



UK Visas and Immigration
Asylum Operations
Lunar House
40 Wellesley Road
Croydon
CR9 2BY

www.gov.uk/home-office

5 November 2020

Dear Stakeholders

As you will be aware, the Government has introduced new national restrictions in England as of today for a period of four weeks. In addition, Scotland has moved to a five-tier system of COVID-19 restrictions, whilst Wales and Northern Ireland are in the middle of temporary lockdowns measures. We are mindful that all substantive asylum interviews were suspended in March 2020 due to COVID-19 and restarted at the end of July 2020 and as such, this has resulted in claimants waiting longer than we would like for their cases to be progressed. We know that this delay can be worrying for them.

We have considered the risks associated with maintaining operations and have concluded that our temporary surge intake units and asylum interview operations will continue in all of our regions – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This is because Asylum and immigration services and interviews are classed as critical services in Public Health England, The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 4) Regulations 2020, Part 2 – Exception 4 (f): to access critical public services, including —

- (i) social services;
- (ii) services provided by the Department for Work and Pensions;
- (iii) services provided to victims (including victims of crime);
- (iv) asylum and immigration services and interviews.

Whilst we would prefer for claimants to utilise our existing face-to-face/video conferencing interviewing infrastructure, we understand that there will be situations where it may not be possible and/or appropriate to do so. Attending an asylum interview is important to the overall progression to decide claims and the invitation to interview letter has been amended to provide further guidance to claimants in situations that they feel unwell to attend or are self isolating on the date of the interview (see attached, along with current intake appointment letter).

We understand that there may be concerns regarding the health and safety of claimants attending our offices, however, we can assure you that Safe Systems of Work have been enhanced as a result of COVID-19 and all our sites have COVID secure measures in place, including additional cleaning regimes for public areas including our interview suites.

At this stage, I would like to thank you for your continued co-operation and understanding and would welcome any views you have on the above, as well as any issues you may anticipate.

If any specific problems arise during the next few weeks, please, feel free to let me know about these at the following e-mail address: AsylumOpsStakeholder@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nadeem Nabi', written in a cursive style.

Mr Nadeem Nabi
Head of Customer Experience