



UK Visas & Immigration

UKVI CUSTOMER ENQUIRY SERVICE – CUSTOMER AND PARTNER Q&A

1. What is changing?

Contacting UKVI from within the UK and overseas is changing to a single supplier – Sitel UK. The service will be complemented by in-house UKVI teams who will deal with escalations and queries.

All customer contacts will be managed by the new supplier, with the exception of sponsors, some asylum calls and the Business & Educators Helpdesk.

2. Why is the service changing?

The external provision of Contact Centre Services is currently delivered through two contracts with two suppliers, Hinduja Global Solutions (HGS) and Sitel. HGS handle international enquiries whilst Sitel handle overflow from UKVI contact centres. Both contracts expire at the end of May.

The changes have been to reduce costs and encourage customers to 'self-serve' by using information and guidance on www.gov.uk

3. When will this happen?

The new service starts on 1 June 2017.

4. How will the service be different?

The main differences are:

- All phone numbers and opening hours for contacting us from outside the UK will change.
- The number of languages offered for those contacting us from outside the UK is being reduced to eight.
- Customers contacting UKVI by e-mail from outside the UK will be charged.

Customers will be encouraged to use www.gov.uk to access information and guidance.

5. What are the charges?

From 1 June 2017 the charges for customers contacting us from outside the UK are:

- £1.37 per minute for calls to the helpline in addition to the standard network charge. This is unchanged from existing charges.
- £5.48 per e-mail.

The £5.48 charge per e-mail includes the initial email enquiry from the customer plus any follow-up emails to and from the contact centre relating to the same enquiry.

6. How can customers and agents contact UKVI from 1 June?

If they are unable to find the answer on www.gov.uk, UK-based customers and agents can contact UKVI by phone, and for reporting technical problems, via e-mail. Those contacting us from outside the UK can also contact us by telephone and e-mail but will be charged for these services.

7. Are your phone numbers for contacting you from within the UK changing?

No.

8. Why has the number of languages been reduced?

Around 80% of customers who contact UKVI from outside the UK choose to do so in English. The languages we will no longer offer amount to just 4% of the total volume of calls and e-mails.

9. Why are phone calls and e-mails chargeable for overseas customers and not for those within the UK?

The UK government believes it is right that those who use and benefit directly from the UK immigration system make an appropriate contribution towards meeting the costs.

Those who use the services from outside the UK are predominantly prospective customers and in many cases no application will be made and no application fee collected. Customers who use the services from within the UK will often already have an immigration status with UKVI and have already paid an immigration fee.

10. Can customers and agents contact UKVI without paying?

From within the UK there is no charge for contacting us by e-mail, whilst phone calls are charged at the caller's standard network rate. Customers and agents who contact us from outside the UK will be charged their standard network rate plus £1.37 per minute. Our web site www.gov.uk will be the main source of information and advice and is free of charge. British Embassies are unable to assist with visa related enquiries.

11. How will you charge customers who want to send an e-mail?

Customers will actually send a 'web message' via the internet rather than an e-mail from Outlook or other e-mail account such as G-mail. Before customers type and send their message they will need to pay by credit or debit card.

12. How will the charge be paid?

Phone calls will be paid for as they are now, via credit or debit card. E-mails will be paid for by entering their card details prior to submitting their query. The charge per e-mail includes the initial query from the customer plus any follow-up emails to and from the contact centre relating to the same enquiry.

Customers who do not have access to a credit or debit card may choose to use a trusted third party such as an agent or sponsor.

13. How will UKVI handle those who try to find answers to their questions via other means? For example by phoning an embassy directly, or using social media.

UKVI is aware there is a risk of calls being displaced and will be working in particular with FCO and colleagues in UKVI communications, to ensure customers are signposted to UKVI's contact centre and guidance on www.gov.uk

14. How many languages will be available on the phone helpline and e-mail service?

The service within the UK is available in English only. The service for those outside the UK will be available in eight languages: English plus Arabic, Cantonese, French, Hindi, Mandarin, Russian and Spanish. There will be one telephone number for each language.

15. How do customers contact UKVI if they don't speak any of the eight languages?

Customers may choose to use a trusted third party or agent who can speak one of the eight languages offered.

16. What times will the service be available?

The service for customers inside the UK is unchanged and will be:

- 9.00am - 4:45pm Monday-Thursday
- 9.00am - 4.30pm Friday

Enquiry type	Number
General	0300 123 2241
Nationality / Euro	0300 123 2253
Landlords	0300 069 9799
Preventing Illegal Working	0300 123 5434

The new telephone numbers and opening hours for those outside the UK are below and reflect standard business hours where possible.

Language	Number	Opening hours (British Standard Time)
English	+44 (0)203 481 1736	Monday-Friday, 24 hours
Arabic	+44 (0)203 481 1737	Sunday-Thursday, 05.00-13.00
Cantonese	+44 (0)203 481 1739	Monday-Friday, 01.00-09.00
French	+44 (0)203 481 1740	Monday-Friday, 09.00-17.00
Hindi	+44 (0)203 481 1741	Monday-Friday, 04.00-12.00
Mandarin	+44 (0)203 481 1742	Monday-Friday, 01.00-09.00
Russian	+44 (0)203 481 1743	Monday-Friday, 06.00-14.00
Spanish	+44 (0)203 481 1738	Monday-Friday, 13.00-01.00

17. How will UKVI handle enquiries when a customer contacts UKVI relating to an issue which is not their fault or out of their control? Will they still need to pay to contact UKVI?

We are not intending to make any changes to the current process for customers who are outside the UK. If a customer considers their application or refund request has not been processed within the service standards, and they subsequently have to contact UKVI, they can raise a complaint and ask for the charges to be refunded.

18. I am a sponsor that has subscribed to the premium customer service. Does this change affect me?

No, the service provided to sponsors by the premium customer service teams remains unchanged. Sponsors should continue to raise queries with their licence manager in the usual way.

19. Why is the international service chargeable for phone calls and e-mail?

The UK government believes that those who benefit directly from the UK immigration system make an appropriate contribution towards meeting the costs.

The Home Office also needs to reduce the overall level of funding for the immigration system. This can be achieved by reducing costs and increasing resources generated from immigration fees income.

Information to help customers make their immigration application is available for free on www.gov.uk. This guidance and the application process has been recently improved.

20. What benefits will the new contract provide?

Sitel has a wealth of experience in supporting customers to ensure they have the right information and help them to resolve their queries. This is done by signposting to existing sources of information on www.gov.uk or by directing enquiries to someone who can assist. Sitel are also working with UKVI to develop online self-service tools such as being able to check the status of an application.