



Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Chair
Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Yvette,

2nd May 2019

EU SETTLEMENT SCHEME

In my letter of 7 March about the full opening of the EU Settlement Scheme from 30 March, I said I would write to the Committee again with a copy of the report on the public beta test phase of the scheme. A copy of the report, which will be published on gov.uk, is enclosed.

The public beta test phase began on 21 January 2019 and ended on 29 March 2019. It enabled us to successfully test, at scale, the online application process as an integrated, end-to-end process. It was available, on a voluntary basis, to resident EU citizens (and their EU citizen family members) with a valid passport, and to their non-EU citizen family members with a valid biometric residence card, which also contains a biometric chip, to allow us to continue to test the EU Exit: ID Document Check app as an integrated part of the online application process.

My letter of 7 March included initial findings from the public beta test phase. The enclosed report confirms the success of that phase, with the volume of applications enabling us to test at scale the functionality of the end-to-end online application process. While no significant changes have been required, as expected in any test phase we have continued to develop the system and make technical improvements to it. We are grateful to those individuals who participated.

200,420 applications were submitted during the public beta test phase, from 21 January to 29 March 2019. By the 16 April 2019, 187,959 decisions on those applications had been made and issued, with 69 per cent granted settled status, 31 per cent granted pre-settled status and none refused. Applicants usually received a decision within one to four days. 161 of the applications did not result in a grant of leave or a refusal, because they were withdrawn by the applicant; rejected as invalid because they did not submit their passport for verification where they had been unable to use the app; or could not be processed because they were void because, for example, the applicant was a British citizen.

The technology performed well, with 95 per cent of applicants successfully able to use the EU Exit: ID Document Check app to prove their identity remotely, and 75 per cent able to do so in under 10 minutes.

In this phase, 88 per cent of applicants chose to provide their National Insurance number to help demonstrate their UK residence through automated checks of employment and some benefits records. 73 per cent of decided adult cases did not need to provide any additional evidence of UK residence, as they were able to rely on the results of these checks or on holding a valid permanent residence document or existing indefinite leave to remain. Where additional evidence of UK residence did need to be provided, applicants continued to benefit from the flexible approach we are taking to this, with scope for a very wide range of documents to be relied on as evidence of residence.

The feedback from applicants on the speed and ease of the application process was positive, with 81 per cent of those who provided feedback saying it was easy, or fairly easy, to complete their application form, and the majority of those who responded were more likely to be positive about the application process than critical.

In light of the successful testing of the online application process during the private and public beta test phases, we proceeded to launch the EU Settlement Scheme in full on 30 March 2019, as set out in my letter of 7 March. The total number of applications received since the testing of the scheme began on 28 August 2018 is now over 600,000, and we received over 50,000 applications in the first weekend that the scheme was fully live. Further information on the EU Settlement Scheme will be published in a quarterly official statistics publication from August 2019.

My letter of 7 March referred to the legislative changes being made to give effect to the Prime Minister's announcement that all applications to the EU Settlement Scheme would be free of charge from 30 March 2019 and that, from that date, anyone who had applied during the test phases and paid a fee would have that fee refunded. The refunds have been managed through an automated process, and we have now processed all of them through Home Office systems. They will continue to reach customer accounts in the coming days.

I will place a copy of this letter and the enclosed report in the House Libraries.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Nokes', is centered on the page.

Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP
Minister of State for Immigration