



Home Office

Nationality procedures: priority treatment requests

Version 3.0

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About this guidance

This guidance tells nationality caseworkers about the handling of requests for priority treatment of citizenship applications.

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 Nationality 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 Review, Atlas and Forms team.

Publication

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

- version **3.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **12 February 2025**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Changes to the [Criteria for priority](#) section. Small updates made to other sections.

Related content

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Requests for priority made by ministers

The first consideration is whether the request for priority has come from a minister and if they are dealing with it:

- as a constituency matter
- in their ministerial capacity

When a minister wishes to raise a case as a constituency MP they must write from their constituency office, to the responsible minister and you must deal with their letter in the same way as any other MP's case. The minister raising the case must not make the decision on the case. A second minister must be designated to deal with the constituency cases of the minister. If a constituency case goes to a minister's private office, they must keep a record of when it arrived, and any action that was taken on it.

It is appropriate for ministers to look into cases that are drawn to their attention by MPs, representative groups or by individuals that write to, or approach them, in their ministerial capacity. The correct procedure is to send the case to the relevant minister to respond. In all cases the minister's private office must record when and where the case was raised, and what action was taken.

Care needs to be taken with cases in which a minister has a personal interest or connection, such as if they concern family, friends or employees. If a minister wishes to raise questions about the handling of such a case, they must write to the minister responsible, and must make clear their personal connection or interest. The minister responsible for the case must ensure that the enquiry is dealt with following the correct procedures, and no special treatment occurs. A full audit trail must be recorded throughout the process.

Applications for registration

When a request is made, and the reasons given meet the [criteria for priority](#), it should be dealt with appropriately.

Where the priority request relates to a minor registration application associated with a parent's application for naturalisation, the request should be considered as follows:

- where the application is not dependent on the outcome of the parent's application, such as applications made under [section 1\(3\) of the British Nationality Act 1981](#) the application can be given priority
- where the outcome is dependent on the outcome of the parent's application, such as some applications under [section 3\(1\) of the British Nationality Act 1981](#) the application must only receive priority treatment in exceptional circumstances

Applications for naturalisation

It is possible to provide priority to naturalisation applications, if the circumstances in the [criteria for priority](#) are met. The degree of priority will depend on the nature of the case, and the stage that it has reached. For most, the only priority that must be given is that you agree to start enquiries on the application. Where an application is nearing completion it can be possible to deal with the request fairly quickly. In other cases, it may not be possible to meet a deadline, and you must explain this to the customer. You must not give the customer a specific date when the application will be completed. In appropriate cases the travel document centre may be able to help customers, if they are unable to obtain documentation from their own authorities. No such undertaking should be given without first consulting with the travel document centre.

Criteria for priority

When deciding to agree a request for priority, you must consider whether there is evidence that the case has been mishandled or overlooked. If the case is more than 12 months old, but the delay is justifiable, priority should not be given.

We can, in addition, consider granting a measure of priority in circumstances where a customer:

- is unable to make journeys necessary for compassionate or business reasons on existing documents
- has compelling or compassionate circumstances where they may need to travel to the UK quickly
- is approaching their 18th birthday and may be unable to make the oath of allegiance and pledge as an adult
- can show that they require British citizenship for a particular job
- wishes to represent the UK internationally in a sport or other event, (confirmation should be obtained confirming the customer meets a sufficient calibre) such cases may attract publicity and must be referred to the chief caseworker in the first instance
- is in the immediate family of a civil servant posted, or soon to be posted, abroad
- has already been significantly inconvenienced as a result of administrative error by the Home Office
- has secured the agreement of a minister to priority consideration
- has been invited to make a fresh application (where the decision to refuse previously might have been made sooner but for an oversight by the Home Office), and the new application has been received within a reasonable time of receipt of the refusal letter
- has demonstrated that it would be in the national interest to consider an application out of turn despite the circumstances being otherwise undeserving

Evidence justifying priority consideration must be called for at your discretion, subject to the proviso that, as far as possible, we avoid becoming involved in protracted correspondence about whether an application merits priority or not.

In cases where there is a compelling Home Office business need, we can consider granting priority.

Requests for priority in advance of an application

In certain cases, it may be decided that an application, made at some time in the future, should be granted a degree of priority. In such cases, you must notify the customer of that decision in writing and advised when submitting their application, to enclose a copy of that letter.

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use only.

Official – sensitive: end of section

Related content

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