

# GMS Flash Alert

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## United Kingdom - Enhancements to Registered Traveller Service, New Sponsor Priority Service

The U.K. government has announced that it has extended the U.K.'s Registered Traveller Service from currently nine countries to a further 16 countries.<sup>1</sup> Nationals of these countries are able to utilize U.K. and European Union (EU) entry lanes and e-passport gates at various ports of entry and are not required to complete landing cards, thus contributing to faster entry into the United Kingdom.

The government has also introduced a priority service for employers that hold a U.K. licence to sponsor work visas for non-European Economic Area (EEA) national employees, allowing them to apply for faster processing of some sponsor duties and related requests, such as further allocations of Certificates of Sponsorship.<sup>2</sup>

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### WHY THIS MATTERS

Since the U.K. voted to leave the EU in June 2016, the U.K. government has steadily been pointing out that the country is open for business. This widening of the Registered Traveller Service suggests the U.K. government wishes to make the U.K. an attractive destination for regular business visitors and tourists. The extension of the scheme will mean visitors will spend less time waiting (in queues, filling out forms, etc.) upon entering the U.K. and more time on those activities and pursuits that concern them.

Registered sponsors are businesses that are authorised to sponsor the work visas of their employees in the United Kingdom. They must make requests online to administer sponsorship. Many sponsor requests can take up to 18 weeks to receive approval from the U.K. government. The new priority service will be useful for businesses that are willing to pay for faster service and is an extension of the U.K. government's existing policy of charging a premium for swifter processing of various types of immigration applications.

# Registered Traveller Service

## Background

The Registered Traveller Service was fully introduced in April 2015 for those aged 18 and over from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and the USA. In January 2016, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan were added to the scheme.

The service is available at the following airports: Heathrow, Gatwick, London City, Stansted, Luton, Manchester, Birmingham, East Midlands, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Eurostar terminals in Paris, Brussels and Lille are also part of the scheme.

Eligible visitors must:

- be at least 18 years of age,
- have a U.K. visa or have visited the U.K. at least four times in the last 24 months, and
- have an eligible passport.

The cost for one year's membership is £70 and applications can be completed online.<sup>3</sup>

## Newly-Added Countries

The scheme has now been extended to include Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Brunei, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Malaysia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay.<sup>4</sup>

The U.K. government recently announced that the scheme will also be extended to certain categories of travelers from India in the future.

# U.K. Sponsor Licensing: Priority Service Process

## Eligible Requests

The requests which qualify for the sponsor licensing priority service are:

- approval of the annual Certificate of Sponsorship allocation;
- approval of any additional Certificate of Sponsorship allocation;
- changing an Authorisation Officer;
- adding a new Level 1 user.

This service is only available to Tier 2 and 5 A-rated sponsor licence holders.

## Availability

A maximum of 20 priority service requests are available Monday to Friday between 9am and 4pm. If there is no availability on the day of the request, a new request will have to be submitted the following working day.

## Requests to Use Sponsor Licensing Priority Service

Sponsors will need to make the original request for the required service via the online sponsor management system (SMS). They will then receive a telephone number they need to ring to check availability and pay a fee of £200 if the request is successful. Only one request can be made per call.

Submitted requests will generally be processed within five working days. Approval will be notified to the Authorising Officer or representative e-mail address registered on the sponsor licence. There is no guarantee the request will be approved.

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## KPMG NOTE

According to the U.K. government, visitors from the countries that have just been added to the Registered Traveller Service spent nearly £1bn in the U.K. last year, and trade with these countries is worth several times this every year to the U.K. economy. Making visiting the U.K. for nationals of these countries as easy as possible should benefit U.K. businesses as well as the wider tourism industry.

While sponsors may feel that the sponsor licence fee, fee per sponsored migrant, visa application fee, and NHS surcharge should entitle them to have urgent requests processed within a reasonable time-frame – and in any case faster than 18 weeks – it is encouraging to see that the U.K. government has finally acted on business's feedback that faster turnaround times are needed to foster more efficient and expeditious service of their U.K. operations with the personnel they require when they require them.

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## FOOTNOTES:

- 1 See the 19 November 2016 press release "[Faster entry at the border now available to Uruguayans.](#)"
- 2 See the webpage entitled "[Guidance: Tier 2 and 5 Priority change of circumstance service.](#)"
- 3 See the Registered Traveller service [webpage](#).
- 4 Ibid.

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## Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional\* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in the United Kingdom.

The KPMG Legal Services – Immigration Team has a wealth of experience in transactional, advisory, and compliance assurance services. We will be able to advise your business in relation to practical considerations in light of the above changes, as well as what this means for your long-term recruitment and compliance strategies.

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*\* Please note the KPMG International member firm in the United States does not provide immigration services.*

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