

Helping British People Overseas Consular services 2016–2020



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Helping British people overseas

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's consular service supports British people around the world when they most need our help. This document sets out how we will continue to build on our work to achieve consular excellence and how we will help British people to be better prepared to travel or live overseas

Over the next four years we will:

- > help reduce the number of preventable incidents before they happen and help minimise the risk to British people overseas;
- > help British people take responsibility for travelling, living and working overseas safely;
- > provide professional and tailored assistance to British people when they most need our help including in times of crisis.

We will continue to invest in our network of professional consular staff so that we continue to provide a high quality service, especially in challenging circumstances focusing on those people who most need our help. We will regularly ask for and respond to feedback from British people who use our services in order to continually improve our service.

Preventing problems

To prepare for their travel, or life overseas, British people need access to the right information.

Our prevention work aims to:

help British people to help themselves; support them to take responsibility for their safety and security while overseas;

and **improve** the ease of access, and in some cases the standards, of the services local authorities overseas can provide when they are needed.

Over the next four years we will:

- > continue to produce public campaigns to outline the key issues that may affect British people who travel, work or live overseas;
- > improve the information we provide on the assistance and services we offer;
- > publish clear and accessible travel advice;
- > work with partner organisations (including some whom we fund), local authorities and other government departments who may be able to provide specialist advice and services;
- > work with local authorities overseas, and in some countries press for improvements, so that British people can access the services they need or may be entitled to;
- > improve our online services and use of social media in order to communicate effectively with the British public;
- > ensure that all of our embassies, high commissions and consulates are ready and able to assist in a crisis; and
- > work with British businesses on crisis preparedness.

Taking personal responsibility

We cannot help reduce or prevent incidents overseas alone. We expect British people to take responsibility for themselves and their safety while overseas by taking some simple steps:

Being aware:

- > read the FCO Travel Advice. Our travel advice provides information to help British people form their own judgements about travelling to or living in a particular country. If they choose to travel to a country where we advise against travel, our ability to help may be limited.

Being prepared:

- > take out appropriate insurance and be aware of what the insurance does and does not cover;
- > ensure they have the means to return to the UK – look after their passport and make sure they are able to support themselves financially while travelling or living overseas;
- > be aware of and know how to access the relevant local services for which they may be entitled (e.g. healthcare, social services, benefits), or have appropriate insurance to cover healthcare and repatriation where there is no entitlement;
- > continue to follow any previous medical advice and take sufficient medication with them while overseas; inform their travel insurance company of any pre-existing medical conditions.

Being respectful:

- > be aware of and respect the standards of behaviour people expect in the country they are visiting.

Our assistance

We understand that no matter how well prepared British people are, they may still find themselves in a difficult or distressing situation overseas. **We are there to help. Our priority is to assist those who are most in need of our help.** This includes people who have been a victim of crime including rape or sexual assault, or torture and mistreatment; those who are hospitalised or arrested; victims of forced marriage; cases involving child protection and murder or manslaughter; and those affected by a crisis, such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

Our network of professional consular staff will:

- > listen carefully;
- > show respect. We expect the same towards our staff;
- > assess the situation and tailor our assistance to the individual and his/her individual circumstances;
- > provide information and advise on available options;
- > help British people to get support from family and friends;
- > direct them to support from local authorities, the police, and local organisations or charities, who have the expertise and ability to meet their needs;
- > liaise with UK government departments and specialist organisations;
- > issue a travel document in an emergency (e.g. if a passport is lost or stolen) if the person is eligible, and depending on their location; and
- > where there is no available alternative, issue or notarise documents required by overseas authorities;
- > be transparent and accountable for the decisions they make.

The nature of our support will vary depending on individual circumstances. We will assess the personal needs of the individual taking into account, for example, the situation they are in, their location, whether they are a traveller or long term resident who may have access to local services. Not all of the assistance provided will be from the UK government. We will decide whether specialist support is needed from our partners, other UK government departments or foreign governments, or, whether in certain circumstances, there is suitable information and services available to British people to help themselves. The support we provide may also differ during a crisis, such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

More information on the type of assistance and services we can and cannot provide is available in our [Support for British nationals abroad: A guide](#).

VISION

To assist British people living, travelling and working around the world when they are most in need

VALUES

Excellence

Our network of professional consular staff will provide a high quality and tailored service

Empathy

We will listen and be respectful

Efficiency

We will deal with enquiries appropriately and efficiently

PREVENTION

COMMITMENT

We want to reduce the number of preventable incidents and help minimise the risk to British people overseas

We will give clear and appropriate information and work with foreign governments and other partners where appropriate

RESPONSIBILITY

We expect British people to

Be aware:

Read FCO travel advice

Be prepared:

Insurance; Passport; Healthcare

Be respectful:

Know and respect the standards of behaviour in the country they are in

We are **available to receive calls 24 hours a day.**

We will **work with partners** to access their support and services.

We will offer an increased choice in how **to access our services.**

We will **use feedback to improve the services we provide.**

ASSISTANCE

COMMITMENT

We are there to help British people when they need us most, including in times of crisis

Our assistance will be professional and tailored to each individual's needs

RESPONSIBILITY

We expect British people to take responsibility for themselves and their safety while overseas

Access their insurance

Be aware of and know how to access the relevant local services they may be entitled to in their location