



Home Office

Guide B1

Registration as a British citizen – A guide for British Overseas Territories citizens

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Introduction

On 21 May 2002 anyone holding British Overseas Territories citizenship (BOTC) 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.

You can apply for registration under section 4A 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. Adults and children can apply.

If your British Overseas Territories citizenship is only through a connection with the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, or you have previously renounced that status, you may be able to apply under section 4(2) on the basis of UK residence. Information about how to apply can be found in Guide B2.

This guide summarises the legal requirements to apply for registration under section 4A of the British Nationality Act 1981. 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.

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 the statutory requirements. This guide helps you to understand them.

Before applying

If you hold an additional nationality aside from British overseas territories citizenship, 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.

Registration as a British citizen will not cause you to lose British Overseas Territories citizenship.

Please note, a nationality application does not provide any immigration status while it is being considered. If you are in the UK, 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.

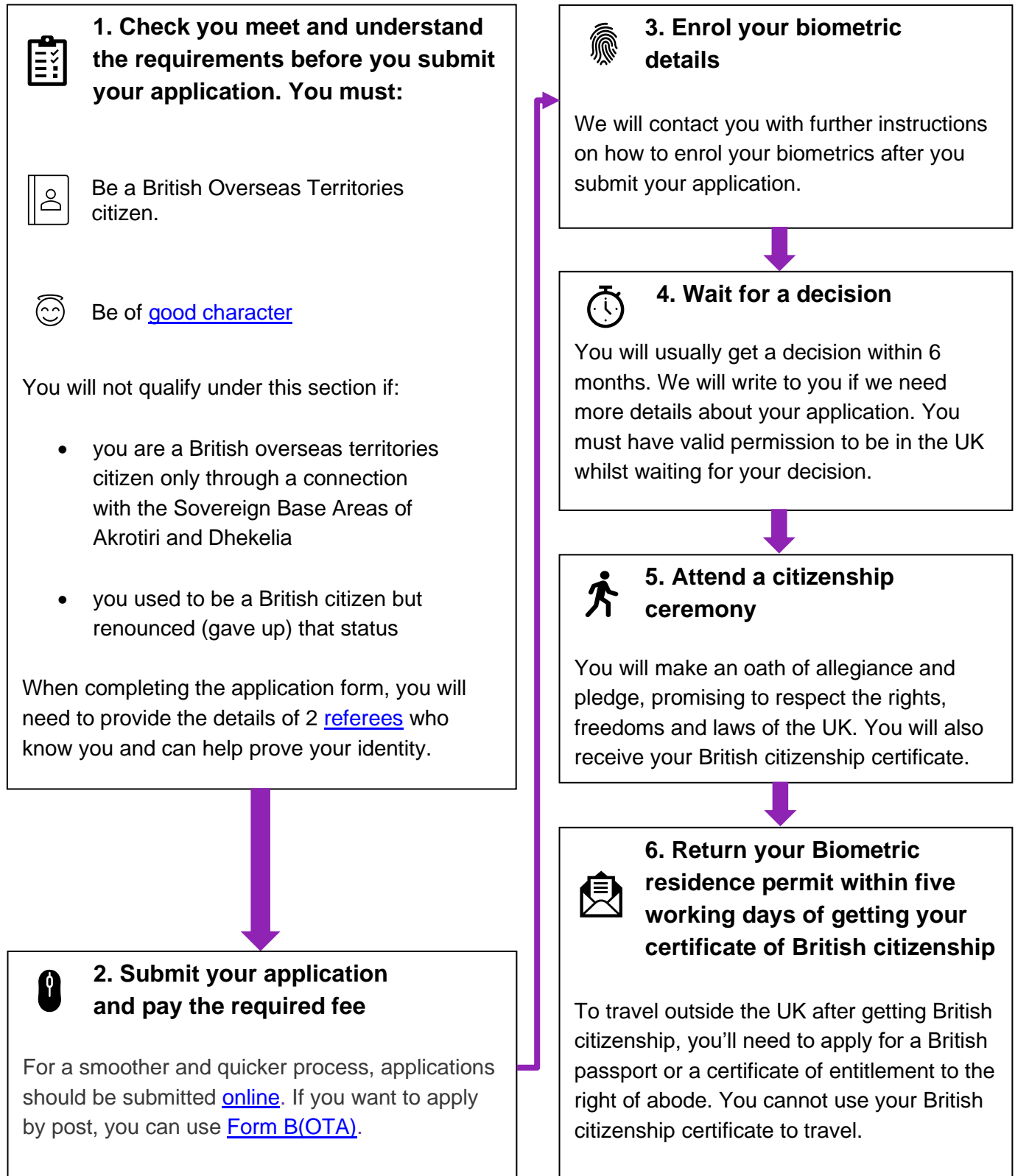
There is no charge for applications made under the Windrush Scheme.

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>.

Step by step guide to registering as a British citizen under section 4A



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:

- a British Overseas Territories citizen
- You must not have become a British overseas territories citizen only through a connection with the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia.
- you must not have renounced (given up) British citizenship.

Our guidance on who is a British overseas territories citizen can be found here:

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

What if you do not qualify?

If you are a British overseas territories citizen and do not qualify under this section may still be able to become a British citizen if you have lived in the UK for 5 years and are settled in the UK – see Guide B2).

Crown service

British Overseas Territories citizens who do not qualify under this section may also 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.

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Good character

The British Nationality Act 1981 contains a statutory requirement that those seeking to register as British must be of good character. 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 registered 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 registration 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

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).

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.

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](#).

The policy has recently changed. 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.

Where there is reliable evidence that 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, we will normally disregard these immigration breaches.

We will also consider whether you are a refugee who has a defence under section 31 of the NIAA 1999 having travelled to the UK directly, claimed asylum without delay, and showed good cause for your illegal entry or presence in the UK. We will normally disregard illegal entry or overstaying of a person with a valid section 31 defence.

Further information about what we will consider is in the [good character policy guidance](#).

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

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Referees

Your application must be endorsed by 2 referees.

One referee can be of any nationality but must be a [professional person](#). A professional person could include:

- a minister of religion
- civil servant
- a member of a professional body such as an accountant or a solicitor (but not one who is representing you with this application).

The other referee must be the holder of a British citizen passport and either a [professional person](#) or over the age of 25.

Each referee must have known you for at least 3 years.

Each referee must not be:

- related to you
- related to the other referee
- your solicitor or agent representing you with this application
- employed by the Home Office

We will not usually accept a referee who has been convicted of an imprisonable offence during the last 10 years.

Child applicants

At least one of the referees must be a person who has dealt with the child in a professional role such as a teacher, doctor, health visitor or social worker. Where a child cannot provide a referee who has dealt with them in a professional capacity and has provided documents to show that they have attempted to do so, two referees who meet the criteria for referees on adult applications can be accepted.

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.

Biometric enrolment

Once your application has been submitted and you have paid the required [application fee](#) you will be required to enrol biometric details.

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. You will not be able to book a biometrics appointment, even if you know you will need one, until we have contacted you.

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. 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.

Your application may be rejected as invalid if you do not enrol your biometrics when requested. There is no longer a fee for enrolling biometrics in the UK.

For more information about enrolling biometrics, please visit the following section of our website: <http://www.gov.uk/biometricresidence-permits>.

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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. You can demonstrate this most easily by providing your passport (as above), or your naturalisation or registration certificate.

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

Children 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 of receiving your invitation.**

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 (of receiving your invitation) without good reason, your application for citizenship will be refused and you will need to re-apply.

Children under 18

Children under 18 who have applied with their parents may attend a ceremony with other members of the family, to collect their certificate. They do not have to take the Oath/Affirmation or Pledge, but may do so. If they do not attend the ceremony, another family member may collect their certificate. Children whose parents do not attend a ceremony will receive their certificate in the post.

You must ensure you have sufficient immigration permission to remain in the UK until you have attended your ceremony and made the Oath and Pledge. A citizenship application does not, in itself, give permission to stay in the UK.

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 to 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 becoming a British citizen

Once an individual becomes a British citizen, they will no longer be able to enter the UK using their BRP or digital status, or by presenting their citizenship certificate at the UK border.

For travel purposes, an individual can [apply for a British passport](#) or for a [certificate of entitlement to the right of abode](#) that can be placed in a valid foreign passport.

Please refer to GOV.UK for information on [how long it may take to get a British passport](#) or [how long it may take to get a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode](#). Individuals may wish to consider this before applying for citizenship (for example, if they have plans to travel outside of the UK).

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](#).

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