



Home Office

Guide B(OTA)

Registration as a British Citizen – A guide for:

- British Overseas Territories Citizens
- British Nationals (Overseas)
- British Overseas Citizens
- British subjects
- British protected persons

May 2025

Contents

Introduction	1
Before applying	1
The Windrush Scheme	2
IAA and immigration advice	2
B(OTA) – step by step guide to registering as a British citizen following residence in the UK	3
Do you qualify?	4
The requirements	4
Requirement to have been in the UK on the first day of the qualifying period	5
Absences from the UK	7
Overall absences in your qualifying period	7
Absences in the 12 months prior to applying	8
Lawful residence	10
EEA nationals	10
Right of abode	10
Irish nationals	10
Immigration time restrictions	12
Showing you are free from immigration time restrictions	12
EEA nationals and their family members	13
If you are outside the UK	13
Good character	14
Criminality	14
Terrorism and International Crimes	15
Financial soundness	16
Deception	17
Immigration matters	17
What if you haven't been convicted but your character may be in doubt?	18
What if you consider that you have mitigating factors?	18

Crown and designated service	19
Additional provision for British Overseas Territories citizens	20
Referees	21
Biometric enrolment	22
Understanding the process	23
Before you apply	23
Evidence of identity	23
Residence Requirements	24
If you are applying as a BOTC who does not already hold British citizenship	25
If you are applying based on your Crown service	26
Biometric Enrolment	26
Application Processing Times	26
Travel after submitting an application	27
Citizenship Ceremonies	27
Next steps	28
Will I get digital status showing I am a British citizen?	29
Travelling to and from the UK after registering	30
Citizenship-related queries	30
Applications submitted before 28 June 2022	30

Introduction

This guide summarises the legal requirements to apply for registration based on residence in the UK, some of which have changed under [The Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#). In particular, the requirements for lawful residence are now easier to demonstrate. It is not a complete statement of the law or policy but should answer routine questions you may have on the requirements and our processes.

Becoming a British citizen is a significant life event. Apart from allowing you to apply for a British citizen passport, British citizenship gives you the opportunity to participate more fully in the life of your local community.

Your right to registration is a matter of law as set out in the [British Nationality Act 1981](#). The Home Secretary may only register you if you satisfy a number of statutory requirements. This guide helps you to understand them. It may be possible to grant your application even if you are not able to meet all of the requirements, but this cannot be done in all cases. The way that discretion is exercised is described throughout this booklet. More information on how applications may still be granted even though you may not meet all the requirements can be found in the nationality casework guidance [here](#).

Before applying

If you hold an additional nationality aside from your existing British one, you should check whether your other country of nationality allows multiple citizenship. Some countries do not allow dual or multiple citizenship and you may therefore lose, or have to give up, your existing nationality in order to become a British citizen. If you have any questions about this, you should seek advice from the country of which you are a citizen before making your application. If the country of which you are currently a citizen continues to recognise you as one of its citizens, you may continue to be subject to the duties of citizens of that country when you are in its territory. This may include obligations to undergo military service.

If you are a British Overseas Territories citizen, a British National (Overseas), a British Overseas citizen, or a British subject from Ireland (under section 31 of the British Nationality Act 1981), registration as a British citizen will not cause you to lose that status.

However, if you are a British subject from a location other than Ireland, or a British protected person, you will automatically lose that status on being registered as a British citizen.

Please note, a nationality application does not provide any immigration status while it is being considered. You must ensure you have valid permission to stay in the UK until you have had a decision on your application and attended your citizenship ceremony.

The Windrush Scheme

The Windrush Scheme is for people who arrived in the UK many years ago and do not have documentation confirming their immigration status. If you are eligible under the Windrush Scheme you should not use form BOTA. You should instead use the form available from GOV.UK, see

www.gov.uk/government/publications/undocumentedcommonwealthcitizensresident-in-the-uk.

There is no charge for applications made under the Windrush Scheme.

IAA 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 Immigration Advice Authority (IAA), an independent body. Nationality advice should only be provided by a person who works for an organisation registered with, or exempted by, the IAA or who is authorised to practise (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 IAA regulated advisers are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/immigration-advice-authority>

[Contents](#)

B(OTA) – step by step guide to registering as a British citizen following residence in the UK



1. Check you meet and understand the requirements before you submit your application. You must:



Be a British Overseas Territories citizen; a British National (Overseas); a British Overseas citizen; a British subject; or a British protected person.



Have [lived](#) in the UK [lawfully](#) for 5 years without excess [absences](#). You can meet the lawful residence requirement if you have [indefinite leave](#) in the UK.



Have been in the UK on the first day of the qualifying period. This will be [5 years](#) before the date on which you apply.



Be free from immigration time restrictions on the date of application and have been for at least 12 months. You will meet this requirement if you have [indefinite leave](#) in the UK.



Be of [good character](#)

There are alternative means of applying on the basis of [crown or designated service](#) or if you are a [British Overseas Territories citizen](#).

When completing the application form, you will need to provide the details of 2 [referees](#) who know you and can help prove your identity.



2. Submit your application and pay the required fee

For a smoother and quicker process, applications should be submitted [online](#). If you want to apply by post, you can use [Form B\(OTA\)](#).



3. Enrol your biometric details

We will contact you with further instructions on how to enrol your biometrics after you submit your application.



4. Wait for a decision

You will usually get a decision within 6 months. We will write to you if we need more details about your application. You must have valid permission to be in the UK whilst waiting for your decision.



5. Attend a citizenship ceremony

You will make an oath of allegiance and pledge, promising to respect the rights, freedoms and laws of the UK. You will also receive your naturalisation certificate.



6. Return your Biometric residence permit within five working days of getting your certificate of British citizenship

To travel outside the UK after getting British citizenship, you'll need to apply for a British passport or a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode. You cannot use your naturalisation certificate to travel.

Do you qualify?

Adults and children under the age of 18 may be registered as a British citizen if they meet the relevant criteria.

You must be **one** of the following:

- a British Overseas Territories citizen
- a British National (Overseas)
- a British Overseas citizen
- a British subject
- a British protected person

Our guidance on who is or is not one of these nationalities can be found here:

[Types of British nationality: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/types-of-british-nationality-overview)

You must also be of 'sound mind'. This is to ensure that you have the capacity to understand the implications of the decision to register as a British citizen. There is discretion to overlook this requirement in certain circumstances, where it is in the applicant's best interests to do so. If you are applying on behalf of someone who is not of sound mind and for whom you are responsible, relevant details of that person's medical condition and of your role as their caregiver, can be provided when you apply.

Parents or others with parental responsibility may apply on behalf of their children.

The requirements

The legal requirements you should meet before you apply are that you:

- Are a British Overseas Territories citizen; a British National (Overseas); a British Overseas citizen; a British subject; or a British protected person
- Are of sound mind, so that you understand the step you are taking
- Have lived in the UK for a minimum of 5 years before you apply
- Must have been physically present in the UK (including the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands) [on the day 5 years before](#) the application is received by the Home Office

- Must not have been in [breach of the immigration laws](#) in the 5-year period before making your application. We may assume you meet this requirement without making further enquiries if you have been granted indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK
- Must be [free from immigration time restrictions](#) on the date of application and for the 12-month period before making the application
- Must not have had more than 450 days outside the UK in the 5-year period before making the application (but see the section on [Absences](#) from the UK)
- Must not have had more than 90 days outside the UK in the 12-month period before making the application (but see the section on [Absences](#) from the UK)

In special circumstances, some discretion may be exercised over absences, presence in the UK on the first day of the qualifying period, and immigration time restrictions in the last 12 months. You should explain any special circumstances when you apply based upon [guidance](#) on how they might be considered.

The section on [Crown and Designated Service](#) shows alternative ways such people might qualify.

If you are a [British Overseas Territories citizen](#), you may also be registered as a British citizen by discretion.

The remainder of this guidance sets out in more detail out each of the requirements, how you may satisfy them, and answers some questions you may have about the process.

Requirement to have been in the UK on the first day of the qualifying period

You must have been in the UK **exactly 5 years** before your application was received. For example, if your application is received on 05/01/2022 you should have been physically present in the UK on 06/01/2017.

If you cannot meet this requirement, your application is likely to be refused. If you believe there were exceptional circumstances which prevented you from being in the UK on the first day of the qualifying period, please provide details when you apply.

We recognise that occasionally someone might apply without realising that they were not in the UK at the start of the qualifying period. If you did not meet the requirement when you

applied, we may see if there is another, later date we can use to allow you to meet the requirement and will consider your application on, or after, that date.

However, please be aware the requirements remain unchanged, and this does not guarantee that the application will be successful if an alternative date cannot be found. It may also result in delays to your application until you can meet the statutory requirements. You must pay the full fee that is in force on any date we use.

You are strongly recommended to make sure you meet the requirement before applying.

[Contents](#)

Absences from the UK

Overall absences in your qualifying period

You should not have been absent for more than 450 days during the 5 years before making your application.

When you submit your application, you will be asked to tell us all absences during the relevant period. This will help you decide whether you meet the requirement.

There is discretion to disregard absences in excess of the limits in some circumstances. This discretion is outlined in the following tables.

Absences from the UK during your residential qualifying period will be considered in the following way:

Normal permitted absences in qualifying period	450 days
Total number of absences normally disregarded.	480 days
Absences normally disregarded only if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you meet all other requirements and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have established your home, family, and a substantial part of your estate here. 	900 days Please note: if your absences are up to 730 days we would expect you to have been resident in the UK for the last 7 years. For absences exceeding 730 days we would expect you to have been resident in the UK for the last 8 years unless the absences were a result of one of the reasons given below

For absences exceeding 730 days, please explain if your absences were a result of either:

- A posting abroad in Crown or designated service. For example, as a member of HM Forces, or as the husband, wife or civil partner of a British citizen serving abroad in Crown or designated service
- An unavoidable consequence of the nature of your work. For example, if you are a merchant seaman or someone working for a UK based business which requires frequent travel abroad

- Exceptional or compelling reasons of an occupational or compassionate nature such as having a firm job offer for which British citizenship is a genuine requirement
- The excess absences were because you were unable to return to the UK because of global pandemic

Only very rarely would we disregard absences in excess of 900 days. If your absences are more than this limit your application is likely to fail and your fee will not be fully refunded.

Absences in the 12 months prior to applying

In addition to the overall number of absences, you should not have been absent for more than 90 days during the final 12 months of the qualifying period.

Absences from the UK during the last 12 months of your qualifying period will be considered in the following way:

Normal permitted absences in final 12 months of your qualifying period	90 days
Total number of absences normally disregarded	100 days
Total number of absences normally disregarded only if all other requirements are met and you have demonstrated links with the UK through presence of family, and established home and a substantial part of your estate.	101 – 179 days
Total number of absences that may be disregarded if you do not meet all the other requirements providing the following criteria are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have demonstrated links with the UK through presence of family, and established home and a substantial part of your estate and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the absence is justified by Crown service or by compelling occupational or compassionate reasons taking account of the criteria listed on page 10 	101 – 179 days

Please note: Only in the most exceptional circumstances would total absences exceeding 180 days in the final 12 months of the qualifying period be disregarded if all other requirements were not met.

If you were in the UK armed forces and want us to overlook some of the residence requirements on that basis, you must provide confirmation from your employer of your dates of service.

Examples of documents that can be used to show you have been in the UK for the required time period, can be found [here](#).

Please note, you do not need to submit documents that have been uploaded as part of previous immigration applications – we will have a record of these and will consider them in support of your application.

[Contents](#)

Lawful residence

You should have been in the UK lawfully during the 5 years before making your application.

Under [The Nationality and Borders Act 2022](#), you will normally meet this requirement where you have been **granted** indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK. This means that, in most cases, you will only need to demonstrate that you hold valid indefinite leave in the UK in order to meet the lawful residence requirement. You will not normally need to provide evidence of your immigration status during the 5-year period.

EEA nationals

If you are a dual EEA national, supplying evidence of your settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) will also normally meet this requirement. That also means you will not need to send evidence of what you were doing in the UK prior to being granted settled status.

This includes people who did not hold **comprehensive sickness insurance** under the EEA regulations whilst either a student or a self-sufficient person. You can now meet the lawful residence requirement simply by showing you have been granted settled status under the EUSS. You also no longer need to explain why you did not hold comprehensive sickness insurance.

Please note that if you are relying on an Withdrawal Agreement right to reside permanently, you will still need to provide evidence of your lawful residence throughout the qualifying period as well as evidence that you have been granted LTE/R (pre-settled status) under the EUSS.

Right of abode

Certain Commonwealth nationals, including those with dual nationality, have the [right of abode](#) in the UK. A person with the right of abode is not subject to immigration control and so will have also been in the UK lawfully during the qualifying period.

Irish nationals

Irish citizens, including those with dual nationality, can enter and stay in the UK without requiring [permission](#). (There are some limited exceptions to this, where the person is

subject to a deportation order, exclusion decision or exclusion order, or travel ban.) If you are an Irish national as well as a British national, you will, therefore, have been in the UK lawfully during the qualifying period.

[Contents](#)

Immigration time restrictions

All applicants are required to show that, at the time of application, they are free from immigration time restrictions. You should also have been free from immigration time restrictions for 12 months before applying for citizenship. This means that you may need to wait until you have been in the UK for at least 6 years before you apply to register.

Showing you are free from immigration time restrictions

People who are free from immigration time restrictions will usually hold a status such as indefinite leave to remain (ILR), including ILR issued under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), which is also known as settled status. You will also meet this condition if you have the right of abode in the UK. Irish citizens, including dual Irish and British nationals, are considered settled from their date of arrival in the UK, meaning they are free from immigration time restrictions for naturalisation purposes without having to hold leave under the immigration rules.

When applying, you can provide us with one of the following to show you are free from immigration time restrictions:

- Your 16-digit unique application number (UAN) (if you have been granted indefinite leave (also known as settled status) under the EUSS)
- Your UAN or share code if you have an eVisa showing indefinite leave to remain in the UK
- Your biometric residence permit or any other documents confirming your right to remain permanently in the UK – you can use it for 18 months after the expiry date printed on the card (providing you still hold that status)
- Your passport showing permission to remain permanently in the UK
- The Home Office letter by which you were given permission to remain permanently in the UK
- Evidence of being freely landed, if you did not receive specific permission because you were freely landed as a Commonwealth citizen before 1971 or arrived as a child on your parent's passport
- Valid certificate of entitlement to the right of abode
- If you are a dual Irish national, you must provide your Irish passport
- Evidence you have acquired a Withdrawal Agreement right to reside permanently on the basis of [qualifying activity](#) for the relevant period. You must previously have been granted limited leave (also known as pre-settled status) under the EUSS

If you believe you are free from immigration time restrictions for another reason, please give details on the form and provide relevant evidence of this.

If you are not free from immigration time restrictions, you should apply for permission to stay permanently in the UK, and then wait a further 12 months, before you apply to register.

EEA nationals and their family members

If you are an EEA or Swiss national (or their family member), please be aware the deadline for a first application to the EUSS was 30 June 2021, but first [applications can be made later](#) in certain circumstances where there are reasonable grounds to do so. You can [get help online or over the phone](#) if you require assistance making an EUSS application. Our [detailed caseworker guidance](#) explains how late applications granted under the EUSS will be considered for naturalisation purposes.

You can no longer apply for citizenship based on permanent residence status acquired under the EEA Regulations before 1 July 2021. You are advised to submit an EUSS application before submitting a citizenship application.

If you have already been granted limited leave (also known as pre-settled status) under the EUSS you may later acquire an automatic right to reside in the UK permanently under the terms of the Withdrawal Agreement. You will usually need to have conducted [qualifying activity](#) in the UK for 5 continuous years and will need to provide evidence of this.

If you are outside the UK

A person who is outside the UK is, by definition, not subject to any restriction under the immigration laws on his or her maximum length of stay in the UK. However, the Home Secretary will normally refuse an application made outside the UK where it appears that the main reason for making the application in this way was to avoid the requirement about immigration restrictions. If you make your application overseas but would have had only a conditional right to remain in the UK on the date of application if you had remained here, your application is unlikely to succeed.

[Contents](#)

Good character

The British Nationality Act 1981 contains a statutory requirement that those seeking to become British must be of good character. This means you must observe UK laws and show respect for the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Before you complete this section, 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 you are granted citizenship on the basis of incorrect or fraudulent information you will be liable to have your 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 in the UK and overseas. This includes if you went to prison, or you 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 you have failed to pay and there were criminal proceedings as a result, or you have 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 you have any endorsements on your driving licence you must access the [DVLA website](#) to download and print a summary of your record and send it with your application, or provide the paper counterpart.

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

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

You must also tell us if you have any children who have been convicted of an offence or who have received a court order.

You must say if your details have been recorded by the police as a result of certain sexual offences, or if you 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 you may go to court, or which is awaiting hearing in court. This includes having been arrested for an offence and waiting to hear if you will be formally charged. If you have been arrested and not told that charges have been dropped, or that you will not have to appear in court, you may wish to confirm the position with the police. You must tell us if you are arrested or charged with an offence after you make your 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 you have had any involvement in terrorism or whether you have been involved in any crimes in the course of armed conflict, including crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide, or if you 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 HM Revenue & Customs for

confirmation that your 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 you are liable for income tax but do not pay through PAYE, you must demonstrate that your obligations towards the HM Revenue & Customs have been discharged by attaching a Self-Assessment Statement of Account.

You must tell us if you have ever been declared bankrupt, found to have unreasonably failed to pay your council tax, engaged in fraud in relation to public funds (including claiming public funds to which you were not entitled or were prohibited from accessing, or failing to declare your full circumstances), or have an unpaid NHS debt of £500 or more.

Deception

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

Immigration matters

We will look at your immigration history and whether you have been here unlawfully or “in breach” of the immigration laws. Further information is set out in the [good character policy guidance](#).

Your application for citizenship will normally be refused if:

- you entered the UK illegally, no matter how much time has passed since the illegal entry took place
- you previously arrived without a required valid entry clearance or electronic travel authorisation, having made a dangerous journey.

A dangerous journey includes, but is not limited to, travelling by small boat or concealed in a vehicle. It does not include, for example, arrival as a passenger with a commercial airline.

We will consider whether your illegal entry or arrival was outside your control, such as if you were a child, or trafficked into the UK or a victim of modern slavery at the time. Further information about what we will consider is in the [good character policy guidance](#).

What if you haven't been convicted but your character may be in doubt?

You must say if there is any offence for which you may go to court, or which is awaiting hearing in court. This includes having been arrested for an offence and waiting to hear if you will be formally charged. If you have been arrested and not told that charges have been dropped, or that you will not have to appear in court, you may wish to confirm the position with the police. You must tell us if you are arrested or charged with an offence after you make your 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.

You must say whether you have been involved in anything which might indicate that you are not of good character. You must give information about any of these activities no matter how long ago it was. Checks will be made in all cases and your application may fail and your fee will not be refunded if you make an untruthful declaration. If you are in any doubt about whether you have done something, or it has been alleged that you have done something, which might lead us to think that you are not of good character, you should say so.

What if you consider that you have mitigating factors?

You can also tell us about any genuine, meaningful attempts to change your behaviour and comply with the law. For example, any voluntary or charity work you participate in, or where you have engaged with programmes or activities aimed at addressing the cause of your offending such as treatments aimed at reduction of alcohol consumption, drug dependency or anger management courses. You can also tell us about any exceptional or compelling circumstances you may have, for example, evidence that indicates that you were not in control of your own arrival if you entered the UK illegally, for example a positive decision received through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). These examples are not exhaustive.

You can tell us about this in the 'further information not covered in other sections' box on your application.

[Contents](#)

Crown and designated service

British Overseas Territories citizens, British Nationals (Overseas), British Overseas citizens, British subjects and British protected persons who do not meet the [residence requirements](#) may be registered as British citizens if:

- they are or have been in Crown service under the government of a British Overseas territory, or
- they are or have been in service as a member of a body established by law in a British overseas territory, the members of which are appointed by or on behalf of the Crown.

Registration will be on an exceptional basis and at the Home Secretary's discretion. You should show that you:

- have been the holder of a responsible post, and
- have given outstanding service, and
- have some close connection with the United Kingdom.

You should also explain the special circumstances you feel the Home Secretary should take into account when considering your application.

If you think you might qualify, you should write in the first instance, stating your case, to the Governor of the British overseas territory concerned.

Registration is not a reward for long service under the British Crown and is rarely granted on this basis.

[Contents](#)

Additional provision for British Overseas Territories citizens

On 21 May 2002 anyone holding British Overseas Territories citizenship also automatically became a British citizen under the [British Overseas Territories Act 2002](#). This means that most BOTCs will also be British citizens and will be able to live and work in the UK on that basis.

If you are a BOTC who does not also have British citizenship (for example, if you moved to the British Overseas Territory from another country and acquired BOTC status through naturalisation or registration after 21 May 2002) then you may apply to register as a British citizen unless:

- your British Overseas Territories citizenship is by connection only with the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, or
- you have previously ceased to be a British citizen as a result of a declaration of renunciation.

Registration is at the discretion of the Home Secretary and subject to meeting the good character requirement.

[Contents](#)

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.

[Contents](#)

Biometric enrolment

As part of the application process, all applicants are required to enrol their biometric details for the purpose of identity verification. We may be able to re-use biometrics provided for previous immigration applications. We will contact you to provide further instructions on how to enrol your biometrics after you have submitted your application.

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.

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

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

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 GOV.UK: www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits.

[Contents](#)

Understanding the process

Before you apply

Please ensure you have the correct documents before you apply. If you do not submit your application with supporting documents and pay the correct [fee](#), then the application will be returned to you unprocessed. You should indicate in the space provided what documents you have supplied and why.

Dual/multiple nationality

Dual nationality (sometimes called [dual citizenship](#)) is when someone holds British nationality and the nationality of another country at the same time. It is also possible to hold more than two nationalities at the same time.

The UK recognises dual and multiple nationality and allows British nationals who have more than one nationality to hold a British passport.

Before applying, you should be aware that not all countries accept dual and/or multiple citizenship and you may therefore lose, or have to give up, any other nationality you may hold in addition to your existing British nationality, in order to become a British citizen. If you have any questions about this, you should seek advice from the country of which you are already a citizen before making your application.

Evidence of identity

If you were issued with a Biometric Residence Permit, you must provide/use it in support of your application (even if it has expired), alongside:

- Your passport* or
- National identity* card or
- Home Office travel document* or
- Home Office entitlement card* or
- Home Office ARC letter* or
- Your birth certificate or
- Your photo driving licence* or
- A bank, building society or credit card statement issued to you within the last 6 months

If you have changed name and/or gender and do not have, or cannot obtain, any of these documents in your acquired identity you are also required to provide evidence of that change. This can include:

- a [Gender Recognition Certificate](#) or
- a letter from your doctor or medical consultant confirming that your change of gender is likely to be permanent
- change of name deed poll
- marriage certificate
- a civil partnership certificate

You will need to provide evidence that you are a British Overseas Territories citizen, a British National (Overseas), a British Overseas citizen, a British subject, or a British protected person. You can demonstrate this most easily by providing your passport (as above), or your naturalisation or registration certificate. If you cannot provide these, and your claim is through your birth and/or your parents' birth, send your birth certificate and, if possible, your parents' birth and marriage certificates.

Residence Requirements

Absences

You should supply the following documents to show you have been mainly in the UK during the 5 years before making your application:

- Your passports
- If you are unable to provide your passport, explain why and supply letters from employers (including start and finish dates), payslips, P60s, educational establishments or other government departments indicating your presence in the United Kingdom during the relevant period

Examples of documents that can be used to show you have been in the UK for the required time period, can be found [here](#).

Although we do not normally accept doctors' letters on their own as proof of presence, these may be accepted if nothing else is available and the doctors can confirm that they have seen you on a regular basis during the period concerned.

If your passport is not stamped when you come into the United Kingdom, you must still provide your passport, but also provide alternative evidence of presence as above.

Please note, you do not need to submit documents that have been uploaded as part of previous immigration applications – we will have a record of these and will consider them in support of your application.

Demonstrating absences from the UK (if applying based on continuous UK residence)

We understand that sometimes people may not remember the exact dates of travel outside the UK. Please do your best to provide the relevant information and we will try to use our own records to help confirm your presence in the UK.

If you have had so many trips outside the UK that you exceed the size limit on the application form, please provide any additional absences as a separate attachment.

Lawful Residence

We have the power, under the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, to not enquire further into the lawful residence of an applicant, where you have been granted indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK. This means that if you are applying based on 5 years' residence in the UK, you will normally only need to demonstrate that you hold valid indefinite leave in the UK in order to meet the lawful residence requirement.

If you are a dual EEA national, supplying evidence of your settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) will also normally meet this requirement. That also means you will not need to send evidence of what you were doing in the UK prior to being granted settled status.

This includes people who did not hold **comprehensive sickness insurance** under the EEA regulations whilst either a student or a self-sufficient person. You can now meet the lawful residence requirement simply by showing you have been granted settled status under the EUSS. You also no longer need to explain why you did not hold comprehensive sickness insurance.

If you are applying as a BOTC who does not already hold British citizenship

You will need to provide evidence that you are a BOTC such as your passport or your naturalisation or registration certificate. You will also need to be of good character.

If you are applying based on your Crown service

You will need to provide a letter from the relevant employer confirming date and place of recruitment, position held, and the extent to which it would be in the employer's interests for the application to be granted.

Biometric Enrolment

All applicants applying for British citizenship will need to enrol their biometric details to verify their identity as part of the application process. You will usually need to complete this step of the application process within 45 days of submitting your application and failure to do so would invalidate your application.

You will be provided with instructions explaining where and how you need to enrol your biometric information after you have submitted your application. We may be able to re-use biometrics previously provided with earlier immigration applications.

Enrolling biometrics for children

Child are also required to enrol their biometric details as part of their registration application.

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.

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.

Travel after submitting an application

After submitting your application, you are free to travel using your valid passport – and evidence of your valid immigration status – while you are waiting for a decision on your application.

You do not need to tell us about your travel plans, however, please note:

- You will usually be required to **enrol your biometric information within 45 days** of submitting your application. Failure to do so will invalidate your application.
 - You will receive instructions on how to provide your biometric details once you have submitted your application.
- If your application is successful, and you are aged 18 or over, you will need to **arrange and attend a [citizenship ceremony](#) within 90 days**.

Otherwise, there is nothing during the citizenship process that would prevent you from travelling while your application is being considered.

A citizenship application does not provide you with immigration permission in the UK, and you will need to demonstrate your entitlement to [enter the UK](#) at the UK border.

You should ensure that we are able to contact you quickly if we have any queries about your application.

Citizenship Ceremonies

Arranging a citizenship ceremony

If your application is successful, and you are aged 18 or over, you will be invited to attend a [citizenship ceremony](#).

If you are in the UK

You will receive an invitation from the Home Office, and this will confirm the local authority you should contact to arrange your ceremony.

You must ensure you have immigration permission to remain in the UK until you have completed your ceremony. A citizenship application does not provide you with immigration permission in the UK.

If you are outside of the UK

Arrangements will be made for you to attend a ceremony at a British Embassy; High Commission; Consulate; Governor's Office or Lieutenant-Governor's Office.

Your ceremony invitation may be sent to you via email. If you have not received this, we recommend that you check your email's spam or junk folder before contacting us.

You must arrange and attend your ceremony within 90 days of receiving your invitation. The date by which you must attend your ceremony will be given in your invitation.

If you have special needs or concerns about attending your ceremony, please bring these to the attention of the local authority once you have received your invitation.

If you do not attend your ceremony within 90 days without good reason, your application for citizenship will be refused and you will need to re-apply.

At the ceremony

You will be asked to affirm or swear an Oath of Allegiance to the Monarch and to pledge your loyalty to the UK. This is a legal requirement for adults and is the point at which you will become a British citizen. Following this you will be presented with your certificate of citizenship as a British citizen.

Exemptions

Successful applicants are rarely exempt from attending ceremonies. Exemptions may be granted where applicants are physically unable to attend or if their mental state would make it inappropriate for them to attend. If you wish to be exempt, you should say why and provide supporting evidence.

Next steps**What to do if there is an error on your citizenship certificate**

If you notice a mistake on your citizenship certificate, you will need to use [Form RR](#) to request an amendment to it.

Send your completed form and your original certificate to the following address:

Department 201
UKVI
The Capital
New Hall Place
Liverpool
L3 9PP

You may need to pay to change the details on your certificate, depending on if the mistake is your fault (for example, if you provided incorrect details when you applied). UKVI will send you a letter telling you if you need to pay.

Returning your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)

If you still hold a Home Office issued immigration document, such as a BRP (or a Biometric Residence Card (BRC)), you must return it the Home Office (even if the BRP/BRC has expired) within 5 working days of attending your citizenship ceremony or getting your certificate of British citizenship (whichever is sooner).

You can do this by following these steps:

1. Cut your BRP/BRC into 4 pieces and put it in a windowless envelope.
2. Enclose a note saying you are returning your permit because you have become a British citizen. Include your name, date of birth and the document number (found on the front of the card) in the note.
3. Send your BRP/BRC and enclosed note to:

Naturalisation BRP Returns
PO Box 195
Bristol
BS20 1BT

Please note that you may be fined up to £1,000 if you do not return your permit within 5 working days.

Will I get digital status showing I am a British citizen?

There are no current plans to provide digital evidence of British citizenship. If you wish to travel, you will need to get a British passport or certificate of entitlement to the right of abode.

Travelling to and from the UK after registering

Once you become a British citizen, you will no longer be able to enter the UK using your BRP or digital status, or by presenting your citizenship certificate at the UK border.

For travel purposes, you 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](#). You may wish to consider this before applying for citizenship (for example, if you have plans to travel outside of the UK).

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.

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.

If you require anything else, please [contact UK Visas and Immigration for help](#).

Applications submitted before 28 June 2022

Changes introduced by the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 come into force on 28 June 2022. If you submitted your application before that date, we will still use the new powers to decide your application where this would be of benefit to you. For example, we can use ILR for the lawful residence requirement without the need to examine further evidence.

[Contents](#)

