital account.
- Update personal details.
- Share status for customers who are unable to do so themselves.

49. To assist customers who are experiencing technical issues with their eVisa, the Resolution Centre can verify status through alternative means. To support customers who do not have access to technology, or the digital skills or confidence to complete the form online, we have a UK-wide assisted digital service.

50. We will continue to build on our agent capability from 2023, with world class customer service provided by in-house experts who have access to a single view of the customer's interactions with the immigration system.

## Sponsorship

51. To improve the customer experience for employers wanting to sponsor someone to come and work in the UK, we have already made significant changes to our employer sponsorship system and have reduced the length of the process. We have:
- Removed the 'Resident Labour Market Test', reducing the time from identifying a need to hire a migrant worker and acquiring a visa for that worker by 4 weeks.
  - Suspended the cap on Skilled Workers, reducing processing times by up to four weeks.
  - Made the sponsor licence application fully paperless, re-designed the sponsor guidance and made the system simpler, more streamlined and accessible.
52. Compliance is at the core of our sponsorship system and all sponsors are required to comply with all relevant UK legislation. We make relevant checks on all potential sponsors, including on past criminality or immigration offences, to ensure the safety of those coming to the UK for work and once granted sponsorship status, we now have the ability to check automatically whether skilled workers are being paid in accordance with the Sponsor's undertaking.
53. Over 40,000 employers have already successfully become licensed sponsors, many of them small businesses. Most sponsor licence applications are decided within less than eight weeks with an option to receive an expedited decision within 10 working days for a fee. Sponsor licences are currently being processed within the service standards and additional reforms between now and 2024 will further reduce the time it takes a sponsor to hire a worker from overseas. We remain committed to reviewing our service standards and to delivering improvements for customers. Prioritisation of work to accommodate responses to short term issues such as labour supply have impacted our timeframes, and we now expect to deliver improvements by Spring 2023.
54. In August 2021 we published our Sponsorship Roadmap<sup>9</sup> which set out our significant package of reforms to the sponsorship system up to 2024, including the necessary changes to deliver a streamlined, simplified and modern system that meets customers' needs. This transformation will result in a system that is faster and simpler, with a reduced administrative burden on sponsors. However, whilst the end goal of a full transformed sponsorship system for employers remains the same, it will now be in place by 2025, subject to user feedback and the success of the testing outlined in the table below.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-points-based-immigration-system-sponsorship-roadmap/the-uks-points-based-immigration-system-sponsorship-roadmap-accessible-version>

<b>Package</b>	<b>Planned delivery dates for limited roll-out</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
<b>Sponsor a Visa</b>	Early 2023	To streamline the process for sponsors, applicants and enable more efficient caseworking, existing sponsors will have the ability to invite a worker to make their visa application once role details have been approved with the role information pre-populated.
<b>Manage a Licence</b>	Late 2023	To give us greater understanding about a sponsor and their sponsored worker, and allow for quicker decision-making the online management system for all sponsors to carry out post licence activities will be improved e.g. allowing sponsors to make changes such as adding users to their licence.
<b>Become a Sponsor</b>	Early 2024	To make it easier for prospective sponsors to apply for a sponsor licence automated data checks will be introduced. This will reduce the opportunity for abuse, reduce and simplify the evidence requirements placed on prospective sponsors, and reduce casework processing times.



# Travelling to the UK

## Overview

55. To further strengthen the UK border we are introducing a Permission to Travel scheme. This will tell us more about those wanting to come here and prevent the arrival of those we already deem a threat. We are working closely with carriers across all modes of entry to the UK to make the process comprehensive and of benefit to all.

## Permission to Travel

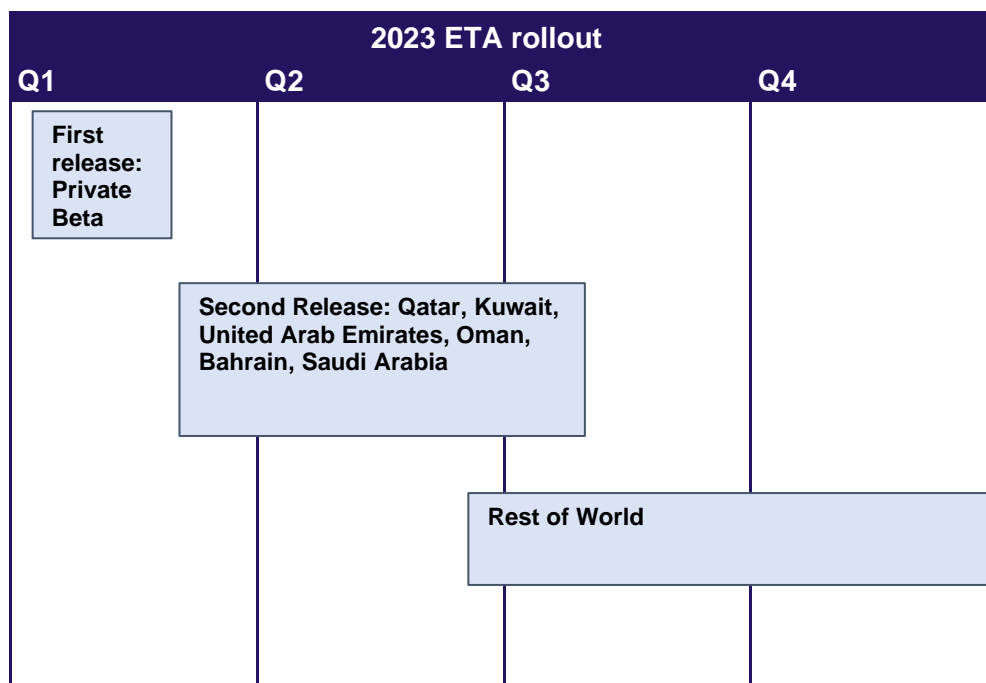
56. To further strengthen the UK border we are introducing a Permission to Travel scheme in 2023. Everyone wishing to travel to the UK will need permission in advance of travel. This will increase our knowledge about those seeking to come to the UK and prevent the arrival of those who present a threat. Instead of turning people away at our border or detaining them at a cost to the taxpayer, this approach will allow us to stop people travelling to the UK in the first place. We will deliver a more targeted approach to border control on arrival and provide information on compliance. This will be demonstrated by:

- Passport – for British and Irish citizens.
- eVisa – for visa nationals and anyone resident or coming to work and study.
- Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) - for non-visa national visitors.

57. The Nationality and Borders Act 2022 introduced the power to require travellers to the UK to hold an ETA - digital approval to travel to the UK. This is in line with the approach many of the UK's international partners have taken to border security, including the USA (ESTA), Canada (ETA), Australia (eTA) and New Zealand (NZeTA). The European Union is expected to launch a similar scheme in 2023 (ETIAS).

58. Customers applying for an ETA will provide their biographic, biometric and contact details, and answer a short set of suitability questions. This information will be checked against our systems and assessed to determine whether the person has permission to travel to the UK. The majority of customers will receive their ETA within a short time of submitting their application. The ETA is not a visa; it authorises an individual to board a carrier to travel to the UK. On

arrival at the UK border, an individual will still need to obtain leave to enter, as per the process now.



## Carrier Integration

59. To support carriers with permission to travel, we are developing a single, integrated approach to security, immigration, and health (if applicable) pre-departure checks, based on our existing Advance Passenger Information (API) systems. Carriers will receive a single message from the Home Office confirming whether an individual has permission to travel when they submit API data. This will help carriers discharge their statutory obligations under the UK 'carriers' liability' scheme, to ensure passengers are properly documented for travel to the UK without the need to check additional immigration documents. This scheme will be amended to reflect the introduction of ETAs and the wider permission to travel requirements.

60. Whilst carriers will still be expected to check that an individual has a valid travel document, the permission to travel message will also help them determine whether the passenger has the appropriate eVisa or ETA. This will mitigate the risk of incurring a charge under the carriers' liability scheme. This new integrated approach will also reduce incidents where, at their own expense, carriers are required under existing immigration legislation to return individuals who have been refused entry at the UK border.

61. We have been engaging with the carrier community across the aviation, rail and maritime transport sectors on our plans since 2021 and have worked with several airlines to help shape our approach to carrier integration. These “early adopters” have been vital to gain insights and feedback on our plans to integrate with all carriers over the course of the next few years.
  
62. In April 2022, we successfully introduced new functionality and tested our ability to send messages to carriers confirming that we could match individual passengers on specific routes to valid permission records using the interactive Advance Passenger Information System (iAPI). We are looking at alternative solutions for carriers who do not use the iAPI so they can send API and receive permission to travel responses. Engagement with these carriers will help us understand how the technology can operate in passenger journeys across different modes of transport. Integration with all carriers will be in place by early 2024.

# Crossing the Border

## Overview

63. We are transforming **crossing the border**, with improvements to security, passenger experience and queue times. We are increasing automation to enable us to better manage flow and interventions at the border. We will maximise the use of pre-travel interventions to increase security by preventing harmful people getting to the border in the first place.

## UK Border Strategy

64. On 17 December 2020, HM Government published its '2025 UK Border Strategy'<sup>10</sup>, which was the result of extensive engagement with industry following a public consultation. The strategy sets out an ambitious plan to transform the border by 2025 and beyond, to create the most effective border in the world. Building on the ambitions set out in the 2025 UK Border Strategy, our objectives to transform the border through digital innovation include:

- Increasing security.
- Improving the customer experience.
- Improving fluidity at airports and ports.
- Breaking the current link between passenger numbers and Border Force resources.
- Allowing Border Force officers to apply their skills and professional judgement to improve security and safeguarding outcomes.

65. Provisions at UK ports are inconsistent, and a key transformation deliverable of the 2025 UK Border Strategy is to establish resilient 'ports of the future'. We will set out the standards and requirements for border infrastructure and facilities, by partnering with ports and the border industry, to support innovation, modern and user-centred designs to speed up and secure the passage of people and goods through ports. This will improve the border crossing experience, reduce vulnerabilities, and build the capability of staff.

66. We have established a Border Vision Advisory Group (BVAG) which gives us the opportunity to work closely with academic and industry experts to drive theoretical research into cutting edge border solutions. The solutions we are developing will benefit all customers at the border, as well as port operators and carriers.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2025-uk-border-strategy>

67. By 2025, the UK border will look very different. Once we have undertaken proof of concepts and pilots for optimising greater automation, including rolling out ETA and increased provision and functionality of eGates, we will be able to transform the border operating model. To support industry to be ready for this future border we will be working across government to set out a Target Operating Model (TOM) for what the border will look like by end of 2023. This will include all users of the border such as passengers, carriers and ports. There will be reconfigured, smarter arrivals halls, allowing most passengers to enter the UK swiftly and securely. We will explore the optimal layout of border control to support automation with port operators as the default for checks. Only passengers of interest due to a range of factors including identity verification; risk profile; specific intelligence; other agency-directed intervention; or safeguarding concern, will be referred for examination to a Border Force Officer (BFO).

## Automation

68. There are on average 144 million crossings each year at the UK border. Many of these are automated - principally through eGates at most airports and some rail stations - allowing for an improved passenger experience for people (12 years of age or above) who pose relatively low risk in terms of criminality, national security or abuse of the Immigration Rules.

69. To improve flow at the border, we have expanded the use of eGates to passengers from 'B5JSSK' countries in addition to British, Irish and EU nationals.<sup>11</sup> National roll-out of new Border Crossing (BX) technology which provides BFOs with greater access to a passenger's information was completed, on schedule, by June 2021. In response to COVID, the roll out of BX across eGates was brought forward and completed six months early by October 2021, to enable the automation of the Passenger Locator Form (PLF) checks. Over 28 million passengers were successfully processed using BX in the first year of operations.

## What will the future border look and feel like?

70. Our vision is to transform the UK Border, making visible changes to security, flow and passenger experience by enabling automated entry to the UK for most passengers across all modes of transport at all ports. This will allow BFOs to apply their skills and professional judgement to target and increase their capacity for security and safeguarding outcomes. Through permission to

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<sup>11</sup> These countries are Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, and the United States of America.

travel we will know more about the people coming to the UK before they travel. Along with visible improvements for customers, we are also investing in better targeting and watchlisting systems to maintain our world leading security capabilities. We have identified the steps we need to take to reach our vision for the border of the future.

### Near Term – end of 2023

71. Our priority is to increase the use of automation by driving up usage among those who are already eligible to use eGates. We are also working to increase the resilience of the e-Gates to increase the number available at any time and so ensure shorter queue times. To increase automated entry through the current eGates we will:

- Conduct proof of concept trials to see if the age limit for current eligible nationalities that can use the eGates can be lowered from 12 to 10 years.
- Improve messaging to make it clear and consistent to assist travellers and direct them into the right queue and ensure customers know how to use the eGates correctly.

### Mid-term

72. From 2023 we intend to further expand the use of automation (including eGates) to cohorts not currently able to use them. Focusing on individuals who already have an immigration permission e.g., people with Indefinite Leave to Remain, or Student Visas. While the numbers are not significant in border crossing volume terms, their processing times are longer, so any automation of these cohorts will improve flow at the border.

### Long-term

73. We will focus on the step change and transformation of the use of automation for all passengers to improve the flow capacity at air, rail and maritime ports. Through the BVAG established in December 2020, we are engaging with academics, industry suppliers, port operators and carriers to explore the future of automation. These hackathon events will continue throughout 2022, providing a catalyst for our detailed design for the future. We will:

- Identify feasible technical solutions for automation of the future, such as contactless entry.
- Undertake proof of concepts including the use of existing and new automation technologies for air, maritime and rail ports, including those who present at the border in vehicles from 2023 and pilots at operational ports in 2024.
- Trial a Pre-Clearance Model against a highly automated border model on select departure points where border control requirements are fulfilled before departure.

# Living in the UK

## Overview

74. For people **living in the UK**, we are making it simple and more straightforward to comply with our rules and access entitlements, whether that be demonstrating the right to work or access to the NHS. This is being achieved through our further development of account and online services to allow users to view and prove their rights and entitlements.
75. The introduction of eVisas allows individuals to view their up-to-date immigration status information online at any time and to share relevant information about their rights digitally and securely with third parties, such as employers or public and private service providers. This reduces costs and saves time for the customer, Home Office and checking organisations.
76. We have already started this journey, with millions of individuals already proving their rights via the online 'view and prove', 'Right to work' and 'Right to Rent' services on gov.uk. Online services for employers and landlords already allow them to check an individual's right to work or rent through a simple digital check.
77. To support employers and landlords we have simplified the process for checking a person's right to work and rent. The physical BRP/BRC card can no longer be accepted by employers and landlords. This improves the security and integrity of the entire system and is part of the Home Office's work to modernise and digitise the Right to Work and Rent Schemes. During the Covid-19 restrictions, many customers found it helpful to share status and demonstrate their eligibility remotely. This has also simplified the process for employers and landlords by reducing the number of documents relied on to prove status and is enabling checks to be conducted easily and remotely.
78. As part of our wider reform of the immigration system, we are increasingly enabling other Government departments and public authorities to be able to automatically access immigration status information. These system-to-system services will allow other government departments to access the relevant information automatically, without the individual having to go online and prove their rights.
79. System to system checks which support millions of checks each month are already in place with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and NHS England and Wales. Further services are planned throughout 2022 and 2023 with partners such as the

DVLA, Social Security Scotland, the Student Loans Company and some local authorities. The data made available is specific to the need of each department and contains only the necessary information to inform their decision making. By making data available in this way, we are reducing the number of occasions customer will have to prove their rights. Our salary checks with HMRC mean we can ensure employees are being paid the amount their employers committed to pay them, helping to prevent worker exploitation.

80. We continue to be intelligence-led in our compliance actions targeting sponsors who present a higher risk or have no track record of compliance. Sanctions for noncompliance may range from conditions or limits on recruitment, managed action plans, or suspension and revocation of a sponsor licence.



## Communications and engagement

81. The ongoing transformation and innovation of the UK's immigration system impacts a number of audiences who need to understand how they are affected and what action they need to take, from those coming to visit or work in the UK to the travel industry. It is also vital to keep the wider public informed as to how the Government is delivering on its New Plan for Immigration. We are committed to continue supporting this change through comprehensive communication and engagement campaigns.
82. To date we have successfully supported the opening of the EU Settlement Scheme, points-based immigration system and safe and legal humanitarian routes, with campaigns driving awareness and preparedness amongst those affected and the wider public, using a range of channels including broadcast, video on demand, social media, and physical advertising such as billboards and public transport. We will continue this support through targeted messaging and outreach to new and existing audiences affected by the changes to the system.
83. This includes new campaigns targeting those planning their travel to the UK, crossing the border and living and working in the UK. Our messaging will drive awareness of the rollout of ETAs, eVisas, customer accounts and online services with the goal of enabling as seamless a transition as possible for our customers.
84. We continue to engage our expert Advisory Groups and key stakeholders in business, academia and the third sector on the further changes being implemented during the lifetime of the programme. The Advisory Groups remain instrumental in providing valuable feedback and insight to us on the transformation of the system, which we feed back into the programme. The groups also continue to provide us with wider engagement opportunities across all sectors impacted by the changes we are delivering.
85. Face-to-face engagement with key stakeholders is vital. Our programme of engagement events continues, with activity particularly aimed at those new to the system. Events to date have reached over 40,000 stakeholders, including business, landlords, financial institutions, educational establishments, local authorities, foreign administrations and citizens, and have been an important way to provide clarity and get feedback on the changes we are implementing.

## **Points-based immigration system**

With the end of Freedom of Movement on 31 December 2020 and the launch of the points-based immigration system, in September 2020 the Home Office launched a communications campaign across radio, social media, video on demand and billboards across the country to inform and prepare those affected.

Targeting EU citizens and UK employers the 24-language nationwide and international marketing campaign ran through late 2020 into mid-2021. Messages included clear calls to action to EU citizens resident in the UK on securing their rights to remain, with employers and EU countries kept informed of the ways in which individuals can visit, work and live in the UK through our points-based system.

This was underpinned by hundreds of engagement events open to those wishing to learn about the system in detail, targeting all sectors, regions and nations across our United Kingdom as well as Internationally. Engagement included broadcast and bespoke events for businesses large and small, sessions in conjunction with other government departments as part of their regular forums, and surge events for EUSS citizens and interested parties where we reached almost 4,000 stakeholders in a 10-day period at the end of June 2021.

Thanks to our clear and timely messaging we have ensured that EU nationals' resident in the UK have secured their rights to live and work in the UK, with over 6 million grants of status under the EU Settlement Scheme. UK employers have been able to adapt to recruiting skilled EU workers through our fairer global points-based system, and those eligible for our humanitarian schemes have been able to secure the support they need.

Our extensive, wide-reaching engagement programme, targeting employers and other interested parties about the EU Settlement Scheme and new immigration system, have been well received, with the immigration system and processes being demystified resulting in an increase in sponsor, visa and EUSS applications as a result of this engagement.

## **Ukraine Guidance for Landlords and Employers**

In April and May 2022, the Home Office, in conjunction with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Refugee Employment Network and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, ran a series of events for employers and landlords. In the space of one week approximately 1000 stakeholders attended and received an explanation of the Ukraine visa schemes, information on rights to work and rent, and how stakeholders can help those with these visas access work and private rental accommodation if and when they are ready to so. Attendees were able to pose questions to a panel made up of representatives from the government departments and organisations on all aspects of the schemes.



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