



UK Visas and Immigration
Asylum Operations
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Dear All,

Following on from communications we shared with you on 22 September 2020 and as discussed at the Decision Making National Asylum Stakeholder Forum (NASF) on 29 September 2020, we are writing to update you on the Proof of Concept and use of a third-party supplier to conduct asylum interviews. This update also covers questions raised via the Asylum Operations Stakeholder Inbox. I would like to start with an apology for the delay in responding to your questions.

Asylum Operations have previously advised that we were looking to scope out and test the concept of using a third-party supplier to support asylum interviews in order to deliver support as a temporary, short term measure. At this stage we are only exploring the potential feasibility. Once the Proof of Concept phase is complete, we will evaluate and continue to engage with external stakeholders on any future developments.

To confirm, the Proof of Concept is likely to last initially around eight weeks, with controlled mobilisation of testing with our external supplier. The Proof of Concept phase will help establish viability, whilst providing an opportunity to identify process efficiencies and learning for any further development.

In terms of training and support, we have developed a bespoke package that has been designed specifically to meet the needs of those officers from the third-party supplier. This is to ensure officers are fully equipped to carry out the role, with the training package being delivered by experienced Asylum Operations' training staff. The training also includes mock interviews and feedback on performance and techniques.

Following this, an experienced team selected from within Asylum Operations, will provide ongoing support to the officers, ensuring quality control throughout the Proof of Concept phase. The team will be a key part of the process, working collaboratively with the officers throughout the Proof of Concept, to assure asylum interviews are completed to a high standard.

Prior to interviews, we will look to triage cases for suitability in advance, removing any vulnerable cases, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASCs) and minors. Interviews will be conducted using our existing video conferencing technology, supported by Home Office interpreters where needed. Alongside the practical support, quality will be continually assured in the same way as other asylum interviews. We have also obtained agreement for second line

assurance quality checks on video interviewing and have asked this is extended to include the Proof of Concept cases.

Once we have completed the Proof of Concept exercise and conducted an evaluation, we will collate findings, conclusions and recommendations and will provide you with an update. The evaluation on the success of the Proof of Concept will include conducting a full evaluation on the quality of interviews and a 'lessons learned' exercise.

As previously mentioned, the Proof of Concept is aimed to help us in bring balance back to our systems following the Covid-19 outbreak, increase interview output and ultimately, provide our customers with an improved experience by avoiding lengthy delays to interviews and decisions. We hope that you will support us in our approach as we commit to keeping you updated as the Proof of Concept develops.

If you have any questions on the above, please direct these to AsylumOpsStakeholder@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

David Draper
Acting Head of Asylum Operations