



# All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modernising Employment

MEETING MINUTES ENSURING FAIRNESS IN INTERNATIONAL HIRING

9<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Chair's Introduction:** Productive APPG and a good year to make things better, little things can fit well into the Parliamentary timetable and our suggestions are being received with a receptive ear. The King's Speech referred to proposals to reform welfare and help people into work so this APPG is timely.

**Present:** Lord Lucas of Crudwell (Chair), Andrew Henderson (Secretariat), Keith Rosser, George Warrington & Callum Wright, Reed; (see list at end)

**Keith Rosser, Reed Screening, Better Hiring Institute Investors in People:**

*Founded and built Reed Screening, one of the UK's largest employee screening businesses with revenues over £7m annually. Various roles with UK Gov advising on employee screening, labour market policy and legislation. Keith received a Home Office Commendation Award in 2016 for services to recruitment and was recognised as a Community Leader at Buckingham Palace in 2018. Creator of the UK's first APPG on Modernising Employment and hiring and as a labour Market expert was appointed to the Ministerial Advisory Panel on the Future of Work and also advises on the UK's Labour Market Strategy. A Non-Executive Board Member of the GLAA, an arms-length body of UK Home Office, and a Non-Executive board member and appointed person to public bodies in Scotland. Keith is also the Chair of various trade bodies including the criminal record checking agencies. Keith is Chair of JobsAware, a MET Police founded charity with cross government support tackling labour market issues and Chair of the Better Hiring Institute. In 2023 Keith was made an Honorary Fellow of Lancaster University for his services to the UK labour market.*

It is about balancing the interests of immigrants, employers and the public. We will hear from these three sectors. Our aim is to come out with a practical set of proposals that make the right to work system better for all.

Firstly on the right to work scheme, we were part of this move from face to face to digital checks which was launched a year ago. This was a step on the road to digitising hiring. The development of the digital right to work scheme is an ongoing piece of work. 83% of people we interviewed opted for the digital route, which takes 4 minutes to complete. By 2030 nearly 25m people will have found jobs in the UK via a digital route.

Secondly, we know that 1 in 5 lack the necessary documents for the digital route. 10% of the UK Adult population are non-Internet users so are outside the scheme. Met Lord Murray and put forward suggestions for the scheme which are now being worked on by the Home Office. Need to address issues of fraud in the system such as people using fraudulent documents.

Have we got the right guidance for employers to help them navigate through the processes? We know that labour market abuses are rife, the Press has run a number of stories about migrant workers not having the employment promised. We have seen debt bondage and modern slavery cases. Looking forward to hearing practical steps to solve these issues.

**Anita Pali, Sheridans:** (see slides)

Four challenges:



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1. Timescales: If you plan to bring someone into the UK you need to supply them with a visa. A licence can take 8 weeks which makes the offer process very long. There is an option to pay extra for a priority service but instead of speeding things up, it is a lottery. Every individual needs a separate certificate on your licence to hire so more queues and more time is built into the hiring process. It can take up to 18 weeks to complete this process for a job applicant.

You can pay to speed up the visa process and cut it down to 8 weeks, if you can afford it!

Appointments in the UK can take 2 weeks if you want to switch employers thus another delay is introduced. Individuals can be unemployed and the employer lacking a staff member due to this delay.

2. Slide Costs – system is geared towards large employers who are willing to pay the fees. Delays in bringing in workers can have knock-on effects such as the inability to fulfil contracts which has cost implications to the employer. The Immigration Skills charge should be refunded if the employee leaves but this does not seem to happen.

There are very few free appointment slots for a Visa appointment. It can cost up to £250 with no difference in service levels.

3. Slide Tech. issues

The client has to submit the application not the lawyer. Since Summer 2022 you cannot save the form and come back to us. Thus submissions fail and there is no copy. Home Office is not fixing.

Advocate IDSPs. If you are doing a visa application for someone from overseas you cannot edit the form. This means having to pay a new set of fees and fill in a new form which costs time and money.

Home Office use BLS and TFS in other countries. Sites often crash and hard to upload documents. Does not seem to be improved. Needs better messaging and sub-contractors should not be giving out legal advice on the door.

4. Slide Service Levels.

More people qualify now and we have created a more level playing field post-Brexit. If you apply for a visa in the US you can get it done in a week, but may not get that level of service in other countries. So why is a priority service being offered in one country and not another? This creates delay.

Biometric appointments are easy to get in London but not in the rest of the UK. Should not be the case that people are forced to wait or come to London.

Slide Conclusion:

UK VI needs to improve its service offering and remove the 9.00 a.m. queuing system. Repeat fees should be removed and turn around times improved. Speed up the process generally!

Not all IDSPs are equal in service level provision and when things go wrong the customer service support is inadequate.



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Have seen improvements but the UKVI systems need updating for better business processes.

## **Aké Achi, Founder, Migrants At Work**

Year ending June 2022 Home Office granted 221,223 visas to overseas workers, 321,000 visas were granted by YE June 2023. The Care Sector had 121,290 granted.

The validation process for getting a licence: after the employer has registered with the CQC, the Home Office looks at the CQC report and we find that many employers do not comply with legislation and treat workers badly. Licences are approved by the Home Office though in spite of the poor track record.

Employers are effectively making false statements to the Home Office. We find that many agencies charge the workers but claim to the Home Office that they are not involved. Many workers come to the UK without adequate legal coverage and find that the terms and conditions are altered but they are trapped, unable to go home. Take accommodation for individuals and their family members, workers find that the sponsor has not supplied the necessary support or has turned it into a loan. This loan is enforced even if the individual is not working.

An employer can appoint a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party HR company to manage the process. Sometimes people are brought into the UK without any work without the employer knowing. Some recruitment agencies, who are unregulated, breach Immigration Law. The use of AI by agencies to book appointments for visa applications is also common. The worker then has to pay the recruitment company to obtain the appointment. Some sponsors give work in exchange for sex or for tax fraud. Workers do not report these activities to the Home Office because the worker will then lose their permission to be in the UK. They can switch to a new sponsor but need £1270 in the bank to make that change. Legal advice is non-existent as well.

Arshia Seth - Nigerian national working in the UK on a sponsored visa for a UK charity. This was transferred to a new organisation and was dismissed. The Court deemed the dismissal unfair but her visa was revoked.

Her employment rights under TUPE were breached. However without a sponsor her legal status could not be maintained. The Home Office could not help as the new employer had nothing to do with her and no-one would / could take responsibility. System created a position of vulnerability.

Sylvie Copley - Take the case of asylum seekers who are in the UK with permission to work, many employers do not understand the immigration rules so the asylum seekers can only work cash in hand.

One client applied for a job as a care worker with her ARC card that shows her status. Employer has to go through the paper-based checking process. From December 2022 it took 3 months to get a response so the individual was without work and income.

In conclusion a lot of employers have developed modern slavery policies based on people being in the UK already. Do not deal with the process of people coming into the UK when they are vulnerable to exploitation.



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**Katie Rountree, Head of Recruitment, KPMG**

Introduced KPMG and the need for international recruitment. 28% of the workforce hold a visa of some type. Needs to ensure that the business can recruit the right people. Mindful of the skills gap in our local market. Have student and graduate programmes to fill this gap and deliver on frameworks.

The challenges:

- 1) Cost change – fast pace of change which has an impact on candidates. Conflict and the geopolitical landscape is putting a strain on the migration stream. The international student population are motivated to continue through to employment. Need to ensure that these avenues remain efficient.

Need to be mindful that the global race for talent is expanding with more countries competing.

Digitalisation – great potential which we want to use but we need to make sure that it is inclusive.

We need to remain agile and flexible to meet changing requirements. This means we need robust contacts with the Home Office.

Right to work guidelines are complex. We have to identify and verify people but this does not cover expired passports and forces people travel for face to face checks. Home Office guidelines are not always all encompassing in term of the guidance offered. This creates work.

SOC code compliance is not agile enough. We want to move people across the business and have open opportunities within KPMG so that we can keep them. SOC code requirements challenge this and are unhelpful. There is a cost aspect to the business as well. At KPMG we have built a new piece of tech to help with compliance for sponsored workers.

- 2) EVisas – employers need more robust and clear guidance. We want to ensure that the staff member can go through the process confidently.
- 3) Home Office checking services – scoring some own goals as an employer, the VISA type is not included on the information which comes back and it does not confirm who the sponsor is so it is hard to track the person. Very little guidance of what to do when something goes wrong.
- 4) Seeing candidates coming through outside their validity periods which means that the employee has to travel again which puts a cost burden on the candidate.

In sum we have great processes in place but a lot more work needs to be done. Better synergy needed though.

## **Questions:**

KR – are there figures that show how successful the priority service is?

AP – no statistics published. Personally we do get the visas but it is a challenge and I have to write to the Home Office

KR - Do you have any insight into the Migrant Advisory Committee?



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AP – The shortage of occupation list does go out for consultation regularly.

KR – what is the impact of a false negative?

AP – causes delays in hiring and therefore the start date

KR – we will take a look at Adis Sehic’s comment.

AP – Cost is the biggest factor that puts people off.

KR – Does KPMG have a view on Tier 2? Seems to work for large employers but not SMEs.

KRountree – that is our preferred route. Our graduates go into the skilled worker route.

KR – Aké was talking about strategies for modern slavery, is KPMG aware of this?

KRountree – we do not see it in KPMG. Could get some insights from the team who deal with that so we can share it.

AA – for me to reform this sector to ensure that people who come to the UK are not trapped is to reform the immigration rules entirely. In the short term, employers must work with people who have lived experience of modern slavery. Tend to work with Unions. We can map all the stages at which exploitation can occur.

Need to reform the validation process, how the Home Office takes the information to the CQC, but not the whole system.

AP - Need to look at costs, should be fairer and access to appointments made the same worldwide. Speed is also key, turn around things more quickly and better customer service.

KR – small changes, big impacts: clear and concise guidelines, small tech changes and make the right to work as inclusive as possible.

## Closing remarks:

Lord Lucas – thanked the speakers and the audience for attending. Will digest the content and find a way through. Some will require a change of policy which we can package up for the new Government. Improving information and support for employers should be possible without any strain. At least four people said yes to the poll on how understandable is the system. Would be good to use these as advisors.

The timescale delays will not do. No structural reason for delay, we can convey this to a good Minister and can motivate them.

## Attendees:

Sellick Partnership	Chloe	Dickenson
Optima UK Inc. Ltd	Lorraine	Boorman
Elysium Healthcare	Shaun	Cox



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Aylula Solutions	Delaney	Millward
Serco	Kelly	Van Nelson
Experian UK&I	Alina	Howe-Jones
APSCo	Shahzia	Imtiaz
Buckingham Futures	Ketan	Dattani
Grant Thornton	Rob	Davies
Dominic Headley & Associates	Dominic	Headley
Kier	Emma	Mortimer
Key Stream	Julia	Dixon
Work Rights Centre	Adis	Sehic
Work Rights Centre	Bethany	Birdsall
Gattaca PLC	Michelle	Harding
BDO LLP	Marketa	Pohlodkova
Complygate	Rajiv	Ranajn
Aston University	Heather	Eden
Barchester Healthcare	Gill	Hobson
Gattaca plc	Jane	Mitchell
FNZ	Katie	Ingram
Migrants At Work	Sylvie	Copley
Devon County Council	Tom	Bowen
Devon County Council	Kelly	Wood
ORG	Sara	Alsherif
Devon County Council	Shelley	Holder
KPMG	Eric	Lee
Blue Arrow	Lauren	Maxwell
London borough of Bromley	Susan	Luck
Lancaster University Management School	Noeleen	Hammond Jones
Devon County Council	Lauren	Dodd
ACCA	David	Allan
The Open University	Shakeel	Chohan
Turning Point Scotland	Caron	Duffus



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UWTSD	Teresa	Byrne
Ramsay Healthcare UK	Claire	West
Ramsay Healthcare	kevin	feely
Association of Labour providers	Joanne	Young
allianceHR	David	Camp
University of Lancaster	Yu	Fu
Five Rivers Child Care	Caroline	Olive
KPMG	Hayley	Kofoed
Kirklees Council	Chloe	Brooke
Ganymede	Lauren	Bradford
The3million	Kezia	Tobin
ID-Pal	Mark	O'Hara
Peregrine/Conexia Limited formerly Capita	Catherine	Smith
Trust Education	Danielle	Quinn
Heath Sector Talent	Natalie	Garfoot
CWP NHS TRUST	ALISON	REAVY
Hood Group	Nikki	Bhatt
LockNStore	Karen	Ziemba
Wyke College	Jenny	Anderson
IOSH	Corey	Edwards
NHS (East Cheshire)	Helen	Jackson
Just Nurses	Ieva	Percule
Head of Employee Relations	Victoria	Bryant
Administrative officer	Phillippa	Wilson
Intern	Arshia	Seth
Arla Foods Limited	Alex	Tyrrell
Gloucestershire Care Providers Association	Ollie	Counter
TPG Promotions Ltd	Sanjeev	Pali
NHS Gloucestershire ICB	Zack	Pandor
Sheridans	Varki	K'Rajah



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	Mary	Dahunsi
	Latika	Thakre
KPMG	Katie	Rountree
Migrants At Work	Aké	Achi
Sheridans	Anita	Pali