

# News story: New UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services centres open

From today (Friday 2 November), people applying for work or study visas, settlement or citizenship from within the UK will be able to make appointments to use new, modernised and efficient service centres.

The first centre will open in Manchester on Friday 9 November 2018 and will be followed by new centres in Birmingham, Glasgow, Cardiff, Belfast and Croydon. In addition, there will be 50 enhanced service centres nationally, which will be available to customers for a charge, and a premium lounge located in London.

The modernised service will mean that most people applying in the UK will be able to submit their biometric information including photos, fingerprints, and signatures as well as their supporting evidence at a single appointment.

The current system requires an individual to make an application, send their documents to UKVI, who retain them until the application is completed, and enrol their biometrics separately.

To help improve peace of mind for customers using the centres, it will now be possible, in the majority of cases, to take digital copies of evidence meaning that people won't have to hand over important documents, such as passports, while their applications are processed.

The Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

We are committed to delivering a modern, convenient and easy to use service for UKVI customers.

These new service centres located across the country are a key part of our vision for a system that supports its customers and provides peace of mind whilst they are making an application.

The majority of people will now complete their applications online via an intuitive and easy to use system before attending one of the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services centres (UKVCAS), which will be delivered by commercial partner Sopra Steria.

Customers will be led through an online application process making it clear what they need to do, what supporting evidence they will need and where they need to go to complete their application.

Free appointments will be available for everyone, however, customers will also have the option to purchase added value services such as same day

appointments and [On Demand services](#).

In addition, there will also be 7 dedicated Service and Support Centres (SSC), which will transform the experience for people who need more support with their applications.

Experienced frontline Home Office staff will help those who need extra support to better understand their circumstances and if necessary, take the appropriate safeguarding action.

These SSCs will be in Belfast, Cardiff, Croydon, Glasgow, Liverpool, Sheffield and Solihull, and will open in January 2019.

[Further information on these services](#).

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## [News story: A Joint Effort – Integrating Advanced Materials onto Military Platforms](#)

This forthcoming Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) competition is looking for innovative joining technologies that enable the use of advanced materials and/or designs on military platforms in land, sea and air environments. This is a parallel call between the UK and Australia.

Many different materials are within scope, including joining combinations of composites, metals, ceramics and polymers. Potential joining solutions should provide enhanced capability through one of the following:

- improved performance through use of new material combinations or structural designs
- improved durability of structures through better joints
- improved ability to maintain joints through the life of the military platform

Phase 1 of the campaign will have £500k available to fund multiple proposals. This campaign will be supported in Australia by the Next Generation Technologies Fund in a parallel competition. It is anticipated that additional funding will be available for further phases.

A competition [event](#) will be held on 28 November 2018 in central London.

This event will allow you to find out more about the competition, as well as meet the DASA team, technical experts from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, front-line users and potential collaborators. There will also be a chance to book one-to-one sessions with the project team.

If you are interested in attending this event, please [register for an entry ticket](#). Places are limited and so please register as early as possible.

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## [News story: Progress on health and wellbeing in the Civil Service](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content] Blog by Jonathan Jones, Permanent Secretary of the Government Legal Department, and Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Champion

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## [News story: What support is available for my small business?](#)

### **Access finance available to support small businesses**

[Start up Loans](#) of up to £25,000 can give you a much-needed boost if you're just starting out or looking to scale up. Or take a look at the [British Business Bank's Finance Hub](#) for more finance options for smaller businesses.

If you are an entrepreneur or small business located in the North of England,

the [Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund](#) could provide the funding you need to help your business realise its potential.

## **Growing ideas**

[Innovate UK](#) supports businesses to develop and realise the potential of new ideas through funding and research collaboration. Their [Knowledge Transfer Network](#) also connects you to expertise, finance and markets to commercialise your innovation.

## **Attract investment and diverse talent**

[Venture capital schemes](#) can help you raise money for your company. Our 4 schemes offer tax reliefs to investors, designed to help your business grow by attracting investment.

[Start-up visas](#) and [Innovator visas](#) make it easier for you to access international talent. Tech Nation offers a dedicated [Tech Nation](#) visa to bring international tech talent to the UK.

## **Get support and insight for your tech business**

[Tech Nation](#) provides programmes to support UK tech businesses, as well as access to free online courses to build digital skills.

Tech Nation's [Data Commons for UK Tech](#) provides a detailed view of the UK's digital economy and is a rich source of market intelligence and insight.

## **Become more competitive by making a few simple changes**

[Be the Business](#) provides practical tools and resources and can help small businesses across the UK supercharge productivity.

## **Get in touch with your local Growth Hub**

[Your Local Growth Hub](#) can connect you to the right business advice and support at a local and national level, no matter what size or sector you're operating in. This is available in England only.

## **Get advice on selling overseas**

If you are a small business invested in or currently selling overseas visit [GREAT](#) for guidance on exporting, access live export opportunities, find an online marketplace to sell your products overseas and access the right finance and insurance to help you win vital international contracts.

## **Make tax more straightforward**

We've made some fundamental changes to the way the tax system works. If you are a VAT-registered business the [Making Tax Digital service](#) will help make sure you get your tax right through the keeping of digital records and using software to submit your VAT return.

## **Take on an apprentice**

Grow your own skilled workforce you need by taking on an apprentice. You can get [government funding](#) to cover some of the cost of training and assessing an apprentice if you're in England.

The government has recently launched a [new website](#) with details about how businesses can make the most of our apprenticeship reforms.

## **Apply for government contracts**

Our [Contracts Finder](#) lets you search for information about government and agency contracts worth over £10,000 and explore information on previous tenders to understand what opportunities there might be for your business.

If you're having any issues with not being paid on time, the [Small Business Commissioner](#) can provide advice on late and unfair payment, to help you take action and work to resolve disputes.

The free Business Support Helpline can also help you find the right advice and support at all stages of the business journey – whether you're starting out, growing or looking to stay ahead. Find contact details for [your area](#).

## **Business Representative Organisations (BROs) and UK Trade Associations**

Business Representative Organisations are set up to help your business. Each sector has its own Organisation that you can search for online.

## **Prepare your business for EU exit**

The UK will leave the EU on 29 March 2019. Leaving the EU means your business may need to prepare for change.

You can find up to date [information](#) to help you understand how leaving the EU may affect your business and what you can do to get ready.