

Nationality Checking Service at Registration Services

1. Name of lead officer responsible for completing the initial assessment:

Nathan Pritchard – Head of Customer Services & Performance

2. Name of 'policy'/service under review

The Nationality Checking Service.

a. New or proposed policy/service? No

b. Existing policy/service? Yes

3. What is the aim, objective or purpose of the policy/service?

The Nationality Checking Service (NCS) is a partnership between the Home Office UK Border Agency and local councils in England and Wales. This partnership allows those people applying for British citizenship to make their applications, in person, at their local council offices.

Registration Services started the NCS appointment service in September 2008 and offer NCS appointments for a small fee to help simplify the citizenship application process. Applicants will be asked to bring the following documents to the appointment:

- Completed application form(s) – the application forms are available from the Register Office or from or downloaded from the [UK Border Agency](#).
- Supporting documents.

The NCS adviser will check the following:

- Application form(s) have been completed correctly.
- The supporting documents will be checked and certified by the NCS adviser, so that applicants can keep the originals. Original documents must be provided.
- All completed and checked applications will then be sent to the Home Office by special delivery.

This is not a fast track application service for Citizenship applications.

This is an optional service and other agents are available e.g. Solicitors, dealing directly with the Home Office. There are a number of Councils throughout England and Wales offering this service and you can find a list of all participating authorities on the [Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner \(OISC\) website](#).

Applicants must fulfil the following criterion before making an application for British citizenship:

- Residential qualification - the applicant will need to have resided in this country for 5 years (as a single applicant). Alternatively, for 3 years if they are the spouse or civil partner of a British Citizen. In this case the applicant must have been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain or Enter by the time that they make their application.
- If the applicant is applying under the 5 year rule they must have held Indefinite Leave to Remain or Enter for at least 12 months. The ILR stamp should be in their passport, travel document, or on a letter from the Home Office.
- Knowledge of Life in the UK - the applicant must have passed the Life in the UK test or hold an ESOL qualification with a Citizenship element.

The customer's application will still be assessed by the Home Office. But by using the checking service they can be sure that their application will be complete in every detail, which will make it more likely that it will be processed more quickly.

4. Is there evidence or reason to believe that this policy/service could have higher or lower impact on any of the following groups?

Equality Strand	Will there be an impact?	High/Low impact
Age	No	Low
People from minority ethnic backgrounds	Yes	High
Woman	No	Low
Disabled people	No	Low
Faith or religious belief	No	Low
Sexual Orientation	No	Low

5. Data

- a. What data have you been using to assess the impact of this policy? (Please indicate for **each** of the equality groups listed above). It is also important to specify which equality groups have been consulted as part of this assessment.

The primary function of the Nationality Checking is to simplify the nationality application process and to help reduce unnecessary delays in the process of applying for British Citizenship. Therefore the only Equality Strand which the NCS checking service has a direct impact on is 'People from minority ethnic backgrounds' strand. The NCS service at Registration Services has ensured that processes are in place to ensure that the service that is provided to applicants underpins these objectives.

The [UK Border Agency](#) website states the following;

“Last year only 2% of applications made this way were unsuccessful. This compares with 10% refusals for other applications.”

NCS application statistics

Year	Total number of NCS applicants
2008 (this service commenced in September 2008)	90
2009 (the service was suspended between January and April 2009)	81
2010 (figure taken at the end of October 2010)	375

2010 NCS appointment breakdown by month

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
12	38	55	36	31	39	35	39	41	49		

b. Are there any data gaps that you have identified?

Currently NCS customers are not asked to complete customer satisfaction surveys; all of the other services within Registration Services already collect customer information. The data which has been collected has been used to shape service objectives and make service improvements, when necessary.

Customer analysis sheets have been developed in staff brainstorming sessions; hard – to reach groups have been identified for all of the other core services that Registration Services provide. Please find below a link to the Civil Partnership matrix

- [Civil Partnership customer interaction analysis sheet](#)

To date, an analysis sheet has not been completed for the National Checking Service.

We aim to benchmark against other local authorities' statistics to ensure that our figures are comparable.

c. How could you seek to fill these data gaps?

6. Are there any additional measures that can be adapted/undertaken to progress equality/diversity issues in this area?

We are developing an online booking system for Nationality Checking Service appointments. The Registry Office has an online booking system which currently is only available to Registration Services.

This will allow customers to check their eligibility and inform them of the documentation that they will need to bring with them to their NCS appointments. The system will also allow customers to book their own appointment slots.

It is hoped that the introduction of this service will improve the 'customer journey' as the service is not limited to the Registry Office opening times and will reduce time spent on the telephone and allow the applicant to book their desired time slot.

It will also benefit the Registry Office as it will reduce staff time on the telephone; the NCS process can be complicated and it is not unusual for an officer to spend 30 minutes on a call.

7. In what ways could you promote good community relations in this area?

Promote updates on the public website and engage with the Communications Team at LBRUT to raise the profile of this service.

8. Are there any steps you can take to meet disabled people's needs by adjusting the policy, service or employment practice?

Not applicable.

9 Please provide any further information that you think is relevant to the initial assessment

All information and evidence is included above.

10 From your assessment do you think a full assessment is needed? Please provide reason for your answers.

I do not think that a Full EINA needs to be undertaken as actions identified in the action plan in Question 11 will ensure that gaps identified in this INA will be met.

Service monitoring will be more structured and should any issues/problems arise these can be resolved before there is any impact on customers.

11. If a full assessment is not needed please provide an outline of any equality objectives, which have arisen from your initial assessment of gaps or further areas to progress. These need to also be included in Directorate equality/diversity action plan and your Service Plan.

Equality Strand	Action	By When	By Whom	Outcome
Ethnicity	Conduct customer monitoring surveys for NCS applicants	End November 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacky Howard 	To ensure that all processes and procedures fully integrate the needs of all of our customers
Ethnicity	Complete a customer analysis sheet for NCS	End of December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be done in a team meeting 	Understand the customer's requirements and needs when undertaking a NCS interview.
Ethnicity	Benchmark NCS with other LB's.	December 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nathan Pritchard 	Benchmarking provides a forum to discuss shared 'issues', a forum to discuss good practice as well as sharing figures.
Ethnicity	Develop an online booking system	Project is underway – no 'live' date has been identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nathan Pritchard Justine Dalton Jacky Howard 	Increase the access channels that are available to our customers and resolve customer enquiries at the first point of contact.

SIGN OFF

(For each name and date)

Manager: Paul Chadwick

DMT: 3rd December 2010