

Inspection Report Published: An Inspection of UK Visas and Immigration Front End Services

News story

This inspection examined the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of FES delivered by UKVI through its streamlined and digitised UK Visa and Citizenship Application Service (UKVCAS) in-country, Home Office SSCs and Visa Application Centres (VACs) overseas.



Publishing the report, David Neal said:

I welcome the publication of this report, which examined the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of the Home Office visa application services, delivered by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Front End Services (FES).

The inspection explored the guidance, instructions and assistance provided to customers, the availability of appointments, the customer experience, training for staff, quality assurance mechanisms, support for vulnerable customers and the relationship with commercial partners.

While I recognise that the development of digital services provides new ways of working and delivering services which are less paper based, more secure and quicker, this needs to be balanced against the customer experience. This report highlights several concerns that need to be addressed by the Home Office and its commercial partners. Customers have indicated that for some of them the visa application process is their first interaction with the UK Government, and it is important to get this engagement right. Delivering an efficient and effective visa application service is in the interest of all parties.

I am pleased that the Home Office accepted 7 of the 8 recommendations in full and that a number of the recommendations are already in train or completed as part of UKVI's wider transformational work. It is especially good to note that a recent review of the availability of free appointments, which is a key concern raised by customers in this inspection, has led to contractual changes with Sopra Steria LTD, which will on average have the effect of offering over 5,000 additional free appointments to customers each month. I will continue to track customer experiences in this regard through my stakeholder fora.

David Neal, Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

Published 25 November 2021