EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE IMMIGRATION, NATIONALITY AND PASSPORTS (FEES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2026

2026 No. 311

1. Introduction

1.1 This Explanatory Memorandum has been prepared by the Home Office and is laid before Parliament by Command of His Majesty.

1.2 This memorandum contains information for the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments.

2. Declaration

2.1 Mike Tapp MP, Minister for Migration and Citizenship at the Home Office, confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

2.2 Nicola Sills, Deputy Director – Strategic Finance at the Home Office, confirms that this Explanatory Memorandum meets the required standard.

3. Contact

3.1 Mohammed Khurrum Mahay at the Home Office can be contacted by email at the following address with any queries regarding the instrument: feesandincomeplanning.requests@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Part One: Explanation, and context, of the Instrument

4. Overview of the Instrument

What does the legislation do?

4.1 This instrument will:

i. Increase fees across a range of immigration and nationality products and services, including the fee for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA)

ii. Reduce the fee payable for an application to register as a British citizen by an individual under the age of 18

iii. Extend the ETA fee to the Isle of Man and the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey

iv. Amend and clarify fee exceptions for legacy applicants on the Innovator Founder route

v. Amend the fee description for the student route for the Isle of Man to align with UK Immigration Rules

vi. Increase fees for passport and overseas delivery services.

Where does the legislation extend to, and apply?

4.2 The extent of this instrument (that is, the jurisdiction(s) which the instrument forms part of the law of) is England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The provisions specified in Regulation 9 extend to the Isle of Man and those specified in Regulation 10 additionally extend to the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey.

4.3 The territorial application of this instrument (that is, where the instrument produces a practical effect) is the same as its extent.

5. Policy Context

What is being done and why? What was the previous policy, how is this different?

Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations 2018

Increases to immigration and nationality fees

5.1 Income from immigration and nationality fees plays a key role in the funding of the migration and borders system, with successive Governments taking an approach of increasing the proportion of costs that are met by end users of the system in order to reduce reliance on funding from the taxpayer. The Government continues to pursue this approach, and as such this instrument will apply increases to immigration and nationality fees, across a broad range of application categories, including ETA, work, study, visit, settlement, entry clearance, leave to remain, sponsor licence, nationality and citizenship. The total estimated impact of these changes is £376.9 million additional income in 2026-27 based on current forecasts.

5.2 Details of the changes to specific fees are set out on Gov.UK[1] as well as in the Schedules of the accompanying instrument. Overall, a 6.5% increase is being applied across fees in scope of these changes, with some exceptions as set out below. Decisions on specific levels of increase have been informed by wider funding considerations, balanced against anticipated wider impacts associated with different potential levels of increase.

5.3 Notably, the proposed fee increases will not apply to applicants using the Global Talent or High Potential Individual routes. This exemption reflects the Government's commitment to attracting highly skilled individuals who can support innovation and contribute to economic growth in the UK. In addition, the planned increases will not affect fees for Certificates of Sponsorship or Confirmations of Acceptance for Studies.

5.4 Irish citizens living in the UK, both adults and children who apply to register as British citizens will also be exempt from these changes. A new, dedicated British citizenship route for Irish citizens was introduced on 1 July 2025, with fees set significantly lower than those for standard registration and naturalisation (£723 for adults and £607 for children). As this route has only recently been established, these fees will not be increased through these Regulations.

5.5 The fee for the Certificate of Entitlement to the Right of Abode will be exempt from these changes. The Certificate of Entitlement transitioned to a digital format on 26 February 2026, replacing physical vignette stickers in foreign passports. A digital certificate will not require a new application each time the linked foreign passport expires; instead, the record can be updated online for free. The fee for the digital certificate will be kept under review as new operational data becomes available.

Increase in ETA fee, and extension of the ETA fee to the Isle of Man and the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey

5.6 An Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) is a permission to travel in electronic form (linked to an individual's passport) which specified individuals are required to apply for and obtain in advance of their journey to the United Kingdom. It is a requirement in the Immigration Rules for individuals (excluding British and Irish citizens) visiting

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-regulations-revised-table

the United Kingdom, who do not need a visa, entry clearance or who do not hold existing immigration status. This instrument will increase the fee for an ETA from £16 to £20, delivering an estimated £96.7 million in 2026-7 based on current forecasts.

5.7 Furthermore, each Crown Dependency is launching its own legally distinct ETA scheme in 2026 that the UK will operate on their behalf. Accordingly, this instrument includes provisions to extend the £20 fee for the UK ETA scheme to the Crown Dependencies.

Reduction in fee for applications for registration as a British citizen by individuals under the age of 18

5.8 The British Nationality Act (BNA) 1981 sets out the circumstances in which an individual can apply to register as a British citizen, as well as associated eligibility requirements. The 2018 Fees Regulations set out the fees for British citizenship registration, with different fees charged to adults and those under the age of 18.

5.9 The Government has previously recognised the particular benefit that children gain as the result of a successful citizenship application through the introduction of an affordability-based fee waiver and fee exemption for children in the care of a Local Authority in June 2022. The Immigration White Paper published in May 2025 further set out a commitment to consider measures to reduce the financial barriers to young adults, who have lived here through their childhood, from accessing British nationality.

5.10 Accordingly, this instrument reduces the fee payable for an application to register as a British citizen by individuals under the age of 18, from £1,214 to £1,000. This is estimated to reduce income by a negligible amount in 2026-7 based on current forecasts. This impact has been factored into the development of the wider package of income-related fee changes made by this instrument, with those wider changes offsetting the reduction in child citizenship fee income to support a balanced overall position. The change to the fee does not impact existing waiver and exemption provisions, which will continue to apply.

Rectification of drafting error in respect of entry clearance fees on the Student and Child Student route

5.11 This instrument corrects a drafting error arising from previous amendments to the Regulations. The fee for out of country student and child student entry clearance applications, set out in Table 1.3.11A to the Regulations was last correctly amended to £363 in Spring 2022. Subsequent amendments to the Regulations in Autumn 2023 and Spring 2025 intended to increase this fee, but those statutory instruments mistakenly amended Table 1.3.11, which had been removed from the Regulations in 2020. As a result, the fee in Table 1.3.11A does not reflect the policy intention set out in the relevant Explanatory Memoranda and in the previous erroneous amendments to Table 1.3.11. This instrument rectifies that error by replacing the £363 fee with £558, representing a c.6.5% uplift on the intended current fee of £524.

5.12 The Government's guidance for Statutory Instrument Practice (SIP) states that if an instrument is correcting a defective instrument, departments should consult the SI Registrar and consider whether to apply the free issue procedure. The free issue procedure would make the new instrument available, free of charge, to everyone who received the original instrument. Having completed the process as required by paragraph 4.7.6 of the Statutory Instrument Practice, the department is of the view that

this would be disproportionate given the error is narrow in scope and limited to a single figure.

Amendment and clarification of fee exceptions for legacy applicants on the Innovator Founder route

5.13 In April 2023, the previous Innovator route was closed and replaced with Appendix Innovator Founder, with new fees introduced for obtaining an endorsement, and for attending a contact point meeting with an endorsing body, in which progress against an applicant's business plan is assessed. The fee for an endorsement is £1,000, and the fee for a contact point meeting is £500. Both fees are paid directly to, and retained by, the respective endorsing bodies.

5.14 Before the introduction of Appendix Innovator Founder in April 2023, no endorsement or contact point meetings fee were charged. As part of the introduction of Appendix Innovator Founder, transitional arrangements were put in place to ensure applicants who already held leave under the former Innovator route, and who held an endorsement issued before the rule changes, were not disadvantaged. Accordingly, the Fees Regulations include specific exemptions from the endorsement and contact point meeting fees.

5.15 It has been identified that the current fee exemptions could be interpreted as applying wider than intended. We are amending the provisions to clarify that transitional arrangements only apply to those who were originally endorsed prior to 13 April 2023, to ensure alignment with the policy intent.

Amendment of fee description for the student route for the Isle of Man

5.16 The Isle of Man Immigration Rules currently provide for a Tier 4 Migrant route, an umbrella term covering both Tier 4 (General) student applications and Tier 4 (Child) student applications. This instrument will increase the fee for this route from £524 to £558.

5.17 The Isle of Man is updating its Immigration Rules to align with the current UK Immigration Rules for students. The new Rules will take effect on 8 April 2026. As a result of these changes, the fee description for the Tier 4 Migrant route will be amended to reflect the replacement of the Tier 4 provisions with 'Appendix Student' and 'Appendix Child Student'. Consequently, applications previously made under the Tier 4 Migrant route will now fall under the new categories of entry clearance applications under 'Appendix Student' or 'Appendix Child Student' to the Isle of Man Immigration Rules.

Fees for Home Office Travel Documents

5.18 Under the UK's obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, fees for a Convention Travel Document and Stateless Person's Travel Document are set at or below the cost of the standard, online passport application fee for adults and children. This instrument will increase the fee for a Convention and Stateless Person's Travel Document from £94.50 to £102 for an adult and £61.50 to £66.50 for a child, in line with the respective cost of a passport being set by these Regulations.

5.19 A Certificate of Travel is a travel document that is provided at the discretion of the Secretary of State to a person who has been granted leave to remain in the United Kingdom but is unable to obtain a passport from the authorities of their own country. In line with wider changes in these Regulations, the fee for this document is increasing by 6.5% from £300 to £320 for adults, and from £151 to £161 for children.

Amendments to the Passport (Fee) Regulations 2022

Increase in passport fees

5.20 Fees for passport applications are set in accordance with s86 and s87 of the Immigration Act 2016. Fees can only be set at or below the cost of processing and delivering the services associated with making the application, which includes the cost of processing applications, consular support overseas (including for lost and stolen passports), and the cost of processing British Citizens at UK Borders. Currently, income from passports is below the cost of operating these services. Consequently, the Home Office is increasing fees to move them closer to a cost recovery footing. These amendments will increase fees for all standard paper and online applications, frequent traveller passport applications, priority services and the booking fee by circa 8%. These changes are estimated to generate £49.1 million in 26-27 based on current formats. Details of the changes to specific fees are published on gov.uk and the schedules to the accompanying instrument.

5.21 The current fee for a standard passport application made online inside the UK will increase from £94.50 to £102 for adults and from £61.50 to £66.50 for children. For a standard application made by post in the UK, the fee will be increasing from £107 to £115.50 for an adult and £74 to £80 for children. The Home Office's policy regarding fees for applications made by HM Diplomatic Service, HM Government in an official capacity, HM Armed Forces and their dependants remains the same, with fees aligned with the cost of an online application made inside the UK. The priority service booking fee, which is retained if an appointment is cancelled by the prospective passport holder or another person acting on their behalf within 48 hours of the appointment time, is increasing from £32 to £34.50.

5.22 Fees for international postal applications will increase from £120.50 to £130 for an adult and from £82.50 to £89 for a child. Online applications that are made outside the UK will increase from £108 to £116.50 for an adult and from £70 to £75.50 for a child. Frequent traveller passports will increase from £120 to £129.50 for UK postal applications, £107.50 to £116 for applications made online in the UK, from £133.50 to £144 for postal applications made outside the UK and £121 to £130.50 for applications made online outside the UK. Fees for optional services for digital priority fast-track will increase from £178 to £192 for an adult and from £145 to £156.50 for a child, and digital premium service will also increase from £222 to £239.50 for an adult.

5.23 There are no changes in respect of a standard passport application made by a prospective passport holder born on or before 2nd September 1929, for which there is no charge, nor to collective passports.

5.24 Certain delivery charges are being increased for the first time since 2018, to put them on a cost recovery basis. Customers applying for passports overseas are subject to courier charges where the delivery of their documents have to be returned by secure delivery, currently set at £9.70-£11.41 for delivery of a passport if the application is successful, £10.16 for the separate return of supporting documents if applicable, and £13.31 for delivery of postal applications for up to four people. These Regulations will increase both delivery and return fees to a standard rate of £14.32 and increase the fee for postal applications to £16.24. No changes are being made to charges for delivery inside the UK if the customer opts for their passport and supporting document to be delivered by secure delivery, which is currently set at £5. Alternatively, customers can have their passport and supporting documents returned by second class post, the fee for which is covered by the passport application fee.

5.25 Alongside changes to courier fee levels, we are also amending The Passport Fees Regulations 2022 ('the 2022 Regulations') to remove a provision that allows for a single fee to be charged for the forwarding of up to four applications in the same package. This is a legacy arrangement that was introduced in 2011 when the majority of applications were made using paper forms and sent by post. The 2022 Regulations are clear that delivery fees are charged per person; reference to fees being charged for 'up to four' persons are unclear and potentially confusing. We are therefore removing reference to a single fee being charged for up to four applications from the 2022 Regulations.

6. Legislative and Legal Context

How has the law changed?

6.1 The Immigration, Nationality and Passports (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 amend the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations 2018 in respect of fees chargeable for immigration and nationality related applications and services, and the Passport (Fees) Regulations 2022 in respect of the fees charged for passport applications and priority services.

Why was this approach taken to change the law?

6.2 This is the only possible approach to make the necessary changes.

7. Consultation

Summary of consultation outcome and methodology

7.1 In respect of the immigration and nationality fee changes, the Home Office conducted a targeted consultation in November and December 2013 on how its charging strategy works in practice, to help shape the approach to charging in the future. [2] This in turn informed the development of the provisions at section 68(9) of the Immigration Act 2014, which set out the factors that the Secretary of State is permitted to take into account when setting fees. These include the cost of exercising the relevant function, the benefits that accrue to an individual as the result of a successful application, and the costs of exercising any other function in relation to immigration or nationality. These powers have since underpinned the approach to fees over the last decade, which includes the setting of fees above a cost recovery level in order to help meet costs within the wider migration and borders system, and to move the system onto a substantially self-funding basis. This approach continues to be reflected in these Regulations. Further changes made by these Regulations are consequential to changes in Immigration Rules and wider policy changes and, therefore, have not been the subject of a separate formal public consultation.

7.2 There was no public consultation in respect of the Passport Fees Regulations on the fees set out in these Regulations, in line with the approach taken to previous amendments to passport fee levels. Fees for passport applications and passport related services are set with reference to the provisions at sections 86 and 87 of the Immigration Act 2016, which permit fees to be set at a level to recover costs associated with passport and consular functions. As increasing passport and courier fees to better reflect cost recovery is in line with these provisions as well as broader objectives relating to the funding of the migration and borders system, the department

[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c002be5274a7318b906b8/ImmigrationFeesChargingResponse.pdf

has not considered it necessary or proportionate to undertake a formal public consultation.

8. Applicable Guidance

8.1 The fee table published on GOV.UK that sets out all immigration and nationality fees will be updated to reflect the changes made by this instrument on 18 March 2026. [3] Additionally, new Passport Fees will be published on GOV.UK on 18 March 2026.

Part Two: Impact and the Better Regulation Framework

9. Impact Assessment

9.1 A full Impact Assessment is submitted with this memorandum and published alongside the Explanatory Memorandum on the legislation.gov.uk website. The Net Present Social Value is between £1,427.0 million under the low elasticity scenario and £995.0 million in the high elasticity scenario, with a central estimate of £1,311.4 million.

Impact on businesses, charities and voluntary bodies

9.2 The impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies is between -£5.8 million under the low elasticity scenario and -£25.5 million under the high elasticity scenario, with a central estimate of -£14.1 million (present value, 2026-27 prices) over the five-year appraisal period.

9.3 The legislation does impact small or micro businesses.

9.4 To minimise the impact of the requirements on small or micro businesses (employing up to 50 people), the approach taken is to charge a lower fee for obtaining a sponsor licence where the applicant is a small or charitable sponsor compared to the fee payable by a non-small or non-charitable sponsor. The legislation is expected to be applied to businesses of all sizes, including small and micro businesses. This is in line with the principle that all employers wishing to sponsor foreign workers have the same access to the immigration system and pay the same fee per vacancy filled by migrant labour.

9.5 The impact on the public sector is between £2,108.6 million under the high elasticity scenario and £1,672.7 million under the low elasticity scenario, with a central estimate of £1,928.0million (present value, 2026-27 prices) over the five-year appraisal period.

10. Monitoring and review

What is the approach to monitoring and reviewing this legislation?

10.1 The approach to monitoring this legislation is that fees are kept under regular review. The Home Office has an ongoing programme of evaluation and will continue to monitor the impact of such policies in terms of live application data and collected revenue. This monitoring may include, for example, assessment of volumes and income relative to the estimates and historic trends.

10.2 The instrument does not include a statutory review clause and, in line with the requirements of the Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2015, Mike Tapp MP, Minister for Migration and Citizenship at the Home Office has made the following statement:

[3] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-regulations-revised-table

"Fees for products and services provided for by this instrument are kept under regular review. It is not appropriate in the circumstances to make provision for review. I am satisfied that, though these regulations have impact on small businesses, these would be considered as part of the wider monitoring of the impact on these changes and mitigated to the extent stated in Section 9 above"

Part Three: Statements and Matters of Particular Interest to Parliament

11. Matters of special interest to Parliament

11.1 This instrument makes a number of changes to fees that are above the level of CPI inflation, estimated at 3.5% in 2025 in the Office for Budget Responsibility's November 2025 Economic and Fiscal Outlook. These changes include: a 25% increase to ETA fees; a 6.5% increase to wider immigration and nationality fees; an 8% increase across passport application, priority service and booking fees; an 8% increase to Convention and Stateless Person Travel Document fees; and a 22-47% increase to courier delivery fees.

11.2 The rationale for the level of increases in respect of passport fees is to move these services closer to a cost recovery footing, with the higher rate of increases generally reflecting where a cost recovery gap has emerged due to fees not having been increased for a number of years. Increases to ETA and wider immigration and nationality fees, which are permitted to be set above cost to reflect wider factors as set out under Section 68 (9) of the Immigration Act 2014, have generally been undertaken in order to support wider costs in the migration and borders system and reduce reliance on taxpayer funding.

12. European Convention on Human Rights

12.1 As the instrument is subject to negative procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

13. The Relevant European Union Acts

13.1 This instrument is not made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020 or the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023 ("relevant European Union Acts").