



Home Office

## **Guide MN1**

Registration as a British citizen – A guide about the registration of children under 18

July 2024

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# Introduction to the Guide

## Who is included in this guide and who is not included

This guide assists children who have not yet reached the age of majority (age 18) to become British citizens under the following sections of the British Nationality Act 1981. Once a child reaches age 18 they will have to apply to naturalise using form and guide AN, or apply in a registration route for adults.

This guide covers the following:

- section 1(3) birth in the UK to parents who are now settled in the UK or have become British citizens
- section 1(3A) birth in the UK to parents who have joined the armed forces
- section 3(1) child whose parents are applying for British citizenship
- section 3(2) birth abroad to parents who are British by descent and have lived in the UK or a qualifying British overseas territory
- section 3(5) birth abroad to parents who are British by descent but are now living in the UK or a qualifying British overseas territory
- section 3(1) – registration at the Home Secretary’s discretion
- section 4D birth abroad to parents serving in the armed forces

It does not cover:

- British overseas territories citizenship – see guide [MN2](#)
- British overseas citizenship – see guide [MN3](#)
- British subjects – see guide [MN4](#)
- Children born outside the UK who are, and always have been, stateless (have no citizenship) see – [guide S](#)
- Children born in the UK who are, and always have been, stateless (have no citizenship) see – [guide S](#)
- Children born in the UK who have lived there for at least the first 10 years of their life – British Nationality Act 1981, section 1(4) – see [guide T](#)
- Children born on or after 4 February 1997 in Hong Kong – see [guide EM](#)
- Children who would have become British citizens automatically if their parents had been married – see [guide UKF](#)

## Citizenship through entitlement and discretion

There are a number of routes for children to apply for British citizenship.

- Some routes give them a right under British nationality law to apply and be registered as British citizens. These are entitlements.
- Other routes allow children to be granted on the decision of the Home Secretary. In these cases, applications must show that the child meets existing criteria that the Home Secretary has already agreed should allow children to be registered as British. Or, in other cases, they should demonstrate that it would be right for the Home Secretary exceptionally to allow a child to be registered as a British citizen because of the compelling nature of the child's circumstances. These are at the Home Secretary's discretion. Further details about discretion are available later in this guide.

The words "entitlement" and "discretion" will be used throughout this guide to describe the different routes.

A parent applying for British citizenship at the same time as their child should consider the possibility that the child may be found to be eligible for registration when their own application will be refused. The application form invites the parent to confirm that, if this is the case, the child should still be registered as a British citizen. If the relevant section is not completed, the child's application will be treated as having been withdrawn at the point when the parent's application is refused. No refund will be given.

## Becoming a British citizen

The contents and the information of this guide says what section of the British Nationality Act 1981 the application might be made under. It will be helpful to us, in processing the application, and to you, in understanding the requirements and what needs to go in the application, if you include in your application which section you think applies to the child on whose behalf you are applying.

Becoming a British citizen is a significant life event. Apart from allowing a child to apply for a British citizen passport, British citizenship gives them the opportunity to participate more fully in the life of their local community as they grow up.

For the application to succeed, you will need to show that the child satisfies any requirements that are set out in British nationality law. Or, if the application is at the discretion of the Home Secretary, you will need to show that it satisfies the agreed criteria which can be seen on the GOV.UK website. If the child does not satisfy legal requirements and agreed policy, you will need to demonstrate why it would be right for the Home Secretary to grant the child British citizenship. This guide tells you what information you will need, and which documents you need to supply.

This guide summarises the legal requirements for applying for registration. There may be some discretion where a child is unable to fully satisfy certain requirements. The way that the Home Secretary exercises this discretion is described in the nationality staff instructions which may be accessed on our [website](#).

It is important that you take care in completing the application and in making sure that you satisfy the requirements for registration.

## What happens to the child's present citizenship?

Before continuing with your application, you must understand 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 seek advice from the country of which the child is a citizen before making your application. If the country of which the child is currently a citizen continues to recognise them as one of its citizens, they may continue to be subject to the duties of citizens of that country when they are in its territory. This may include obligations to undergo military service.

The law covering registration is contained in the British Nationality Act 1981 and the regulations made under it. This guide is intended to help you to apply. It is not a statement about the law or policy. Other information about citizenship and immigration is available on the GOV.UK [website](#).

## OISC 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 Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), an independent body. The provision of such advice is prohibited unless a person works for an organisation registered with, or exempted by, the OISC or is authorised to practice (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 OISC regulated advisers is available on its website at [www.oisc.gov.uk](http://www.oisc.gov.uk).

# Who qualifies for registration?

Children must be under 18 years old when the application is made. Once they reach the age of 18 they must apply for British citizenship as adults, either by registration if they have an entitlement, or by naturalisation. The date of application is the date it is received by the Home Office or the receiving authority. If the child is aged 10 or over they must be of good character.

## Automatic acquisition of British citizenship

Children who have automatically acquired British citizenship do not need to be registered. There are two ways a child can automatically be a British citizen without needing to register. A child who is a British citizen *otherwise than by descent* will be able to pass that status on to their own children born outside the UK. A child who is a British citizen *by descent* will not.

## British citizenship otherwise than by descent

A child born in the UK to a parent who is

- a British citizen, or
- settled in the UK at the time the child is born, or
- a member of the UK armed forces

is automatically a British citizen otherwise than by descent and does not need to be registered. A child born in a British Overseas Territory (other than the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia) after 21 May 2002 will also be a British citizen if, at the time of the birth, either parent is a British citizen, or settled in the United Kingdom, or settled in that particular territory, or is a member of the UK armed forces.

A child who is adopted in the UK and one or both adoptive parents are British citizens will also automatically be a British citizen otherwise than by descent on adoption and does not need to be registered. A child adopted under the 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption may be regarded as a British citizen otherwise than by descent on production of

- the Convention adoption certificate issued on or after 1 June 2003
- evidence that, on the date of the adoption, the adopter or, in the case of a joint adoption, one of the adopters was a British citizen

- evidence that, on the date of the adoption, the adopter or, in the case of a joint adoption, both of the adopters were habitually resident in the United Kingdom or in a territory designated for this purpose.

To be settled, the parent(s) must be free from immigration conditions. Children born in the UK to the following will not automatically become British citizens:

- diplomatic staff of foreign missions who have diplomatic immunity
- members of the armed forces of another country based in or visiting the UK
- in the event of war, children of an enemy alien who is part of an occupying force
- parents who are/were in breach of immigration laws. This may apply to parents who are claiming asylum even if they have been given temporary admission. This applies particularly where asylum seekers entered the UK illegally.

## British citizenship by descent

British citizenship can be passed on to one generation born abroad. So a child born abroad to a parent who is British otherwise than by descent will automatically be British by descent.

The exceptions are

- a child born before 1 July 2006 to a British father and non-British mother who were not married. The child will be able to apply for registration under section 4G using [Form UKF](#).
- A child born on or after 1 July 2006 to a British father and non-British mother, but whose mother was married to someone else at the time of the birth. The child will be able to apply for registration under section 4G using [Form UKF](#).

Children born to parents who are British by descent have no automatic claim to British citizenship. Applications may be made through entitlement under section 3(2) or section 3(5) if children satisfy the requirements for registration. Or they may apply at the Home Secretary's discretion under section 3(1) if there are compelling or exceptional reasons for registering a child as British. The exception to this broad rule is where a child is born abroad to one or more parents who are in Crown service or service designated for this purpose or in Community institution service. In this case, the child will be a British citizen otherwise than by descent. To qualify, the parent must have been recruited in the UK and have been sent to serve abroad. Designated service is agreed by Parliament.



Someone who is a British citizen by descent cannot change their citizenship by applying to be registered or naturalised as a British citizen otherwise than by descent.

## Children of EEA nationals

Some children born in the United Kingdom to EEA and Swiss nationals will be British citizens automatically. However, changes in the law mean that different rules apply depending on when a child was born.

- A child born in the United Kingdom **before 2 October 2000** to an EEA national parent will be a British citizen if the parent was exercising EC Treaty rights at the time of birth. This position was confirmed in statute by the [British Nationality \(Regularisation of Past Practice\) Act 2023](#).
- A child born in the United Kingdom **between 2 October 2000 and 30 April 2006** to an EEA national parent will only be a British citizen if the parent had indefinite leave to remain in the UK at the time of the birth. (This does not apply to EEA nationals with an unconditional right of residence, such as retired people or someone who is unable to work because of incapacity.)
- A child born in the United Kingdom to an EEA national **between 30 April 2006 and 30 June 2021** will be a British citizen if their parent had been in the United Kingdom exercising EC Treaty rights in accordance with the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2006 for more than 5 years or had indefinite leave to remain. From the introduction of the EU Settlement Scheme in August 2018 to **30 June 2021**, a child born in the UK to an EEA national parent will also be British if the parent had indefinite leave to remain (including settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme).
- A child born in the United Kingdom to an EEA national **on or after 1 July 2021** will be a British citizen if
  - their parent had indefinite leave to remain in the UK (including settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme).
  - their parent held permanent residence status under the EEA Regulations and applied to the EU Settlement Scheme before 30 June 2021, and the child was born before the parent was granted indefinite leave to remain.
  - their parent did not have permanent residence status and applied to the EU Settlement Scheme before 30 June 2021 and was granted indefinite leave to remain under that scheme after the child's birth.
  - their parent applied to the EU Settlement Scheme after 30 June 2021, and was granted indefinite leave to remain, and can show there were reasonable grounds for a late application and that they could have met the requirements for EUSS ILR on 30 June 2021.
  - their parent held a Withdrawal Agreement right to reside permanently on the basis of [qualifying activity](#) during the relevant period. The parent in question

must previously have been granted limited leave (also known as pre-settled status) under the EUSS.

The child of an EEA national who did not become a British citizen at birth may now have an entitlement to be registered as a British citizen under section 1(3), if the parent became “settled” here after the birth. The parent will have become “settled” if:

- he or she has been granted indefinite leave in the United Kingdom (this includes ILR granted under the EU Settlement Scheme), or
- he or she was exercising EEA free movement rights in the United Kingdom for a continuous period of 5 years ending on between 30 April 2006 and 30 June 2021.
- he or she has obtained a Withdrawal Agreement right to reside in the UK permanently on the basis of [qualifying activity](#) during the relevant period. The parent in question must previously have been granted limited leave (also known as pre-settled status) under the EUSS

## Entitlement to registration as a British citizen

### Children born in the UK – Section 1(3) and 1(3A) application

Section 1(3) - A child born in the UK whose parents are not British citizens and were not settled in the UK will have an entitlement to register when one of their parents become settled in the UK or become British citizens.

Section 1(3A) - A child born in the UK on or after 13 January 2010 whose parents are not born British citizens and were not settled in the UK will have an entitlement to register if either parent becomes a member of the UK armed forces.

If a child lives in the United Kingdom for the first 10 years of their life, an application can be made under section 1(4). Form T should be used for this purpose.

A child born in the United Kingdom who is and has always been stateless may also qualify on the basis of a period of 5 years residence. Form S3 should be used for this purpose.

Alternatively, a child born in the UK whose parents are not settled in the UK and are not applying for settlement of British citizenship may be registered at the discretion of the Home Secretary.

## Children born abroad to British parents – Section 3(2) or section 3(5) application

This category applies to children who:

- were born outside the United Kingdom
- if born after 21 May 2002, were born outside the UK or a qualifying British Overseas Territory; and
- in either case, were born to a parent who is a British citizen by descent (see [“Automatic acquisition of British citizenship”](#))

The United Kingdom means England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

For the purposes of this guide, the qualifying British Overseas Territories are: Anguilla; Bermuda; British Antarctic Territory; British Indian Ocean Territory; Cayman Islands; Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands; St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia; Turks and Caicos Islands; Virgin Islands.

Children coming under this category have an entitlement to register provided they can satisfy the requirements under either section 3(2) or section 3(5).

### Section 3(2)

A child will qualify under this section if:

- they were born outside the UK
- either of the child’s parents was a British citizen by descent at the time of the child’s birth
- the mother or father of that parent (the child’s grandparent) became, or but for their death would have become a British citizen otherwise than by descent, either:
  - on 1 January 1983
  - at the time of the parent’s birth

The British citizen by descent parent must have lived in the UK (or, if the child was born on or after 21 May 2002, in a qualifying British overseas territory) for a continuous period of 3 years at any time before the child’s birth. During that period they should not have absences exceeding 270 days. The application must be made whilst the child is under 18 years of age.

The 3-year residence requirement for the parent does not need to be met if the child is stateless.

An example of a child who qualifies under section 3(2) is as follows:

- The child's maternal grandfather was born in the United Kingdom in 1949
- The child's mother was born in France in 1970 (and is a British citizen by descent). She lived in the United Kingdom from September 1989 to September 1992 (and was not outside the United Kingdom for more than 270 days during that time)
- The child, born in France in 2009, is not a British citizen but can be registered under section 3(2)

It is important to note that a child registered under this section will be a British citizen by descent and unable to pass British citizenship automatically by descent to any of their children born abroad.

On the other hand, a child registered under section [3\(5\) \(see below\)](#) will be a British citizen otherwise than by descent; any of their children born abroad will be British by descent.

If the family are living abroad, you will need to decide whether to apply under this section. Or, if there is a possibility that the family may return to live in the UK or a British Overseas Territory before the child reaches age 15, whether to wait and apply under section 3(5). You should indicate that you are aware of this by ticking the relevant box on the application.

## Section 3(5)

To qualify under this section the child and their mother and father should have lived in the UK (or qualifying British Overseas Territory if born after 21 May 2002) for a 3-year period ending with the date the application is received. And the child and their parents should be physically present in the UK or the qualifying British Overseas Territory at the start of that period.

The child and their parents must not have been absent from the UK (or the British Overseas Territories if appropriate) for more than 270 days during the 3-year residential period. There is no discretion to disregard absences greater than 270 days.

If the parents' marriage or civil partnership has ended or they are legally separated, then only the child and one parent have to satisfy the residence requirement.

Both parents must consent to the child being registered as a British citizen. If one of the parents has died, then only the consent of the surviving parent is required.

A child registered under this section will be a British citizen otherwise than by descent, which means they can pass on citizenship to their own children.

## **Children born abroad to a parent serving as a member of the UK armed forces - Section 4D application**

A child will qualify if:

- the child was born on or after 13 January 2010
- the child was born outside the UK and the qualifying British overseas territories listed in this guide
- at the time of the child's birth one of their parents was a member of the UK armed forces and was serving outside the United Kingdom and the qualifying British overseas territories
- both parents consent to the child being registered as a British citizen. (If one of the parents has died, then only the consent of the surviving parent is required.)

For the purpose of this guide, "member of the armed forces" means either:

- a member of the regular forces within the meaning of the Armed Forces Act 2006
- a member of the reserve forces within the meaning of the 2006 Act subject to service law by virtue of section 367(2)(a)-(c) of that Act.

However, a person is not regarded as being a "member of the armed forces" if, for example, they are:

- a member of the forces raised in a British overseas territory who is serving, or undergoing training, with the UK armed forces
- a member of another country's armed forces who is attached to the UK armed forces (such as part of a coalition force).

## Children whose parents were not married – sections 4F and 3(1)

Children born before 1 July 2006 whose parents were not married could only acquire British citizenship through their mothers. They could not benefit from their father's British citizenship unless their parents married at a later date.

Children born to a British citizen father on or after 1 July 2006 may acquire citizenship from him even if the parents were not married to each other, and will be a British citizen from birth automatically provided there is satisfactory evidence of paternity. The only exception to this is if the mother was married to someone else at the time of the birth.

The following provisions are for children whose parents were not married:

- a child who would have become British automatically had their parents been married can apply for registration under section 4G – see [Guide UKF](#).
- a child who could meet the requirements for registration under section 1(3), 3(2) or section 3(5) had their parents been married can apply under section 4F, using [Form MN1](#).

If you wish to apply under section 4F you should check to see if the child would meet the requirements for section [1\(3\)](#), [3\(2\)](#), [3\(5\)](#) or [4D](#) if the parents were married.

We may normally register a child, born before 1 July 2006, whose British citizen father was not married to their mother, under section 3(1) if:

- We are satisfied about the paternity of the child
- We have the consent of all those with parental responsibility
- If the child's parents had been married, we would normally have registered under section 3(1)
- There is no reason to refuse on character grounds.

## Paternity

Where the mother was not married at the time of a child's birth and no provision is made through surrogacy arrangements or the female second parent provisions of the HFE Act 2008 as to the identity of the father, the "father" will be any person who is shown to be such by either:

- a birth certificate, issued within one year of the birth, naming the child's father, where the birth was registered before 10 September 2015.

- any other evidence, such as DNA test reports, court orders or birth certificates, the Home Secretary considers to be relevant to the issue of paternity and to constitute sufficient proof.

## Registration at the Home Secretary's discretion – Section 3(1) application

There are some situations where we will normally register a child, which are set out below.

### Children whose parent or grandfather is/was in designated or European Community institution service

“Designated service” is employment which the Home Secretary has decided is closely linked to the activities of the UK government and the government has passed legislation to “designate” it.

There are some instances where a child's parent or grandfather is or was in service which became a European Community institution or designated service after the child's birth. This means that the child did not acquire citizenship automatically, whereas any children born after the designation or admission of the service would. In view of this, we would normally register if either:

- the child was born before the date of designation/admission
- the child's parent became (or would, but for their death, have become) a British citizen otherwise than by descent on the date of designation as a result of the grandfather's service
- the child's parent is a British citizen by descent and was in designated service on the date of application, and in the same service at the time of the birth

and

- the normal section 3(1) criteria relating to consent and good character are met.

### Children adopted abroad by British citizen parents

Applications for registration of children adopted either:

- under the terms of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions
- before 3 January 2014 in territories designated under the Adoption

(Designation of Overseas Adoptions) Order 1973

- after 3 January 2014 in territories listed in the Adoption (Recognition of Overseas Adoptions) Order 2013 or the Adoption (Recognition of Overseas Adoptions) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and the Adoption (Recognition of Overseas Adoptions) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2013.

will be considered at the Home Secretary's discretion if:

- at least one of the adoptive parents is a [British citizen otherwise than by descent](#)
- if necessary, both adoptive parents have signified their consent to the registration
- there is no reason to refuse on character grounds
- we are satisfied that all relevant adoption laws have been adhered to. This includes the laws of the country in which the adoption has taken place, the country of origin of the child and the country in which the adoptive parents are habitually resident
- we are satisfied the adoption is not one of convenience arranged to facilitate the child's admission to the United Kingdom.

If some or all of the criteria set out above are not met, the application will be considered on its merits and the child registered if registration is demonstrably in the child's best interest. Even where the criteria above are met, there may be reason why the child should not be registered, such as the existence of serious doubts about an adoptive parent's character or suitability to adopt a child, or irregularities in the adoption procedure.

You must supply the evidence listed in the section "[Child adopted by a British citizen](#)" of this guide.

The full list of countries recognised for Overseas Adoptions can be found at [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/1801/schedule/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2013/1801/schedule/made).

Applications for registration of children who were adopted abroad in other circumstances will normally be refused. However, all applications will be considered on their merits and the child may be registered as a British citizen if it is demonstrably in the child's best interest. In such cases we would expect confirmation that nothing adverse is known about the child or the parents.

## **Children born to a parent who had renounced and subsequently resumed British citizenship**

A child will come within this category if:



- the mother or father has renounced and subsequently resumed British citizenship
- that parent became a British citizen otherwise than by descent on resumption
- the child was born before the date of resumption
- both parents give their consent to registration (unless good reasons are provided).

## Children applying in line with parents

Children will come within this category if:

- one parent is a British citizen or about to become one through registration or naturalisation
- the other parent (if involved in the child's life) is a British citizen or settled in the UK ("settled" usually means that the parent has indefinite leave to remain in the UK)
- the child has been resident in the UK for the last 2 years - (if the child is under the age of 2 we can accept a shorter residence period, taking into account the age of the child)
- the child is settled in the UK
- both parents give their consent to registration (unless good reasons are provided)
- there is no reason to refuse on character grounds.

## Children with settlement and residence

Children will come within this category if:

- the child has completed a period of lawful residence in the UK of more than 5 years
- the child has been granted settled status in the UK, and held that status for at least 12 months
- the child's parents have completed a period of 5 years residence and are settled in the UK ("settled" usually means that the parent has indefinite leave to remain in the UK)
- both parents give their consent to registration (unless good reasons are provided)
- there is no reason to refuse on character grounds.

## Children who have lived in the UK for more than 10 years

Children will come within this category if:

- the child is in the UK lawfully
- the parents are in the UK lawfully
- both parents give their consent to registration (unless good reasons are provided)
- there is no reason to refuse on character grounds.

## Any other child born to British or non-British parents

It is not possible to cover all circumstances under which the Home Secretary might exercise discretion. However, in considering any application not specifically covered above we will look at all of these:

- the child's connections with the UK – we would expect the child to be free of any restrictions on their stay in the UK
- where the child's future is likely to lie
- the parents' views
- the parents' nationality and immigration status – we expect either both parents to be British citizens or one parent a British citizen and the other parent settled in the UK
- whether the child is of good character
- the length of time the child has lived in the UK – we expect at least 2 years residence (particularly if the child is over the age of 13) – this would be considered along with the other factors above, such as whether the child is settled in the UK
- any compelling circumstances

The way that discretion may be exercised is described in the [Caseworker guidance](#) available for viewing on the GOV.UK website. These guidance documents are used by trained nationality caseworkers and do not constitute a definitive set of criteria for registration. They must be taken as a whole. The fact that children may satisfy certain criteria does not mean they will be registered if there are other criteria that they do not satisfy.

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## Good character

The British Nationality Act 1981 contains a statutory requirement that those seeking to register as British must be of good character, which applies to children aged ten or over.

This means the child must observe UK laws and show respect for the rights and freedoms of its citizens. Checks will be made on children aged 10 years and over to ensure that this requirement is met.

Before you complete this section in respect of a child, you are advised to refer to the good character policy guidance which caseworkers use to decide your application. This is available on the GOV.UK [website](#).

Checks will be carried out to ensure that the information you provide is correct. This may include checks with other government departments such as HM Revenue and Customs. If you are not honest about the information you provide, and they are registered on the basis of incorrect or fraudulent information they will be liable to have their 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.

## Criminality

You must give details of all criminal convictions given to the child, both within the UK and overseas. This includes if the child went to prison, or has received a non-custodial sentence such as a suspended sentence. You should also include any out-of-court disposal such as a fine, a caution, a warning or reprimand, a community sentence, a civil order, a civil penalty, a civil judgment, a hospital order or a restriction order. All fiscal fines must also be disclosed. If you are not sure, you should declare all penalties or orders.

Fixed penalty notices such as those issued under the coronavirus Regulations, or for traffic offences such as speeding or parking tickets must also be disclosed, although will not normally be taken into account unless they have failed to pay and there were criminal proceedings as a result, or they received multiple fixed penalty notices in a short space of time.

Where a fixed penalty notice or fiscal fine in Scotland has been referred to a court due to non-payment, or the notice has been unsuccessfully challenged by the person in court, we will consider it as a conviction and assess it in line with the new sentence imposed.

Drink driving must also be declared. If the child has had any endorsements on their driving licence they must access the [DVLA website](#) to download and print a summary of your record and send it with the application, or provide the paper counterpart.

Criminal record checks will be carried out in all cases. If the child has been charged with a criminal offence and are awaiting trial or sentencing, you are advised not to make any application for the child's registration until the outcome is known.

You must give details of all civil judgments which have resulted in a court order being made against them, as well as any civil penalties under the UK Immigration Acts. For applicants from Scotland any recent civil penalties must also be declared. If the child has been declared bankrupt at any time you should give details of the bankruptcy proceedings. (The application is unlikely to succeed if they are an undischarged bankrupt).

You do not need to give details of family law proceedings such as divorce decrees, dissolved civil partnerships, guardianship orders, and parental responsibility orders made against the child.

You must say if the child's details have been recorded by the police as a result of certain sexual offences, or if they are subject to one of the following orders: notification order, sexual offences prevention order, foreign travel order, risk of sexual harm order (or equivalent order made in a British overseas territory or any other country).

You must say if there is any offence for which the child may go to court, or which is awaiting hearing in court. This includes having been arrested for an offence and waiting to hear if they will be formally charged. If they have been arrested and not told that charges have been dropped, or that they will not have to appear in court, you may wish to confirm the position with the police. You must tell us if they are arrested or charged with an offence after you make their application and while the application is under consideration. You risk prosecution under section 46 of the British Nationality Act 1981 if you do not do so.

## Terrorism and International Crimes

You must say whether the child has had any involvement in terrorism or whether they have been involved in any crimes in the course of armed conflict, including crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide, or if they are the subject of an international travel ban. If you are in any doubt as to whether something should be mentioned, you should mention it.

This guidance is not exhaustive. Before you answer these questions, you should consider the full definitions of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide which can be found in Schedule 8 of the [International Criminal Court Act 2001](#).

Alternatively, copies can be purchased from: [The Stationery Office \(TSO\)](#).

It is your responsibility to satisfy yourself that you are familiar with the definitions and can answer the questions accurately.

**Genocide** - acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

**Crimes against humanity** - acts committed at any time (not just during armed conflict) as part of a widespread or systematic attack, directed against any civilian population with knowledge of the attack. This would include offences such as murder, torture, rape, severe deprivation of liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law and enforced disappearance of persons.

**War Crimes** - grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions committed during an armed conflict. This includes an internal armed conflict and an international armed conflict. The types of acts that may constitute a war crime include wilful killing, torture, extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity, unlawful deportation, the intentional targeting of civilians and the taking of hostages.

**Travel bans** - travel bans restrict the movement of individuals associated with regimes or groups whose behaviour is considered unacceptable by the international community.

**Terrorist Activities** - any act committed, or the threat of action, designed to influence a government or intimidate the public and made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause and which involves serious violence against a person or which may endanger another person's life; creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public; involves serious damage to property; is designed to seriously disrupt or interfere with an electronic system.

**Organisations concerned with terrorism** - an organisation is concerned with terrorism if it:

- commits or participates in acts of terrorism,
- prepares for terrorism,
- promotes or encourages terrorism (including the unlawful glorification of terrorism), or
- is otherwise concerned with terrorism.

## Financial soundness

Among the duties and obligations which you are expected to fulfil is payment of income tax and National Insurance contributions. We may ask H.M. Revenue & Customs for confirmation that the child's tax and National Insurance affairs are in order. When you sign the application form you will be giving your consent for us to approach them.

If a child is liable for income tax but does not pay through PAYE, you must demonstrate that their obligations towards the H.M. Revenue & Customs have been discharged by attaching a Self-Assessment Statement of Account.

You must tell us if the child has ever been declared bankrupt, engaged in fraud in relation to public funds (including claiming public funds to which they were not entitled or were prohibited from accessing, or failing to declare their full circumstances), or have an unpaid NHS debt of £500 or more.

## Deception

You must tell us if the child has ever practised deception in their dealings with the Home Office or other government departments (for example, by providing false information or fraudulent documents).

## What if you consider that you have mitigating factors?

You can also tell us about any genuine, meaningful attempts to change their behaviour and comply with the law. For example, any voluntary or charity work the child participates in, or where they have engaged with programmes or activities aimed at addressing the cause of their offending, such as treatments aimed at reduction of alcohol consumption, drug dependency, or successful engagement with a youth diversion or turning point scheme.

You can tell us about this in the 'special circumstances' box at the end of the application.

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# Citizenship ban

The Illegal Migration Act 2023 introduced a citizenship ban for people who had illegally entered the UK, Jersey, Guernsey or the Isle of Man, or an overseas territory, from 7 March 2023. Regulations that took effect on 23 July 2024 changed the law so that the ban has not taken effect. Applications will now be considered in the usual way, in line with the law and policy set out in this guide.

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# 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

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.

For 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.

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

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

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 the following section of our website: [www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits](http://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits).

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# 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.

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# Documents

## All applications for registration of a child as a British citizen

### Evidence of identity

Either:

- Child's passport or travel document
- Child's birth certificate, showing the parents' names
- Driving licence
- Bank, building society or credit card statement issued to them in the last 6 months.

### Child born abroad to British citizen parents

Provide the following:

- Child's birth certificate showing the parents' names
- Parents' marriage certificate (if the parents are married and the father is a British citizen)
- British parent's birth certificate or passport
- British grandparent's birth certificate, registration or naturalisation certificate or passport
- Grandparents' marriage certificate
- Evidence of residence
  - Section 3(2) – evidence that the British parent lived in the UK for a period of 3 years at some time before the child's birth
  - Section 3(5) – evidence that the child and both parents have lived in the UK for 3 years immediately before the date of application.

### Child adopted abroad by British parents

Provide all of the following:

- The child's birth certificate, or where the child has been abandoned, a certificate of abandonment from the authorities previously responsible for the child

- Evidence of the relevant adoptive parent's claim to British citizenship otherwise than by descent
- The consent of the adoptive parent(s) to the registration
- The Adoption Order
- A contemporary report from the overseas equivalent of the Social Services Department which details:
  - the child's parentage and history, and
  - the degree of contact with the original parent(s), and
  - the reasons for adoption, and
  - the date, reasons and arrangements for the child's entry into an institution or foster placement, and
  - when, how and why the child came to be offered to the adoptive parent(s).
- Evidence of the parents' country of habitual residence.

and either:

- Where the parents are habitually resident in the UK, confirmation from the Department for Education (DfE) (for those in England and Wales), from the Scottish Executive (for those parents in Scotland) or from the Department of Health Social Security and Public Safety – Northern Ireland (for those resident in Northern Ireland) that they have been assessed and approved as eligible to become an adoptive parent
- Where the parents are not habitually resident in the UK, confirmation from the equivalent of the Social Services Department in their country of residence that all relevant adoption laws have been complied with.

## For children living in the UK

Provide the following:

- Child's full birth certificate
- Child's passport of entry to the United Kingdom, and any subsequent passports
- Parents' marriage certificate or civil partnership certificate
- If one of the parents does not agree to registration a letter explaining their reasons
- If the application is being made by a guardian, evidence of their right to do so, such as a deed, will or court order.

Only include children who are not already British.

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# Citizenship Ceremonies

## What the child will have to do

Taking the Oath and Pledge is a legal requirement for successful applicants over 18 years of age, and the point at which they become British citizens.

Children who reach the age of 18 by the time their application is decided will be invited to attend a ceremony. At the ceremony they will be asked to swear or affirm an oath of allegiance to His Majesty the King and to pledge their loyalty to the United Kingdom.

Following this they will be presented with their certificate of registration as a British citizen.

Anyone required to attend who has special needs or concerns about saying the Oath and Pledge in English, should bring these to the attention of the local authority once they have their invitation letter.

When you make contact with the local authority you will be asked a number of questions to establish the child's identity, and checks may be made. If the child does not speak English, you will need to explain to the registrar that the child was registered as a British citizen.

If you reside outside the UK, arrangements will be made for you to make the oath/affirmation and pledge at the British Embassy, High Commission, Consulate, Governor's Office or Lieutenant Governor's Office.

## Will the child understand the ceremony?

If the child cannot speak enough English to understand what will be said they will be expected to take someone with them to interpret. During the ceremony they will be asked to repeat the words of the oath and pledge in English, and are advised to practise saying these words before they attend.

Ceremonies are arranged locally and reflect the particular community to which the child now belongs. They will meet a local dignitary or celebrity and be told something about the area and what can be expected of them as a British citizen.

# 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).

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# 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.

Alternatively, you can get in touch via telephone on 0300 790 6268. You can get in touch Monday to Thursday from 9am to 4:45pm, or Friday, 9am to 4:30pm. Information about call charges can be found [here](#).

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