



Home Office

Guide ROA

Applying for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode

January 2026

Contents

Introduction	2
The Windrush Scheme	4
IAA and immigration advice	4
The right of abode	5
Who has the right of abode?	5
Certificates of entitlement	8
Documents	9
Expiry of certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the UK	13
Citizenship related queries	17
Explanation of terms	18

Introduction

This guide explains what the right of abode in the UK means under the Immigration Act 1971. It also gives a simple overview of who has this right. If you need to prove you have the right of abode, this guide explains how to apply for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the UK. The [notes](#) at the end of this guide explain some of the terms we use.

Under regulations for certificates of entitlement to the right of abode you cannot get a certificate of entitlement if you already have a British passport that shows you as a British citizen or as a British subject with the right of abode.

The laws that covers the right of abode in the UK are the Immigration Act 1971, the British Nationality Act 1981, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, and the regulations made under them. This guide gives only a short summary of the law and the Home Secretary's policy. It is not a full explanation of either the law or the policy.

These terms are used throughout this document:

- UK
- Parent and father
- Adopted
- Registered
- Settled
- Qualifying territory

You can find an explanation of these in the [notes](#) at the end of this guide.

Changes to the certificate of entitlement to the right of abode

We are planning to make changes to certificates of entitlement from 26 February 2026.

At the moment certificates of entitlement are stickers (vignettes) placed in a passport. We are going to change this to a digital record. You will be able to use the digital certificate of entitlement in the same way, to prove your right to enter and live in the UK, and to show your right to work or rent if needed. Your status in the UK will not change – only the way you prove it will change.

Read the section on [digital certificates of entitlement](#) later in this guide to see if you need to make an application. You may not need to if you already have a certificate of entitlement in a passport that is still valid on 26 February 2026.

If your application is approved before 26 February, you will get a paper certificate of entitlement sticker, stuck in your passport, and after 26 February you will also receive a digital certificate.

If your application is approved from 26 February, you will be given a digital certificate of entitlement. (In some cases you may also get a sticker in your passport while we move towards a fully digital system.)

Information about how to view your digital status and make changes to your record will be published on our website: [Prove you have right of abode in the UK: Overview - GOV.UK](#). You can also find information in the section on [digital certificates of entitlement](#) in this guide.

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 ROA. You should instead use the form available from GOV.UK, see [Windrush Scheme application form \(UK\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/immigration-advice-authority)
- you should still refer to this guidance when completing a Windrush Scheme application

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

If your application is approved from 26 February, you will be given a digital certificate of entitlement.

Read the section on [digital certificates of entitlement](#) later in this guide to see if you need to make an application. You may not need to if you already have a certificate of entitlement in a passport that is still valid on 26 February 2026.

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](#)

The right of abode

If you have the right of abode in the UK you are free from UK immigration control. This means you do not need permission from an immigration officer to enter the UK, and you can live and work here without any restrictions.

When you arrive at the UK border, you must still prove you have the right of abode. You can do this by showing either:

- a British passport that describes you as a British citizen or a British subject with the right of abode
- a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode issued by or on behalf of the UK Government

Information about getting a British passport is available from [His Majesty's Passport Office](#) (HMPO).

Who has the right of abode?

Under section 2 of the Immigration Act 1971 (which was amended by section 39 of the British Nationality Act 1981), all British citizens and some Commonwealth citizens have the right of abode in the UK.

People who became British citizens on 1 January 1983

You became a British citizen on 1 January 1983 (when the British Nationality Act 1981 came into force) and you have the right of abode in the UK if, immediately before that date you were:

- a citizen of the UK and Colonies and had your citizenship by being born, adopted, naturalised or registered in the UK
- a citizen of the UK and Colonies and had a parent at the time of your birth who was a citizen of the UK and Colonies by being born, adopted, naturalised or registered in the UK
- a citizen of the UK and Colonies whose parent qualified for the right of abode because their parent (your grandparent) was born, adopted, naturalised or registered in the UK
- a citizen of the UK and Colonies who, at any time before 1 January 1983:
 - had been ordinarily resident in the UK for a continuous period of 5 years or more

- during that period, you were not in breach of the immigration laws
- at the end of that period, you had no time limit attached to your stay
- a citizen of the UK and Colonies who had been the wife of a man with the right of abode in the UK and you were married before 1 January 1983.

Please note, if you were a citizen of the UK and Colonies because you were born in a former colony, you may have lost this status when that country became independent. If so, you would only have the right of abode if you qualify under one of the provisions for [Commonwealth citizens](#).

People who became British citizens on or after 1 January 1983

You will be a British citizen if you were:

- born in the UK on or after 1 January 1983 and either parent was, at that time, either:
 - a British citizen
 - settled in the UK.
- born in a qualifying British overseas territory on or after 21 May 2002 and at least one parent was a British citizen or was settled in that particular territory at the time
- born outside the UK on or after 1 January 1983 and at least one parent was a British citizen and either:
 - a British citizen otherwise than by descent
 - in Crown service
 - in Community institution service
 - working in a role designated by the Secretary of State as being closely linked to the UK Government

Similar provisions apply for those born outside a qualifying territory on or after 21 May 2002.

If you successfully apply for registration or naturalisation you will become a British citizen on the date you are registered or the date your naturalisation certificate is issued.

A person adopted in the UK on or after 1 January 1983 or in a qualifying British overseas territory on or after 21 May 2002 becomes a British citizen if at least one of the adopters was a British citizen at the time.

A child adopted outside the UK under the terms of the Hague Convention on or after 1 June 2003 becomes a British citizen on the date of adoption if one of the adopters is a British citizen and they (or, in the case of a joint adoption, both adopters) are habitually resident in the UK.

More information on how British citizenship can be acquired after 1 January 1983 is available on our [website](#) or by emailing the UKVI Contact Centre: NationalityEnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Commonwealth citizenship

If you are not a British citizen, you may still have the right of abode if, on 31 December 1982, you were either:

- a Commonwealth citizen and your parent was a citizen of the UK and Colonies at the time of your birth or legal adoption, and that parent became a citizen because they were born in the UK
- a Commonwealth citizen who had been married before 1 January 1983 to a man who had right of abode in the UK. (Your husband must have had the right of abode before that date).

If you got the right of abode through marriage before 1983 you will not be granted a certificate of entitlement, if:

- another living wife or widow of the same man has ever been in the UK other than as a visitor, an illegal entrant or on temporary admission
- another living wife or widow of the same man has been issued with a certificate of entitlement or entry clearance because of her marriage

These restrictions do not apply if:

- you entered the UK as a wife before 1 August 1988, or
- you have been in the UK at any time since your marriage, and
- at that time you were the only wife of your husband to have entered, or been cleared for entry to, the UK.

If you were not a Commonwealth citizen on 31 December 1982, or you stopped being a Commonwealth citizen at any time after that date (even temporarily), you will not have the right of abode. For example, nationals of South Africa, Pakistan and The Gambia do not qualify because these countries left and later rejoined the Commonwealth.

[Contents](#)

Certificates of entitlement

A certificate of entitlement to the right of abode is official proof that you have the right of abode in the UK for immigration control purposes.

If you hold a UK passport that describes you as a British citizen, or as a British subject with the right of abode in the UK, you cannot get a certificate of entitlement.

We will check with His Majesty's Passport Office to confirm whether their records show that you hold a British passport. If their records show you hold a British citizen or British subject with the right of abode in the UK passport, we will not issue a certificate of entitlement. This is because the law does not allow a person to hold both a British passport and a certificate of entitlement at the same time.

If you have lost your British passport, you must tell HM Passport Office so their records can be updated. If you do not report the loss, your application for a certificate of entitlement may be refused, because HM Passport Office records will still show that you hold a British citizen or British subject passport.

If you already have a valid certificate of entitlement sticker in another foreign passport, you cannot get a new sticker in a different passport.

Once you have a digital certificate of entitlement, you can link it to the passport you want to use for travel.

You can [apply online](#) and a fee must be paid when you apply.

[Contents](#)

Documents

- You must provide your valid passport or travel document.
- You must also submit 2 passport sized photographs taken within the last 6 months.
- You must provide the documents that prove you have the right of abode. The list below explains which documents you need. Birth and marriage certificates should be those issued at the time of birth or marriage. If they were issued later, you must explain why.
- If the name you use is different from the name on your official documents, you must provide proof of your change of name, such as a marriage certificate, adoption certificate or change of name deed.

Basis of application	Documents required
Applicant was registered or naturalised as a British citizen on or after 1 January 1983	Applicant's registration or naturalisation certificate
Applicant was born in the UK before 1 January 1983	Applicant's full birth certificate, showing parents' details
Applicant was registered or naturalised as a citizen of the UK and Colonies in the UK before 1 January 1983	Applicant's registration or naturalisation certificate
Applicant was a British Overseas Territories citizen and became a British citizen on 21 May 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant's British Overseas Territories citizen passport • Applicant's full birth certificate showing parents' details • If born outside an Overseas Territory; parents' marriage certificate (if claiming through the father) and parent's full birth certificate, registration, or naturalisation certificate • If registered or naturalised as a British Overseas Territories citizen before 21 May 2002, certificate of registration or naturalisation • If registered or naturalised as a British Overseas Territories citizen on or after 21 May 2002, certificate of registration

Basis of application	Documents required
	or naturalisation and certificate of registration as a British citizen
Applicant is a Commonwealth (not British) citizen born before 1 January 1983 to a parent who was born in the UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant's full birth certificate showing parents' details, and Parent's full UK birth certificate If claiming through the father, the marriage certificate
Applicant is a female Commonwealth (not British) citizen who was married before 1 January 1983 to a man with right of abode in the UK (the marriage must have taken place before 1 January 1983, and the husband should have had a right of abode before that date)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant's marriage certificate, and Evidence of applicant's husband's right of abode prior to 1 January 1983, such as passport or UK birth certificate, certificate of registration or naturalisation
Applicant was born in the UK or the Falkland Islands on or after 1 January 1983, or in another qualifying British overseas territory on or after 21 May 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant's full birth certificate showing parents' details, Evidence of either parent's British citizenship or settled status at time of applicant's birth, such as a passport describing the relevant parent as a British citizen or indicating that they then had indefinite leave to remain, and Parents' marriage certificate (if claiming through father and applicant born before 1 July 2006)
Applicant was born outside the UK and the Falkland Islands on or after 1 January 1983, or outside the UK and any qualifying British overseas territory on or after 21 May 2002, to a parent born in the UK or the Falkland Islands (or, on/after 21 May 2002, any qualifying British overseas territory) or to a parent registered or naturalised in the UK prior to the applicant's birth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant's full birth certificate showing parents' details, Parent's marriage certificate (if claiming through father and applicant born before 1 July 2006), and Parent's full birth certificate, registration, or naturalisation certificate
Applicant was born outside the UK and the Falkland Islands on or after 1 January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant's full birth certificate,

Basis of application	Documents required
1983, or outside the UK and any qualifying British overseas territory on or after 21 May 2002, to a parent who, at the time of the birth, was a British citizen in service to which section 2(1)(b) of the British Nationality Act 1981 applies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' marriage certificate (if claiming through father and applicant born before 1 July 2006), and Evidence of parent's relevant employment at the time of the birth, such as a letter from the employer
Applicant was adopted in the UK, a qualifying British overseas territory, or otherwise on or after 1 June 2003 under the terms of The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant's adoption certificate, and Evidence of adoptive parents' citizenship and, if a Convention adoption, of their place of habitual residence at the time of the adoption (in respect of citizenship, a passport, and in respect of habitual residence at the time of the Convention adoption, the adoption certificate)
Applicant was a citizen of the UK and Colonies and was ordinarily resident in the UK for a continuous period of 5 years before 1 January 1983 and was settled in the UK at the end of that period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of citizenship of the UK and Colonies, for example a passport or certificate of naturalisation or registration, and Evidence of settlement and 5 years ordinary residence in the UK before 1983, for example a passport, P60s, details of National Insurance contributions, DSS
Applicant was a citizen of the UK and Colonies and had a parent who was born, adopted, registered, or naturalised in the UK prior to the applicant's birth/adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant's full birth certificate or adoption certificate, Parents' marriage certificate (if claiming through father and applicant born before 1 July 2006), and Parents' full birth certificate, adoption, registration, or naturalisation certificate
Applicant was a citizen of the UK and Colonies and had a grandparent born, adopted, registered, or naturalised in the UK before the applicant's parent's birth/adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents' marriage certificate (if claiming through father), Parent's full birth certificate or adoption certificate, Applicant's full birth certificate or adoption certificate, Grandparents' marriage certificate (if claiming through grandfather), and

Basis of application	Documents required
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grandparent's full birth certificate, adoption, registration, or naturalisation certificate

If you are not sure whether or not you have the right of abode in the UK, you can obtain further advice by visiting [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

If you are unable to find the information you need, you can contact us at: FurtherNationalityEnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk.

[Contents](#)

Expiry of certificate of entitlement to the right of abode in the UK

A paper certificate of entitlement to the right of abode (vignette) will cease to be valid on the date the passport or travel document to which it is attached expires.

From 26 February 2026 we will be issuing certificates of entitlement in [digital format](#). Once you have a digital certificate you will not need to make and pay for a new application each time your passport expires. Instead you must update your record to show you have a new passport and upload a new photo. These updates will be free.

Details of how to do this are on [GOV.UK](#). More information is later in this guide in the section on [digital certificates of entitlement](#).

Certificates of entitlement may be revoked by any Home Office official (including HM Passport Office staff), an immigration officer, consular officer or an entry clearance officer if it is found you are no longer eligible. A certificate of entitlement may be revoked if:

- you do not have the right of abode in the UK
- you hold a UK passport describing you as a British citizen or a British subject with the right of abode
- your right of abode is restricted because you are in a polygamous marriage with a man who has the right of abode and another wife has already been issued with a certificate of entitlement
- an order has been made to deprive you of your right of abode

[Contents](#)

Digital certificates of entitlement

We will soon be issuing certificates of entitlement in a digital format. You should read this section to understand what you need to do.

You should continue to make an application for a certificate of entitlement if:

- You have never previously held a certificate of entitlement and now want one
- You previously held a certificate of entitlement but it expired before 26 February 2026
- You currently hold a certificate of entitlement but it will expire before 26 February 2026

A paper certificate (vignette) expires on the same date as the passport the sticker is placed in.

You will **not** need to make a further application if you currently hold a certificate of entitlement which will still be valid on 26 February 2026. However, you should keep reading to understand what will be changing.

Digital format

If your application is approved from 26 February onwards you will receive a digital certificate of entitlement, which you can access through a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account. You may also still receive a vignette in your passport while we close printing facilities by location.

People who hold a certificate of entitlement which is still valid on 26 February 2026 will be issued a digital version of that certificate without needing to make an application. There is no need to return your passport to us.

The digital certificate of entitlement is not an eVisa, but you will need to use the [eVisa process](#) for creating and updating your digital account.

Your UKVI account

Your digital certificate of entitlement will be stored in your UKVI account, and the passport which we know about will be linked to it. You will use this account when needed to update us, for example, when you get a new passport or need to upload a new photograph. You can also use this account to prove to a potential employer or landlord that you have no restrictions on your stay in the UK.

How to set up a UKVI account

You may already have a UKVI account if you set one up during an earlier immigration process. If you do, you will use the same account.

You only need to create a new account if you have never had one. If you do not have an account, instructions on how to create one are here: [eVisas: access and use your online immigration status: Set up a UKVI account to access your eVisa - GOV.UK](#)

You can also set up an account on behalf of someone, such as a small child, who is not currently able to do so. They can then take over that account at an appropriate age. A separate account is needed for each person with a certificate of entitlement.

The most recent passport you have told us about will automatically be linked to your account for travel purposes. You can tell us when you change a passport by using the “Update My Details” function: [eVisas: access and use your online immigration status: Update your details in your UKVI account - GOV.UK](#)

If you want to generate a share code to show an employer or landlord that you have the right of abode in the UK, you must set up a UKVI account. You will control who you share that information with.

What happens to your vignette certificate

Your current vignette sticker will not be cancelled in your passport. It will expire when your passport expires. You do not need to return it to us.

When your passport expires

Your digital certificate of entitlement will not expire, even if your passport expires or is lost. You can link your next passport to it using the “[Update My Details](#)” function.

Once you have a digital certificate of entitlement you will not need to apply again for a certificate of entitlement or pay another fee.

Linking a new passport to your account

Once you have a digital certificate of entitlement, you must tell us if you get a new passport, using “[Update My Details](#)”.

If the passport is chipped and your personal details have not changed, it can normally be updated straight away.

If your name has changed, or if you are adding a passport of another nationality, it may take a few days.

You should try to tell us as soon as you get the new passport and before you travel.

Once updated on our system, your digital certificate of entitlement will then work with your new passport.

If you change your name

Once you have a new passport showing your new name, you must use “Update My Details” to give us details of your updated passport.

Sharing your information

You will be able to share limited information with a potential employer or landlord using a share code for right to work or right to rent checks.

When you give your travel information to an airline or another carrier, they will receive confirmation from us that you have permission to come to the UK, as long as your overseas passport details are up to date on your UKVI account.

If your information on your account is wrong

If you think something in your account is incorrect, you should tell us before you travel so we can fix it. You can report errors using: [eVisas: access and use your online immigration status: Report an error with your eVisa - GOV.UK](#)

Updating your photograph

Your UKVI account will hold a record of your certificate of entitlement and will also contain a photograph from your original application. This will be used to generate share codes for potential employers or landlords, so it is important the photograph still looks like you.

You are expected to make sure your account has a photograph that you can be identified from. Adults should update their photograph every 10 years, but you can update the photograph earlier if your appearance changes significantly. Children under 18 should update their photograph every five years.

You can use the same photo that you used for your passport if it still looks like you.

[Contents](#)

Citizenship related queries

If, after reading this guidance, you have questions about applying for a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode, you can email the Citizenship and Nationality Enquiries team at nationalityenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk.

You should also contact them if you have made an application and your circumstances change (for example, if you move house, get married or are arrested).

If you have not had a reply, we recommend checking your spam or junk email folder before contacting UKVI again.

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

[Contents](#)

Explanation of terms

UK means:

- England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man
- for nationality purposes, before 31 March 1922, it also includes the Republic of Ireland (when it was part of the UK)
- for births in the UK before 1 January 1983, it includes ships or aircraft registered in the UK or unregistered ships or aircraft owned by the UK Government

Parent includes:

- For children born before 1 July 2006: the child's mother, and the father if the parents were married. A child can also be "legitimated" if the parents marry after the birth
- For children born on or after 1 July 2006: the father can pass on his citizenship even if not married to the mother
- Adoptive parents of a legally adopted child

If you were born before 1 July 2006 to a British father but did not automatically become British because your parents were not married, you may be able to register as a British citizen – see [Guide UKF](#).

Legal adoption:

Means an adoption as defined in the Adoption and Children Act 2002. A child adopted in the UK on or after 1 January 1950, or in the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man on or after 1 April 1959, automatically became a citizen of the UK and Colonies if the adoptive father (or adoptive mother, if she was the sole adopter) was a citizen of the UK and Colonies at the time of the adoption.

Registration in the UK:

This includes registration at a British High Commission in an independent Commonwealth country. This means that the country must have been independent at the time of the registration.

It does not include:

- Registration under section 6(2) of the British Nationality Act 1948 (registration on the grounds of marriage to a citizen of the UK and Colonies) if the marriage

took place after 28 October 1971

- Registration under section 7 of the British Nationality Act 1948 (registration of minors) at a High Commission after 28 October 1971.

A person registered under section 1(1)(a) of the British Nationality (No. 2) Act 1964 did not become a British citizen unless their mother became a British citizen on that date (or would have done so but for her death) or if the person already had the right of abode through 5 years' residence.

Settled in the UK:

Means being ordinarily resident in the UK without any time limit on your stay under the immigration laws. A person is not settled if:

- they are in the UK in breach of immigration laws
- they are exempt from immigration control because they are a diplomat or work for certain visiting forces or an international organisations.

An EEA national would be settled if:

- Before 2 October 2000 - they were in the UK exercising a Treaty right
- Between 2 October 2000 and 29 April 2006 - they had indefinite leave to remain in the UK. This does not apply to EEA nationals with unconditional right of residence, such as retired people or someone who is unable to work because of incapacity.
- From 30 April 2006 - they exercised a Treaty right for more than 5 years or had indefinite leave to remain.

British Overseas Territories means:

Anguilla; Bermuda; British Antarctic Territory; British Indian Ocean Territory; Cayman Islands; Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno Islands; St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia; Turks and Caicos Islands; Virgin Islands.

A “qualifying territory” includes all of these territories except the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia.

Settled in a qualifying British overseas territory:

Means being ordinarily resident in a qualifying British overseas territory without any time limit on your stay under the local immigration laws.

A person is not settled if:

- they are in that territory in breach of the immigration laws
- they are exempt from immigration control because they are a member of a diplomatic or consular mission, visiting forces or an international organisation.

Other categories may also not be settled in a British overseas territory, depending on local immigration laws.

[Contents](#)

