



Home Office

## **Guide UKF**

Registration as a British citizen – A guide for persons born to British fathers and whose parents were not married

April 2025

# Contents

Introduction	2
IAA and immigration advice	3
Applying to register as a British citizen if you were born to a British father (and your parents were not married)	4
The requirements you must meet	5
Who can register?	9
Referees	11
Biometric Enrolment	12
Documents	13
Documentary evidence that (had the law been different) you would have become a British citizen	13
Proof of Paternity	13
After you have submitted your application	14
Application Processing Times	14
Travel after submitting an application	14
The citizenship you will acquire	15
Citizenship ceremonies	16
Arranging a citizenship ceremony	16
At the ceremony	16
Exemptions	17
Next steps	18
What to do if there is an error on your citizenship certificate	18
Returning your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)	18
Will I get digital status showing I am a British citizen?	19
Travelling to and from the UK after becoming a British citizen	19
Citizenship-related queries	20

# Introduction

This guide is for adults (aged 18 or over) or parents/guardians completing the form on behalf of a child under the age of 18. References to 'you' refer to the applicant, unless otherwise stated.

Becoming a British citizen is a significant life event. It allows you to apply for a British citizen passport and gives you the opportunity to participate more fully in the life of your local community.

The law covering registration is contained in the [British Nationality Act 1981](#) and the regulations made under it. You will need to show that you satisfy the relevant requirements. This guide is intended to help you apply; it is not a complete statement of the law or policy. Further information about applying for citizenship is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Before continuing with your application, you should be aware that under the nationality laws of some countries a person will automatically lose their nationality if they become a citizen of another country. If you have any questions about this, you should ask the authorities of the country of which you are a citizen before making your application. If the country of which you are currently a citizen continues to recognise you as one of its citizens, you may continue to be subject to the duties of citizens of that country when you are in its territory. This may include obligations to undergo military service.

## **If you are currently living in the UK**

A nationality application does not provide any immigration status while it is being considered. You must ensure you have valid permission to stay in the UK until you have had a decision on your application and attended your citizenship ceremony.

For the purposes of this guide:

- 'United Kingdom' means:
  - England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man; and
  - the Republic of Ireland at a time when it formed part of the United Kingdom (that is to say, before 31 March 1922); and
  - (in relation to birth) a ship or aircraft registered in the United Kingdom or an unregistered ship or aircraft of the Government of the United Kingdom.
- 'Natural father' means a man who is your biological parent.

Please note: If you are not honest about the information you provide, and you are registered on the basis of incorrect or fraudulent information you will be liable to have British citizenship taken away (deprivation) and you may be prosecuted. It is a criminal offence to make a false declaration knowing that it is untrue.

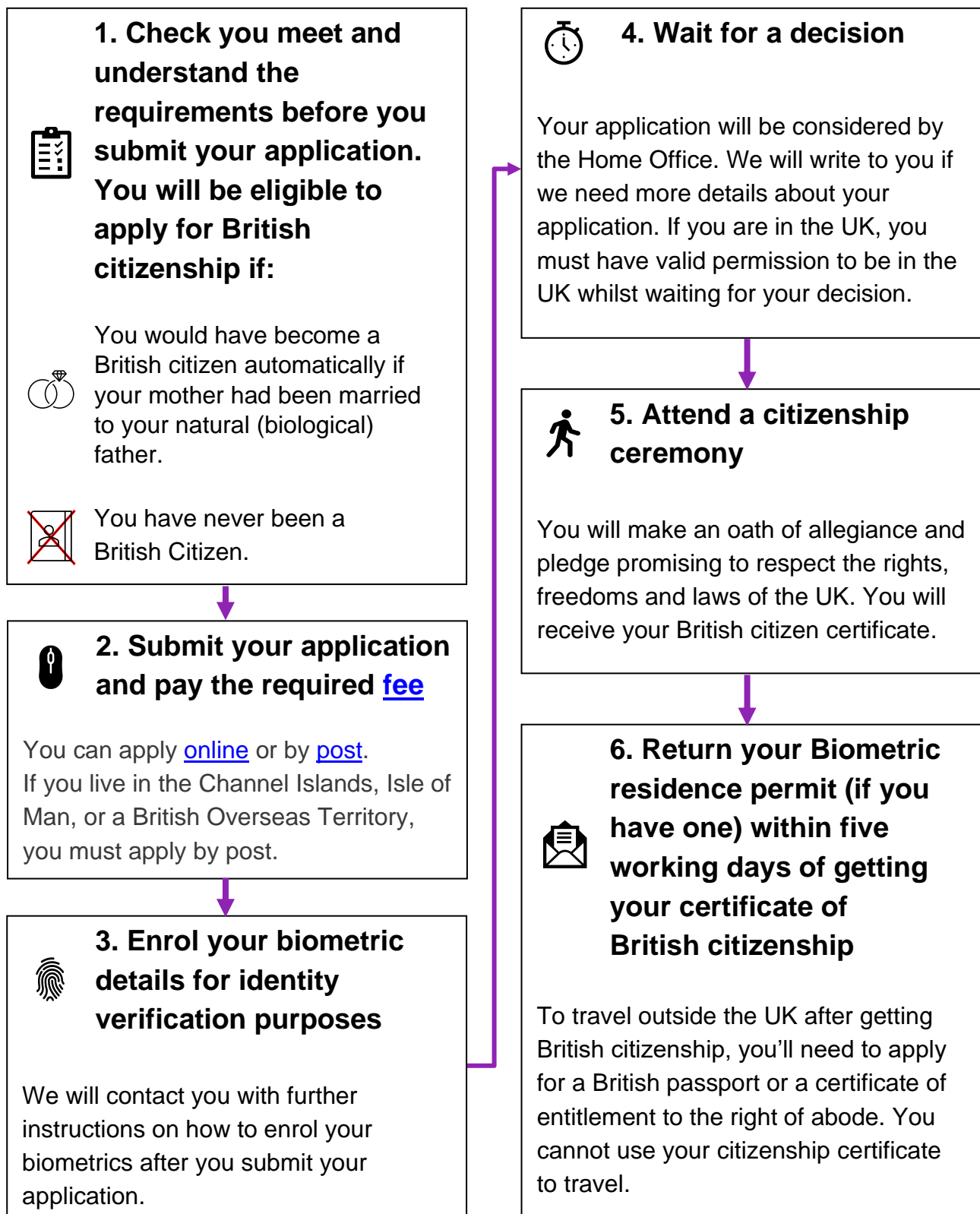
## IAA and immigration advice

You may, if you wish, use the services of an agent such as a solicitor or other competent adviser to help you with your application.

Immigration or nationality advisers acting in the course of business (whether paid or unpaid) are regulated by the Immigration Advice Authority (IAA), an independent body. Nationality advice should only be provided by a person who works for an organisation registered with, or exempted by, the IAA or who is authorised to practise (like solicitors and barristers) by a designated professional body. Certain categories (for example public health bodies) are exempted from the regulatory scheme by Ministerial Order. It is a criminal offence to provide advice or services in contravention of the regulatory scheme. Further information about the regulatory scheme and a full list of IAA regulated advisers are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/immigration-advice-authority>.

[Contents](#)

# Applying to register as a British citizen if you were born to a British father (and your parents were not married)



# The requirements you must meet

You will be entitled to registration if you meet all the requirements below:

- You would have become a British citizen automatically if your mother had been married to your natural (biological) father
- You have never been a British citizen

The law has been written in this way to ensure that those who would have become British citizens automatically, had their parents been married, now have an opportunity to become British citizens by registration.

- Some countries (such as the USA or New Zealand) do not make a distinction between whether a child's parents are married or not. Where the parents are not married, a person may have a claim to British citizenship through their father if he was domiciled in a country whose laws (at the time of the birth) did not distinguish between children of married or unmarried parents. Our guidance on this is published on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

There is no registration option for people who would have become British Overseas citizens on 1 January 1983 had their parents been married and who, as a result, might now have had entitlements to British citizenship under other provisions.

There is a registration route for people who would have become British Dependent Territories citizens on 1 January 1983 had their parents been married – please see guide [BOTC\(F\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/botc-f) on GOV.UK.

## How someone became a British citizen

You would have become a British citizen (if your parents had been married) if:

- You were born in the UK on or after 1 January 1983 and your father was a British citizen or settled in the UK at the time of your birth.

**or**

- You were born outside the UK and you would have been able to become a British citizen through your father. A man could normally pass on British citizenship if he was born in the UK, or registered or naturalised there. Some fathers who were born outside the UK could also pass on British citizenship, for example if they were in Crown service at the time of their child's birth.

## How someone became a British citizen father

- Until 1983, people born in the UK or a place which was a British territory were normally citizens of the UK and Colonies (CUKCs) (and called British subjects before 1949). A person could also become a CUKC through registration or naturalisation.
- When a territory became independent, most people who were CUKCs through their connection with that territory lost their CUKC status and acquired citizenship of the newly independent country. However, if someone did not become a citizen of the new country, they retained CUKC status.
- The concept of the right of abode (ROA) was introduced within the Immigration Act 1971 and came into effect on 1 January 1973. This was held by citizens of the UK and Colonies who:
  - were born, naturalised, registered or adopted in the UK
  - had a parent who was born, naturalised, registered or adopted in the UK
  - had a parent with the right of abode and a grandparent who was born, naturalised, registered or adopted in the UK
  - had completed a period of residence in the UK
- On 1 January 1983, CUKCs with the right of abode in the UK became British citizens.

## How someone became a settled father

For nationality purposes and for the purposes of registering as a British citizen, 'settled' refers to someone resident in the UK who is not subject to immigration restrictions. Many people demonstrate this by having indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

## The definition of 'parents' for nationality purposes

### Before 1 July 2006

- The mother is the woman who gave birth to the child.
- The father is the man who was married to the woman as defined above.

## From 1 July 2006

- The mother is the woman who gave birth to the child.
- The father is:
  - a) the husband of that woman (if they were married at the time of the child's birth); or
  - b) the man who is treated as the father under [section 28 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990](#); or
  - c) if neither (a) or (b) apply, any man who can satisfy the Home Secretary of [proof of paternity](#).

## How someone missed out on British nationality

- Before 1 July 2006 unmarried fathers were not normally able to pass on nationality to their children.
  - In certain cases, a man was treated as the child's father if he was not married to the child's mother at the time of the birth, but they married at a later date. This depended on the laws of the place where the father was "domiciled" at the time.
  - In some cases, a man who was not married to the child's mother can be treated as the child's father, if he was treated as the child's father by the laws of the country where he was "domiciled" at the time of the birth,
  - Further information is available in the published [caseworker guidance](#) on GOV.UK.
- A child born outside the UK to an unmarried father before 1 July 2006 could not usually acquire British citizenship from him. By contrast, a married father could pass on British citizenship to their child born overseas.
  - Up until 1983 this did not affect children born in the UK as, at that time, being born in the UK was sufficient to become a British citizen.
  - However, from 1983, a child born in the UK only became a British citizen if, at the time of their birth, one of their parents was a British citizen or settled in the UK.
- Until 1 July 2006, an unmarried British citizen father, or an unmarried settled father, was not classed as their child's parent for nationality purposes. By contrast, the child would be a British citizen if their natural father was either a British citizen or settled, and married to the child's mother.
- In addition, there are registration provisions which allow a child born from 1983 to register as a British citizen where their parent becomes a British citizen or settled after they are born.



- Until 1 July 2006, these registration provisions could not be used by a child whose unmarried father's status had changed.
- By contrast, the child would be able to register if it was the status of their married father which had changed in this way. (If you could have applied if your parents had been married, you can apply using [Form MN1](#)).

[Contents](#)

# Who can register?

You will generally be able to register under these provisions if you were:

- Born outside of the UK before 1 July 2006 and your unmarried father was born, naturalised or registered in the UK before you were born
- Born inside the UK on or after 1 January 1983 and before 1 July 2006, and your unmarried father was born, naturalised or registered in the UK before you were born, or was settled in the UK when you were born
- Born on or after 1st July 2006, but you did not become a British citizen because your mother was married to someone other than your natural father

If you were born before 1 July 2006, and your unmarried father became a British citizen or settled after you were born, but existing registration provisions cannot be used because your parents were not married, you can apply using [Form MN1](#).

## Example:

Lucy was born in the UK in 2000. Her father was a British citizen and also born in the UK. He was not married to Lucy's mother. If unmarried fathers had been able to pass on citizenship in 2000, Lucy would have become a British citizen at birth. She can apply using Form UKF.

## Example:

George was born in the USA in 1969. His father was born in the UK. His father did not marry George's American born mother. If unmarried fathers had been able to pass on citizenship in 1969, George would have become a CUKC at birth and then a British citizen. He can apply using the Form UKF.

## Evidence of paternity

To apply under these provisions, you will need to prove your relationship with your natural father. To do this you will have to provide evidence of paternity.

If you can provide genuine and reliable documents, we will recognise a man as your father in the following circumstances:

- He is named as your father on a birth certificate issued within one year of your birth, or
- A DNA test report shows he is your father, or
- A court has ruled that he is your father, or

- You can provide other evidence that is sufficient to establish paternity.

If your parents married after your birth, you may already be a British citizen. This will depend on which country's laws applied to your father at the time of the marriage. Some countries' laws – including the UK – state that where a child's parents marry after the child's birth, the child will be treated as if the parents had been married at the time of the birth. If your parents married after your birth you may wish to seek the advice of an [immigration adviser](#).

[Contents](#)

# Referees

Your application must be endorsed by 2 referees.

One referee can be of any nationality but must be a [professional person](#). A professional person could include:

- a minister of religion
- civil servant
- a member of a professional body such as an accountant or a solicitor (but not one who is representing you with this application).

The other referee must be the holder of a British citizen passport and either a [professional person](#) or over the age of 25.

Each referee must have known you for at least 3 years.

Each referee must not be:

- related to you
- related to the other referee
- your solicitor or agent representing you with this application
- employed by the Home Office

## Child applicants

At least one of the referees must be a person who has dealt with the child in a professional role such as a teacher, doctor, health visitor or social worker. Where a child cannot provide a referee who has dealt with them in a professional capacity and has provided documents to show that they have attempted to do so, two referees who meet the criteria for referees on adult applications can be accepted.

We will not usually accept a referee who has been convicted of an imprisonable offence during the last 10 years.

Checks may be carried out to ensure that the referees do not have unspent convictions and are qualified to act for you and that their signatures are genuine. It is a criminal offence to provide false information knowingly or recklessly, punishable with up to 3 months imprisonment or by a fine not exceeding £5,000 or both under section 46(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981.

[Contents](#)

# Biometric Enrolment

As part of your application, all applicants are required to enrol their biometric details for the purpose of identity verification.

Children under 18 applying for registration as a British citizen must also enrol their biometric details. Children under the age of 5 do not need to provide fingerprints, but must have a digital photograph taken of their face.

Up to the age of 5, the Home Office only requires a digitised image of the child's face, although the regulation does not prevent fingerprints being recorded from children aged less than 5 years.

Children under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian at their biometric enrolment appointment.

There is no upper age limit for biometric information to be taken.

Where to give biometric information depends on how you're making your visa or immigration application. You'll be told where to go after you've applied.

An application may be rejected as invalid if the person does not enrol their biometrics when requested.

For more information about enrolling biometrics and the current fee, please visit GOV.UK: [www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits](http://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits).

[Contents](#)

# Documents

This section tells you about the sort of documents you will need to provide to help us consider your application. We cannot consider your application unless we have supporting documents. If you do not submit your application with supporting documents, the application will be returned to you unprocessed.

## Documentary evidence that (had the law been different) you would have become a British citizen

You will need to provide the following documents:

- Your passport
- Your full birth certificate and either:
  - Your father's full birth certificate, or
  - Your father's certificate of naturalisation or registration as a British citizen or as a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies (or, before 1 January 1949, as a British subject), or
  - Papers showing your father's legal adoption, or
  - Your father's citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies or British citizen passport showing he had that status before you were born, or
  - Evidence that he was settled in the UK at the time of your birth if you were born in the UK on or after 1 January 1983.

## Proof of Paternity

If your natural father was named as your father on a birth certificate issued within 12 months of your birth and you were born before 10 September 2015, this will be acceptable evidence of paternity. If not, you must provide other evidence. This could include:

- DNA test reports. We will accept test results from a company that is on the [government's accredited list](#), or
- a court order, or
- other evidence that proves you are related as claimed.

Please provide any translations if these are applicable.

If the person applying is under 18, the consent of all those with parental responsibility should be provided.

# After you have submitted your application

## Application Processing Times

We aim to conclude citizenship applications within 6 months from the date on which we receive your application. Please do not contact us within this timeframe to request an update on your application – we will get in touch if we need any more information to help us make a decision.

You will usually get a decision on your application within 6 months – but some applications may take longer. If we expect that it will take longer than 6 months to decide your application, we will contact you to advise of this.

## Travel after submitting an application

After submitting your application, you are free to travel using your valid passport – and evidence of your valid immigration status – while you are waiting for a decision on your application.

You do not need to tell us about your travel plans, however, please note:

- You will usually be required to **enrol your biometric information within 45 days** of submitting your application. Failure to do so will invalidate your application.
  - You will receive instructions on how to provide your biometric details once you have submitted your application.
- If your application is successful, and you are aged 18 or over, you will need to **arrange and attend a [citizenship ceremony](#) within 90 days**.

Otherwise, there is nothing during the citizenship process that would prevent you from travelling while your application is being considered.

A citizenship application does not provide you with immigration permission in the UK, and you will need to demonstrate your entitlement to [enter the UK](#) at the UK border.

You should ensure that we are able to contact you quickly if we have any queries about your application.

[Contents](#)

# The citizenship you will acquire

If you would have become a British citizen by descent had your parents been married, you will be a British citizen by descent after registration under this provision. British citizens by descent cannot normally pass on their British citizenship to any of their children born outside British territory.

If you are resident in the United Kingdom, and aged 18 or over, you may therefore wish to consider applying for naturalisation, as that would give British citizenship otherwise than by descent which would allow you to be able to pass on that citizenship to any children born abroad to you in the future.

Further information about the requirements for citizenship is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

[Contents](#)



# Citizenship ceremonies

## Arranging a citizenship ceremony

If your application is successful, and you are aged 18 or over, you will be invited to attend a [citizenship ceremony](#).

### **If you are in the UK**

You will receive an invitation from the Home Office, and this will confirm the local authority you should contact to arrange your ceremony.

You must ensure you have immigration permission to remain in the UK until you have completed your ceremony. A citizenship application does not provide you with immigration permission in the UK.

### **If you are outside of the UK**

Arrangements will be made for you to attend a ceremony at a British Embassy; High Commission; Consulate; Governor's Office or Lieutenant-Governor's Office.

Your ceremony invitation may be sent to you via email. If you have not received this, we recommend that you check your email's spam or junk folder before contacting us.

**You must arrange and attend your ceremony within 90 days of receiving your invitation.** The date by which you must attend your ceremony will be given in your invitation.

If you have special needs or concerns about attending your ceremony, please bring these to the attention of the local authority once you have received your invitation.

**If you do not attend your ceremony within 90 days without good reason, your application for citizenship will be refused and you will need to re-apply.**

## At the ceremony

You will be asked to affirm or swear an Oath of Allegiance to the Monarch and to pledge your loyalty to the UK. This is a legal requirement for adults and is the point at which you will become a British citizen. Following this you will be presented with your certificate of citizenship as a British citizen.

## Exemptions

Successful applicants are rarely exempt from attending ceremonies. Exemptions may be granted where applicants are physically unable to attend or if their mental state would make it inappropriate for them to attend. If you wish to be exempt, you should say why and provide supporting evidence.

[Contents](#)

# Next steps

## What to do if there is an error on your citizenship certificate

If you notice a mistake on your citizenship certificate, you will need to use [Form RR](#) to request an amendment to it.

Send your completed form and your original certificate to the following address:

Department 201  
UKVI  
The Capital  
New Hall Place  
Liverpool  
L3 9PP

You may need to pay to change the details on your certificate, depending on if the mistake is your fault (for example, if you provided incorrect details when you applied). UKVI will send you a letter telling you if you need to pay.

## Returning your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)

If you still hold a Home Office issued immigration document, such as a BRP (or a Biometric Residence Card (BRC)), you must return it the Home Office (even if the BRP/BRC has expired) within 5 working days of attending your citizenship ceremony or getting your certificate of British citizenship (whichever is sooner).

You can do this by following these steps:

1. Cut your BRP/BRC into 4 pieces and put it in a windowless envelope.
2. Enclose a note saying you are returning your permit because you have become a British citizen. Include your name, date of birth and the document number (found on the front of the card) in the note.
3. Send your BRP/BRC and enclosed note to:

Naturalisation BRP Returns  
PO Box 195  
Bristol  
BS20 1BT

Please note that you may be fined up to £1,000 if you do not return your permit within 5 working days.

## Will I get digital status showing I am a British citizen?

There are no current plans to provide digital evidence of British citizenship. If you wish to travel, you will need to get a British passport or certificate of entitlement to the right of abode.

## Travelling to and from the UK after becoming a British citizen

Once an individual becomes a British citizen, they will no longer be able to enter the UK using their BRP or digital status, or by presenting their citizenship certificate at the UK border.

For travel purposes, an individual can [apply for a British passport](#) or for a [certificate of entitlement to the right of abode](#) that can be placed in a valid foreign passport.

Please refer to GOV.UK for information on [how long it may take to get a British passport](#) or [how long it may take to get a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode](#). Individuals may wish to consider this before applying for citizenship (for example, if they have plans to travel outside of the UK).

[Contents](#)

# Citizenship-related queries

If, having read the information set out in this guidance, you have questions about applying for British citizenship, you can email the Citizenship and Nationality Enquiries team at [nationalityenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:nationalityenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk).

You should also contact them to let them know if you have made an application and your circumstances change (for example, you move house, get married or are arrested).

If you've not had a response, we recommend checking your email's spam or junk folder before contacting UKVI again.

If you require anything else, please [contact UK Visas and Immigration for help](#).

[Contents](#)

