



Immigration and Nationalisation Directorate (IND) - Kaizen Blitz

From Possibility...

BACKGROUND

As part of the Home Office, the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) is responsible for immigration control and is split into a number of different departments.

This case study focuses on the processes surrounding Managed Migration into the UK, specifically those cases involving EU citizens, their partners and dependants

The IND receives thousands of applications each year from non UK citizens, working and studying in the UK who wish to exercise their right to extended residency in the UK. Many of these applications are from EU nationals who have temporary right to reside in the UK under European law. Many applications are from non-EU nationals who are married to or partners of EU nationals. The applications relating to EU nationals are handled by the Euro team at IND.

Each case is supported by documentation backing up the applicant's right to reside which differs depending on circumstances. Documents have to be checked for authenticity before the case is examined by a Euro team caseworker, and a decision is made as to whether the application has been successful or not. Often the documentation required has not been included in the application request, triggering the case worker to write to the applicant and request the correct documentation.

THE PROBLEM

European law states that applications from EU nationals must be processed within 20 days, and from non-EU nationals, 6 months. The sheer volume of applications received, the different types of applicants and backgrounds combined with the legislative timeframes involved has resulted in a significant backlog of cases. IND asked Ad Esse to facilitate a Kaizen Blitz aimed at identifying and improving the current processes and streamlining the Euro team case work.

A Kaizen Blitz is a rapid improvement programme carried out as a series of workshops, with the operational team being taken out of their usual environment to concentrate without interruption on a specified objective.

The Blitz team comprised a representative group of staff from across the Euro teams and an Ad Esse consultant.

The overall objective of the Blitz was to reduce the total time taken for a case to be processed, with emphasis on reducing the time a case worker spends on non value-add tasks. In the short to medium term this is expected to have a positive impact in reducing the case backlog and in the longer term to help the team meet prescribed timescales and improve customer satisfaction.



OUR APPROACH

The Blitz group represented staff at all levels from administrative assistants up to senior managers. This enabled the group to share knowledge across all parts of the process, better enabling the Blitz to accomplish its goals.

The Blitz was spread over 5 consecutive days, with a further 5 days taken to implement the short / medium term solutions identified. **The approach is noted below:**

- Day 1:** A brief overview of the Blitz process. The team then produced a high level definition of the overall Euro Casework process, drilling down into a detailed definition of the "as is" process. This was followed by listing all the problems, issues and concerns around the case work process.
- Day 2:** Gathered data from a process walkthrough and analysed the results. Identified and grouped ideas for process improvement. Defined what a workable "to be" process for the end of the week might be.
- Day 3:** Developed actions to scope the future processes and checked them with all relevant stakeholders. Collected further data to ensure new processes are viable. Listed actions to implement the new process.
- Day 4:** Broke down the actions into immediate, medium (two week review) and long term, determined who will do what and when. Presented solutions to Euro Group Managers along with their proposed roles and responsibilities. Reviewed implementation of the immediate actions and wrote up implementation plans for the others.
- Day 4:** Continued to implement defined solutions. Agreed progress required by the end of the week and the related benefits. Prepared communications briefing for interested parties. Wrote up new process and produced an action plan with clear responsibilities and timings for the future
- Day 6-10:** were spent reviewing how the initial changes were working and implementing the short term actions

Using staff as the focal point of the investigation allowed individuals to enhance process improvement skills and knowledge due to the intensity of the Blitz, fostering a sense of ownership of the new process and expected benefits.

To Actuality...

FINDINGS

The first two days of process mapping, data gathering and analysis revealed the following findings:

- There was no standard practice across the group;
- 83% of the more straightforward categories of Euro cases were missing documentation;
- There was no allocation of cases between EO and AO grades, which led in some circumstances to senior EO workers undertaking the more straight forward cases that could be handled by an AO;
- Each worker has an individual hold of cases requiring further documentation from the customer, with most containing a large surplus of old cases;
- All files were photocopied regardless of status;
- Many caseworkers photocopied their own work;
- Refusals were taking between 2 and 12 hours, highlighting a need for training in this area;
- On refusal an appeals bundle was being prepared in 100% of cases, even though only 20% of people ever appealed, and
- There was no standard approach to case sampling for quality assurance.

These findings provided the basis for identifying solutions, with a focus on actions which could be implemented almost immediately and at nil cost.



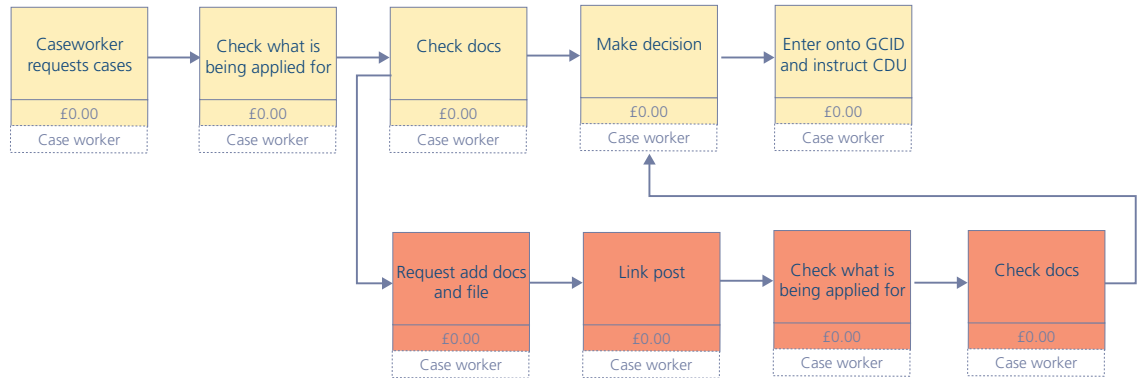
THE IMPROVEMENTS

Improvements were split into 3 categories; immediate, week two and long term.

Immediate improvements identified and implemented included;

- Stopping all photocopying on cases that have been granted. Previously all cases were copied in case “something went wrong”, which was challenged as only a tiny minority of cases were ever recalled;
- Teams are not to receive new cases until those in their “inbox” are dealt with; and
- Cases are to be sorted prior to arriving at the team by the support team (Euro support), allowing the AA's to allocate cases accurately to the AO and EO case workers.

Having established the revised high level process, further detail was documented to ensure a clear understanding of how the new process will impact the overall system.



Week two improvements identified and implemented included;

The improvements implemented in week two are noted below and have been split between case distribution and case handling:

CASE DISTRIBUTION

- Euro Support (ES) developed a checklist outlining which documents each type of case should contain. This allowed the AA's to cross reference with the incoming cases to ensure they had all the requisite documentation;
- Cases with missing information are sent a newly created standard letter requesting the missing information by the AA. This now saves the caseworkers time and means that cases are “good to go” when they reach the case worker; and
- The current push system has been replaced by a pull system, whereby the team leader requests how many cases their team will need from ES. This results in limited build up of cases on each section and gives people a clearer view of how many cases are in the queue awaiting attention.

CASE HANDLING

- Each team's dispatcher (AA) will manage ingoing and outgoing cases with all linking of post, photocopying and file requisition also to be managed by the dispatcher therefore eliminating non-value added tasks carried out by the case worker;
- All cases awaiting additional documentation are held in the central team hold, split into date order and are rejected if no new documents are received within 28 days;
- All holds are uniform in layout and process, with separate sections for cases split between EO and AO, depending on complexity; and
- Each case worker can only request 2 cases at a time meaning that the overnight hold of cases not actioned will be at a minimum.

LONGER TERM IMPROVEMENTS IDENTIFIED AND PLANNED

Recommendations for improving the process beyond the two week Kaizan Blitz include;

- Improving the application form to prompt customers to include appropriate documentation first time;
- Introduce standard paragraphs and roll out training for the handling of refusals;



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- Draw up standard operating procedures across the directorate; and
- Introduce staff fora for all grades to improve communication and exchange knowledge and best practice

BENEFITS

- Cases are checked whilst in the queue resulting in customers being alerted quickly if further documentation is required;
- Case workers now have “one touch” on cases, as they are “good to go” on first look. Previously a high proportion of cases were reaching case workers needing extra information, which caused delay and repetition. The new process means that the majority of cases will be actioned first time by the case workers;
- Stopping unnecessary photocopying on grants will save 5 minutes per case which in a year equates to 338,400 minutes or 13,538 extra grants processed per year;
- A new process is mapped out, taking the administrative duties away from the case workers, allowing focus on higher value-add activities; and
- Identifying the problem with refusals has resulted in a fresh approach to the training provided, introducing a streamlined approach for the case workers.

The Blitz allowed the team to review the case handling process from start to finish with “Lean eyes” using the tools and techniques learnt in the initial training workshop. More work is needed on the refusals and appeals process as using “lean” principles, 80% of the activity relating to preparing appeals bundles is “waste”. This will be examined at a further blitz event.



FURTHER INFORMATION

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