



Home Office

Biometric Information: introduction

Version 11.0

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About this guidance

This guidance gives officials and persons an introduction to biometric information.

In this guidance:

- **'Official' means:**
 - immigration, nationality and asylum caseworkers
 - immigration and border force officers
- **'A person' means:** applicants, claimants, foreign nationals, persons and dependants

Commercial partners will have their own equivalent definitions of an official.

This guidance provides:

- a background to biometric information:
 - what it is
 - why it is collected
 - how it is used
- information on biometric documentation, including biometric immigration documents (BID), in the form of a person's online evidence of their immigration status (eVisa), a biometric residence permit (BRP) or a biometric residence card (BRC)

The definition of biometric information (biometrics) for immigration purposes is set out in section 15 of the UK Borders Act 2007 as amended by section 12 of the Immigration Act 2014. This standardised the definition of biometric information across the Immigration Acts. It is information about a person's external physical characteristics, such as fingerprints. It also refers to features of the iris as an example, but this is not currently used for immigration purposes. The definition can be extended by order to cover internal features as long as they can be measured externally. It specifically excludes DNA see DNA policy guidance.

A person's biometric information which is relevant for the purpose of this guidance is a facial photograph and up to 10 fingerprints, which can either be captured digitally in the form of a digital photograph of their face, and a scan of their fingerprints or using wet-ink prints and a paper photograph.

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 the Identity Security 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 **11.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **20 January 2025**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Updated the information to reflect that BRPs and BRCs will no longer be issued.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

DNA policy guidance

Background to biometric information

This guidance is primarily for officials and people. It provides the background to the enrolment of biometric information for immigration and nationality purposes.

What is meant by biometrics?

It is information about a person's external physical characteristics, such as fingerprints. It also refers to features of the iris as an example, although this is not currently used for immigration purposes. A person's biometric information which is relevant for the purpose of this guidance is a photograph of their face, and images of their fingerprints.

Why we use biometrics

Biometrics play a significant role in delivering security and facilitation in the border and immigration system. The biometrics that we currently use (facial image and fingerprints) enable quick and robust identity assurance and suitability checks on foreign nationals' subject to immigration control, delivering 3 broad outcomes:

- establishing an identity through fixing a person's biographic details (for example, name, date of birth, nationality) to biometric data
- verifying a person accurately against an established identity
- matching people to other datasets (for example, against watchlists or fingerprint collections) to establish their suitability for an immigration product

Biometrics are required as part of an application for an immigration product, such as a visa or biometric immigration document, from a person subject to immigration control. They are also taken from peoples who claim asylum, are in the UK but require leave, are unlawfully in the UK, are arrested or detained under the Immigration Acts, are granted immigration bail, lacks adequate documentation to establish their identity and nationality and those subject to being deported from the UK.

Legislative background

The [Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#) set out the legal basis for taking biometric information from people who are to be removed or deported, people who arrive in the United Kingdom and cannot produce a document establishing identity, nationality or citizenship, and people on immigration bail.

The [UK Borders Act 2007](#) provides legislative powers to make regulations to enable the Home Office to issue 'biometric immigration documents' (BID), which are commonly issued in the form of an eVisa. Previously, BIDs were issued as a physical document known as a biometric residence permit (BRP). BRPs are no longer issued but some people may still hold one, which may have expired.

Since 2008 it has been a requirement for people subject to immigration control, who are applying for leave exceeding 6 months, must also apply for the issue of a BID and register their biometric information as part of that process. Until October 2024 this would have been in the form of a BRP. Most BRPs expired on 31 December 2024.

The [Immigration \(Biometric Registration\) Regulations 2008](#) set out the legal basis for taking biometric information from people making an application for a BID. Since July 2021, a BID can also be issued as a vignette containing a facial image or in electronic form (eVisas), which will appear as a person's online evidence of their immigration status.

Since April 2015 it has been a requirement for citizenship applications to provide biometric information. Some applications for evidence of a right to reside under EU law (see below) also had to provide biometric information, but applications under that scheme closed at the end of December 2020.

[Part IIA of the British Nationality \(General\) Regulations 2003 \(as amended\)](#) sets out the legal basis for taking biometric information from people who are applying to be registered or naturalised as a British citizen.

[The Immigration \(Provision of Physical Data\) Regulations 2006](#) set out the legal basis for taking biometric information as part of immigration applications, where a person is not required to apply for a BID.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#)

[UK Borders Act 2007](#)

[Part IIA of the British Nationality \(General\) Regulations 2003 \(as amended\)](#)

[The Immigration \(Biometric Registration\) Regulations 2008](#)

[The Immigration \(Provision of Physical Data\) Regulations 2006](#)

What are biometric immigration documents (BID)

A BID is a document which was introduced in the Immigration (Biometric Registration) Regulations 2008 as one secure and easily verified proof of permission to be in the UK which helps to reduce identity abuse. In the past, BIDs have been more commonly referred to as biometric residence permits (BRPs) or issued in the form of a vignette containing a facial image, which are physical documents, but since 1 July 2021 they are issued in electronic form, known as eVisas. They can also now be issued as a vignette containing a facial image.

Biometric Residence Permits

BRPs were issued in the UK to people who are subject to immigration control and have not been granted status under the Withdrawal Agreement to confirm their permission to stay for a period which, together with any preceding period of leave, exceeds 6 months.

However, since 2018, UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) has gradually replaced physical immigration documents with digital proof of immigration status in the form of an eVisa, for customers already living in the UK and new visa customers too. Most BRPs expired on 31 December 2024.

A person automatically made an application for a BRP if they made an application for leave for longer than 6 months or apply for entry clearance for longer than 6 months. We now issue BIDs in the form of eVisas to replace BRPs. This means people will now get an eVisa instead of a BRP. A person must, in most circumstances, enrol their biometrics for visa purposes, which were then used in the BRP, and now the eVisa. Further information about the requirement to enrol biometrics will be provided in the updated biometric enrolment guidance.

People whose BRP is lost, stolen or damaged must report their cards lost, stolen or damaged must still notify UKVI about their card at [Biometric residence permits \(BRPs\): If your BRP is lost or stolen](#) and must register for a UKVI account to obtain an eVisa, if they still have outstanding immigration permission. They can find out about registering for an account at: [Get access to your eVisa: Overview](#).

BRPs were valid for the duration of the person's limited leave, or for up to a maximum of 10 years or 5 years if the person is under 16 years old. BRPs have now been replaced and most physical documents expired at the end of 2024.

A person who made an application from overseas will receive an entry clearance vignette, which they will collect from the Visa Application Centre. They will be asked to create a UKVI account once they arrive in the UK to access their eVisa. A person who made their application from within the UK will receive an eVisa which they can access through their UKVI account.

People must update their account whenever they obtain a new travel document, so they can use their eVisa to travel in and out of the UK.

We have rolled out eVisas incrementally across different routes, both for in country and out of country applications. By 2025, almost all physical immigration products and services will be replaced with an eVisa.

A BRP can be used for identification purposes for up to 18 months after it expires and will show the immigration status and entitlements of the individual held in the UK while it was valid. They are highly secure standalone polycarbonate cards, containing biometric information and immigration status in a tamperproof chip embedded in the document. An expired BRP does not necessarily mean that the person's permission has also expired. Anyone holding an expired BRP but still has valid permission in the UK are encouraged to create a UKVI account to access their eVisa, if they have not already created their UKVI account. The person can create a UKVI account to access their eVisa online at: [Get access to your online immigration status \(eVisa\)](#).

The BRP also includes the conditions of leave, but cannot be used to establish whether the individual has any right to work, such checks must be conducted using the [view and prove service](#).

A BRP enables the holder to:

- provide proof of immigration status in the UK
- prove identity for immigration purposes
- access the online service to prove their [right to work](#) and share their right to work information with potential employers
- access our online service to prove their [right to rent](#) private rented accommodation and share their right to rent information with potential landlords

Employers and landlords then use the online checking services to [View a job applicant's right to work details](#) and [View a tenant's right to rent in England](#), respectively, where a person has shared their status information.

However, how they prove their status will change from 2025 and they should take action to create a UKVI account to access their eVisa before their BRP expires.

eVisa

An eVisa is a digital form of Biometric Immigration Document and provides the individual with online evidence of their immigration status. It also contains the individual's facial image and full name.

People with an eVisa can view their immigration status online using the [View and prove your immigration status](#) service, and share relevant information about their immigration status and rights and entitlements with others. For further information about this service and who can use see: [View and prove your immigration status \(eVisa\)](#).

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[Biometric residence permits](#)

[View and prove your immigration status](#)

Retention and usage of biometric information

[Prove your right to work to an employer](#)

[Prove your right to rent in England](#)

[View a job applicant's right to work details](#)

[View a tenant's right to rent in England](#)

[eVisa guide](#)

What is a biometric residence card (BRC)?

This page tells officials and people what is meant by the term biometric residence card.

European Economic Area (EEA) Rights BRCs were previously issued in the UK to people from outside the EEA or Switzerland who made an application and had a right to reside in the UK because of an enforceable European Union law right or any provision made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. The Immigration (Provision of Physical Data) Regulations 2006 (as amended) set out the legal basis for taking biometric information for cards issued under the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2006 ('the EEA Regulations'). Since January 2021, people can no longer apply for an EEA Rights BRC.

Since 2018 the Home Office has issued EU Settlement Scheme BRCs under Appendix EU of the Immigration Rules to non-EEA nationals granted pre-settled and settled status. The [Immigration \(Provision of Physical Data\) \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018](#) set out the legal basis for taking biometric information from people applying to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Foreign nationals from outside the EEA who were able to live and work in the UK based on rights derived from EU law before 31 December 2020 and those who have been granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme may hold either an EEA Rights BRC or an EU Settlement Scheme BRC. The non-EEA family members of EEA citizens with status under the EUSS receive an EU Settlement Scheme BRC, if they do not already have an EEA Rights BRC, together with access to their eVisa.

The Home Office stopped issuing BRCs from 31 October 2024. Most applicants will only receive an eVisa after this date and most BRCs and FWP cards expired at the end of 2024, but a small number of BRPs and BRCs issued before 2021, may show a later expiry date.

The BRC cannot be used to establish whether the individual has any right to work or rent, but can be used to enable checks using the [view and prove service](#).

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[Immigration \(Provision of Physical Data\) \(Amendment\) \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2018](#)

eVisa overseas process

This page tells officials what they need to do to ensure people who are granted entry clearance can enter the UK to register for a UKVI account to obtain an eVisa. This page does not apply to people who use the [UK Immigration: ID Check app](#).

People applying for entry clearance of over 6 months **must**, in most circumstances, enrol their biometric information and will be issued with an Entry Clearance vignette (until early / mid 2025). They will be asked to create a UKVI account when they arrive in the UK in order to access their eVisa. Further information about the requirement to enrol biometrics is set out in the biometric enrolment guidance at [Biometric information - enrolment](#). The UKVI account registration forms part of the individual's application to come to the UK.

You **must** issue successful people with a 90-day short term biometric entry clearance visa in their travel document to allow them to come to the UK. The visa will start from the date the individual gave on their application form that they would travel to the UK. Once the person is in the UK, they will be able to create their UKVI account and access their eVisa.

If a person does not travel before their 90-day short term biometric entry clearance visa expires, they will need to apply for a replacement by completing the online form. They will normally be required to pay a fee to replace an expired entry clearance visa and, in most circumstances, will need to make an appointment to resubmit their biometric information as we cannot reuse biometric from people applying from overseas.

Resettlement refugees

Refugees coming to the UK through the resettlement process must be given a visa valid for up to 6 months showing leave outside the Immigration Rules (LOTR) and they will be assisted to register for their UKVI account to obtain their eVisa.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[UK Immigration: ID Check app](#)

[Non-compliance with the biometric registration regulations](#)

Alternatives to customer collection at a Post Office

Coming to the UK

A person's short-term biometric entry clearance visa or eVisa is evidence of their permission to come to and enter the UK. A person **must** have one of these documents and their travel document when entering the UK.

Use of eGates by nationalities authorised to use them

As well as British citizens, some other nationalities are authorised to use eGates. Further information about those nationalities and when they can use eGates is set out in the [use of eGates for quicker entry](#) section of the [guide to faster travel through the UK border](#).

There are some instances where people **must** see a Border Force officer to get their passport stamped if they are coming to the UK. Further information about when this applies is set out in the [getting your passport stamped by a Border Force officer](#) section of the [guide to faster travel through the UK border](#).

Related content

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Related external links

[International Civil Aviation Organization \(ICAO\)](#)

[Use of eGates for quicker entry](#)

[Getting your passport stamped by a Bord Force officer](#)

[Guide to faster travel through the UK border](#)

Biometrics and citizenship applications

This page tells officials why people for registration or naturalisation as a British citizen must submit their biometrics and what to do when a person becomes a British citizen.

Under part IIA of the British Nationality (General) Regulations 2003 (as amended in 2015) anyone applying for registration or naturalisation as a British citizen **must**, in most circumstances, provide their biometric information (facial image and fingerprints) as part of their application. This information will be used to verify the identity of the individual and is checked against any previous biometric enrolments including the fingerprint records held by the police. Children under the age of 5 **must not** provide fingerprints but **must** have a digital photo taken of their face.

You **must** delete any sets of fingerprints taken as part of the citizenship application or provided as part of any previous immigration function or nationality application after confirmation the individual was granted British citizenship. You **must** delete the facial image after the individual concerned has been issued with a UK passport confirming them as a British citizen.

You **must** not issue people with a new BID, but they will be allowed to retain their current BID while their application is decided.

You **must** cancel the BRP of new British citizens, if they hold one, and they **must** return it to the Home Office using the address below:

BRP Returns
PO Box 195
Bristol
BS20 1BT

If a person fails to return their BRP after they have become a British citizen, they may be issued with a financial penalty.

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