

Rise in UK Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa applications from Chinese nationals

The number of high net worth individuals from China utilising the Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa category to relocate and remain in the United Kingdom has increased substantially by 41 per cent and 97 per cent respectively over the past year, according to Richmond Chambers Immigration Barristers (www.immigrationbarrister.co.uk)

Data published by the [Office for National Statistics](#) reveals that while 420 entry clearance applications from entrepreneurs were granted in 2011, this increased significantly to 591 successful applications in the year from 2011 to September 2012. The number of Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) dependent visas also increased from 490 in 2011 to 836 in the year from 2011 to September 2012.

Official statistics for the same period also revealed a substantial increase in the number of successful in-country leave to remain applications made by Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) migrants. In 2011, 360 applicants secured extensions of stay in the UK in the Entrepreneur visa category. In the year 2011 to September 2012 this figure increased to 710. The same period saw an increase in successful Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) dependent visa applications from 279 to 419.

Representing a “fast track” route to British citizenship for Chinese nationals who are interested in setting up in business in the UK – and, importantly, their children, who are able to enjoy free education in the UK – the UK Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category was first introduced in 2008. It is open to Chinese nationals who have access to at least GBP £200,000 (equivalent to CNY 1,988,140/HKD 2,457,280) to invest in one or more UK business. These funds can be held in the applicant’s personal bank account or in the account of one or more third-parties, provided that the third-party confirms that the funds are available to the applicant for investment in a UK business.

The Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category is also open to foreign nationals who have access to at least £50,000 (equivalent to CNY 497,036/HKD 614,321), where funding is provided by one or more registered venture capital firms regulated by the Financial Services Authority, one or more UK Entrepreneurial seed funding competitions which are listed as endorsed on the [UK Trade & Investment](#) website, or one or more UK Government Departments and made available by the Department(s) for the specific purpose of establishing or expanding a UK business.

In December 2012 alone, 15 entry clearance applications were made in China for the Tier 1 visa categories. The most popular cities for applicants seeking to migrant to the UK using the Tier 1 (Investor) and Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) categories were Beijing, Guangzhou, Jinan, Wuhan and Shenzhen respectively.

Commenting specifically on the increase in UK visa applications from Chinese Entrepreneurs, Paul Richmond, head of Richmond Chambers Immigration Barristers ([click here](#) to view their services), said: “The UK has always been an attractive destination for citizens of China seeking a cosmopolitan lifestyle, world-class education opportunities, a clean environment and a favourable tax regime. Many Chinese nationals are keen to educate their children in the UK, while the prestige of owning London property and a burgeoning Chinese expat community mean that London is an increasingly popular destination for wealthy Chinese emigrants who are interested in setting up and running a business in the UK.”

With the English language requirement for the Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category having recently been reduced from CEFR Level C1 (IELTS 7.0 – 8.0) to CEFR Level B1 (IELTS 4.0 – 5.0) and the investment funds requirement for switching from the Tier 1 (Post-study work) to Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category

remaining at just £50,000, the rise in the UK Entrepreneur visa applications from Chinese nationals looks set to continue.