



Home Office

Application Registration Card

Version 5.0

Producing an application registration card (ARC) for asylum claimants.

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About this guidance

This guidance tells you what an application registration card (ARC) is, when it is issued, and how changes of circumstances are to be recorded and managed.

This guidance informs the person who is registering the asylum claim what actions they must take to enable the ARC to be issued. It also informs officers what action they need to take if the claimant informs the asylum team that they have an issue with their ARC during the asylum process.

It replaces all previous guidance.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email Asylum Policy team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **5.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **02 September 2021**

Changes from last version of this guidance

- Removal of section: EU Reception Condition Directive (2003/9/EC)
- Removing reference to Migrant Help in the section replacement to lost or stolen ARCs

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What is an application registration card (ARC)?

The application registration card (ARC) is a credit card-sized plastic card issued by the Home Office to individuals who claim asylum. It contains information about the holder's identity or claimed identity although it is not evidence of identity. This includes details of their nationality as well as age and whether their age has been disputed by the Home Office pending the outcome of a Merton age assessment. The ARC certifies that its holder is an asylum claimant and as such will be allowed to remain in the United Kingdom while their asylum claim is still pending. Furthermore, it also confirms whether the claimant has permission to work at the time of issue.

A new ARC design and issuing process was phased in from June 2017. See [Images of ARC](#).

Background

The Application Registration Card (ARC) has been issued to asylum claimants and their dependants since 2002. It used to be issued to a claimant at a limited number of sites that had an ARC producing machine. If the claim was made at a location that did not have an ARC printing machine, then the claimant would be required to attend an ARC issuing event at a suitable location in person on another day.

The revised ARC and associated process, introduced in July 2017, enables an ARC to be issued to asylum claimants and their dependants within 3 working days of the claim being registered as in [paragraph 359 of the Immigration Rules](#) regardless of where the claim for asylum is made. Asylum claimants will be sent their ARC by post following the successful enrolment of biometric details on livescan or cardscan terminals. A successful enrolment requires the capturing of fingerprints for all claimants and dependants aged 5 and over and a facial image of all claimants and dependants regardless of age.

Since July 2017, the ARC has contained an expiry date. This is a new feature which was not found in the previous iteration of the ARC. The expiry date is set to 2 years from the issue of the card. The details contained on the card reflect the details as entered on the case information database (CID) at the time the claim for asylum is registered.

Claimants used to access their asylum support payments using the ARC. This is no longer the case. Support payments are now accessed through the Aspen card.

The standard acknowledgement letter 2 (SAL2) that was issued if the old ARC could not be issued has been withdrawn and should no longer be issued.

Policy intention

The ARC design is aligned with the current biometric residence permit (BRP) to present a consistent view of Home Office documents to the public, assisting in document and status checking.

The claimant may have no other documentation to demonstrate their claimed identity. The ARC may provide public sector bodies with assurance that the holder is an asylum claimant. It will show a single unique identity, which cannot easily be changed, which provides reassurance to the claimant, and to the public at large. However, the ARC does not constitute evidence of the claimant's identity ([paragraph 359B of the Immigration Rules](#)). There will be occasions where an individual's identity will need to be resolved during the asylum process.

The ARC is issued in order to:

- confirm that the person has made a claim for international protection in the United Kingdom or are a dependant of a main claimant
- provide easier access to services, for example a general practitioner (doctor) may ask to see evidence of status when an asylum claimant (or an asylum dependant) registers with them
- indicate to a prospective employer whether the holder is permitted to take employment, in accordance with the Home Office's permission to work policy
- present to Home Office officials or police officers, for example at a reporting event, to demonstrate who they are

If the claimant has already been issued a BRP and it is still valid, they should keep their BRP and still be issued with an ARC. If, however, the claimant gained a BRP by deception than it should be withdrawn from the claimant.

Application in respect of children

[Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009](#) requires the Secretary of State to make arrangements to ensure that immigration, asylum and nationality functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in the UK. It does not impose any new functions, or override existing functions.

The main ways in which the Home Office does this are:

- being alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect, being alert to risks which abusers may pose to children, and being ready and able to share relevant information with other public bodies who have a responsibility towards children
- ensuring that staff who have face to face contact with children are able to conduct their business in a child sensitive manner, and staff with roles involving regular contact with children receive appropriate training for their role

Provision is made in the ARC process to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK, whether they are claiming asylum in their own right or included as dependants on another person's asylum claim. Such need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are met, where necessary, through appropriate support, referrals to appropriate bodies and accommodation arrangements as part of the asylum registration process (which includes the ARC process). The ARC is issued to all claimants and any dependants. Children under the age of 5 are not fingerprinted.

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Legislation

Immigration Act 1971

The application registration card (ARC) is referred to as 'registration card' in section [26A of the 1971 Immigration Act](#).

'Registration card' means a document which:

- carries information about a person (whether or not wholly or partially electronically)
- is issued by the Secretary of State to the person wholly or partly in connection with:
 - a claim for asylum (whether or not made by that person)
 - a claim for support under section 4 of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (whether or not made by that person)

Section 26A of the 1971 Act also explains the offences that someone would be committing if they falsify or alter the card.

The section further states that the definition of the registration card can be amended to include people other than asylum claimants. Any change must be agreed by Affirmative Resolution in both Houses of Parliament.

Immigration Rules

The requirements of [Article 6\(2\) of the EU Reception Conditions Directive \(2003/9/EC\)](#) were inserted into [paragraphs 359 to 359C of the Immigration Rules](#).

It is a requirement for all those making a claim for asylum (and their dependants) to be issued, within 3 working days, a document indicating that they are an asylum claimant with a pending asylum claim (paragraph 359 of the Immigration Rules). If the decision is taken to decline to examine the claim (for example the asylum claim has been declared inadmissible or withdrawn) it will no longer be pending for the purposes of this rule. The document referred to in paragraph 359 will normally be the ARC.

The document does not need to certify that the identity recorded on the document for the asylum claimant is correct (paragraph 359B of the Immigration Rules).

Although there is no obligation to provide the claimant with an ARC if they are detained (paragraph 359A of the Immigration Rules), the ARC is to be requested and held on file. If the claimant is released whilst their claim is still pending, it can then be given to the claimant.

An ARC must not be issued to EU citizens.

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Requesting an application registration card (ARC)

If you are responsible for registering an asylum claim and taking the claimant's biometrics, a process which is normally referred to as 'asylum screening', you must request the production of the claimant's and any dependant's application registration card (ARC) through the case information database (CID).

In all cases (including claimants held in detention), you must make every effort to request production of the ARC through CID's 'print ARC function' at the time that the claim is lodged. If the claimant is held in detention, their ARC is held on file so that it is available if the claimant is later released from detention before a decision has been taken on their claim.

To request production of the ARC, the claimant's biometrics (a photograph in all cases and fingerprints for those aged 5 and over) must first be enrolled on the Immigration Asylum Biometric System (IABS).

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To ensure that the ARC can be issued, you must:

- update CID to show their permission to work status regardless of whether they already have permission to work
- record a 'formal address', if there is no formal address on CID, then the ARC cannot be sent to the claimant
- where a handheld scanner is not attached to CID, correctly enter the Immigration Fingerprint Bureau reference manually onto CID
- ensure that children under 5 are photographed and the image is loaded onto IABS, ideally using the livescan or cardscan camera
- ensure that the image upload is of 'passport' standard (see: [Fingerprinting and photographing for ARC issue](#))
- complete the same process for all dependants

A checklist to assist you producing the ARC can be found at [checklist for application registration card \(ARC\) production](#).

If the claimant has been issued with a biometric residence permit (BRP) and it is still valid, the claimant is to retain the BRP as well as being issued an ARC. If the BRP provides them with permission to work, for example the claimant is a student who is continuing their studies and still has permission to work, you must select the equivalent work category in the admin events 'work'.

Where a claimant has been allocated asylum support accommodation, you must enter the address provided by the National Asylum Allocation Unit as their formal address. If they do not qualify for accommodation and fail to provide a formal address, the ARC will only be issued once an address has been provided. A report will be run by the ARC Assurance team to monitor any claimants and dependants that have not been issued an ARC.

Once you request the card, it will enable both the image from IABS and the CID data to be encoded and sent to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), who are responsible for printing the card. They will send the card to the claimant's formal address as recorded on CID through a secure mail (signed for) service. In the case of those in initial accommodation, an individual representing the contract manager will receive the card on their behalf and pass it to the claimant.

Where cards cannot be delivered due to the claimant's absence from the address provided, compliance activity can commence, including the suspension of asylum support where relevant.

All teams registering asylum claims need to ensure that:

- the biometric capture is to passport standard (see: [Fingerprinting and photographing for ARC issue](#))
- an individual's permission to work status is correctly recorded on CID
- claimants understand that their cards will arrive by post

Fingerprinting and photographing for ARC issue

You must make sure that both fingerprints (for those aged 5 and over) and a facial image are enrolled on the Immigration Asylum Biometric System (IABS). This is part of the standard process for registering asylum seekers and their dependants.

You must take a photograph of the claimant's face to the same standard required for a passport or biometric residence permit. That is principally the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standard. For example, the image must be full face, front view, the claimant's eyes are open and they must not be wearing glasses. Head coverings are only permitted for religious reasons and the head covering must not obscure the claimant's face. Examples of the type of image required see [Rules for passport photos](#).

Adults who cannot be fingerprinted

IABS biometric recording systems (BRS) livescan and cardscan accommodate the enrolment of facial images for adults who cannot be fingerprinted.

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Children under 5

The livescan and cardscan terminals have been adapted to record facial images for children under 5. Where the date of birth entered into the BRS shows the subject as under 5, a photograph of the claimant can be enrolled without the requirement to fingerprint. You should identify the enrolment by recording the IFB reference in the reference number field on CID.

Detained claimants

Where a claimant is detained and is then released on immigration bail, the ARC will be issued subject to the following criteria being met:

- there is a claim for asylum outstanding
- biometrics, including a facial image to ICAO standards, have been taken
- 'Work Status' and 'Formal Address' have been recorded on CID

If these preconditions are met, the ARC can be issued in the standard way outlined in [Requesting an application registration card](#). Local procedures should be adapted to ensure fingerprints and photographs have been enrolled on IABS and have been quality assured.

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Change of circumstances

The details on an application registration card (ARC) will only be changed in specific circumstances. It is not an identity card and is issued in the identity accepted at the time of an individual's asylum claim, or alternatively in the identity that the officer believed was the individual's true identity. For example, when an undocumented asylum claimant is biometrically matched to a visa application, the identity recorded on the visa application may be taken as the preferred identity in which to register the asylum claim. A decision-making unit may need to amend or reissue an ARC due to a change of circumstances, for example a change in permission to work.

Change of name

The ARC records the name of the claimant as verified by the issuing officer when they claimed asylum (or was provided during an earlier interaction with the Home Office, such as in a visa application). The name produced on the card will be the same as the name on other documents issued to the claimant when the asylum claim was recorded, for example the form Bail201: notification of grant/variation of immigration bail.

The ARC is not an identity card. If you have accepted a change in the claimant's name, the ARC should only be reissued if the amendment is significant, because of departmental error and the claim will remain pending. The CID record must also be amended to show the accepted name.

If the CID record later in the process has a minor update, for example an alternative spelling of their name is later accepted at substantive interview, it is not necessary to issue a new ARC. The claimant can use the ARC in conjunction with other documents, such as a Bail201, if they change their name.

It may be appropriate to issue a new ARC if the asserted identity of the claimant was not accepted when they claimed asylum due to evidence that the claimant previously provided an alternative identity (such as in a visa application). If the asserted identity is later accepted, then a new ARC can be issued if the asylum claim will remain pending. However, if the claim is in the process of being decided, then the form Bail201 or IS248 should instead be issued to the claimant in their asserted identity. Such forms should contain the holder's image.

Gender identity

The ARC will be issued in the claimant's self-identified gender identity, which will predominately be the sex ascribed to them at birth. Where an error is made, or the claimant changes gender, a new ARC must be issued without delay, correctly showing the claimant's self-declared gender. The CID record must be updated to reflect the claimant's identity and any ARC where the gender is no longer correctly recorded permanently destroyed. It is not necessary for a claimant to have

undergone any type of medical intervention to be considered to have changed their gender.

Change of appearance

A new biometric enrolment must take place if the appearance of the claimant has significantly changed. This is particularly important for children or adolescents. The images recorded are intended to also assist with tracing missing persons. It is important to record up to date images and fingerprints in the Immigration Asylum Biometric System (IABS) as appropriate.

Children who have turned 5

It is important to fingerprint the child as soon as possible after turning 5 in case they are reported as missing at a later stage. Immigration Fingerprint Bureau (IFB) fingerprint records will be the best means of identification for the Missing Persons Bureau, who will lead the investigation to trace the family.

There is no need to replace the ARC when the child turns 5 unless the card is expiring as the IFB reference on CID will link to the biographic and biometric records.

Replacement of lost or stolen ARCs

If the claimant says that their ARC is lost, stolen, or was not delivered, they should be directed to the .gov.uk website where they will find information about the online ARC enquiry form. The webpage is:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-registration-card-arc/application-registration-card-arc.

An unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC) should contact the Refugee Council.

Replacement of an ARC containing inaccurate information

There will be occasions where the personal details on the ARC do not reflect the information contained on the individual's personal record on CID. This could be because the CID record has been amended after additional information has been provided or the individual's details have changed. An ARC may be issued using the CID based system without a new enrolment where you are satisfied that:

- there is an outstanding claim for asylum
- biometrics, including a facial image to 'passport' standards, have been taken
- work status and formal address have been recorded on CID
- the inaccuracies are a result of official error

Where changes are made as a result of the claimant's request a new enrolment of biometrics should be arranged. If you suspect that a crime has been or will be

committed, for example where the claimant reports the loss of their ARC stating that they have permission to work, but is also requesting another permission to work ARC in a different name, the advice of the local immigration crime team should be sought.

When you wish to reissue a replacement card, the existing card will be cancelled and retained for destruction. You should request card cancellation by email to the ARC Assurance team. See [cancelling an application registration card](#) for further information.

Where the claimant's age is disputed but a decision about their age has been made, see the asylum guidance on assessing age for how to issue a revised ARC.

Permission to work

If you receive a permission to work application and the claimant qualifies, you should inform them by issuing a standard letter as documented in the permission to work guidance, if the following preconditions are met:

- there is an outstanding claim for asylum
- biometrics, including a facial image to 'passport' standard, have been taken
- 'work status' and 'formal address' are recorded on CID; and
- the old ARC has been submitted for destruction

You must then update work status on the 'admin events' screen in CID. An ARC endorsed 'work permitted' will only be issued if the CID entry indicates that they are entitled to take employment.

If the claimant either has no current ARC or an ARC in the previous style (before June 2017), you must arrange for their biometric enrolment on IABS and follow the guidance in the section: [Requesting an application registration card](#).

If the claimant has a new-style ARC that was issued after June 2017 you must:

- contact ARC Assurance to cancel their existing ARC
- update work permissions in CID
- issue the new ARC confirming permission to work

Replacement of a 'work permitted' ARC

If the holder of an ARC loses their permission to work, you must reflect this on relevant Home Office records.

You must:

- update the 'admin events' screen in CID to the status of 'no work'
- ask for the current ARC to be returned, if it is not returned, you should record this in CID notes to ensure that it is retained at the next reporting event

- if the claimant still needs an ARC after they have returned their permission to work ARC, issue a new one to reflect the fact they no longer have permission to work

See [Cancelling an ARC](#) on how to handle returned ARCs. You must also email the ARC Assurance team so they can cancel the card on the card management system.

ARC and crime

Where a genuine ARC is required to be used as evidence in a criminal investigation, the card must be cancelled on the card management system. Crime teams and police colleagues should contact the ARC Assurance team to cancel the card. See [cancelling an application registration card](#).

Police and crime colleagues should be made aware of the provisions of section [26A of the Immigration Act 1971](#), which sets out the offences for misusing, forging or counterfeiting a registration card.

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Assurance

A checklist is available for managers to use and identify if there are problems with compliance for issuing an application registration card (ARC). See: [ARC assurance checklist](#).

The ARC management system collects information on cases where the ARC was not produced. Where an ARC has not been issued the ARC Assurance team will ascertain why this has not happened. They will work with the business units involved to minimise these instances:

Reasons why the ARC might not have been issued include:

- the biometric inputs were below the required standard
- the biographic data did not map across to the ARC management system
- it was not requested, which could be for reasons of either human error or a technical issue

The information collected will help to ensure that photographs are taken to 'passport' standard, and that a replacement or new ARC is issued where the data has been correctly recorded but a technical failure has resulted in the ARC not being issued.

If you need to check the ARC is genuine

The ARC contains the same security features as the biometric residence permit (BRP). For images of the ARC and endorsements on the card - see [Images of application registration cards](#).

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Cancelling an application registration card

When an asylum claim is withdrawn, or is substantively decided, subject to appeal rights being exhausted, the holder is no longer an asylum claimant and has no reason to retain the application registration card (ARC). You should make arrangements for the ARC to be returned to the Home Office and for it to be cancelled. If an ARC is returned to you, you must cut it in 2 and send it to the Biometric Immigration Document Management Unit (BIDMU).

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If you grant refugee status, you must request that the claimant returns their ARC. You must also inform the ARC Assurance team to cancel it. If the claimant has been granted another form of leave, then after the claimant is appeals right exhausted you should follow the same process as for those granted refugee status.

If the claimant is appeals right exhausted and no leave has been granted you should request that the ARC is returned, and inform the ARC Assurance team to cancel it. If the card is not returned, then you should update CID to say that the ARC is to be retained when they next report.

Death of a claimant

On the death of an asylum claimant, you should cancel the ARC by informing BIDMU of the cardholder's death and clearly noting CID. Where the card is available, it should be cut up in 2 and [returned to the Biometric Immigration Document Management Unit \(BIDMU\)](#).

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Checklist for application registration card (ARC) production

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ARC assurance checklist

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Images of application registration card

Front of the application registration card (ARC): including work categories:



Reverse of ARC: including age dispute category:

