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Queen's Speech

On 3 December, the new session (for 2008-2009) of Parliament opened with the Queen's Speech. The speech introduces the Government's agenda for key pieces of legislation to be introduced in the session. The speech announced a Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Bill.

Separately, however, the Government announced that it would also be producing a new draft Bill during this session. This will be the draft Immigration Simplification Bill.

More information is provided by the "Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Bill" information sheet. Other information sheets on the "Draft Bill" refer to the current draft Bill – the draft (partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill. However, when the draft Immigration Simplification Bill is produced, it is expected to include many of the provisions in the current draft Bill.

New Immigration Minister

In October, Phil Woolas MP replaced Liam Byrne MP as the Minister for Borders and Immigration.

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/aboutus/organisation/ministers/>

Points Based System (PBS)

On 27 November, Tiers 2 (skilled workers) and Tiers 5 (temporary workers and youth mobility) were introduced. There have been a number of announcements on the UK Border Agency website in the news section during October and November about this. The UK Border Agency archive of news announcements is available at: <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/newsandmedia/news>

Among the announcements was confirmation that a skilled worker (Tier 2) could satisfy the maintenance requirements for him/herself and his/her family if an A-rated sponsor provides written confirmation that the sponsor will maintain and accommodate the individual and any family for their first month in the UK. Further information is available at:

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/maintenancefortier2>

Information sheets on "Points Based System" provide background information.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Government has now withdrawn its immigration reservation. More information is available from the "Children's Welfare" information sheet.

Seven Year Child Concession

Under this concession families with dependant children in the UK for 7 years could apply for indefinite leave to remain. On 9 December, the concession was withdrawn—see:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm081209/wmstext/81209m0002.htm#08120943000019>

Identity Cards

The Government has begun to introduce identity cards for immigrants. This is being rolled out in stages—see:

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/firstidcards>

Zimbabwe and DRC

Last month has seen important decisions in two test cases. Asylum-seekers from Zimbabwe may benefit from the recent decision of the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal in *RN (Zimbabwe)*. More information is available from the "Zimbabwe Country Guidance" information sheet.

However, the Court of Appeal has dismissed a similar challenge against removal to the Democratic Republic of Congo of anyone refused asylum in *BK (DRC)* [2008] EWCA Civ 1322 which is available at:

<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2008/1322.html>

10th December 2008

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