

# Government appoints new interim Small Business Commissioner

Mr King will head the independent Office of the Small Business Commissioner in Birmingham. It was launched in December 2017 to ensure fair payment practices for Britain's small businesses and support them in resolving their payment disputes with larger businesses and bring about culture change. To date, it has recovered over £6.5 million owed to small businesses.

Mr King was Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Credit Management (CICM), which is responsible for administering the voluntary Prompt Payment Code. Signatories to the Code sign up to pay 95% of invoices in 60 days, with an ambition to move toward 30-day payment terms. Mr King will take responsibility for transferring the administration of the Code in his new role at the Office of the Small Business Commissioner. This will fulfil the commitment made by government in June last year to bring late payments measures under one umbrella.

The government will shortly recruit for a permanent Small Business Commissioner and has committed to strengthening the powers of the Small Business Commissioner to hold to account the minority of larger businesses who fail to make payments on time. New powers could include compelling information and disclosure of payment terms and practices, imposing financial penalties or binding payment plans on large businesses found to have unfair payment practices.

Small Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

In Philip, small businesses will have a real champion with a proven track record of tackling late payments. This is an important time for the Office of the Small Business Commissioner as we seek to strengthen its powers and Philip is absolutely the right person to lead it at this time.

Philip King said:

I am delighted to have been appointed interim Commissioner and given the privilege of directly supporting the government in helping small businesses to prosper and grow.

Recognising the needs of businesses both large and small is an essential part of resolving potential conflict. I would encourage small businesses to engage with the Commissioner's office at the earliest opportunity.

## **Philip King biography**

In a career spanning 40 years, Philip has held senior credit management roles in the high-tech and communication sectors, in distribution and retail, including spells at Olivetti and Vodafone. He was appointed Director General of the Institute of Credit Management (ICM) in 2005, and later Chief Executive, and was behind the Institute's drive to become a Chartered body (the CICM) in 2015.

## **About the Small Business Commissioner**

The Small Business Commissioner considers complaints from small businesses (that is businesses with fewer than 50 staff) about payment problems they are encountering concerning their larger business customers (with over 50 employees), making non-binding recommendations on how the parties should resolve their disputes.

### **Additional information**

This interim appointment is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments and has been made in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

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## **Courts and tribunals service centres to pilot longer hours**

- Service centres will now operate 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday
- They will open on Saturdays for the first time
- More than 500,000 queries answered in the first year

Anyone who has a query about divorce, probate or social security and child support can now receive help from dedicated staff between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 2pm on Saturdays. Previously, the service centres were only open on weekdays between 9am and 5pm.

The extended opening hours are part of a pilot to gauge the demand for services outside normal working hours, and whether opening for longer provides an improved service experience for the public.

Justice Minister, Chris Philp MP, said

These centres are already making a real difference to how we administer justice with more than 500,000 queries being answered in the last year alone.

Opening them for longer will ensure people receive the support they need without disrupting their busy lives. We want to make sure the court system provides the best service for those who use it.

Service centres were introduced as part of HMCTS's £1bn programme to reform courts and tribunals. They act as the administrative backbone of the justice system by bringing a number of services together under one roof to offer an improved and more consistent experience for victims, witnesses, and anyone who uses the court and tribunals system.

The first two service centres opened in Stoke and Birmingham in January 2019 with a third due to open in Loughborough in Spring.

### **Notes to editors:**

- HMCTS will collect information and analyse data throughout the course of the pilot on contact volumes, types of call and why people were calling. It will also conduct surveys to assess feedback received from staff.
- At the end of the pilot the evidence gathered will be assessed to determine whether service centres should proceed with extended opening hours.

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## **35th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Sweden**



The Universal Periodic Review takes place in Geneva.

The United Kingdom welcomes Sweden's long-standing commitment to promoting and protecting human rights. We commend Sweden's extensive contribution to human rights domestically and internationally, commitment to advancing women's and girls' rights, and efforts to ensure media freedom.

We encourage Sweden to maintain efforts to combat discrimination and hate crimes against minority groups, and welcome its adoption of a national plan

to combat racism and hate crime.

We recommend that Sweden:

1. Advise authorities to take further measures to ensure human trafficking offenders are investigated and prosecuted effectively, including through provision of sufficient funding to units investigating trafficking.
2. Adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections.
3. Adopt legislation limiting the time an individual can be placed in pre-trial detention.

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## [Ofsted consults on changes to inspection framework for teacher training](#)

The [draft framework has been developed to align with Ofsted's new education inspection framework \(EIF\)](#) and the Department for Education's standards and frameworks for ITT and early career teachers. It has been tailored to the different phases of trainee education, including early years, primary, secondary and further education. And, like the EIF, it looks less at outcomes data and focuses more on how effectively trainees are prepared to teach a well-sequenced curriculum.

The proposed new framework is the result of extensive research, including pilot visits to ITE partnerships, and experience gained over the past 26 years.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, said:

While no new teacher is completely ready when they first step into a classroom, high-quality teacher training gives them a solid grounding so that they can begin inspiring the next generation.

We want to make sure our ITE inspections provide the best measure of the quality of education and training that trainees get. We've designed what we hope is a clear and user-friendly framework that

assesses the things that matter most.

The new framework reflects the shift in focus of our education inspections from outcomes to the substance of education. It removes aspects of inspection that do not genuinely assess the quality of teacher training. This will help make sure ITE partnerships' are focused on the things that have the greatest impact on trainees' education and, ultimately, children and young people.

Ofsted is seeking views on the draft framework and inspection handbook. The main proposals include:

- introducing a new 'quality of education and training' judgement, with a focus on the ITE curriculum, to replace two current judgements
- applying a new methodology for gathering inspection evidence
- a single visit, four-day inspection, announced three days in advance
- short and long telephone conversations as part of inspection preparation
- spring and summer term inspections only

The consultation is open for 10 weeks and will close on 3 April. Ofsted is seeking the views of a wide range of respondents, and would like to hear from trainee and newly qualified teachers, ITE partnerships, headteachers and other employers.

Subject to the consultation, the new ITE framework will be published in summer 2020, introduced from September 2020, with inspections beginning in January 2021.

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## [Apply for a UK visa in Bishkek via Teleperformance Ltd in 2020](#)



You can apply for a UK visa in Bishkek via the occasional visa application service operated by the UK Government's commercial partner Teleperformance Ltd. In 2019, the temporary enrolment centre will operate on a monthly basis throughout the year and on a fortnightly basis between April and August. The

dates are

Month	Dates
January	16 Jan
February	14 Feb
March	19 Mar
April	16 Apr 30 Apr
May	07 May 21 May
June	04 Jun 18 Jun
July	02 Jul 16 Jul
August	06 Aug 20 Aug
September	17 Sep
October	15 Oct
November	19 Nov
December	10 Dec

The Temporary Enrolment Location (TEL) will be at the Hyatt Regency Bishkek, 191 Abdrahmanov street, Bishkek.

In order to use this service it is essential to book an online appointment no less than 24 hours in advance. There is a charge of £59 to use the Visa Application Centre in Bishkek. This will be in addition to the visa fee and will be charged at the point of booking the online appointment and will cover the cost of providing the application submission facilities in Bishkek. Your appointment at this Visa Application Centre will not be honoured if this fee is not paid.

Once the UK visa application is submitted in Bishkek the completed application, which will include all supporting documentation and the customer's passport, will be forwarded to the Decision Making Centre in Istanbul by commercial courier, where they will be considered by Entry Clearance staff. Decisions and documents will then be returned direct to the customer by courier. Processing target times will remain unchanged and TEL staff will play no part in the decision making process.

Alternatively, visa applicants are still able to apply at the free-to-use Visa Application Centre in Almaty, which is open 5 days per week.

The British Embassy in Bishkek is unable to advise on visa matters. Any callers seeking advice will be directed to the above-mentioned guidance.

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Last updated 27 January 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 27 January 2020

We have updated the 2020 dates.

2. 15 January 2019

2019 Visa Application Centre opening dates in Bishkek

3. 11 December 2017

Updated for 2018

4. 15 August 2017

TEL dates for August 2017

5. 14 July 2017

First published.