



Home Office

Transfer or refer a case

Version 34.0

This guidance tells caseworkers, entry clearance officers and Home Office officers how to transfer or refer a case to another unit.

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About this guidance

This guidance tells you about how to transfer or refer a case to another unit.

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:

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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 **34.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **26 April 2025**

Changes from last version of this guidance

New details around how to refer cases to NRPC with section 120 grounds.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Initial checks

This page tells you which initial checks must be done before transferring or referring a case.

Caseworkers must carry out the following checks before referring a case. The safeguard and promote child welfare page explains your duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and tells you where to find out more Information.

Check Atlas Person Alerts

Find the person on Atlas. Go to the Person Summary View (PSV). Go to the biographic strap and under the name of the person there will be a square. If there are no alerts, the square will be grey and there will only be 'add an alert' visible in it.

If there are alerts, the square will be purple, the numbers of the open and closed alerts will show and there will be a 'view alerts' clickable link. To view the alerts, click on 'View alerts'.

If there is a 'team interest alert' you must click the cross to expand this. If you see the instruction 'contact case owner – Foreign National Offender Returns Command' you must email FNO Returns Command Intake and Triage Inbox.

The central reference system (CRS)

CRS must always be checked for local alerts and the details must be actioned as necessary.

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[Referring cases to criminal casework](#)

European casework: North West region only

This page tells caseworkers in the North West region only how to follow the nationally agreed harm matrix as part of the Euro case consideration.

For all other regions, you must follow the process that your team has in place for these cases.

Applications from European Economic Area (EEA) Nationals: EEA 1 / EEA 3 case types

Cases assessed as a harm A category which meet the criminal casework (CC) threshold must immediately have case ownership transferred to CC.

Cases assessed as a harm A category which do not meet the CC threshold must be referred to the regional case ownership team.

Cases assessed as harm B or C must have the ownership closed on CID and the file sent to layby or to the relevant unit for any further action.

Applications from third country nationals: EEA 2 / EEA 4 case types

Cases assessed as a harm A category which meet the CC threshold must immediately have case ownership transferred to CC.

Cases assessed as a harm A category which do not meet the CC threshold must be referred to the regional case ownership team.

Cases assessed as harm B or C must have ownership transferred to the relevant regional case ownership unit for them to take forward any enforcement action.

For more information see:

- [European casework process diagram](#)

For information on how refer a case to CC see: [Referring cases to criminal casework](#).

For information on how to transfer a case to NRPC non-detained see: [How to refer cases to National Returns Progression Command \(non-detained\)](#).

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How to refer cases to National Returns Progression Command (NRPC)

This page tells you which cases are managed by NRPC and how to refer cases to them.

NRPC deals with individuals who are in the UK without permission to stay, whether they are detained or not detained, progressing the return of such to their country of origin or a safe third country.

NRPC Detained Returns are responsible for conducting bail reviews and considering the submissions made by those in detention. NRPC non-detention teams manage the cases of non-detained immigration offenders without a right to remain in the UK, and families through the family returns process.

Where cases have a right of appeal or are entitled to apply for an administrative review, NRPC will not take ownership of the case until all appeal rights have been exhausted or the administrative review concluded. Where cases do not have a right of appeal or an administrative review, NRPC will take ownership of the case at the point of refusal.

NRPC will not accept new asylum claims. Further representations on cases previously refused asylum are only accepted in family cases that are already in the family returns process or in those cases where the claim has been refused and no further appeal is pending or the claim has been withdrawn.

Acceptance criteria

To refer a case to NRPC, the following criteria must be met:

- appeal rights exhausted
- no outstanding administrative review
- no asylum cases unless the claim has been withdrawn by the person or the claim has been refused and no appeal rights are pending
- no stateless applications unless there is an agreed valid emergency travel document (ETD) or passport that can be used to arrange removal
- no outstanding applications unless there is an out of time human rights claim or the case requires reconsideration by NRPC
- no criminal case where the individual has been sentenced to more than 1 day's custodial sentence
- no criminal deportation cases where the individual has been sentenced to more than 1 day's custodial sentence
- no ongoing status in the UK (such as extant leave or exempt from immigration control)
- no detained cases

Referral process: Compliance and Enforcement (C&E) card ownership

Before referring a case to NRPC, all necessary safeguarding actions must have been completed.

Most cases can be referred to NRPC through changing ownership of the C&E card on Atlas to show the business area as 'RP Operational Support Team'. The business unit field should be left blank. Where there is no C&E card on Atlas, one will need to be created.

The only exceptions to referring a case via case ownership include urgent referrals, cases with section 120 grounds, certain financially supported cases, those with a severe medical condition and referrals to the Family Returns Unit (FRU).

Urgent cases

If a case requires urgent consideration, you must email NRPC Operational Support Queries, setting out the reasons for the urgency.

Section 120 grounds raised

When Immigration Compliance & Enforcement (ICE) or Reporting & Offender Management (ROM) receive section 120 grounds you must:

1. Upload the section 120 grounds to 'View and Record Communications' relating to the C&E card.
2. Expand the C&E card on the PSV on Atlas using the plus symbol and click on 'View case details' then click on the 'Manage Case' drop-down and select 'Review Barrier' from the drop-down list. Select 'Go' to proceed.
3. Select who the Review Barrier is for by using the tick-box.
4. In the box 'Add any other referral information' add the reasons why you are making the referral.
5. Under 'Is this a self-referral?' select 'No'.
6. Under the drop-down 'Which business area do you want to refer to?' enter 'RP Core Casework'.
7. Under 'Select the business unit to send this request to' enter 'IE, Returns, RP, Core Casework, Team 14'.
8. Under 'What is the deadline for this request' set due date at 10 working days.
9. Leave the time field as the default.

10. Select 'Save and complete'.

Those receiving financial support from the local authority (LA)

There are 2 options for how to refer the case of someone receiving financial support. The option you select will depend on the circumstances of the case, as detailed below.

If an individual has been receiving financial support for less than 1000 days or the individual does not have a severe medical condition, or if a family are receiving financial support, the case must be referred by updating ownership of the C&E card on Atlas to show the business area as 'RP Operational Support Team'. The business unit field should be left blank. Where there is no C&E card on Atlas, one will need to be created.

For individuals who are not part of a family unit who have been in receipt of LA support for 1000 days or more or who have a severe medical condition you must:

1. Expand the C&E card on the PSV on Atlas using the plus symbol and click on 'View case details' then click on the 'Manage Case' drop-down and select 'Review Barrier' from the drop-down list. Select 'Go' to proceed.
2. Select who the Review Barrier is for by using the tick-box.
3. In the box 'Add any other referral information' add the reasons why you are making the referral.
4. Under 'Is this a self-referral?', select 'No'.
5. Under the drop-down 'Which business area do you want to refer to?' enter 'RP Core Casework'.
6. Under 'Select the business unit to send this request to', enter 'IE, Returns, RP, Core Casework, Senior Caseworkers'.
7. Under 'What is the deadline for this request', set due date at 10 working days.
8. Leave the time field as the default.
9. Select 'Save and complete'.

You must then email the NRPC Senior Caseworkers via the NRPC SCW inbox providing a brief case summary and any supporting evidence which has been submitted. Once an email has been sent, upload your email to 'View and Record Communications' on Atlas.

Files

At the point of signposting a case to returns preparation, the file must either be retained by the referring team or sent to Iron Mountain Storage. Files must not be sent to returns preparation. If the case is accepted by returns preparation, they will request the file at a later date.

Related content

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Referrals to the family returns unit (FRU)

This page tells you how to refer a case to the FRU.

Cases where there is at least one removable adult with at least one dependant child (aged under 18) must be transferred to the FRU for managing through the family returns process.

Acceptance criteria

Before you can refer a case to the FRU, it must meet the following requirements:

- appeal rights exhausted
- no outstanding administrative review
- no outstanding judicial reviews (unless referred by litigation teams and action is required by National Returns Progression Command (NRPC) to conclude the judicial review)
- no outstanding applications
- no criminal deportation cases
- notice of liability to removal, such as Notice of Liability or equivalent, served on all individuals and this updated on Atlas
- be barrier free
- have valid travel document or emergency travel document (ETD) applied for, agreed in principle within next 10 to 12 weeks or able to be obtained within 10 to 12 weeks for all family members, if documents have been agreed the ETD agreement must still be valid
- all dependants liable to removed added to the main applicant's C&E card
- a family welfare form (ICD.3629) created under the main applicant's C&E card

Making a referral to FRU

1. Expand the C&E card on the PSV on Atlas using the plus symbol and click on 'View case details' then click on the 'Manage Case' drop-down and select 'Review Barrier' from the drop-down list. Select 'Go' to proceed.
2. Select who the Review Barrier is for by using the tick-box.
3. In the box 'Add any other referral information' add the reasons why you are making the referral.
4. Under 'Is this a self-referral?', select 'No'.
5. Under the drop-down 'Which business area do you want to refer to?' enter 'RP Family Returns Unit'.

6. Under 'Select the business unit to send this request to', enter 'IE, Returns, RP, Family Returns Unit (FRU) & Appeals, FRU, FRU Gatekeeping and Tasking Team'.
7. Under 'What is the deadline for this request', set due date at 10 working days.
8. Leave the time field as the default.
9. Select 'Save and complete'.

Whilst you await FRU reviewing the task, and if your area manages cases through Calendar Events on Atlas, you must do this. You must consider closing your open calendar event until the case has been accepted by the receiving unit.

If the referral is accepted into FRU, then you should close your Calendar Event. The FRU gatekeeper will change ownership of the C&E card.

Refused referral

If the referral is rejected by FRU in Atlas, you must clear the refused referral task, continue to work the case, and add a calendar event.

If FRU refuse your Review Barrier referral, you will receive a 'Refused Referral' task which you must action. This will be visible in the 'Outstanding Tasks' strap at the top of the PSV.

1. Open the 'Refused Referral' task.
2. You will be able to see a summary of why the referral was refused.
3. You will be required to click the tick box 'I acknowledge I have read the above'. When you have ticked this, select 'Save and complete'.
4. Take further actions on your case depending on what the reasons for the refused referral were and update 'Calendar Events' (if you use them).

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Referring cases to criminal casework

This page gives information to all Home Office staff about the procedures that must be followed when referring an application to criminal casework (CC).

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Criminal casework: contact details

This page gives contact details for criminal casework (CC).

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Duty telephone lines

The duty telephone numbers are available to foreign national offenders, their representatives and our strategic partners. The numbers provide a contact point for the team when the named case owner is not known or is unavailable and will carry an out of hours message advising callers that the office is closed and giving details of normal opening hours.

Teams and / or location	Telephone number
Croydon casework teams - 3, 5, 6, 9, 10	020 8253 6455
Croydon casework teams - 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25	020 8253 6202
Croydon casework teams – 1, 11, 12, 13, 14	020 8760 1457
Croydon security and special cases unit European Economic Area Mentally disordered offenders Casework teams – 4 and 16	020 8760 8041
Liverpool	0151 213 2168
Leeds	0113 341 3373

Related content

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Referring a case to special cases

This page tells Home Office staff how to transfer a case to special cases (SC).

Before carrying out this process, all [initial checks](#) must be completed.

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Making a counter-terrorism referral

This page tells Home Office staff how to make a counter terrorism referral.

Before carrying out this process, all [initial checks](#) must be completed.

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Making a referral to a regional intelligence unit

This page tells Home Office staff how to make a referral to regional intelligence units.

For the current process for referring a case to intelligence hubs use the Intelligence referral form.

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Refer or defer entry clearance cases

This page tells entry clearance officers (ECOs) how to handle referrals and deferrals for visa applications made outside the UK.

Entry clearance cases: what is a referral or deferral?

What is a referral?

A referral is where an application is referred to Home Office visas and immigration for a decision.

The majority of decisions will be made at post. It is important that posts do not make a decision locally on applications that do not fall within the Immigration Rules without referring.

Once a referral has been made, posts cannot make any decision on that application but must wait until they get a response.

If a referral leads to the refusal of entry clearance, any subsequent appeal must be handled by the section which refused the referred application, including authority to issue a visa outside the Immigration Rules.

If referred casework unit (RCU) decides that an application does not meet the relevant criteria, posts must draft the refusal notice using the suggested wording provided by RCU and handle any subsequent appeal.

After a referral has been made to RCU, the applicant may appeal the decision and provide additional evidence of compelling compassionate circumstances and the case will now meet the criteria. In these cases, the ECO can refer the case back to RCU for consideration outside the Immigration rules.

What is a deferral?

A deferral is when posts delay making a decision on an application because they require more information or advice.

For more information, see: [when to defer an application](#).

Entry clearance cases: when to refer an application

You must refer categories of entry clearance applications, listed in [the mandatory referrals](#), to Home Office visas and immigration for a decision. You must decide all other applications, including those that have been deferred, unless the case is particularly unusual or difficult.

You must not use the referral procedure solely as a means of passing the responsibility for a decision in a difficult case to London. To refer a case which can be decided locally wastes resources and delays decision making.

For contact details of where to refer or defer applications see [contacts for referred and deferred cases](#).

Entry clearance cases: when to defer an application

You can defer an application when it requires additional information from Home Office visas and immigration.

In addition, an application can be deferred in order to obtain specialist policy advice from the Entry Clearance Complex Case Advice team.

For contact details of where to refer or defer applications, see [contacts for referred and deferred cases](#).

Entry clearance cases: mandatory referrals

A mandatory referral must always be referred to another team to make an immigration decision.

An application which is a mandatory referral on nationality grounds can be refused locally, if it does not meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

Referred casework unit (RCU)

Certain categories of application that do not fall within the Immigration Rules must be referred to RCU. These include:

- other dependent relatives, for example, not the spouse, civil partner, unmarried partner, or child under 18 of persons with humanitarian protection (HP)
- all dependants of persons with discretionary leave, who do not yet have indefinite leave to remain, where there are compelling compassionate circumstances for applications to be considered outside the Immigration Rules
- relatives of persons with refugee status, who do not meet the requirements of paragraph 352A and 352D, where the ECO is satisfied that there are compelling compassionate circumstances for applications to be considered outside the Immigration Rules
- family of minors who have been recognised as refugees in the UK, where there are compelling compassionate circumstances for applications to be considered outside the Immigration Rules
- appeals allowed only on human rights grounds
- applications from potential or matched organ donors (for more information, see: [Medical issues](#))
- witnesses to attend trial in the UK if they do not meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules as a visitor
- Foreign and Commonwealth and former Gurkha service personnel

- in cases that are high profile and posts are considering refusing because approving the application would be non-conducive to the public good, or where there is media interest, you must:
 - refer to RCU as soon as possible after the application has been received
 - clearly mark the case for the attention of a senior caseworker with the date the applicant intends to travel
 - fully complete the appropriate form to assist with consideration of the case
- issuing a European Union uniform format form (EU UFF) to persons who do not hold another form of acceptable identification: if the applicant is coming to the UK for the first time for family reunion or settlement, posts can issue the UFF without reference to RCU
- cases that have been discussed with operational managers and further clarification of the Immigration Rules or guidance is needed

Entry clearance cases: how to refer or defer an application

To refer or defer an application you must:

- decide which team is best placed to deal with the referral or deferral
- complete the appropriate pro forma in full as a word document: any incomplete referrals or deferrals, including where the pro forma is missing, will be returned to post
- send the referral or deferral pro forma to the relevant mailbox: to avoid referrals being overlooked, emails must not be sent to a named individual and the lead contact must only be used where excessive delays have occurred and the case becomes urgent
- note in the subject line of the email:
 - the visa application form (VAF) number
 - a brief description of the query
 - your post details
- scan and attach any relevant documents to the email, such as court orders or social services reports: if scanning is not possible, you must either:
 - obtain authorisation from the relevant team to fax the documents, which must be done in numbered batches of no more than 15 pages at a time, with each numbered bundle stating how many pages it contains
 - consider sending documents by bag
- provide a detailed summary of the application, highlighting the main issues
- include details of any exceptional compelling compassionate circumstances that warrant consideration outside the rules
- make an initial recommendation on the outcome based on your assessment of the evidence available (referred casework unit (RCU) referrals)
- have in place a referrals mailbox to receive replies
- check the mailbox daily and make sure all appropriate staff have access as this will avoid duplication of work
- use the 'bring up' system in Proviso for all referred or deferred cases
- send any reminders to the appropriate team mailbox and identify the email as a chaser (for example, chaser 1 or chaser 2)

Entry clearance cases: contacts for referred and deferred cases

Referred casework unit (RCU)

All applications mentioned in the section: [Categories that are mandatory referrals](#) must be referred to RCU.

Evidence and enquiry (E and E)

E and E will provide information from Home Office (HO) files relating to an applicant or sponsor. E and E can send copies of deportation orders, immigration histories, photos or interview transcripts. The team aims to respond to all requests for information within 10 working days.

Many HO files are very large so posts must be as specific as possible about what is required.

E and E has asked that:

- ECOs do not send chasers within the first 10 days
- when ECOs receive the information they have asked for, they do not send an acknowledgement email because E and E catalogue all the enquiries once the relevant information is sent out

Work Permits UK

This team was disbanded following the introduction of the points-based system. The team that has replaced them deals with in UK points-based system enquiries only.

Euro casework

The team is responsible for all European related referrals or deferrals, such as European Economic Area (EEA) family permits. This includes cases for consideration for refusal under the EEA.

As well as EEA family permits, this team deals with all in UK applications for:

- registration cards
- registration certificates
- permanent residency
- family member resident stamps

Entry clearance cases: processing times for referrals and deferrals

The referred casework unit (RCU) will confirm receipt of a referral or deferral within 2 working days. The team will provide the:

- date of receipt
- Home Office reference number if applicable
- expected date of reply or target date

As long as a post has provided all the necessary information, RCU will deal with a referral within 20 working days and a deferral within 10 working days from confirming receipt.

The appropriate form will be returned to a post with a response. This will be sent by email to the post referrals mailbox. Posts must check this account regularly. RCU will also update CRS with the outcome of the referral.

Where RCU authorise leave outside the Immigration Rules, the endorsement authorised must be added. If not, Proviso must be amended to make sure the vignette records the endorsement exactly as RCU have directed.

Policy teams aim to respond to all requests for advice in 4 working days.

Evidence and enquiry aims to respond to all requests for information within 10 working days.

Related content

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Referring cases to the Interventions and Sanctions Directorate

This page tells Home Office staff how to refer cases to the Interventions and Sanctions Directorate (ISD).

See Sanctions: refer case to Interventions and Sanctions Directorate (ISD) for guidance on how to make a referral to ISD. They will then either apply sanctions or pass the information to the relevant external partner. Areas of abuse, or potential abuse, to refer to ISD cover:

- NHS charging
- driving licences - Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) or Driver and Vehicle Agency Northern Ireland (DVA (NI))
- taxi and private hire licences
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)
- illegal working - Civil Penalty Compliance team (CPCT)
- private rented sector - Right to Rent scheme and civil penalties, eviction and offences
- private rented sector - Evictions team (Notices of Letting to a Disqualified Person)
- illegal migrants' current accounts (financial services)
- working with the Department for Education (DfE)
- working with the electoral registration offices (ERO)
- working with no recourse to public funds network (NRPF) Connect

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