



Global InSight

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Overview

The UK Home Office has launched two new customer services: a passport return service for Tier 2 intracompany migrants and a Tier 4 premium customer service for educational establishments.

Travel eased for overseas workers in the UK

Non-European overseas workers in the UK who are extending their leave after 22 July 2013, will have the benefit of testing the Home Office's pilot passport return service.

This seemingly minor change to the Home Office process will bring substantial benefits to workers currently in the UK. Passports previously had to be left with the Home Office while the visa extension application process was underway, and lengthy processing times meant that some applicants were effectively prevented from traveling for long periods of time.

After receiving feedback from UK sponsors that this was harming business, the passport return service was revised to allow Tier 2 intracompany applicants to have their passports returned within 7-10 days of receipt by the Home Office.

This means applicants may continue to travel during their visa extension application process – although they still need to have valid leave that covers the period during which they intend to travel outside the UK. Care must be taken not to travel if current leave will expire before returning to the UK.

Although this pilot scheme is limited to those holding intracompany visas, the Home Office has commented that, if successful, it will consider extending the service to other in-country applicants.

Tier 4 premium customer service – The Home Office has announced a new premium customer service for Tier 4 sponsors.

This new premium customer service will be offered to sponsors in three stages:

- Tuesday, 23 July 2013, for account management service pilot sponsors
- Monday, 2 September 2013, for publicly funded highly trusted sponsors (HTS)
- Monday, 4 November 2013, for all other HTS

Tier 4 sponsors will be eligible to apply for the premium customer service if they have HTS status, have not been issued a civil penalty in the last three years, and have paid in full any civil penalties issued before that.

The Home Office stated that the new premium customer service will allow educational establishments to provide an "enhanced level of customer service to international students." Benefits will include a dedicated account manager within the premium customer service team, as well as priority treatment on all matters relating to HTS' responsibilities as sponsors of overseas students.

The new premium customer service is optional with an annual fee of £8,000. Further information on the new premium customer service and its benefits can be found at premium customer service for sponsors.

URL: <http://tax.cmail5.com/t/r-i-bdrtlz-l-j/>

Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union (EU) – The Republic of Croatia joined the EU on 1 July 2013, making it the 28th member state of the EU. Croatian nationals are entitled to enter and reside in other EU member states for the first three months of residence on an unrestricted basis.

After that initial three-month stay, the UK has introduced restricted rights for Croatian nationals for a transitional period of five years. Other members of the European Economic Area have also introduced restrictions, which usually require Croatian nationals to register or apply for work authorization with the host country prior to commencing employment.

In the UK (unless an exemption applies), Croatian nationals will require a Certificate of Sponsorship assigned to them, and then a further application must be submitted for a Worker Authorisation Registration Certificate (WARC). Croatian nationals will not be able to start work until the WARC is issued. If similar WARC applications for Bulgarian and Romanian nationals are any indication of processing times, employment start dates for Croatian nationals could be delayed.

Exemptions are listed on the Home Office website, but include Croatian nationals who, on 30 June 2013, had already been working with permission in the UK for a continuous period of at least 12 months.

Deloitte's view

The passport return service is positive and welcome news for intracompany applicants who need to travel during the visa extension process. However, care must be taken by such applicants who travel if their current leave will expire before returning to the UK. The consequences for those applicants who do not return to the UK before their current visas expire are potentially serious. Some applicants with expired visas may be unable to make a new Tier 2 visa application for 12 months due to the current exclusion period – a potentially disastrous result. Appropriate checks will be needed to manage potential risks.

— Margaret Burton (London)
Director
Deloitte United Kingdom
+44 (20) 7007 1506
maburton@deloitte.co.uk

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