

Points-based immigration system opens

Applications for the new skilled worker visa open today (1 December), meaning the brightest and the best from around the world can now apply to work in the UK from 1 January 2021.

Under the points-based immigration system, points will be awarded for a job offer at the appropriate skill level, knowledge of English and being paid a minimum salary. Skilled worker visas will be awarded to those who gain enough points.

The new immigration rules will ensure that businesses can recruit the most highly qualified from across the globe to drive the economy forwards and keep the UK at the frontier of innovation.

It will also encourage employers to focus on training and investing in the UK workforce, driving productivity and improving opportunities for individuals, especially those impacted by coronavirus.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This government promised to end free movement, to take back control of our borders and to introduce a new points-based immigration system. Today, we have delivered on that promise.

This simple, effective and flexible system will ensure employers can recruit the skilled workers they need, whilst also encouraging employers to train and invest in the UK's workforce.

We are also opening routes for those who have an exceptional talent or show exceptional promise in the fields of engineering, science, tech or culture.

People will normally need to be paid at least £25,600 per year unless the 'going rate' for that job is higher.

Applications are made online, and as part of this, people will need to prove their identity and provide their documents.

Once someone outside the UK has gone through all these steps, they will usually get a decision within 3 weeks.

They will need to have enough money to pay the application fee (ranging from £610 to £1,408), the healthcare surcharge (usually £624 per year) and be able to support themselves (usually by having at least £1,270 available).

The visa lasts for up to 5 years before it needs to be extended.

Alongside the skilled worker visa, a number of other routes have opened

today.

These include:

- Global Talent visa for people who can show they have exceptional talent or exceptional promise in the fields of science, engineering, humanities, medicine, digital technology or arts and culture
- Innovator visa for a person seeking to establish a business in the UK based on an innovative, viable and scalable business idea
- Start-up visa for a person seeking to establish a business in the UK for the first time
- the Intra-company Transfer visa, which is for established workers who are being transferred by the business they work for to do a skilled role in the UK

The Student route and Child Student route opened on 5 October 2020 to eligible international students from across the globe.

Clinical evaluation confirms accuracy of LAMP test

- Findings from a technical and clinical evaluation of OptiGene RT-LAMP tests confirm high sensitivity to the virus.
- Evaluation carried out by NHS trusts and universities finds the test to be highly effective in identifying infectious cases, including for people not displaying symptoms.

A [technical and clinical evaluation](#) conducted by NHS trusts and universities has confirmed OptiGene RT-LAMP tests to be accurate and sensitive enough to be used for COVID-19 testing, including for those without symptoms.

The OptiGene RT-LAMP (loop-mediated isothermal amplification) test was found to have a sensitivity of 79% and specificity of 100%, meaning the test is effective in identifying the cases who are infectious and are most likely to transmit the disease. In samples with a higher viral load, the sensitivity of the test increased to 94% for saliva and 100% for swabs.

Unlike PCR tests, LAMP tests do not require sequential changes of temperature and so can turnaround test results more rapidly.

As part of the strategy to deliver asymptomatic testing to identify those who might otherwise unknowingly spread the virus, OptiGene RT-LAMP tests have been used to test some NHS staff and in asymptomatic testing pilots in Southampton, including at the University of Southampton which has seen 55,000 people tested.

Initial results from these pilots show the test as effective in identifying positive cases and breaking chains of transmission.

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

"With up to a third of individuals with COVID-19 not displaying symptoms, we are rolling out asymptomatic testing to protect those at highest risk. Most importantly NHS staff who are at the forefront of fighting this virus. By broadening testing to identify those showing no symptoms and who can infect people unknowingly, we can find positive cases more quickly and break chains of transmission.

"We are using the latest technology to do this, and the country's leading scientists have rigorously evaluated the Optigene LAMP test in the lab and in the field and confirmed its sensitivity for asymptomatic testing."

Professor Dame Sue Hill, Chief Scientific Officer for England in NHS Test and Trace, who led the evaluation of the OptiGene RT-LAMP Assay for NHS Test and Trace said:

"We've shown through carefully conducted studies that the OptiGene LAMP test is fast, reliable and easy to use and dependent on testing format can work directly with saliva samples as well as with swabs. It has been effective in the pilot study sites and can make a valuable contribution to our overall COVID-19 testing capability."

Professor Keith Godfrey, of the University of Southampton MRC Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit, who led the first phase of the Southampton saliva testing pilot said:

"The saliva LAMP project in Southampton has proved to be very easy for students to use, and is extremely popular with parents and staff. Participation among University of Southampton students has been very encouraging, with 80% of students in halls of residence and over two thirds of those in private accommodation registered for regular saliva LAMP testing.

"Targeted educational materials and effective continued engagement with the students and school staff have been an essential part of the programme's success, supported by well-developed laboratory, IT, enquiries and case contacting systems. During the pilot, with regular testing and participation rates exceeding 80 per cent among the school staff and students, there has been no evidence of any transmission of infection within the schools involved. Feedback from students, staff and parents has been amazingly positive."

- Sensitivity means the proportion of people with a disease that have a positive test, whereas specificity means the proportion of people without the disease that have a negative test.
- RT-LAMP was used in four configurations – with and without RNA extraction and using swab or saliva samples. The results of the

evaluation published today show that sensitivity and specificity across the dynamic range of viral loads demonstrated in this study were:

- RNA RT-LAMP on Swabs: Sensitivity 95%; Specificity 99%
- RNA RT-LAMP on Saliva: Sensitivity 80%; Specificity 100%
- Direct RT-LAMP on Swabs: Sensitivity 70%; Specificity 100%
- Direct RT-LAMP on Saliva: Sensitivity 79%; Specificity 100%

The sensitivity of the Direct RT-LAMP assay increases in samples with a higher viral load (CT <25 by RT-qPCR) to 100% (swabs) and 94% (saliva). All RT-LAMP assays shown to have over 99% specificity.

The Technical and Validation Group was established under NHS Test and Trace, inclusive of NHS and PHE experts and working closely with MHRA and research bodies. The Technical and Validation function considers manufacturers of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) tests for viral detection (including LAMP technologies) and registers their interest in the national procurement process if their test meets, or are intended to meet the requirements of the relevant Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) Target Product Profiles.

Loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) is a single-tube technique for the amplification of DNA and a low-cost, rapid alternative to RT-qPCR. Reverse Transcription Loop-Mediated Isothermal Amplification (RT-LAMP) combines LAMP with a reverse transcription step to allow the detection of RNA.

Community testing to help lift restrictions in highest tiers

- Government sets out new programme to help provide route to move down tier levels for highest risk areas
- Areas in tier 3 invited to apply for support for community testing to detect asymptomatic cases and drive down transmission
- Local areas will be asked to consider incentives to encourage people to take part in order to detect as many cases as possible

Details of a new community testing offer have been set out today by the Government to help local areas detect asymptomatic cases, suppress the virus

and offer a route out of the toughest restrictions.

Local authorities in tier 3 areas, the highest level of restrictions, can apply for the new six-week community testing programme to complement wider local strategies to tackle the virus.

The Government will work with local authorities to identify how community testing might be used to help areas in tier 3 move down to a lower tier, whilst continuing to protect the people in those communities and the NHS.

Local authorities will determine the best way to focus testing, suppress the virus and ensure their communities benefit, with potential models including whole population testing of all non-symptomatic individuals over 11 years old, testing targeted on specific geographic areas, such as those with high prevalence, or highly targeted testing on specific locations, employment sectors, or workplaces where there is a high risk.

Local Directors of Public Health will be supported to develop approaches that work for their community, backed by national support and funding. Central government will provide operational support for the design and delivery of community testing programmes, and funding available to local authorities will be estimated based on the number of tests they aim to deliver over the 6 week programme.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

By expanding our testing to include people showing no symptoms, we are finding more positive cases more quickly and breaking chains of transmission. Up to a third of people have coronavirus without symptoms, so it is incredibly important to be testing those who could be infecting others unknowingly.

When more people come forward for regular community testing, we have a much greater chance of driving down prevalence of the virus and saving lives.

I know people in the top tiers are facing a particularly difficult time, which is why we are supporting them with mass community testing to provide a route towards lowering the level of restrictions they face.

We are committed to working with local areas to make this work for their communities and I encourage all those living in areas where community testing is offered to come forward and get tested.

The Government will also work in partnership with local authorities to develop initiatives to encourage participation, based on their knowledge of local populations and areas. Examples might include discount schemes with local businesses, partnerships with community organisations or local employers, or door knocking campaigns.

If successful, the community testing programme will be expanded into next year. Applications will be assessed on a number of factors including local infection rates, robust plans for community testing resources and other logistical and commercial considerations to ensure testing delivers the best possible value for money.

Proposals will be carefully assessed at both a local and national level and signed off by the Chief Medical Officer to ensure they are appropriate and safe and learning can be shared across the country.

This builds on the community testing pilots which are taking place in Liverpool and Merthyr Tydfil. Since the Liverpool pilot began, more than 200,000 people have been tested as part of a strategy that has helped to significantly reduce prevalence.

Community testing will make use of rapid Lateral Flow Tests which give results within an hour, and will focus on locating and suppressing asymptomatic transmission. The more cases identified and self-isolating, the quicker the control of virus transmission which is essential to help areas move down a tier.

With up to a third of individuals with coronavirus showing no symptoms, increased community testing will help identify those who are infected and infectious, but asymptomatic and unaware that they might be spreading the disease, so that they can isolate and protect others.

Anyone who tests positive, using either a Lateral Flow Test or an existing swab test, must self-isolate along with their household immediately and their contacts will be traced.

Eligible local authorities are invited to work with local liaison teams to develop plans and submit a proposal detailing their ambitions for community testing as soon as possible to roll out from now and into 2021.

The devolved administrations will be supported to roll out similar exercises with a pilot already ongoing in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales, and they will also receive their population share of testing capacity, including lateral flow testing.

The NHS COVID-19 app remains a key tool to help break chains of transmission. Inputting positive PCR test results into the app increases the number of people contact traced and the speed contact tracing happens, which helps reduce the spread of coronavirus and supports the reduction in the R number.

Patrick Finucane Case: UK Government

Outlines Way Forward

Press release

The UK Government has today outlined its way forward regarding the case of Patrick Finucane.



The UK Government has today outlined its way forward regarding the case of Patrick Finucane.

Following extensive consideration of all options available, the Government has decided not to establish a public inquiry into the murder of the Belfast solicitor at this time. A review process is being taken forward by the Legacy Investigation Branch of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), and investigations being conducted by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland are ongoing – both independently of Government.

The Government has acknowledged the Supreme Court finding that there is yet to be an Article 2-compliant investigation into the death of Mr Finucane, and has been working since the judgment was published to assess how best to address the specific findings of the Court.

The Government has committed to re-assess whether a public inquiry is necessary to resolve any outstanding obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights in light of the police review process and Police Ombudsman investigations.

The Government, has also today published further details – not previously in the public domain – relating to the conduct of previous investigations into the Finucane case. A report of a review conducted by the PSNI in 2015 in light of the findings of the de Silva review has been shared with the family and will be published by the PSNI in the coming days.

Earlier today, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Brandon Lewis, spoke to the Finucane family to inform them of the Government's decision.

Mr Lewis said:

The murder of Patrick Finucane was an appalling crime that has caused tremendous suffering. The UK Government is clear that the shocking levels of collusion in this case are totally unacceptable, and has publicly apologised that this took place.

This case is sadly but one example of the violence and tragedy experienced by so many individuals and families during the Troubles, not just in Northern Ireland but across the United Kingdom and Ireland. It demonstrates the importance of ensuring that all families affected by the Troubles have an opportunity to find out the circumstances of their loved one's death.

We remain committed to working collaboratively with the Irish Government, the Northern Ireland parties, and civic society, including victims groups, in finding and delivering a progressive way forward on legacy to support NI in working towards a more positive future.

Note to Editors:

- Patrick Finucane, a practising lawyer, was murdered in his home in North Belfast on the evening of Sunday 12 February 1989. He was shot 14 times. The attack was carried out by gunmen from a loyalist paramilitary group.
- A number of investigations and reviews have taken place into Mr Finucane's murder. Between September 1989 and April 2003, Lord Stevens, the former Chief Constable of the Metropolitan Police, carried out three investigations into allegations of collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries, the third of which ("Stevens III") was specifically into Mr Finucane's murder. There have been 2 further independent reviews led by legal professionals (Judge Peter Cory in 2004 and Sir Desmond de Silva in 2012) and a further internal review by the PSNI in 2015.
- On 27 February 2019, the Supreme Court handed down its judgment in *Re Finucane* [2019] UKSC 7. The Finucane family had challenged successive Governments' decisions not to conduct a public inquiry in this case. The Supreme Court made a declaration in February 2019 that there had not been an Article 2 compliant inquiry into Mr Finucane's death. At §153 Lord Kerr (for the Court) stated:

I would therefore make a declaration that there has not been an Art.2 compliant inquiry into the death of Patrick Finucane. It does not follow that a public inquiry of the type which the Appellant

seeks must be ordered. It is for the state to decide, in light of the incapacity of Sir Desmond de Silva's review and the inquiries which preceded it to meet the procedural requirement of Art.2, what form of investigation, if indeed any is now feasible, is required in order to meet that requirement

- Article 2 ECHR protects the right to life and includes a procedural obligation on the part of the state to instigate an independent effective official investigation when individuals have been killed as a result of the use of force or in otherwise suspicious circumstances.
- Investigations by the Police Ombudsman are ongoing and on 02 November 2020 the PSNI informed the UK Government that the death of Mr Finucane is shortly due to undergo a process of review, in accordance with their Case Sequencing Model policy. The Chief Constable confirmed that this is expected to begin early in the New Year.
- The Public Statement can be found [here](#)
- The Government Response can be found [here](#)

Published 30 November 2020

Secretary of State outlines way forward in Pat Finucane case

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement.

INTRODUCTION

The murder of Patrick Finucane on 12 February 1989 in front of his family was an appalling crime that has caused tremendous suffering. It occurred during a difficult and dark period of this nation's history which brought untold pain to many families across the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Northern Ireland has made massive strides since the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement to create a vibrant, inclusive and forward-looking future. However, the legacy of the Troubles still hangs like a shadow over society. This Government is determined to work hand in hand with the people of Northern Ireland, from all communities, with victims and survivors, and with our Irish

partners. We want to find a way to bring truth and reconciliation where there is currently hurt, and where too many people continue to suffer due to the absence of information into the circumstances of the deaths of their loved ones.

Mr Speaker, it is plain that the levels of collusion in the Finucane case, made clear by previous investigations, are totally unacceptable. Former Prime Minister, David Cameron, rightly apologised publicly in 2012. I unreservedly reiterate that apology today. I also acknowledge an apology can not undo history, nor can it alleviate the years of pain that the Finucane family have felt. But it is nonetheless right that this Government acknowledges that, at the height of the Troubles, actions were taken that fell far short of what can and should be expected.

Mr Speaker, the murder of Patrick Finucane has been the subject of a considerable number of investigations and reviews, including the 'Stevens 3' investigation and the de Silva review. These investigations led to the conviction of Ken Barrett, a loyalist terrorist who pleaded guilty to the murder.

In February 2019, the Supreme Court made a declaration that the State had not discharged its obligation to conduct an Article 2 compliant investigation into the death of Mr Finucane. That judgment specifically set out that – 'It is for the state to decide...what form of investigation, if indeed any is now feasible, is required in order to meet that requirement'.

It did not order a public inquiry. But in considering all the options open to me to meet the State's obligations under Article 2, I have considered whether a public inquiry is the most appropriate step to address the specific findings of the Court at this time.

DECISION

Mr Speaker, I have today spoken to the Finucane family. I advised them of my decision not to establish a public inquiry at this time. Our public statement, published this afternoon, sets out the considered rationale for this decision, which I will now explain directly to the House.

Mr Speaker, in reaching its conclusion, the Supreme Court identified a number of issues with previous investigations in this case:

Firstly – there was no identification of the officers within the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service who failed to warn Patrick Finucane of known threats to his life in 1981 and 1985, together with the circumstances in which these failures occurred;

Secondly – there was no identification of the RUC officers who, as Desmond De Silva said, "probably did propose" Mr Finucane as a target for loyalist terrorists in December 1988; and

Thirdly – there was no identification of the police source who provided intelligence about Patrick Finucane to Ken Barrett.

The Supreme Court identified these shortcomings and other failures of process. But it did not render the previous reviews and investigations – which resulted in significant findings and information being released into the public domain – as null and void.

The work conducted by, and the findings of, those previous independent investigations and reviews remain valid. The State's Article 2 obligations can be met through a series of processes – taken by independent authorities on the initiative of the State – which cumulatively can establish the facts, identify the perpetrators and hold them to account where sufficient evidence exists.

In June 2019, an independent review of previous investigations was commissioned by my Rt Hon Friend, the member for Staffordshire Moorlands. The first purpose of this review was to gain a clear understanding of what investigative steps had already been taken to identify all individuals of concern. Its second purpose was to understand the actions taken as part of previous investigations in respect of these individuals.

INFORMATION IN PUBLIC DOMAIN

The review was conducted by independent counsel from Northern Ireland. It highlighted that steps had in fact been taken during previous investigations which had not been considered by the Supreme Court – but which were relevant to the issues it identified. For example, it found that a number of officers from the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army's Force Research Unit had been interviewed as part of the Stevens' investigation and that Stevens accepted that there was no direct breach of policy by any individual officer at the time.

As my Rt Hon friend for North Shropshire stated in 2011, accepting that collusion occurred is not sufficient in itself. The UK Government recognises the need to ensure sufficient levels of public scrutiny of criminal investigations and their results.

I am today publishing further information that was considered by the independent counsel in their review since the Supreme Court judgment, some of which has not previously been released into the public domain. This includes information pertaining to a Police Service of Northern Ireland review conducted in 2015.

PSNI REVIEW PROCESS AND OONI INVESTIGATION

Mr Speaker, as set out in the 2015 police review, a number of issues were referred to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland in 2016 and remain subject to investigation.

In addition, the Legacy Investigation Branch of the PSNI informed my Department on 2 November 2020 that Patrick Finucane's case is shortly due to undergo a process of review, in accordance with the priorities set out in their Case Sequencing Model. The Chief Constable confirmed that this is expected to begin early in the New Year.

To be clear – this is a purely operational police matter. The UK Government rightly has no role whatsoever in determining how or when the police deal with its outstanding legacy caseload. However, the fact that a decision on a police review is due shortly is an important development and was a factor in determining the next steps in this case. Critically, a review would consider whether further investigative steps could be taken in this case and whether the PSNI should do so. These were key elements of the Supreme Court judgment.

It is, quite properly, for the Chief Constable of the PSNI to determine the precise scope and format of any review in accordance with their own priorities and review procedures. And the police have indicated that they expect that any review would need to be conducted independently of the PSNI.

Such a process, in addition to the ongoing investigations being conducted by the Police Ombudsman, could play an important role in addressing the issues identified by the Supreme Court.

FUTURE INQUIRY

Mr Speaker – I want to be clear. I am not taking the possibility of a public inquiry off the table at this stage. It is important that we allow the PSNI and Police Ombudsman processes to move forward, and that we avoid the risk of prejudicing any emerging conclusions from that work.

I will consider all options available to me to meet the Government's obligations.

CONCLUSION

Mr Speaker, I assure the House that this decision has been taken following careful consideration of the facts, the findings of the Supreme Court judgment, the outcome of the independent counsel review, and the United Kingdom's obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Mr Speaker, this Government has demonstrated that, when the public interest requires it, we will establish public inquiries to look at potential failings by Government or state bodies. As we have done in the case of the Manchester bombing.

In this instance, I believe it is in the public interest to allow the police and Ombudsman processes to proceed, before taking a decision on whether the State's Article 2 obligations have been discharged, or whether further steps are required.

Mr Speaker, this case is sadly just one example of the violence and tragedy experienced by so many individuals and families across Northern Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom, and Ireland during the Troubles. That is why this Government remains committed to dealing with the legacy of the past in its entirety.

We are determined to get this right, working closely with communities. This

is vital so that society in Northern Ireland can look beyond its divisive past and towards a shared future.

I commend this statement to the House.