

News Release
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UKBA reforms unhelpful and leave fundamental problem of net migration target unchanged, says English UK

The changes at the UK Border Agency are unlikely to make any useful difference to the operation of the visa system for students and may even cause new problems, according to Tony Millns, Chief Executive of English UK.

"The creation of two new departments, one for visas and one for immigration law compliance, creates huge potential for disagreement and completely contradictory messages.

"It does however mean that ministers will no longer be able to remain at arms' length of decisions when it suits them, as it is clearly all under their direct control. Ultimately, though, however well you implement a bad policy - in this case the net migration target - does not make it any better."

Home Secretary Theresa May announced in Parliament that the UKBA is to be abolished, with its work returning to the Home Office, because "its performance was not good enough." The announcement came the day after a damning report into the organisation from the Home Affairs Committee, which said it was "not fit for purpose".

The UKBA was created as an arms-length agency of the Home Office in 2008, but Mrs May said that had led to a "secretive culture". It is now being split into two parts, both of which will report directly to ministers, the second time the agency has been split in just over a year. Last year the UK Border Force became a separate body responsible for border checks and enforcement.

Mrs May said that the split had showed the benefits of having smaller, more focused structures. She said: "But the performance of what remains of UKBA is still not good enough. The Agency struggles with the volume of its casework, which has led to historical backlogs running into the hundreds of thousands."

She said a board would be formed to oversee all the organisations in the immigration system - immigration policy, the Passport Service, Border Force and the two new entities.

The UKBA split would create "a high-volume service that makes high-quality decisions about who comes here" and an organisation with "law enforcement at its heart".

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with more than 450 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity (www.englishuk.com).

2. For more information, please contact Tony Millns, Chief Executive of English UK on tony@englishuk.com.