



Home Office

# Appendix HM Armed Forces: caseworker guidance

Version 5.0

# Contents

Contents.....	2
About this guidance.....	4
Contacts.....	4
Publication.....	4
Changes from last version of this guidance.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Background.....	5
Relevant legislation.....	6
Immigration Rules.....	6
Definitions.....	6
Armed Forces Covenant.....	7
Members of HM Armed Forces exempt from immigration control.....	9
Who is exempt from immigration control?.....	9
Application process.....	9
Verification of status.....	10
Family members of HM Armed Forces or an HM Armed Forces service leaver.....	11
Validity.....	11
Suitability.....	11
Eligibility.....	11
Entry clearance.....	11
Tuberculosis (TB) certificate.....	11
Relationship – child.....	12
Relationship – partner.....	12
English language requirement.....	13
Financial requirements.....	13
Accommodation requirement.....	13
Decision making.....	13
Period of a grant.....	14
Conditions of a grant.....	14
Settlement as a family member of a HM Armed Forces member, or an HM Armed Forces service leaver.....	15
Validity requirements.....	15
Suitability requirements.....	15
Eligibility requirements.....	15
Entry requirements.....	15

Tuberculosis (TB) certificate .....	15
Relationship – child .....	15
Relationship – partner.....	16
Bereaved partner .....	16
Qualifying period for settlement.....	16
Continuous residence requirement.....	16
English language requirement.....	17
Knowledge of life in the UK requirements .....	17
Financial requirements.....	17
Decision making.....	17
Period of a grant where the requirements for settlement are not met and permission to stay is being granted.....	18
Conditions of a grant.....	18
Leave to Enter and Remain (Amendment) Order 2015.....	18
HM Armed Forces service leavers.....	20
Validity.....	20
Suitability.....	20
Eligibility requirements.....	20
Tuberculosis (TB) certificate.....	20
Military service requirements.....	20
Medical discharge requirement.....	21
Illustrative considerations in medical discharge cases .....	21
Applications refused settlement but granted limited permission to stay .....	23
Medical discharge – background and supporting information.....	23
How to determine if the cause is attributable to service .....	24
Injury not attributable to service .....	24
Decision making.....	24

# About this guidance

This guidance tells you how to consider applications under Appendix HM Armed Forces. HM stands for His Majesty's. A partner or dependent child of a member of HM Armed forces or of a service leaver can also apply on this route. An application can be made up to 18 weeks prior to a HM Armed Forces member discharging from service.

An application can be made from in the UK or overseas.

The HM Armed Forces route is a route to settlement.

Those serving, or who have served in the Reserve Forces, or their family members, cannot apply on this route.

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or think that the guidance has factual errors then email Armed Forces Policy.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

## Publication

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

- version **5.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **02 April 2026**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

The changes to this guidance include the insertion of a table to support decision-making on medical discharge cases.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Introduction

## Background

This guidance was introduced in April 2024 with the introduction of the new Appendix HM Armed Forces alongside Appendix International Armed Forces and International Civilian Employees and [Appendix Gurkha and Hong Kong military unit veteran discharged before 1 July 1997](#) set out in [HC590](#) Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, laid before Parliament on 14 March 2024. It forms part of a suite of guidance relating to Immigration Rules covering requirements for the Armed Forces, both domestic and international to come to, or stay in the UK.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Relevant legislation

## Immigration Rules

This page tells you the requirements the applicant must meet to be granted settlement (also known as indefinite leave to enter (ILE) or indefinite leave to remain (ILR)), or permission to stay under Appendix His Majesty's (HM) Armed Forces to the Immigration Rules.

When you consider an application, you must check:

- it is valid
- the applicant does not fall for refusal on grounds of suitability
- the applicant meets the eligibility requirements

Guidance on validity, suitability and eligibility is contained in this document.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this guidance, the following terms apply.

**HM Armed Forces** means Regular service personnel in the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the Army (including the Brigade of Gurkhas), the Royal Air Force, and does not include the Reserve forces.

**HM Armed Forces service leaver** means Regular service personnel who was a member of HM Armed Forces but was discharged within 2 years of the date of this application, or a person who was within 18 weeks of their discharge date at the date of this application.

**Reckonable service** means service which counts towards an applicant's pension, and it starts from the first day of paid service in HM Armed Forces if over 18 or from their 18th birthday, but does not include time when the applicant is either:

- absent without leave (AWOL)
- detained in military detention
- detained and serving a sentence in:
  - one of His Majesty's Prisons (HMP)
  - Young Offenders Institutions (YOI)
  - Youth Justice Board establishments (YJB)
- on a career break
- on special unpaid leave
- on a career intermission
- on secondment
- on additional maternity leave
- on adoption leave over 40 weeks
- on additional shared parental leave over 40 weeks
- on unpaid parental leave

## Armed Forces Covenant

This page tells you about the Armed Forces Covenant. The Armed Forces Covenant reflects the nation's moral obligation to people who have sacrificed civilian freedoms and put themselves in danger on its behalf. It states:

“Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.”

There are differences between the Immigration Rules that provide for HM Armed Forces and their family members compared to other British or settled people, because of the unique role they play, the nature of their service, and the sacrifices, dangers and risk of injury or death they face. Appendix HM Armed Forces recognises the UK Government's moral obligations to service personnel and their families under the Armed Forces Covenant. These provisions recognise that families play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces and the lack of choice that service personnel and their families have over deployment.

For example:

- partners of members of HM Armed Forces get permission to enter / stay for 5-years, rather than 30 months, so they are not disadvantaged by having to extend their permission at the 30-month point when overseas, as this is more expensive
- partners of HM Armed Forces can spend their probationary period overseas if accompanying their sponsor on an overseas posting
- partners of members of HM Armed Forces with 4 years' service may make an application for settlement on the basis of domestic abuse before their partner settles - this is because 4 years' service is the point at which the sponsor could settle if discharged from HM Armed Forces and the partner should not be disadvantaged by the fact that the sponsor continues to serve (same rationale for appeal rights)

You must refer the case to a senior caseworker, who must seek advice from armed forces policy where necessary, if you feel that the applicant is disadvantaged through service in HM Armed Forces (either their own or that of a sponsor) when compared with a civilian, in a specific case.

An example of this might be where a soldier has been badly injured and relatives other than those provided for in the Immigration Rules have applied for immigration permission to provide short-term care and support.

In these circumstances, applicants should apply on VAF(AF) or FLR(AF) and will normally be granted up to 30 months leave outside the rules (LOTR) so that the situation can be kept under review.

**Related content**  
[Contents](#)

# Members of HM Armed Forces exempt from immigration control

This section tells you about members of His Majesty's (HM) Armed Forces who are exempt from immigration control.

## Who is exempt from immigration control?

The following categories of HM Armed Forces are exempt from immigration control:

- a full-time member of the home forces (HM Armed Forces) subject to service law – regular (non-reserve) HM Forces personnel are always subject to service law whilst enlisted
- a reservist with HM Armed Forces deployed / due to be deployed - this means reserve forces are only exempt at those times they are subject to service law

However, for the purposes of the Immigration Rules, a reservist, or their family members are not eligible for consideration under Appendix HM Armed Forces.

## Application process

Exempt status is conferred by the Immigration Act 1971. Any person who is exempt from immigration control does not require prior entry clearance.

The UK now operates a modernised 'digital' permission to travel system. From 25 February 2026, international carriers are required to confirm, through automated checks against Home Office records, that passengers have valid permission, status or exemption, to travel to the UK.

People who already have a valid physical exempt vignette sticker can continue to use this to demonstrate their exemption from immigration control until the date of expiry, or until they no longer qualify for an exemption from immigration control (whichever is sooner).

From 25 February 2026, people applying from outside of the UK, will no longer receive a physical vignette sticker. They will instead be issued with a digital record of exemption. Those making their application from within the UK will also transition to a digital record of exemption from 19 March 2026.

Applying for a record of exemption is not mandatory but allows people who are exempt from immigration control to easily demonstrate their exemption when required and allows carriers (for example, airlines) to automatically confirm their status, ensuring a smoother journey when travelling

From 25 February 2026, if a person chooses to travel without an exempt vignette (sticker) or a digital record of exemption, there is a greater chance they may

experience inconvenience and delays when travelling to the UK as additional checks may be required to confirm their UK exempt status.

The Home Office recommends that people meeting the conditions for exemption currently in the UK check their exempt vignette is valid. If they do not have one, or it has expired, they should consider applying for one to ensure a smoother journey when travelling

Applicants opting to make an application online will follow the same process as they do now. For further information see: [Entering the UK: exemptions to controls](#).

There is no charge for a request of evidence of exempt status.

No biometric information is required for applications made in the UK if exempt under the Immigration Act 1971 or the 1972 Exemption Order.

Those applying from within the UK for an extension of an existing vignette should continue to send their passport and documentary evidence supporting the request, such as posting orders and military ID to the address below:

Visits UK (SHU)  
Armed Forces/FCDO Team  
Visa, Status and Information Services- UKVI  
L4, 2 Ruskin Square  
Dingwall Road  
Croydon  
CR0 2WF

From 19 March 2026, a digital record of exemption will be issued.

## Verification of status

Where a member of HM Armed Forces is exempt from immigration control under section 8(4) of the Immigration Act 1971 and a Border Force Officer is satisfied that this is the case, the Border Force Officer may not refuse entry unless the member of the armed forces is subject to a deportation order.

Members of HM Armed Forces must demonstrate they are exempt from immigration control under the 1971 Act by providing an exempt vignette or a digital record of exemption, or their HM Armed Forces identification (ID) card.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Family members of HM Armed Forces or an HM Armed Forces service leaver

This section tells you about the requirements for entry clearance for permission to enter or permission to stay as a partner or dependent child of a His Majesty's (HM) Armed Forces member or an HM Armed Forces service leaver making an application under Appendix HM Armed Forces.

## Validity

The validity requirements for a partner or child of a HM Armed Forces or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, are set out in paragraphs **AF 9.1. to AF 9.5. of Appendix HM Armed Forces**.

Where any of these requirements are not met the application is invalid and may be rejected without consideration of the substantive application.

The Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) does not apply.

## Suitability

In considering the suitability criteria in **paragraphs 10.1. to 10.2. of Appendix HM Armed Forces** and [Part Suitability of the Immigration Rules](#) you must refer to the Grounds for refusal: criminality caseworker guidance.

## Eligibility

The requirements for entry clearance or permission to stay as a partner or child of a HM Armed Forces member or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, are set out in **paragraphs AF 11.1. to AF 19.2. of Appendix HM Armed Forces**.

## Entry clearance

If applying from outside the UK as a partner or child of a member of HM Armed Forces, or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, the applicant must apply for and obtain entry clearance as a partner or child before they arrive in the UK.

## Tuberculosis (TB) certificate

If [Appendix Tuberculosis](#) applies, the applicant must provide a valid medical certificate confirming that they have undergone screening for active pulmonary tuberculosis and that this tuberculosis is not present in them.

## Relationship – child

The applicant must meet the age, independent life, care and relationship requirements for a dependent child in [Appendix Children](#):

## Relationship – partner

The applicant must be the partner of a person who either:

- is a member of HM Armed Forces who is exempt from immigration control
- has permission under this Appendix
- is a British citizen and:
  - naturalised after 5 years reckonable service
  - is a member of HM Armed Forces
  - is an HM Armed Forces service leaver
- is settled providing the person had:
  - permission
  - exemption from control as a member of HM Armed Forces
  - as an HM Armed Forces service leaver before they were granted settlement

The requirements of [Appendix Relationship with Partner](#) must be met.

If the application is for entry clearance and the applicant is a fiancé or fiancée or proposed civil partner all the following must be met:

- the applicant and their fiancé / fiancée / proposed civil partner must be aged 18 and over on the date of application
- the applicant and their fiancé / fiancée / proposed civil partner must have met in person
- the relationship between the applicant and their fiancé / fiancée / proposed civil partner must be genuine
- the applicant and their fiancé or fiancée / proposed civil partner must not be so closely related that they would be prohibited from marrying, or entering a civil partnership with each other as defined in the Marriage Acts 1949 to 1986, the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 and 1986, the Marriage (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, the Civil Partnership Act 2004 and the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014
- neither the applicant nor their fiancé or fiancée / proposed civil partner can be married to / in a civil partnership with, another person at the date of application
- the applicant must be seeking entry clearance to enable their marriage / civil partnership to take place in the UK within 6 months of the date of entry to the UK

If the application is for permission to stay as a fiancé or fiancée or proposed civil partner all the following must be met:

- the applicant must have been granted entry clearance as a fiancé / fiancée / proposed civil partner
- the marriage or civil partnership must not have taken place

- the decision maker must be satisfied there is a good reason for the delay in the marriage or civil partnership taking place
- the decision maker must be satisfied the marriage or civil partnership will take place in the UK within 6 months of the date of application

## English language requirement

Unless an exemption applies, the applicant must show English language ability on the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#) in speaking and listening of at least level A1.

The applicant must show they meet the English language requirement, or are exempt, as set out in [Appendix English Language](#).

## Financial requirements

In considering the financial requirements in paragraphs AF 16.1. to AF 17.7. of Appendix HM Armed Forces for a partner or child of a HM Armed Forces member or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, you must refer to the Family Migration: Appendix FM and Appendix HM Armed Forces Minimum Income Requirement guidance.

The applicant must show they meet the financial requirement as specified in [Appendix FM-SE](#).

## Accommodation requirement

The applicant's accommodation in the UK must not be overcrowded or contravene public health regulations. For further guidance on the accommodation requirement, see Part 8 - Family Migration: Adequate maintenance and accommodation guidance.

## Decision making

If you are satisfied that that applicant meets the validity, suitability and relevant eligibility requirements for a partner or child under Appendix HM Armed Forces, you must grant the application.

Where the applicant does not meet all the suitability or eligibility requirements for a partner or child of a member of HM Armed Forces, you must go on to consider whether refusal of the application would breach Article 8 of the Human Rights Convention because it would result in unjustifiably harsh consequences for the applicant or their family. This will be considered in line with the guidance on this approach which applies to [Appendix FM](#) partners and children.

If an application under Appendix HM Armed Forces is refused the applicant has the right to appeal to the Immigration Tribunal.

## Period of a grant

You must grant permission to stay for whichever is shorter of either:

- 5 years
- the remaining duration of the applicant's partner's enlistment
- the remaining duration of the applicant's partner's extant permission
- 6 months if the applicant is being granted entry clearance
- permission to stay as a fiancé / fiancée / proposed civil partner

You must grant permission to stay as a dependent child to end on the same date as whichever of their parents' permission ends first, unless one parent is a British citizen or a person who has a right to enter or stay in the UK without restriction and is, or will be, ordinarily resident in the UK. In such case, you must grant permission to stay which ends on the same date as the parent who is granted as the partner of an HM Armed Forces service member, or an HM Armed Forces service leaver.

## Conditions of a grant

The grant will be subject to all the following conditions:

- no access to public funds
- work permitted (including self-employment and voluntary work) (unless granted as a fiancé / fiancée / proposed civil partner where no work is permitted)
- study permitted, subject to the ATAS condition in Appendix ATAS (unless granted as a fiancé / fiancée / proposed civil partner where no study is permitted)

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Settlement as a family member of a HM Armed Forces member, or an HM Armed Forces service leaver

## Validity requirements

The validity requirements for settlement as a partner or child of a member of His Majesty's (HM) Armed forces or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, are set out in **paragraphs AF 22.1. to AF 22.3. of Appendix HM Armed Forces**.

Where any of these requirements are not met the application is invalid and may be rejected without consideration of the substantive application.

The Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) does not apply.

## Suitability requirements

In considering the suitability criteria in **paragraphs AF 23.1. to AF 23.2. of Appendix HM Armed Forces** and [Part Suitability of the Immigration Rules](#), you must refer to the Grounds for refusal: criminality caseworker guidance.

## Eligibility requirements

The requirements for settlement as a partner or child of a HM Armed Forces member or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, are set out in paragraphs AF 24.1. to AF 32.5. of [Appendix HM Armed Forces](#).

## Entry requirements

If applying from outside the UK as a partner or child of a member of HM Armed Forces or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, the applicant must apply for and obtain entry clearance as a partner or child before they arrive in the UK.

## Tuberculosis (TB) certificate

If [Appendix Tuberculosis](#) applies, the applicant must provide a valid medical certificate confirming that they have undergone screening for active pulmonary tuberculosis and that this tuberculosis is not present in them.

## Relationship – child

The applicant must meet the age, independent life, care and relationship requirements for a dependent child in [Appendix Children](#).

## Relationship – partner

The applicant must be the partner or child of a person who either:

- is a member of HM Armed Forces exempt from immigration control with at least 5 years' [reckonable service](#)
- has been granted or, is at the same time applying for (and is being granted) settlement as a HM Armed Forces service leaver
- has leave to enter or remain under Appendix HM Armed Forces or Part 7 paragraphs 276E-QA of the Immigration Rules or under the concession which existed outside the Immigration Rules whereby the Secretary of State exercised discretion to grant leave to enter or remain to a member of HM Forces who has been medically discharged
- is a British citizen and:
  - naturalised after 5 years reckonable service
  - is a member of HM Armed Forces
  - is an HM Armed Forces service leaver
- is settled providing the person had permission (or exemption from control as a member of HM Armed Forces or as an HM Armed Forces service leaver before they were granted settlement

The requirements of [Appendix Relationship with Partner](#) must be met.

## Bereaved partner

If the applicant is applying as a bereaved partner, they must meet the requirements as specified in [Appendix Bereaved Partner](#).

## Qualifying period for settlement

The applicant must have completed a continuous period of 60 months with permission to enter or stay under this Appendix as the partner or child of the same member of HM Armed Forces, or HM Armed Forces service leaver (excluding any period of entry clearance or permission to stay as a fiancé or fiancée or proposed civil partner).

If the applicant does not meet AF 27.1, the qualifying period of 60 months can be met by including periods of time spent with continuous residence on any other route to settlement if the applicant:

- did not enter the UK illegally
- has permission as a partner of a member of an HM Armed Forces, or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, for at least one year immediately before the date of application

## Continuous residence requirement

The applicant must meet the continuous residence requirement as set out in [Appendix Continuous Residence](#) for the qualifying period.

The child of a parent who qualifies for settlement under this Appendix should be granted in line with the qualifying parent and does not need to have completed the 60-month qualifying period.

## English language requirement

Unless an exemption applies, the applicant must show English language ability on the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#) in speaking and listening of at least level B1.

The applicant must show they meet the English language requirement, or are exempt, as set out in [Appendix English Language](#).

## Knowledge of life in the UK requirements

Unless an exemption applies, the applicant must meet the Knowledge of Life in the UK requirement as set out in [Appendix KOLL UK](#).

## Financial requirements

In considering the financial requirements in paragraphs AF 31.1. to AF 32.5. of Appendix HM Armed Forces for a partner or child of a HM Armed Forces member, you must refer to the Family Migration Appendix FM Section and Appendix HM Armed Forces Financial Requirement.

The applicant must show they meet the financial requirement as specified in [Appendix FM-SE](#).

## Decision making

If you are satisfied that that applicant meets the validity, suitability and relevant eligibility requirements for a partner or child under Appendix HM Armed Forces, you must grant settlement.

If the applicant is outside the UK, entry clearance for settlement must be granted. If the requirements for settlement are not met, but you believe the applicant is likely to meet the requirements for entry clearance or permission to stay as a partner or child of a member of HM Armed Forces or an HM Armed Forces service leaver under Appendix HM Armed Forces, you must vary the application to an application for permission to stay as a partner or child of a member of HM Armed Forces or HM Armed Forces Service leaver (as appropriate). Where this happens no additional application fee for entry clearance or permission to stay will be required and the settlement application fee will not be refunded.

Where the applicant does not meet all the suitability or eligibility requirements for settlement as a partner or child of a member of HM Armed Forces or an HM Armed Forces service leaver, you must go on to consider whether refusal of the application would breach Article 8 of the Human Rights Convention because it would result in unjustifiably harsh consequences for the applicant or their family. This will be

considered in line with the guidance on this approach which applies to [Appendix FM](#) partners and children.

If you are not satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for settlement or permission to stay, the application for settlement will be refused.

If an application under Appendix HM Armed Forces is refused the applicant has the right to appeal to the Immigration Tribunal.

## Period of a grant where the requirements for settlement are not met and permission to stay is being granted

You must grant permission to stay for whichever is shorter of:

- 5 years
- the remaining duration of the applicant's partner's enlistment
- the remaining duration of the applicant's partner's extant permission
- 6 months if the applicant is being granted entry clearance or permission to stay as a fiancé or fiancée or proposed civil partner

You must grant permission to stay as a dependent child to end on the same date as whichever of their parents' permission ends first, unless one parent is a British citizen or a person who has a right to enter or stay in the UK without restriction and is, or will be, ordinarily resident in the UK. In such case, you must grant permission to stay which ends on the same date as the parent who is granted as the partner of an HM Armed Forces service member.

## Conditions of a grant

The grant will be subject to all of the following conditions:

- no access to public funds
- work permitted (including self-employment and voluntary work) (unless granted as a fiancé or fiancée or proposed civil partner where no work is permitted)
- study permitted, subject to the ATAS condition in Appendix ATAS (unless granted as a fiancé or fiancée or proposed civil partner where no study is permitted)

## Leave to Enter and Remain (Amendment) Order 2015

The amendments to the Immigration (Leave to Enter and Remain) Order 2000 in relation to HM Armed Forces' families makes sure that any time spent accompanying the sponsor on an overseas posting will count towards the qualifying probationary period of 60 months. This is a requirement for settlement under Appendix HM Armed Forces. This means any family members who have valid immigration permission as a dependant of a member of HM Armed Forces will not automatically lose their permission to stay if they remain on an accompanied posting overseas for a period longer than 2 years. Family members of HM Armed Forces personnel granted leave

outside the Immigration Rules are not covered by this amendment and will need to apply for entry clearance under Appendix Armed Forces if:

- their leave has expired
- they have remained outside the UK for longer than 2 years

**Related content**

[Contents](#)

# HM Armed Forces service leavers

This section tells you about the requirements for an HM Armed Forces service leaver. The Immigration Rules for this are set out in Appendix HM Armed Forces.

## Validity

The validity requirements for a person applying for permission to stay in the UK as a service leaver are set out in **paragraphs AF 1.1. to AF 1.5. of Appendix HM Armed Forces** to the Immigration Rules.

Where any of these requirements are not met the application is invalid and may be rejected without consideration of the substantive application.  
The Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) does not apply.

## Suitability

The suitability requirements for a person applying for permission to stay in the UK as a HM Armed Forces service leaver are set out in **paragraphs AF 2.1. to AF 2.2. of Appendix HM Armed Forces**.

In considering the suitability criteria in Appendix HM Armed Forces and [Part Suitability of the Immigration Rules](#), you must refer to the Grounds for refusal: criminality caseworker guidance.

## Eligibility requirements

The eligibility requirements for a person applying for entry clearance for settlement, settlement, or permission to stay in the UK as a HM Armed Forces service leaver are set out in **paragraphs AF 3.1. to AF 6.2. of Appendix HM Armed Forces**.

## Tuberculosis (TB) certificate

If [Appendix Tuberculosis](#) applies, the applicant must provide a valid medical certificate confirming that they have undergone screening for active pulmonary tuberculosis and that this tuberculosis is not present in them.

## Military service requirements

The military service requirements for a person applying for permission to stay in the UK as a service leaver are set out in **paragraphs AF 5.1. to AF 5.3. of Appendix HM Armed Forces**.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Medical discharge requirement

To qualify for settlement the applicant must have been medically discharged by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and must meet the medical discharge requirement at AF 6.1.

The applicant must have been medically discharged from HM Armed Forces and either:

- the cause of the medical discharge was attributable to deployment on operations (an operational theatre is a place where military action takes place)
- the cause of the medical discharge was attributable to service, and it is appropriate to grant settlement following assessment of all relevant factors

In assessing whether it is appropriate to grant settlement where the medical discharge was attributable to service, caseworkers must carry out a balanced assessment of all relevant factors, including (but not limited to):

- the seriousness of the illness or injury
- the need for any further medical treatment in the UK
- the availability of equivalent medical treatment in the individual's country of origin
- the prognosis for recovery, including whether the injury or illness will affect their ability to support themselves in their country of origin
- the length of reckonable service completed at the point of discharge

No single factor is determinative. However, the seriousness of the injury or illness and the lack of availability of appropriate medical treatment abroad will normally be given significant weight.

Applicants who have been medically discharged may be granted settlement without having completed a specified minimum period of reckonable service, provided the requirements of AF 6.1 are met.

## Illustrative considerations in medical discharge cases

The table below provides illustrative, non-exhaustive considerations that may arise when assessing settlement following medical discharge under Appendix HM Armed Forces.

It does not create additional routes, set service-length thresholds, or remove the requirement to consider each application on its individual merits in accordance with AF 6.1.

Nature of medical discharge	Relevant considerations (illustrative, non-exhaustive)
Medical discharge attributable to deployment on operations	Where the medical discharge resulted from injury or illness attributable to deployment on operations, the medical discharge requirement at AF 6.1(a) will normally be met. Caseworkers should still consider the seriousness of the condition, prognosis, and any ongoing medical or support needs following discharge. No minimum period of reckonable service applies.
Medical discharge attributable to service in HM Armed Forces (non-operational)	Where the medical discharge was attributable to service more generally, settlement may be appropriate following a balanced assessment under AF 6.1(b). Relevant considerations include the seriousness of the illness or injury, the need for further medical treatment and its availability in the applicant's country of origin, the prognosis for recovery (including the applicant's ability to support themselves), and the length of reckonable service completed at the point of discharge. No single factor is determinative.
As part of the assessment under AF 6.1(b): serious or permanent injury or illness attributable to service	Where, as part of the assessment under AF 6.1(b), the injury or illness attributable to service is serious, permanent, or requires ongoing or specialist treatment, this may weigh in favour of settlement, particularly where equivalent treatment is not readily available in the applicant's country of origin.
As part of the assessment under AF 6.1(b): less serious injury or illness attributable to service	Where, as part of the assessment under AF 6.1(b), the injury or illness attributable to service is less serious, caseworkers should consider the prognosis for recovery, any ongoing treatment needs, and the applicant's overall service history when determining whether settlement is appropriate.
Medical discharge not attributable to service	Where the injury or illness was not attributable to service, the medical

Nature of medical discharge	Relevant considerations (illustrative, non-exhaustive)
	discharge requirement for settlement is not met and the application must be refused in line with AF 6.1 and AF 6.2.

Service length is one factor among several and must not be treated as a threshold or presumption. Settlement following medical discharge depends on service attribution and the overall assessment required by AF 6.1(b).

## Applications refused settlement but granted limited permission to stay

Where the applicant does not qualify for settlement because they do not meet AF 6.1, they may still meet the medical discharge requirement at AF 6.2, and limited permission to stay may be granted if:

- the applicant has been medically discharged
- the cause of the medical discharge was attributable to service in HM Armed Forces (AF 6.2(a))
- it is appropriate to grant permission to stay to facilitate either:
  - further medical treatment
  - a period of recovery before they can return to their country of origin (AF 6.2(b)(i)–(ii))

Permission under AF 6.2 will normally be granted for a period not exceeding 30 months and will not be subject to restrictions on employment or recourse to public funds.

Permission under AF 6.2 is intended to be temporary and should not be granted for longer than is necessary to allow the applicant to become medically able to return to their country of nationality.

## Medical discharge – background and supporting information

When a member of HM Armed Forces is medically discharged, they are provided with confirmation of their discharge, including discharge date, and the King’s Regulation under which they have been discharged.

A person is medically discharged if they no longer meet the medical standards required for continued service. These standards vary depending on the Service, rank, role, and any treatment received from the Defence Medical Services and the NHS.

A member of HM Armed Forces is provided with a copy of their medical records on discharge. Medical records will contain details of any injury or illness. An assessment of service attributability is made by the MOD veterans organisation.

Caseworkers should be made aware of, or seek to establish, the availability of relevant medical treatment outside the UK.

A member discharging from HM Armed Forces will receive a Certificate of Service, which sets out details of their period of engagement and assignments. This document may assist in understanding the applicant's service history.

## How to determine if the cause is attributable to service

Where an applicant has received compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), this can be accepted as evidence that the injury or illness was attributable to service.

Where no AFCS evidence is available, you should consider MOD medical records, MOD attributability assessments, and other service documentation relating to the circumstances of the injury or illness.

## Injury not attributable to service

Where the injury was not attributable to service, the application must be refused in line with AF 6.1 and AF 6.2.

## Decision making

If the applicant meets all the requirements as an HM Armed Forces service leaver under Appendix HM Armed Forces, and none of the general grounds for refusal apply, settlement must be granted.

If the applicant does not meet the suitability or relevant eligibility requirements for settlement, the application must be refused.

If the applicant meets the validity, suitability, and eligibility requirements for permission to stay as an HM Armed Forces leaver, but not settlement, permission to stay must be granted for a period not exceeding 30 months, as appropriate.

The applicant will have access to public funds and permission to work.

Where an application is refused, the applicant may apply for an administrative review if they believe an error has been made.

### Related content

[Contents](#)