

B/F PROCEDURES

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Introduction

A caseworker should make their decision on the evidence supplied with an initial application, rather than requesting further information. **Applications must not under any circumstances be approved unless the evidence provided fully justifies that outcome.**

However, if the caseworker considers there are compelling circumstances as to why further information should exceptionally be requested, they should gain agreement from a manager *before* requesting further information and placing the case in b/f.

Cases should not be re-b/f'd

For existing b/f cases, if the applicant fails to provide all items requested by the given deadline the case should be considered on the information received by that date.

Caseworkers should only give b/f extensions where the applicant or representative presents compelling circumstances, such as serious illness or natural disaster. The caseworker should gain agreement from a manager before any extension is given.

Process for cases that are b/f'd

If you have agreement to b/f a case the following procedures should be followed.

A request should be sent out to the applicant asking them to supply the required evidence. Any requests for further information should be noted on the 'comments/actions' screen on Adept. The request should be sent by both e-mail (if an email address has been supplied) and by post. Where it is possible to request the information by telephone, then caseworkers should do so. This is to ensure that we have made reasonable attempts to inform the applicant of the request, and to shorten the length of the b/f process by avoiding possible postal delays. If, after the specified four- or six-week period has expired, no further information has been received then caseworkers should check whether the Data Processing Team has received the information. If the information hasn't been received then the case should be refused three days after the deadline has expired, which will allow for any documents currently within the internal postal system to get to the Team.

Length of time given to supply further information

For applicants in the UK:

The applicant should be given a maximum of **four** weeks to supply the required evidence from the date of the request letter.

For applicants outside the UK:

The applicant should be given a maximum of **six** weeks to supply the required evidence from the date on the request letter.

These timescales are a maximum length. If the caseworker considers that there are reasons why it is unnecessary to give the maximum time period then a shorter period should be given.

For example, if you make telephone request for further information to an in-country applicant, who advises you that they have the information you require and can send it to you promptly, the applicant will not need the maximum b/f period. Therefore the caseworker should give the applicant a suitable period of time (e.g. 2 weeks).

Deadline Extensions

The timescales set out above are applicable to all cases, to ensure that all applicants are treated in the same way. Only in exceptional circumstances will extensions be considered and justifiable reasons should be recorded. You must have agreement from a manager when deciding if an extension is justified.

Applicants should be informed in the information request letter that a decision will be made on their case after the specified time has elapsed and no further evidence is supplied.

Managing the b/f

It is the responsibility of caseworkers and their line managers to monitor their b/f cases and ensure that the appropriate action is taken. If a caseworker is going on leave and b/f deadlines will be reached in their absence, these cases should be passed to their line manager so that they can be actioned. Caseworkers should also make sure that all actions are recorded in the Actions tab of Adept e.g. when a letter is sent, a follow up call is made, information is received. This will help other caseworkers if they have to take over a case.