

Applying for Family Reunion

**A Guide to the
Family Reunion
Process**



Acknowledgements

This guide would not have seen the light of day without the dedication and passion of our colleagues, Sarah Foster and Clare Tudor. The support and feedback of all the British Red Cross family reunion project caseworkers involved has been equally invaluable.

The legal professionals who have worked with the British Red Cross in supporting refugee family reunion applications, must also be thanked for sharing their knowledge and experience.

Last but not least, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to legal consultant Julian Bild for sharing his precious expertise and guidance on refugee family reunion.

Foreword

The British Red Cross recognises that refugee family reunion is a complex process – whether identifying and collecting necessary documentation, planning trips to embassies across borders, or convincing the UK government that the people abroad applying for reunion really are family. We also recognise family reunion as a right entitled to people granted protection status.

Until the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, refugee family reunion applications were eligible for legal aid all over the UK. This enabled access to legal advisers who could support applications by translating complicated requirements, identifying relevant documentation and supporting the submission of applications. Following the 2012 Act however, refugee family reunion was no longer eligible for legal aid in England and Wales and people were left to either make their own applications, or hire solicitors at great financial cost, in order to see their families again.

Because refugee family reunion is a complicated process, and because the resources available to families to navigate such applications have reduced, we are seeking out fresh ways to ensure that families can reunite. We are conscious of the realities in England and Wales – in contrast to Scotland and Northern Ireland, where legal aid continues to support refugee family reunion applications.

This guide is another tool that will hopefully help some families prepare and submit their applications. We have created the guide to help people who have no support or who are trying to better understand what the application process requires. Despite our efforts to ease the burden of applying, we maintain that the only durable solution is publicly funded legal support.

Updated version April 2025

This guide has been updated in April 2025 to reflect changes made by the Home Office to Appendix Family Reunion (Protection). Specifically, the introduction of the requirement to meet Appendix Relationship with Partner, and Appendix Children in conjunction with Appendix Family Reunion (Protection).

Changes have also been made to section 6 of this guide. These changes relate to uploading evidence before a biometric appointment and reflect the fact the Home Office now use VFS (and no longer TLS) as their commercial partner for all Visa Application Centres.

Contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1 How to use this guide	5
1.2 Feedback	5
1.3 Disclaimer	5
2. Where can I get help?	6
2.1 Free legal advice and legal aid	6
2.2 Additional information	7
3. Before you begin: understanding family reunion	8
3.1 Family reunion and the law	8
3.2 The family reunion process	9
3.3 Eligibility: am I allowed to bring my family to the UK?	10
4. Evidence gathering	16
4.1 What evidence do I need?	16
4.2 Common issues and problems	22
4.3 Presenting your evidence	29
4.4 Witness statements	29
5. Applications and form filling	
5.1 Applications: before you begin	32
5.2 Making the applications	34
6. Uploading evidence	51
6.1 Next steps	51
6.2 Creating an electronic bundle	51
6.3 Uploading the evidence	52
6.4 Posting your documents	55
7. Preparing for, and attending the embassy appointment	57
7.1 Your family must... ..	57
7.2 What happens at the overseas mission / embassy?	57
7.3 Changing or cancelling embassy appointments	58
7.4 I have missed my embassy appointment	58
8. Decisions and outcomes	59
8.1 How will I know when a decision has been made?	59
8.2 What happens if my visa(s) are approved?	59
8.3 What happens if my family members' applications are rejected?	61
Glossary	65

1. Introduction

This guide has been given to you because you have asked us about refugee family reunion. This guide will help you understand:

1. Who is eligible for refugee family reunion.
2. How to make the application.
3. What evidence is required and how it should be organised.

1.1 How to use this guide

This guide has been written for refugees and their families and can be used as an independent resource or to provide extra help during advice sessions. The guide should be read in order to make the best use of it. It is important to read the [actual law](#) and [guidance](#) (which is written by the Home Office) so that there will be no misinterpretations or misunderstandings – links have been provided to the relevant parts of the rules. If any issues addressed in this guide are unclear, or you require more specific help, we recommend you seek regulated advice. We have provided useful contact information for such advice at the back of this guide.

Where words are written **in bold**, you will find them in the glossary at the back of the guide

Please note that this guide is a resource to help refugees understand the family reunion process. It should not be used by unqualified individuals to provide immigration advice on family reunion. Providing immigration advice if you are not qualified and not regulated is an offence under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

1.2 Feedback

We would very much appreciate feedback on this guide. Any comments, questions and suggestions can be sent to Darren Murton (darrenmurton@redcross.org.uk)

1.3 Disclaimer

This guide has been written as a resource to help refugees and their families understand the family reunion process. We know that refugee family reunion is a complicated process. At the British Red Cross, we are advocating for the process to be made simpler. However, in the meantime, we hope that this information will be useful to families who are making these applications. While it is always better to get tailored legal advice to your particular circumstances, this guide is intended to help when it is not possible to get legal advice. Following this guide does not guarantee that your application will be successful. For this reason, we maintain that the only durable solution is publicly funded legal support.

This guide does not replace face-to-face advice. It is impossible to cover all aspects of this complicated area of immigration law in such a small guide, and as such only the key points are raised. Every case is different: it may be that some issues within a particular case are not covered in this guide, or issues covered in the guide are not relevant to an individual case. Flow charts and visual aids have been included in the hope that they may provide a clearer explanation of some points, but they are not a complete overview of the entire process. For cases not covered by this guide, it is always advisable to seek advice from a person or agency regulated by the [Immigration Advice Authority \(IAA\)](#) or [The Law Society](#).

2. Where can I get help?

Always seek professional help if you can. However, if you cannot find legal assistance, this guide will help you navigate the process.

For legal representation it is important that you find an adviser who is regulated by the IAA or who is registered with the Law Society, and IAAS accredited. For a list of IAA regulated advisors in your area, visit the [IAA website](#). To find a representative who is both registered with the Law Society and IAAS accredited, visit the [Law Society website](#).

2.1 Free legal advice and legal aid

On 1 April 2013, significant changes to Legal Aid happened as a result of the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act. As part of these changes, refugee family reunion was no longer eligible for free legal advice under legal aid in England and Wales. Recently at appeal, the court upheld that family reunion is not within scope of legal aid. As a result, it is no longer possible to get legal aid for family reunion applications or appeals in England and Wales. Generally, options for free legal advice are very limited. It may be possible to get some free legal advice from your local Law Centre or Citizens Advice Bureau. At appeal, it may be worth contacting the Bar Pro Bono Unit.

It is worth noting that the government has allocated some funds for legal advice in ‘exceptional cases’ (**exceptional case funding**), which may include family reunion cases. It is possible to apply for exceptional case funding directly and the form can be found here: www.gov.uk/legal-aid-apply-for-exceptional-case-funding.

For additional advice or signposting, speak with:

- > Advocate (formerly Bar Pro Bono Unit) - weareadvocate.org.uk/
- > Citizens Advice Bureau - www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- > Free Representation Unit (FRU) - www.thefru.org.uk
- > Law Centres Network - www.lawcentres.org.uk
- > Public Law Project - publiclawproject.org.uk/

2.2 Additional information

The following websites will provide helpful information on family reunion and advice when you are going through the process.

UKVI website

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration

Family reunion information

www.gov.uk/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection/family-reunion

Information on where to apply

www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa

Online applications, IHS reference number and booking embassy appointments (through links in the application)

www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk

Country-specific information on how to make settlement applications

www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre

This often includes:

- a link to the corporate partner's website for the Visa Application Centre (VAC)
- information on how to make enquiries
- a guide to visa-processing time

Information on visa processing

www.gov.uk/visa-processing-times

Information on TB test requirements

www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa

Information on making a subject access request

www.gov.uk/government/publications/requests-for-personal-data-uk-visas-and-immigration

Commercial partner websites

VFS Global

www.vfsglobal.com

TLS Contact

uk.tlscontact.com

3. Before you begin: understanding family reunion

In this section we will cover:

- > The rules around family reunion.
- > The family reunion process.
- > Eligibility criteria.

3.1 Family reunion and the law

Refugee family reunion represents just one of many types of visa: it is a right attached to being recognised as a refugee. Family reunion is a process by which refugees can be reunited with their immediate **pre-existing** or **pre-flight family**. In this process, the refugee in the UK becomes **the sponsor** and **the applicants** are the family members abroad who are making the application. There are some key differences between family reunion visas and other settlement visas, including the following:

- > You do not need to pay an application fee.
- > You do not need to meet any financial or accommodation requirements.
- > Your family do not need to meet any English language requirements.

The rules that regulate family reunion are found in the [Immigration Rules](#), and are supplemented by [Home Office guidance](#). You should try to read the relevant rules and guidance before you start your application. Some information on them can be found below.

Before applying for family reunion visas, you need to establish the following:

- > You are eligible to bring your family to the UK (only people with certain immigration status in the UK are allowed to sponsor family reunion visas).
- > Your family are eligible to join you in the UK (only certain family members can join you in the UK).
- > You can prove with evidence that you meet all the requirements in the Immigration Rules.

This guide does not thoroughly address applications which can be made based on Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – your right to a family life. Although relevant, human rights law is outside the scope of this guide. If you are seeking to rely on your right to family life in an application, it is recommended that you seek professional legal advice.

What are the Immigration Rules?

The **Immigration Rules** are written rules that state who can and cannot enter, stay and settle in the UK. It is important that you know which rule you are applying under, and whether you and your family are eligible for family reunion. There are rules and guidance covering every aspect of the application process. These rules (and the main body of the **UK law** relating to family reunion) can be found in **Appendix Family Reunion (Protection)**.

You can find the full version of the Immigration Rules here:

[Immigration Rules - Immigration Rules Appendix Family Reunion \(Protection\) - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules-immigration-rules-appendix-family-reunion-protection)

What else should I look at before starting?

The Home Office also issues **guidance** which must be followed by **Entry Clearance Officers (ECOs)**, the people who decide whether your family will be granted **VISAs**. It is a good idea to read the guidance before starting the application process.

The guidance relating to family reunion can be found here:

[Family reunion.docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612212/family-reunion.docx)

Please note, the Home Office regularly update the family reunion guidance. Therefore, we would always recommend checking you are using the most up-to-date version before submitting an application.

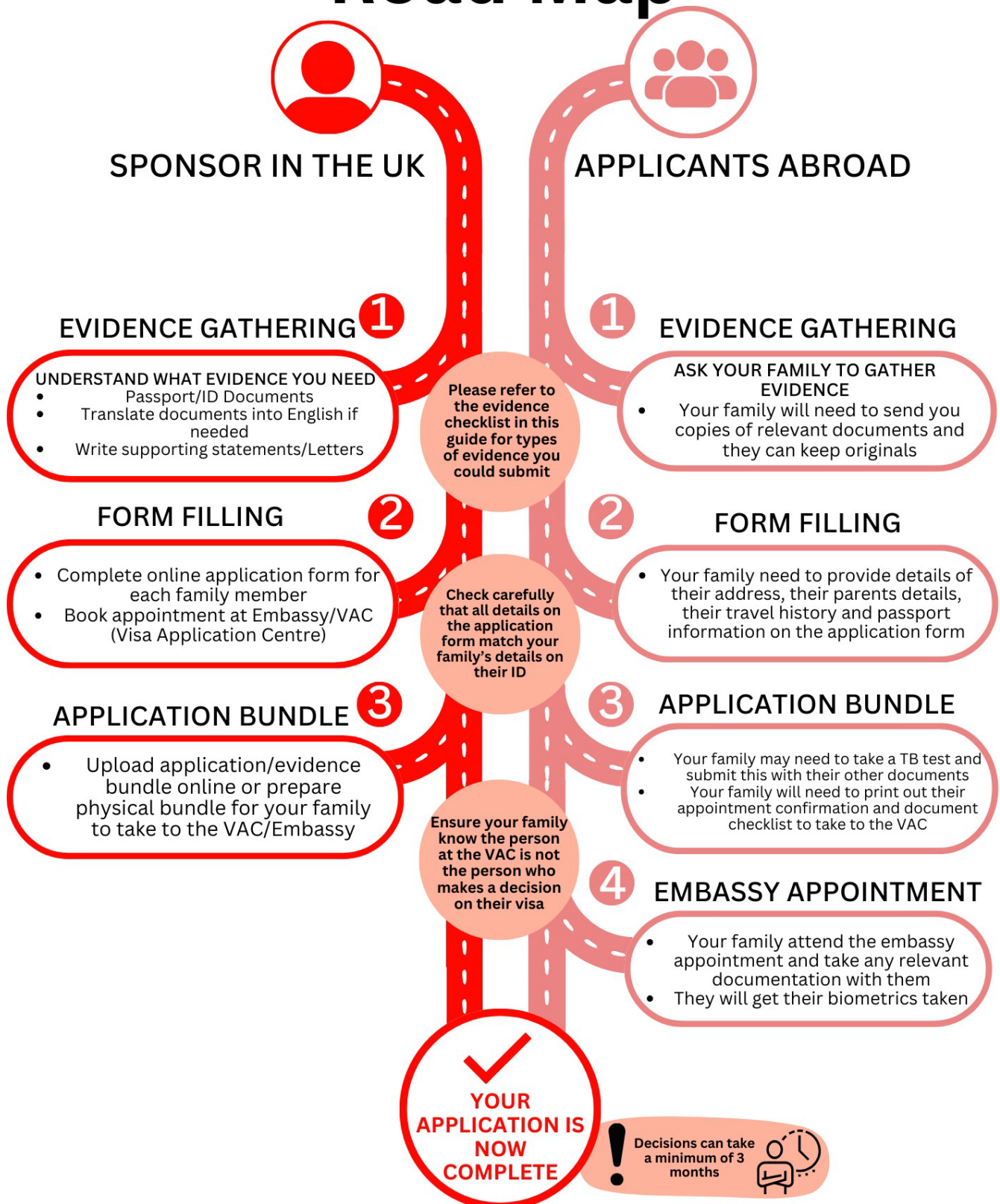
3.2 The family reunion process

A road map of the family reunion process is included below, which will hopefully explain the main stages of making a family reunion application. Please be aware that this is a simplified process chart and there are no timescales included. In summary, family reunion applications tend to follow the pattern of:



As the UK sponsor, your role will normally be more involved in evidence gathering and form-filling. However, it is important to remember that this is your family's application, so they need to be involved in the process as much as possible to avoid confusion or complications at the embassy. For this reason, we show the process as involving both you and your family from start to finish.

Family Reunion Road Map



3.3 Eligibility: am I allowed to bring my family to the UK?

The sponsor (person in the UK)

In order to meet the refugee family reunion rules, the sponsor must have **protection status** in the UK. Protection status means:

- > Refugee status; or
- > Humanitarian protection; or
- > Indefinite leave to remain (ILR) following a grant of refugee status or humanitarian protection; or
- > Been resettled as a refugee to the UK under a resettlement scheme. Including:
 - Gateway Protection Programme
 - Mandate Refugee Programme
 - Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement (VPR) scheme
 - Community Sponsorship Scheme
 - UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)
 - Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme: Pathway 2 (ACRS)

If you have been a refugee but then become a British Citizen, you will **not** be able to apply for refugee family reunion and instead will have to make an application under a different set of rules. There is a cost to these applications. If you are a refugee and considering becoming a British Citizen, it is advisable to wait until your family reunion application has been completed before starting the process.

You cannot be a sponsor (in family reunion applications) if you are a British citizen, if you are a child (i.e. under 18 years old), if you came to the UK through family reunion yourself or if you were granted refugee status as the dependent of someone with refugee status.

The applicants (family abroad)

Only *pre-existing* or *pre-flight* families qualify for family reunion. Pre-existing means family members, who were your family and who you were normally living with before you fled your own country (or the country where you were living). The list of eligible applicants below only applies if they are pre-existing family.

Family reunion usually takes place when family members are overseas: however; there are ways of applying for family members who are already in the UK. If your family members are in the UK and you otherwise meet the criteria for family reunion, you may be able to make an in-country application. See below for further information.

Who can I bring to the UK through family reunion?

You will only be allowed to bring close family members who formed part of your pre-flight family unit to join you in the UK. This is limited to:

- > Your spouse (wife or husband), civil partner or an unmarried / same sex partner, providing that you and your partner have been in a relationship for two years or more before you fled your own country (or the country where you normally lived) to seek asylum in the UK.
- > Your child, or your partners child, under the age of 18 who is **not leading an independent life**, is still dependent on the family, is unmarried, is not in a civil partnership and has not formed their own separate family.
- > Your child, or your partners child, over the age of 18 **under certain circumstances**. If you wish to apply for an adult child, we advise you to seek legal help as these applications can be complex.
- > An adopted child if you have an adoption order and that it was granted by the administrative authority or court in that country and that it was issued in the country where the child is from or is living. Your adoption order must also be recognised as valid for the purposes of UK law.
- > A child who had been conceived but was born after you left to seek asylum.
- > Stepchildren who were part of your family unit before you fled to seek asylum in the UK. If the other biological parent of your stepchild is alive, you will need to include their formalised permission as evidence.

Clearly, not all family members can join you in the UK. Bringing family members outside of the rules above is very difficult in a family reunion application. Instead, you may wish to consider bringing family members on another type of visa. For example: they may also be able to apply under other provisions of the Immigration Rules (e.g. **Part 8, Rule 297** or **Appendix Child Relative (Protection)** or under **Appendix FM: Family Members**).

If you cannot meet the requirement of the family reunion rules, you should seek legal advice about alternative options that may be available to you.

Definition of spouse/civil partner/unmarried partner

The requirements for entry clearance or leave to remain as a spouse, civil partner or unmarried partners for the purpose of family reunion are set out in [Appendix Family Reunion \(Protection\)](#) and [Appendix Relationship with Partner](#). You must provide evidence, to the required standard of proof, that all the following criteria are met:

- You and your partner have a valid marriage or civil partnership which existed before you left your country of origin/country where you normally lived
- Your marriage or civil partnership must be recognised by law in the country in which it took place
- You have met each other in person
- The evidence produced establishes that the relationship between you and your partner is genuine
- Each of the parties intends to live together permanently with the other and that the relationship is ongoing
- Your spouse cannot be your child, parent, sibling, uncle/aunt or niece/nephew
- You are both over the age of 18 at the time of application

If you are not married or in a civil partnership with your partner you must show that:

- You have met each other in person
- You have been in a relationship similar to marriage or a civil partnership which has subsisted for 2 years or more
- That the evidence you provide establishes that the relationship between you and your partner is genuine
- That you intend to live together permanently and that your relationship is ongoing

- Your partner cannot be your child, parent, sibling, uncle/aunt or niece/nephew
- You are both over the age of 18 at the time of application

Polygamous marriages

If you are in a polygamous or polyamorous marriage (you have more than one wife or husband still alive) it is not possible for more than one of your spouses to apply for refugee family reunion under the rules. If you are making an application for one of your spouses and you can only do this if none of your other wives/husbands are or have been, at any time since your marriage, in the UK, or granted entry clearance to come to the UK as your spouse. Please see [Appendix Relationship with Partner Guidance](#) for more information.

Definition of a Child

The requirements for entry clearance or leave to remain as a child for the purpose of family reunion are set out in [Appendix Family Reunion \(Protection\)](#) and [Appendix Children](#) of the Immigration Rules. You must show that:

- You, the sponsor, are the child's parent or your partner/spouse is the child's parent
- The child is under the age of 18 at the time of the application – where a child reaches the age of 18 after an application has been submitted, but before it has been decided, the caseworker must consider the applicant's eligibility as if the applicant was still under 18
- The child is not leading an independent life
- The child is not married, in a civil partnership or formed an independent family unit
- If your child is over the age of 18 you **may** still be able to apply for them to join you in the UK under certain circumstances. These applications are more complex so we advise you to seek assistance from a legal professional

Children over the age of 18

In certain circumstances, it may be possible for you to bring your adult child to the UK under [Appendix Family Reunion \(Protection\)](#). Rule FRP 6.2 states that children over 18 can be included in an application providing you submit evidence to support their claimed age and you demonstrate there are exceptional circumstances which mean they are not leading an independent life, they are still dependant on you and/or your spouse/partner and they are still part of your family unit like a child under the age of 18 typically would be.

Some factors you will need evidence include:

- You will need to show your child is still dependent on the emotional and financial support of you or their other parent
- If they depend on their other parent, you will need to show they also qualify for family reunion and intend to travel to the UK, or they have already travelled to the UK
- You will need to show your child is not leading an independent life
- You will need to show your child has no other relatives who could reasonably be expected to support them and they cannot access support or employment in the country in which they are living and would therefore likely become destitute if left on their own

The above list is not exhaustive, and all relevant factors must be considered by the Entry Clearance Officer when making a decision. Applications for adult children can be complex,

therefore we **strongly advise** you seek legal help if you wish to make an application for your adult child.

Adopted children

If, before you fled your country, you adopted a child you must be able to demonstrate that they hold an adoption order, and that it was granted either by the administrative authority in the third country, or by a court which has the legal power to decide such applications.

The adoption order should have been issued in the child's country of origin, or where the child is living. Your adoption order must be recognised as valid for the purposes of UK law.

De facto Adopted children

De facto adopted children are dependent children who have become part of your family through circumstance, but who were never formally adopted by you or your partner. De facto adopted children do not meet the relationship requirements of the immigration rules, as they are not your biological child nor your legally adopted child. With sufficient evidence and exceptional circumstances it **may** be possible to succeed in making an application under rule FRP 7.1 or outside the rules (see section below), however these applications are highly complex and come with a higher chance of refusal. Therefore, we **strongly advise** you seek professional legal help if you are considering an application under Appendix FRP 7.1. Additionally, there may be more suitable routes available to you, for example [Appendix Child Relative \(Protection\)](#).

Applications under Rule FRP 7.1/Outside the rules – Exceptional and compassionate factors

Occasionally, it is possible that applicants who do not meet the eligibility criteria (FRP 3.1 - 6.2), may be able to come to the UK because to refuse their application would result in unjustifiably harsh consequences for the applicant or their family and would therefore breach their Article 8 (ECHR) right to respect for their private and family life (see rule Appendix FRP 7.1).

The Home Office guidance on family reunion under FRP 7.1. states that;

“Where they do not meet the eligibility requirements, you must consider on the basis of the information provided by the applicant, whether there are exceptional circumstances which would make a refusal of the application a breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) because such refusal would result in unjustifiably harsh consequences for the applicant or their family member whose Article 8 rights it is evident from the information provided would be affected by a decision to refuse the application, as set out in paragraph FRP.7.1.”

Alternatively, an applicant can also make an application ‘outside the rules’ if they believe there are compelling and compassionate factors relevant to their case which do not amount to a breach of their Article 8 rights. The guidance states;

“Where you are not satisfied that the sponsor and applicant or applicants meet the eligibility requirements in paragraphs FRP.3.1 to FRP.6.2 and assess there to be no exceptional circumstances which would make a refusal of the application a breach of Article 8 of the ECHR, you must consider whether a grant of leave outside the rules is warranted on compelling and compassionate grounds - see compelling compassionate factors.”

The Applicant will have to demonstrate as part of their application what the exceptional circumstances or compassionate factors are in their case. The Home Office guidance is clear that;

“Each case must be decided on its individual merits. Entry clearance or a grant of leave outside the Immigration Rules is likely to be appropriate only rarely and consideration should be given to interviewing both the applicant and sponsor where further information is needed to make an informed decision.”

If you believe you are eligible to make an application under rule FRP 7.1 or outside of the Immigration Rules, we **strongly advise** you seek professional legal help. These applications are complex and a legal professional will be able to advise you on how best to move forward with your application.

In-country family reunion applications

Family reunion more commonly takes place when family members are overseas: however; there are ways of applying for family members who are already in the UK. If your family members are in the UK and you otherwise meet the criteria for family reunion, you may be able to make an ‘in-country’ application. Further information on these types of applications can be found in the Home Office guidance.

To make an in-country application you must apply for permission to stay online on the GOV.UK website on the specified form: “FLR (HRO)”.

You must demonstrate you meet the criteria under [Appendix Family Reunion \(Protection\)](#). You will be required to provide evidence to prove this, in the same way you would if you were making an out-of-country application. See the ‘Evidence’ section below explaining what evidence is required.

Once you have submitted your in-country application your family member will be required to provide your biometric information and you will be notified of how to do this at a [Service Support Centre \(SSC\)](#). Details of your nearest SSC centre can be found [here](#). Applicants over 5 years of age, this will be a scan of their fingerprints and a digital photograph. Applicants who are under 5 are not required to provide their fingerprints but must still provide a digital photo of their face at a SSC.



4. Evidence gathering

There is no specific list of evidence which needs to be produced; however, you will need to prove to the Home Office that you and your family, the applicants, meet the criteria laid out in the Immigration Rules.

The evidence you give must establish that the relationship between you and the applicant exists and that it is genuine. It must also establish that your relationship existed prior to you having fled your country of origin or your country of former habitual residence to seek asylum in the UK, and that you and your family intend to live together in the UK. The Home Office guidance acknowledges that applicants and sponsors in family reunion cases may not be able to provide the level of evidence that would be required for other applications under the Immigration Rules, due to the nature of refugee journeys. However, it is up to the applicant to provide a plausible explanation for the absence or lack of any evidence and to establish that they are in a relationship or related as claimed to you.

The Entry Clearance Officers will make their initial decision on the evidence you and your family give to them, so it is important that you send all the necessary evidence and explain any missing documents in a short statement.

Remember to involve your family abroad in evidence gathering you may not be able to provide some documents that perhaps they can (such as photos or contact records).

4.1 What evidence do I need?

You should include as many relevant documents to support your application as you can. **Please note that any documents not written in English need to have a certified translation.** Below is a list of the evidence you may need to provide.

This is not an exhaustive list, and it is not expected that an applicant would have all of the following. However, generally speaking the more evidence you can give, the better. This of course assumes that the evidence you are giving actually does prove what you think it does. For example: itemised telephone records with no telephone owner details may not be very useful. Similarly, records showing only a few very short phone calls each month will not prove that you are in daily contact with your family.

The Home Office guidance states that:

“Applicants could include any number of documents to support their claim that they are related as claimed, this could be:

- *marriage certificates*
- *traditional marriage ceremony documents*
- *documents relating to accommodation or joint purchases*
- *DNA tests (at the applicant’s expense and from an organisation accredited by the Ministry of Justice – HM Courts and Tribunal Service)*
- *birth certificates*
- *adoption orders*
- *original letter from UKVI or Immigration Enforcement (IE) confirming the sponsor has leave and status as claimed in the UK*

- family photographs
- wedding photographs
- wedding invitations
- witness statements (from the sponsor and applicant, wedding guests, family members, or person who conducted the ceremony)
- communication records (telephone records, emails and letters for the period they have been apart, or social media messages)
- any other evidence indicating the relationship is as claimed

Gathering your (the sponsor's) evidence for family reunion applications

Proof that you have Protection Status

- > A screenshot of your [eVisa](#) stating you have protection status (refugee status, humanitarian protection status, ILR following a grant of refugee status etc).
- > Your expired Biometrics Residence Permit stating your immigration status. Please note, after 31/12/2024 the Home Office stopped issuing physical BRP cards and replaced them with electronic visas (eVisas).
- > Travel document / certificate of travel.
- > The letter you received when your asylum was granted, or your appeal determination (if you were granted asylum after an appeal).

Proof that you have a pre-existing relationship

If you have named your family in your asylum case the Home Office guidance says that; *“Caseworkers must take into account any other evidence previously available to the Home Office as part of any other application. For example, evidence submitted as part of the asylum claim (statement of evidence form (SEF), witness statements, asylum interview or evidence from any appeal hearing). The fact that family members have been mentioned in the asylum claim is a strong indication that they formed part of the pre-flight family unit.”*

- > A copy of your asylum screening interview notes and substantive interview notes, if you mentioned your family members in the interviews.
- > Witness statements provided as part of your asylum case or appeal hearing
- > It is helpful if you can write a short statement, which outlines who is applying to join you and your relationship with them. **(See the section on writing a statement below.)**

Applicant's documents (your family's evidence)

General documents that all family members need

It is important to check that the spelling of all names and dates of birth in all your family's documents (and any translations) match the spellings in your interview documents. If there are any differences, you will need to write a brief explanation in your statement explaining why they are different:

Example 1: *On your child's birth certificate and passport, their name is spelt Rebecca. But in your asylum interview with the Home Office, the name you gave was spelled as 'Rebekah' in the record.*

Example 2: At your asylum interview, you told the Home Office that your husband's date of birth was 01.01.1978. But when you see his passport, it gives his date of birth as 01.01.1980.

- > Passport or travel document for **all** family members who will be travelling. **Please note that if any applicants do not have passports, they should apply for them immediately.**
- > If it is absolutely not possible to obtain a passport and you can show reasons why this might be the case you may be able to ask for a Form for Affixing a Visa (known as a FAV), which allows one-way travel. An example of when this may be necessary is if your family have also had to flee their country of origin because of persecution and cannot approach the embassy for travel documents.
- > Original photographic identification documents or any proof of identity. This is necessary if your family member(s) do not have passports or travel documents. The Home Office needs to be sure that your family are who they say they are.

Documents needed if your husband, wife or unmarried partner want to apply

Proof of pre-existing relationship / marriage / civil partnership.

- > If you are married or in a civil partnership, you need to provide an original marriage certificate or civil partnership certificate. This should show that your marriage took place **before** you left your country to seek asylum and is considered a **'valid' marriage**. The marriage certificate will only be considered valid if the marriage took place according to the rules of the country in which it occurred. If you are concerned that your marriage may not be considered valid, consult a professional legal advisor before continuing with your application.
- > Divorce certificate(s) if your current marriage / civil partnership is not your first, and the country in which you married your current applying spouse does not recognise polygamous marriages.
- > If you remarried after being widowed, the death certificate of your previous spouse.
- > If you are an unmarried partner, you will need to show that you have been in a relationship for **two years or more**. Do you have shared bills, photos or other proof that you were partners for two years or longer?
- > Photos or videos taken at the wedding / civil ceremony.
- > **Witness statements** from people who attended your wedding or civil partnership ceremony.
- > Family photos of you and your spouse / partner together before you left to claim asylum in the UK.
- > If you and your partner have children, you can also provide their birth certificates as evidence of your relationship.

Proof that you are still in a relationship

- > Evidence that your husband, wife or partner is still in contact with you since you left your country (for example: via Viber, Tango, WhatsApp, Facebook messages, email, phone cards, itemised telephone bills or online call records). For guidance on how to do get this evidence, please see the section below: 'I don't know how to obtain records of contact'.
- > If you lost contact for some time, evidence of how you regained contact with each other. This may prove helpful if it has been some time since you were granted status in the UK, but you could not make an application earlier because you didn't know the location of your partner.

- > Money transfer receipts if you are sending money to support your spouse / partner, or they are sending money to you.
- > Letters and greetings cards.
- > If you have been able to visit your husband, wife or partner, it is helpful to provide evidence of such visits. This could include: visa stamps, photos of you both together, and proof of travel (airplane tickets, rail tickets etc).

Documents needed for children who are applying

Proof that the child is your child (or the child of your wife / husband or partner)

- > Birth certificates for every child: this is to show that they are your child and so **must** name you (or your partner) as their mother or father on the birth certificate. If you are a step-parent, the birth certificate is still useful to show the child's relationship to their biological mother or father (your wife, husband or partner). This will also prove that the child is aged under 18, which is another requirement of the rules.
- > If the child is your step-child, you will need the death certificate of their biological parent if they are no longer alive.
- > If the child has a parent who is not planning to join with you in the UK, you will need their written consent for the child to join you. You may also need legal advice about the issue of **sole responsibility**.
- > Adoption certificate / court declaration if your children are adopted.
- > Family book / UNHCR family registration book.

Proof that the child is not leading an independent life, married, or has formed their own separate family

- > Evidence that you have been maintaining or looking after the child (for example: proof of child maintenance payments or bill payments to guardians, overseas schools etc).
- > Proof of parental instruction – such as messages sent to guardians relating to the care of the child.
- > Proof the child is enrolled in school (if applicable)
- > Witness statement from the child (if old enough).
- > Witness statement or letter from the guardian (the person looking after the child at their current location) giving details of how you maintain responsibility for the child and why they believe the child would be better off with you in the UK.
- > Records of contact with the child or other evidence that you are continuing life as a family despite the fact you are currently separated.

Proof that you were a family unit before the sponsor left to claim asylum

- > Family photos and videos of you and the child together.
- > Evidence that you were responsible for the child before you left them (for example: proof that you registered the child at a doctors' surgery, paid their school fees or registered them at school).
- > Witness statement from you, the guardian, other family members or the child if they are old enough.
- > If you mentioned your child in your asylum documents e.g. in your substantive interview, this can be used to prove your pre-flight relationship

Note: Proving a subsisting relationship with children is not a requirement of the rules, but the ECO may be concerned if it appears there has been no relationship between you and the child at all since your separation.

Resettlement Scheme Evidence

If you arrived to the UK on the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme, Gateway Protection Programme, Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme or Mandate Refugee Programme you must satisfy the Entry Clearance officer that you declared your family member on your resettlement application form. The Home Office acknowledge that *“there may be legitimate reasons why the sponsor did not mention a dependant at an earlier stage and any explanation provided must be carefully considered”*. It is important to be aware that the ECO may refuse your application if you cannot provide a suitable explanation of why you failed to mention your family.

If you came as a dependent of your parent through a resettlement programme, your parent may need to seek independent legal advice as you will, essentially, be arguing against what they stated as the truth in their interview leading to their grant of refugee status in the UK. This could potentially lead to a review of their refugee status (see revocation of refugee status).

You will most likely need to undertake a [Subject Access Request](#) to UKVI in order to obtain your interview conducted abroad.

Supporting Document Checklist

Rule	Evidence needed	Document ready?	If not available remember to provide an explanation in a statement or cover letter
Proof of Refugee Status	Your Biometric Residence Permit/eVisa		
	Asylum determination letter		
	Your travel Document		
	Your Gateway / Mandate / SVP Resettlement letter		
Family members Proof of Identity	Your family members' passports		
	UNHCR registration documents / attestation		
	School ID card or letter		
	National ID card		
	Asylum status registration documents if family have claimed asylum in another country		
Proof of relationship	Marriage certificate		
	Divorce Certificate (if previously married)		
	Death certificate (if widowed or step-parent)		
	DNA test		
	Birth Certificates		
	Adoption Orders		
Pre-flight relationship (NB some of the above documents and certificates would also indicate a pre-flight relationship)	Sponsor's asylum screening interview, SEF interview, asylum statements, court decision etc naming family members		
	Documents relating to cohabitation, accommodation or joint purchases, joint bank accounts, joint utility bills etc		
	Family photographs taken pre-flight		
	Wedding photographs, invitations, video etc.		
	witness statements (from the sponsor and applicant, wedding guests, family members, or person who conducted the ceremony)		
Your relationship is subsisting	emails and letters for the period you have been apart		
	Social media messages / communication for the time you have been apart		
	Phone cards / itemised phone bills		
	Evidence you have visited your family		

4.2 Common issues and problems

I am married but cannot provide a marriage certificate

In such a case, it will be very helpful to show that you mentioned your partner / spouse in your application for asylum – so providing a copy of the asylum screening interview or substantive interview where your husband, wife or partner are mentioned is important. If you do not have these documents, you can apply for them through a **subject access request** (information on how to do this is discussed below).

It would be useful to provide photos of your wedding if you have them. And it's also important that both you and your partner address the reasons for not having a marriage certificate by each writing a witness statement. If possible, try to obtain a letter from the marriage or wedding venue stating when you were married there. Additionally, you could get a witness statements from people who attended the wedding or a statement from the Priest or Iman who married you.

Additionally, if you have children with your wife or husband, it may be useful for you and the children to have a DNA test to provide evidence of your pre-existing relationship with your partner.

I am not married and cannot provide proof that I have been in a relationship with my partner for over two years

Both you and your partner will need to write statements discussing your relationship and for how long you have been together. It will also be necessary to rely on witness statements in this case. For example: you may have had neighbours, friends or family members who knew about your relationship and/or living arrangements or a landlord who you paid rent to. And if you have children with your unmarried partner, are you both named as the child's parents on the birth certificate? (This could help to prove you have been in a relationship.) Additionally, you will likely have mentioned your partner in your screening and/or substantive interviews with the Home Office during your asylum claim.

I cannot provide birth certificates

If these are not available, you will need to explain why there are no birth certificates in a witness statement. In order to prove that you are related to the child as you claim to be, it may be necessary to undertake a DNA test. However, you could rely on other evidence such as family photos.

If you decide to undertake a DNA tests privately (i.e. you pay) for either initial application or for appeal, it is important you carefully read the [guidance](#) on private DNA tests and check that the DNA testing provider you are using is recognised by Home Office. These tests can be very expensive.

I cannot provide ID

It is very important that anyone who is making an application can prove they are who they claim to be. Family members must have ID in order to make an application for family reunion. This can be an asylum / refugee status document, national ID card, birth certificate, passport,

driving licence, UNHCR registration or attestation, school or college ID card etc. If you do not have ID of any kind, **it will be necessary to obtain this before proceeding.**

My family cannot provide passports

If your family member(s) cannot obtain a valid passport for reasons outside their control, this does not prevent them from making an application for family reunion. Sometimes, it is simply not possible for applicants to obtain them. However, your family should try to obtain passports, particularly if they are nationals in their own country (for example: Ethiopians in Ethiopia).

If they are unsuccessful, you will need to show that they have at least tried to apply for passports – and may need to add relevant emails / letters / forms / correspondence to your evidence bundle with their national embassy. Identification documents (in some form) will still be required for your family members, to prove that they are who they state they are. You can then ask the Home Office, in your covering letter, to accept the family reunion application and issue the visa using a one-way travel document called a Form for Affixing a Visa (FAV). However, even if the Home Office accept your application and provide your family with a FAV, they may still face issues with exiting their country of nationality. Therefore, it is always advisable (if it is safe for them to do so) to get a passport if your family are applying inside their country of nationality.

Furthermore, if your family are applying from outside their country of nationality, it may be possible for them to request a FAV (if they are unable to obtain a passport). However, ID documents will still be required to make an application. It is also advisable for applicants outside their country of nationality to check the exit requirements for that country before making an application, for example, what ID documents will they need to be able to exit with a FAV?

I have not mentioned my family in my asylum claim: what do I do?

Naming your family in your asylum claim is one way of evidencing that you had a pre-existing family when you came to the UK and claimed asylum. If you did not mention your family in your asylum claim, you will need to include a statement explaining the omission and giving clear reasons for it.

Not mentioning your family in your asylum claim is not in itself grounds for refusing your family's application, but you will have to find other ways to evidence that you were a family together before you came to the UK. Perhaps you have photos or other documents (bank statements, house deeds, school or GP letters, registers from your local community centre / church / mosque) that show you lived together as a family before you left your country to claim asylum. Or perhaps you can obtain a family certificate from your local authority to show that you all lived together in one house?

What if I have lived in the UK for some time before making this application?

Family reunion applications are not time-limited in themselves, provided you meet the eligibility criteria. If you have had protection status for a few years before submitting the application, the Entry Clearance Officer will probably want you to explain in your cover letter or witness statement why you did not begin the family reunion process earlier. The ECO cannot refuse you only on the basis that you waited to make the application, but they may doubt whether your relationship is genuine and subsisting.

I don't know how to obtain my records of contact.

It is important to show you have remained in contact with your family since separation. Getting records of contact from applications such as Viber and WhatsApp can take time, and will often require you to backup files and export them via email. You can also take screenshots of your phone messages.

Viber

Visit help.viber.com/en/article/back-up-and-restore-viber-messages

If you would like to create a backup file for your messages, you can do so easily by following these steps:

1. Open **Viber**.
2. Select **More options**.
3. Select **Settings**.
4. Select **Calls and messages**.
5. Select **Email message history**.
6. Once the backup file is created, select the application through which you would like to email it, then send it to yourself or any other email.

WhatsApp

Retrieving messages from WhatsApp depends on which phone you use. For information on how to backup or export your WhatsApp, please visit:

whatsapp.com > FAQ > Android > Chats > How to save your chat history?

faq.whatsapp.com/android/chats/how-to-save-your-chat-history

If you wish to evidence your call history on WhatsApp, you will need to screenshot your call log. Your call history cannot be exported.

Facebook

On a computer, you can open privately sent messages and conversations with particular people in a separate tab, then print them (click file > print) or copy and paste them to a word file. On your phone, you may need to take screenshots of the Facebook messages and email the saved pictures so that you can print them or save them on a CD-ROM or USB stick.

Alternatively, see here a guide on how to download your Messenger chat (for Android or iPhone): [Download a copy of your information on Messenger | Messenger Help Centre \(facebook.com\)](https://www.facebook.com/help/messengerchat)

Screenshots:

In some cases, it may be easier to take screenshots on your phone of conversations, texts, messages and call history with particular family members. These are then saved as photos on your phone in the photo gallery. To take screenshots on most phones you need to

- 1) Navigate to the screen you want to capture.
- 2) Press and hold down the round button at the centre bottom of your phone, or the home icon (usually in the middle) on the bottom of your phone. At the same time, you will need to press the camera or sleep button located at the side or top of your phone.
- 3) Press and release the camera or sleep button, and you will hear a camera-like shutter sound

- 4) Release the home / camera button.
- 5) The screenshot will be automatically saved in your photo album or photo gallery and can be emailed to yourself from your phone to print. Alternatively you can email and copy the screenshots to a USB stick or CD-ROM.

Phone records

Getting records of contact may depend on the contract you have with your mobile phone provider. If you have a contract phone, it is normally easier to get your phone records. Difficulties generally arise if you are using a pay as you go phone, so we deal more with these here.

As a general start point, contact the customer service team of your phone provider and ask how you can obtain records of your call history.

Phone cards are often produced as evidence of contact, but they will not be enough on their own since you cannot prove they have been used to speak with your family. It is a good idea to hold on to any phone cards or vouchers that you do buy, but it is not ideal to rely only on phone cards as evidence of contact. You should try to obtain your phone records as well.

Don't forget that your family abroad may also be able to get hold of itemised records showing when they have been calling you.

Lycamobile

Lycamobile gives you the option to either print your own records or request them to be sent to you. However, you must **register** your sim before you can pursue either of these options.

You can register your sim card by visiting www.lycamobile.co.uk and clicking on 'register your sim', Alternatively, you can call 332 if you have a Lycamobile phone, or 0207 132 0322.

You will then receive a text message with a code that will allow you to access your online phone records over the past six months.

Next steps: 1. Visit Lycamobile.co.uk 2. Click on MyLycamobile 3. Enter both your Lycamobile number and the code that has been sent to you (which is case sensitive).

Take a screen print (hold Ctrl and Print Screen button on your keyboard) of the page that shows both the telephone number and your name, to demonstrate that this is indeed your Lycamobile account.

Click on 'My call history' and you will have the option to view the phone records for the last six months. To print, select the month you want from the drop down menu, wait for it to load and open as a PDF. You can then print the PDF file.

For each month you view, take a screen print or print the webpage by clicking on 'file > print'. This is because the PDF will not feature your telephone details, so it may be difficult to show that the records belong to your number).

Alternatively, register your sim card and obtain your records by posting a letter to Lyca mobile. State exactly what you want, the reasons for the request, and include your name, telephone number and address. Also enclose a postal order for £7.50. You cannot send cash.

Lebara

As with Lycamobile, register your sim card and sign up to MyLebara. You will then be provided with a log-in code that gives you access to your account online. For information on how to see your call history, visit: mobile.lebara.com/gb/en/see-my-call-history

Getting extra information

1. If you require your call history information between 30 days and 12 months, you will need to be registered to MyLebara and will be charged a £10 fee (payable by cheque).
2. You will receive your call history within 40 calendar days of Lebara receiving the cheque.
3. You will also need to include a Subject Access Request Form (SAR), which can be printed from MyLebara's website.
4. Once you have completed the SAR, send it along with your £10 cheque to: LEBARA LIMITED, Legal Department, 2nd Floor, 25 Copthall Avenue, London EC2R 7BP

Three

If you have a Three mobile contract, you can access your telephone records online. To do this you just need to log in to your My3 Account: www.three.co.uk/My3Account/Login

If you have not already registered with them, you can do so here: www.three.co.uk/My3Account/Register

You will need the last six numbers of your sim card to do this. Look on the right-hand side of the registration screen for instructions on how to find these on your phone.

When you log in to your account, click on 'Bills'. At the bottom of the screen you will see a list of your telephone bills for each month. Click on the printer icon next to each of them to get a PDF document of your bill, which you can then print out for your application.

If you are on a pay as you go contract with Three, you can only request your telephone records for the months since you registered the sim card – so it is a good idea to register your sim card as soon as possible. You can do this by calling 0800 358 4948.

To get your call records, you must fill out a Three Mobile Subject Access Request form. You should send this to the address on the form with:

1. Proof of your identity (e.g. a photocopy of your immigration status document, biometric residence permit or travel document).
2. Proof of your address (e.g. a current council tax, gas or electricity bill showing your address).
3. A cheque or postal order for £10 made payable to Hutchison 3G UK Ltd.

How do I make a subject access request to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), or the Home Office?

If you need to ask the UKVI for documents, you do this through a subject access request. Information on how to make the request can be found here:

[Request copies of personal information held in the borders, immigration and citizenship system - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/request-copies-of-personal-information-held-in-the-borders-immigration-and-citizenship-system)

You need to complete an online application form, which can be found here:

[Subject access request](#)

Once you have completed your online application form you will need to send a copy of your ID documents to the Home Office via email, instructions of how to do this and where to send the documents will be explained once you have completed the online application form. Once the Home Office has received your certified ID, your request will be processed within 30 days. Please note, you may need to complete a 'Detailed Request' rather than a 'Basic Request' in order to get all the documents you need.

Think about where your evidence comes from and whether it is the best evidence you can find

In your application, anything you say or any documents you rely on can be checked by the Home Office. Always try to provide the best evidence that is available, and if it is not available explain why in a witness statement.

General grounds for refusal

As part of a family reunion application it is important that you and your family provide supporting evidence to establish their identity and evidence that they are related to their sponsor as claimed. If you provide false documents your family's application will be refused.

If false representations have been made or false documents or information is submitted (whether or not relevant to the application, and whether or not to your or your family's knowledge), or material facts have not been disclosed, in relation to the application or in order to obtain documents from the Secretary of State or a third party required in support of the application, your family's visa application will be refused.

Reliance on fake documents or false information will damage your family's application. It can also lead to prosecution, potential revocation of your refugee status, removal from the UK and up to a ten-year ban on you returning, and a ban on your family re-applying. It is always better to provide a reason why a particular document is absent, rather than submitting documentation that is not genuine or stating something that you know to be untrue.

This does not just apply to providing false documents but includes not disclosing any previous criminal activities, arrests, or warrants for arrest.

If your family member has previously been in the UK, and has previously been deported, overstayed or otherwise has a poor immigration record with the home office they may be refused depending on how long ago they were deported or how long they overstayed. Your family will also be refused if they have been in the UK before and have a debt with the NHS of over £500.

Revocation of the sponsor's refugee or humanitarian protection status

It is important to remember that when a family reunion application is made, the information submitted will be checked against any information provided by you as part of your original asylum claim or any subsequent application for indefinite leave or settlement that you have made. Where information given in the family reunion application gives rise to evidence of deception by you this could lead to a review of your entitlement to protection in the UK. The Home Office acknowledge that your family may not always know the full details of your asylum

claim due to, for example, security reasons, however you may have to explain any irregularities.

This could be, if, for example, you have claimed asylum saying you are a Syrian national however in your family reunion application your documents all state that you are from another country.

If you are in doubt about the general grounds for refusal or if you are concerned about issues which may trigger a review of your refugee status, seek legal advice from a solicitor or qualified immigration advisor.

4.3 Presenting your evidence

It is very important to make it as easy as you can for the Entry Clearance Officer to know exactly what is in your evidence bundle, and why. Try to include a short cover letter for each application, which lists the evidence and documents you are providing and explains why you are providing them. A sample cover letter is provided below.

Sample cover letter

YOUR NAME AND
ADDRESS

Entry Clearance Officer
UKVI Family Reunion Team

DATE

Dear Sir/Madam

Applicants: (Full name, date of birth, nationality)

Application reference number: GWF.....

IHS reference number: IHS.....

Sponsor: (Your name, date of birth, nationality)

Re: Application for refugee family reunion

This is a refugee family reunion application made under Appendix Family Reunion (Protection) of the Immigration Rules. The applicant(s) are applying for leave to enter and remain in the UK in order to join the sponsor, [INSERT NAME], who has been granted refugee status in the UK.

Please find below an index of the specific items of evidence enclosed with this application:

- 1) Copy of online visa application form for applicant [insert name]
 - 2) Copy of the sponsor's, [insert name]'s biometric residence permit / status document / eVisa
 - 3) Witness statement of the sponsor [insert name]
 - 4) Birth certificate of the applicant and translation
- Etc...[CONTINUE TO LIST ALL EVIDENCE THAT YOU ARE PROVIDING]

Furthermore, I respectfully advise that refusing my / our application for refugee family reunion would be a breach of our right to private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights, 1998.

If you have any questions about the documents provided or the application, please contact me on [INSERT NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS].

Sincerely,
[SIGN LETTER]

4.4 Witness statements

What are witness statements and when do I need them?

Witness statements are very helpful in explaining and supporting your application. You may have submitted a witness statement as part of your asylum application. They can be used to explain missing evidence, reasons for delay in applications, and any differences between information given during your asylum claim and that provided for the family reunion application.

It is also sometimes helpful for someone else to write a witness statement if they are able to confirm that what you are saying is true. If you are missing evidence, you may need to consider getting witness statements from some of the following people (depending on which particular evidence is missing):

- ✓ Your partner / spouse.
- ✓ Your children (if they are old enough).
- ✓ The guardian of your children, if this is not your partner / spouse.
- ✓ The other parent of your child, if that parent is not applying to join you in the UK.
- ✓ Other friends and family members in the UK or abroad who can talk about your family relationships.
- ✓ Religious leaders involved in your marriage ceremony and witnesses to a marriage ceremony.
- ✓ People who have been involved in re-establishing contact with your family members after separation, or who have helped maintain such contact by delivering parcels, letters etc.
- ✓ Supporting Organisations who have supported you in the UK (i.e. Charities, Counselling Professionals, GP, Faith Organisations etc)

Any witness statement needs to categorically state that what has been written is true and correct to the best of the author's knowledge. It should also be signed and dated and ideally be accompanied with a copy of the authors valid ID. If someone's signature is hard to read, also print the name next to the signature.

Writing your own witness statement

It is always best to try and get legal help when writing a witness statement, which can be used by a sponsor in support of an application or refugee family reunion. (Please note: the following example includes a list of useful information to include, but every case is different, and you may not need to cover every point mentioned below.)

When you are finished with your statement, make sure that you read it over and are satisfied with the content before you sign and date it. You can write the statement in your own language, but you must then organise a **certified** translation. If you write the statement in English with the help of an interpreter or translator, you must ask the interpreter / translator to sign and date the statement as well.

Sample witness statement

I, [full name], a (Sudanese/ Eritrean/ Pakistani etc...) national, born [date of birth], of [current address], make this statement in support of my [husband's / wife's / partner's / child's / children's] application for refugee family reunion with me in the UK.

- > The names, dates of birth and family relationship to the sponsor of the applicants seeking family reunion.
- > Where a partner application is being made, some information on how you met and formed your relationship. (For example: I met my wife in February 2009. We were introduced at a family gathering.)
- > Details of marriage / civil partnership / co-habitation. (For example: I married my wife on 21 October, 2009. We lived together at our home [address] from the date of our marriage until I was forced to flee.)
- > Details of children, including names and dates of birth.
- > Did you live together as a family unit in your country? If so, for how long? If not, why were you separated?
- > Information about how you became separated from your family and how / whether you were able to stay in contact during your separation.
- > A brief outline of your reasons for leaving your country and a summary of your immigration history. (For example: I left Sudan in June 2012 and arrived in the UK on 1 July, 2012. I applied for asylum on arrival and was granted status as a refugee on 1 November, 2012).
- > When and how did you regain contact with your family after arriving in the UK? Give reasons for any loss of contact.
- > Details of contact between you and your family since being separated (via Skype, Lync, Viber, Facebook etc.). If you cannot provide evidence of contact, why not? If you have phone records, you need to explain who the telephone numbers belong to.
- > Do you send money back to your family? If so, how often? How much do you send?
- > What is the current situation of your family?
- > Do you have any concerns for your family's safety?
- > Do they have any health problems?
- > If you do not have some of the documents needed, give an explanation of why there is no documentation. (For example: perhaps you do not have birth certificates for your children because this is not customary in your country.)
- > Provide an explanation for submitting copied documents as evidence rather than originals (Is it because the originals were lost when you had to leave your country?)
- > Provide an explanation for any differences between information you gave in your asylum interview and information you are giving now in your family reunion application.
- > Provide a reason for any delay in seeking family reunion after you were granted refugee status in the UK.
- > Confirmation that the relationship is subsisting and that you intend to live together with your family in the UK.

I confirm that this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed:

Date:



5. Applications and form filling

Once you have gathered all your evidence, you can start to think about completing the application forms. These forms are compulsory in family reunion applications and most embassies will not accept an application unless you have first completed an online application form and booked an appointment for your family to attend.

5.1 Applications: before you begin

There is no British embassy/Visa Application Centre in the country where my family live: what can I do?

If this is the case, you will be asked to select an alternative embassy/VAC that your family can attend for an appointment. (For example, nationals of Afghanistan can go to Pakistan or Iran).

You can find out where to go by looking at: <https://www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre>

If your family plan to return to their home country after submitting their application, they need to ensure that the foreign embassy understands they will need their passports to return home again. (In such circumstances, embassy staff can simply take a copy of their passport, but this arrangement should be checked and agreed in advance.) Once the final decision is made, your family will need to return to that embassy to have the visa fixed into their passport.

How much does a family reunion visa application cost?

Family reunion applications are **free of charge**. However, you might have to pay for the following:

- > Passports and ID (if you do not have them already)
- > Re-issuing of documents (i.e. birth and marriage certificates), if lost
- > Translations.
- > DNA test (if you decide to do these privately).
- > Tuberculosis test.
- > Document postage (if not uploading evidence electronically).*
- > Travel to embassy.**
- > Visa Application Centres (VAC) appointment fee.

*Most legal advisors recommend that you upload your documents electronically as there is no charge for this. However, you can also send them via courier service for your family to take them with them to the VAC. Please note, postage can be expensive and prices vary depending on how many documents you are sending – we suggest you should aim to save £50 for postage if you choose to present your evidence this way.

While the application itself is free, some Visa Application Centres (VACs) may charge you for using their services. However, there should be free appointments available for family reunion appointments.

Do my family need to get TB tested?

Many applicants will need to be tested for the lung disease **Tuberculosis (TB)** and have a certificate they can submit to the embassy with their application. Whether a TB test is needed will depend on which country your family are in. You can check whether a TB test is needed for your family members here: www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa.

You can also refer to Appendix TB of the Immigration Rules for more information: [Immigration Rules - Immigration Rules Appendix Tuberculosis \(TB\) - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-tb)

Most TB test clinics are run by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Your family will need photo ID, two passport-sized photos, your name and address in the UK, and their TB test fee.

The test fee will often need to be paid in advance before your family can make an appointment. Sometimes you need to pay by bank transfer, but often you can pay at the desk. TB test results are usually quick, but if something shows up on the screening it will be necessary for your family to follow the procedure for treatment. Failure to attend the follow-up appointments could mean long delays in getting the TB certificate, and big delays to your family's progression through the VISA application process. As the TB test certificates are only valid for a period of six months, you may need to consider commissioning this close to the time of submission to avoid extra costs and further tests.

Do I need to prove I have adequate maintenance and accommodation in order to bring my family to the UK?

There are no maintenance and accommodation requirements for family reunion applications, so you do not need to provide evidence of income or a tenancy agreement. However, you need to show that your family members will have somewhere to stay (an address in the UK) should a visa be granted. If you do not have an address in the UK, you will need to find one before you can make the application (as the applications forms will ask for the sponsor's address).

It is advisable to wait until you have switched from NASS accommodation to other accommodation (whether council / hostel / private rented / housing association) before making your application, so it does not appear you will be making your family homeless. However, this is not compulsory, and the Home Office should not refuse your application on the basis of a lack of perceived accommodation. Further, you do not have to show you would be able to maintain your family financially if they were to come the UK – you can make an application for refugee family reunion even if you are not working.

Do I need to pay the immigration health surcharge (IHS) fee?

No, your family will not be required to pay the fee. **However, you are required to register them online and obtain an IHS reference number.** This reference number will need to be written on their application forms or on the cover letter that accompanies the application. You will be automatically directed to obtain the IHS reference number when you complete your online application.

5.2 Making the applications

When you have gathered all the relevant evidence for your application, you can begin the application form. An **online form** must be completed for **every applicant / family member who you wish to join you through family reunion**.

1. VAF4A (online)

The online application form is found at: www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk. It is worth noting this form/login is also where you:

- > Find a link to the portal where you book your family's appointment at the VAC and upload the evidence to support the application
- > Choose the location to collect your family's Biometric Residence Permit
- > Register for your Immigration Health Surcharge reference number
- > Pay any costs associated with your application (there should be no costs for family reunion applications unless you have selected an additional or priority service at the VAC. If you have, this is paid when you book the VAC appointment)

VAF4A (online) application

To complete the online application form, you will need all your family members' details – this includes full names, dates of birth, passport details (if they have passports), addresses, travel history and address history. (You will also need the parents' full details: names, dates of birth, places of birth and nationality).

You can save your application as you progress. However, do not move on to the immigration health surcharge registration until you are 100 per cent satisfied that all the information is correct, and you have answered each question.

Remember: you are the Sponsor and your family are the Applicants. The form should be completed as if your family were completing it.

When completing the online application form, have the following information to hand:

- ✓ Passports (copy of your family's and your own, if you have one).
- ✓ Refugee status documents

Overview of the application

1. You complete the online application on the **GOV.UK** website. You will need an email address to do this. (Visit www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk.)
2. You will need to register each family member separately to create their own application. For example, if you are applying for your spouse and two children you will need to fill in three forms. You can use the same email address and password for each application.
3. Once you have started the application, you will receive a link to your email that allows you to return to that application. You will receive a separate link for each family member's application.

4. In the website, scroll down to **“If you want to join family in the UK”** and under that **“Family reunion visas for refugees”**. Click **“apply for them to join you”**.
5. In the next page, scroll down to **“Apply outside the UK”** and click **“apply online”**.
6. To start an application, click the button **“Start now”**.
7. You will first need to choose the visa category (**“Join or accompany a family member”**) and subcategory (your family member is **“In the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection”**), and the location of the Visa Application Centre where your family will be submitting their application.
8. After this, you will need to register an email address and a password to start the application. After this stage, you can save the information you have provided, pause and return to the application later.
9. Fill in your family member’s details and answer all questions. See detailed instructions below under **“Completing the application”**. **Remember: you are completing these forms as if you were your family member abroad.**
10. You will be asked the estimated date of travel. Be careful when selecting this and ensure you check how long the average decision takes at the embassy where your family are applying. It is reasonable to choose a date around 3 months from the date you intend your family to attend the embassy. However, please note by selecting this date it does not guarantee the Home Office will make a decision before then.
11. You will be able to go back and change the information you have given up until the point when you register for the ‘immigration health surcharge’ (IHS).
12. You will then return to the application and submit it.
13. After submitting the application, you can move to book an appointment at the Visa Application Centre.
14. Once you have booked an appointment you will then be able to upload all your evidence for the application. From the appointment booking service you move to the portal where you can submit the scanned evidence. Alternatively, if you book an assisted scanning appointment, the evidence will be scanned and uploaded at the VAC appointment.

Remember: You need to complete separate application forms for each family member, book an appointment at the VAC and download the evidence for each of them.

Completing the application

Please note: the Home Office occasionally changes the questions on the online application form. At the time of publication, the screenshots and instructions below accurately reflected the application process, however this process is subject to change. Nonetheless, the core questions remain the same and the information below should still provide a helpful guide to follow when completing the online application form.


Before registering your email address and providing any personal details, you need to go through the pages where you select the visa category and subcategory, and the location where your family will provide their biometric information, as described above. You will need to confirm you have checked the available biometric enrolment locations, and that your family will be able to travel to the location you have chosen.

You will then be asked to choose the **visa type**. Select “**partner of someone in the UK with refugee leave**” or “**child of someone in the UK with refugee leave**”. These are applications under the family reunion rules and are free of charge. If you wish to make an application as other family member or as a child of a relative, meaning you are not their parent, you should seek legal advice. These types of applications are not covered by this guide, and they come with a visa application fee.

Visa type	Visa application fee (GBP)	
These are the two visa types covered by this guide.		
Partner of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection (family reunion)	Free of charge	Apply now
► Find out if you are eligible to apply		
Child of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection (family reunion)	Free of charge	Apply now
► Find out if you are eligible to apply		
Other family member of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection	£388	Apply now
► Find out if you are eligible to apply		
Child of a relative (who is not your parent) with limited leave to enter or remain in the UK as a refugee or humanitarian protection	£388	Apply now
► Find out if you are eligible to apply		

Below is shown the application for a partner. An application for a child has the same structure but includes slightly different questions.

After you have chosen the visa type, you will move to the actual visa application, and will be asked to provide an email address and choose a password. The page looks like this:



Visas and Immigration

1. **Start** 2. Application 3. Documents 4. Declaration 5. Pay 6. Further actions

Register an email

Enter an email address and password so you can save your answers. You will then be emailed a unique link to let you log back in to your application at a later point, if needed.

Throughout your application, you can select the option to 'Return to this application later' in order to re-send the link to your latest saved application.

Email address

Create a password

Your password must be 8 characters or longer and include a letter and a number or symbol.

Repeat your password

Save and continue

[▶ Show and edit answers](#)

Once you click **“save and continue”**, you will receive an email with a link to the application. You should use an email address that you can easily access, as this email address will be used by the Home Office to communicate information about the visa application. The email will look something like this:

UK visa application: sign in details



noreply@visas-immigration.service.gov.uk
To [REDACTED]

Retention Policy BRC Email retention policy 1 (3 years)

Expires 11/03/2023

Reply Reply All Forward ...

Wed 11/03/2020 11:12

UK Visas & Immigration

Your visa application has been saved.

Use this link to sign in to your application:

[Partner of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection \(family reunion\)](#)

UK Visas and Immigration

PLEASE DO NOT REPLY TO THIS EMAIL

This email was sent to [REDACTED] as a user of the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) visa application service. Read our [Privacy Policy](#). Information about the visa application process is available on [the visas and immigration pages of the gov.uk website](#).

This service is provided by [GOV.UK](#), the website for the UK government.

After registering your email, you will be asked for information about the **“person you are applying with or joining”**. You will need to fill in **your** information here, as you are the sponsor your family members will be joining. You will be asked to give your **name, nationality and date of birth**, as well as the details of your **passport or travel document**. If you do not have a travel document, you can choose “no”. You will get to a page where you can check the information you have provided. If any of the information is wrong, click “change” to go back to the page and correct the information.

Once you have checked all the information is correct, you click “continue” and move on to the “Application” section. You will be asked to check that **email address** you registered earlier is correct and confirm who the address belongs to. If the email you registered belongs to you, you will need to choose **“someone else”**, as you are filling in the application as your family member who is applying for a visa. If you choose this, you are then asked for “your email address”. If your family member has an email address, you can provide it here, if not, choose “no”.

Next, you will be asked to provide **“your telephone number”**. The Home Office may use this telephone number to contact about the application, so it must be a number that is in use. You can provide either your own or your family member’s phone number. If you use your own number, choose “for use whilst in the UK”, if the applicant’s, choose “for use whilst out of the UK”.

You can then provide other telephone numbers, if you want, and choose whether you would prefer to be contacted by telephone call or text message.

In the next page, you will be asked for **“your name”**. Remember that this is about **your family member**, as you are filling the application as if you were the applicant abroad. Enter their given names and last name, and in the next page, provide any other names they have ever used, for example if they used a different family name before getting married.

1. Start **2. Application** 3. Documents 4. Declaration 5. Pay 6. Further actions

[◀ Back](#)

Your name

Enter your name, as shown in your current passport or travel document.

Your given name is usually your first name. Your family name is the surname that is shared by your family. If you have middle names, include these with your given name. If your name has a suffix (e.g. Jr), include this with your given name. If you have a patronymic name include it with your given names. You must tell us all your given names.

Given name(s)

Other family name

▶ [I cannot enter my name using a current passport or travel document](#)

Save and continue

[Return to this application later](#)

▶ [Show and edit answers](#)

In the following pages, “**your gender and relationship status**” and “**your address**”, provide the information about your family member. For the question “Is this address also your correspondence address?” you may want to answer “no”, to prevent any problems caused by delay in postal services etc. You can then give **your** address in the UK as the correspondence address.

You will be asked to provide information “**about this property**”. This is about the property where your family member is living abroad. You need to tell how long your family member has lived at this address, and whether they own or rent the property. If they are living with relatives or in a refugee camp, you can choose “other” and explain the situation in the text box. You will then be asked to provide all other addresses in which your family member has lived in the past two years, and the move in and move out dates.

After this, you will be asked about “**your passport**”. This is about your family member’s passport. If they have a valid passport, choose “yes” and provide the passport number, issuing authority and issue and expiry dates of their passport. If they do not, you can choose “no”.


In the next page, “**your identity card**”, you can provide details of the applicant’s national ID card, if they have one. If they do not, you can choose “no”.

Next, you are asked for “**your nationality, country and date of birth**”. Put in here the information about your family member, i.e. the applicant. In the next pages, provide information on whether they have any other nationalities, and what is their **immigration status** in the country they are currently living in. If they are living in their country of nationality, choose “I am a permanent resident”. If they are a refugee in the country, choose “I have a temporary visa” and enter the details of that visa, or “I do not have a visa and I am not a permanent resident” and explain the situation in the text box.

If you answered earlier that the applicant is married or in a civil partnership, you will next be asked about “**your current partner**”. If the application is for your spouse, this section is about

you. Provide here your name, date of birth and nationality. For “do they currently live with you” choose “no” and provide again your address in the UK. As you are already in the UK, choose “no” to “will they be travelling with you to the UK”.

You are then asked about “**people financially dependent on you**”. Again, the “you” in here refers to the applicant. If you are also applying for visas for your children who are currently living with your partner, provide their information here. However, you will still need to complete separate applications for each child. You can also provide information here of any dependants of the applicant who are not applying for visas.



Visas and Immigration

John Applicant Example

1. Start 2. **Application** 3. Documents 4. Declaration 5. Pay 6. Further actions

[Back](#)

People financially dependent on you

Does anyone rely on you for financial support?
Include both those travelling with you and those who are not.

This could include:

- children under 18
- children over 18 who live with you at home
- children who you look after all the time
- older relatives who need you for accommodation or other support

☐ Yes ☒ No

[Will these dependants be included in my application?](#)

Save and continue

[Return to this application later](#)

[Show and edit answers](#)

In “give **details about 2 of your parents**” you first give the details of one of the applicant’s parents, and then the other.

Next, you are asked about the applicant’s **travel history**. You will need to give details of all travel within the past 10 years, to the UK, to the EEA and a list of specified countries, and other countries.

In “**your planned travel information**” you can provide a date when your family member is planning to travel. When selecting this we advise you check how long the average decision takes at the embassy where your family are applying. It is reasonable to choose a date around 3-6 months from the date you intend your family to attend the embassy. Please note, selecting a date does not guarantee your family will travel on or before this date.

You will next be asked a series of questions about the applicant’s **immigration history**, any breaches of UK immigration law and any **crimes** they have committed or penalties they have received. You will also be asked whether they have committed war crimes, participated in terrorist activities or held any extremist views. Read the provided explanations, answer the

questions truthfully and check the necessary boxes to confirm you have read the information and guidance.

In “**your employment history**”, you will need to confirm whether the applicant has ever worked for armed forces, government, intelligence services, security organisations, media organisations or judiciary. Check any that are applicable and provide the required further information.

In “**Information about your application**”, you can provide any additional information about the application. Use this space to explain anything in the form that may not be clear in your application (for example: the fact that you or your family have no passports). Also use this space to explain any inconsistencies in the form and the application, or any missing paperwork and documentation. You could also mention that the application is a refugee family reunion application. Remember that when writing information in this box you are writing as the applicant, so “I” refers to them, not you.

You will then see a **summary** of all the information you have provided in the “Application” section. Please review your answers carefully. In case of any errors, you can click “change” to go back to that page and correct the information.

GOV.UK Visas and Immigration John Applicant Example

1. Start 2. **Application** 3. Documents 4. Declaration 5. Pay 6. Further actions

[Back](#)

Check your answers

Check the information below before you continue to the next section.

Personal information

Who does this email address belong to?	Someone else	Change
[Redacted email address]		
Do you have an email address?	No	Change
Provide your telephone number	[Redacted telephone number]	Change
Where do you use this telephone number?	For use whilst in the UK	
Select whether this is your home, mobile or work telephone number	Mobile telephone number	
Add another		Add

After checking the information and clicking “continue”, you will move to the “**Documents**” section of the application. Tick the box to confirm you understand that a passport or travel document can be provided with the application, even if the applicant does not have a passport or travel document. Read the information provided about other evidence and TB testing.

You will then move to the “**Declaration**” section. Read the information about visa **conditions** and tick the box to confirm you understand it.

In the next page, read the declaration and make sure you understand it. You are then asked to confirm in which role you are submitting the application. Since you are not the applicant yourself, even though you have previously answered the questions as if you were, choose “I am submitting the form on behalf of the applicant”.

You will then be asked to give a **“third party declaration”**. To the question about in what capacity you are representing the applicant, choose “family member”. In the explanation field, to avoid any confusion, it is best to write “I am the sponsor and the applicant is my [spouse/child]”, as applicable. You will then need to provide your name and contact details again.

GOV.UK Visas and Immigration ▼ John Applicant Example

1. Start 2. Application 3. Documents **4. Declaration** 5. Pay 6. Further actions

[◀ Back](#)

Third party declaration

In what capacity are you representing the applicant(s)?

☐ Travel agent

☒ Family member

How are you related to Anna Sponsor Example?

I am the sponsor and the applicant is my spouse.

☐ Other

[Save and continue](#)

[Return to this application later](#)

[▶ Show and edit answers](#)

For clarity, it may be good to write here: “I am the sponsor and the applicant is my spouse.”

Again, you will be presented with a summary where you can check that your answers are correct.

Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)

In the next page, you will be asked to register for the **Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)**. Make sure you are satisfied that all the information you have given in the previous sections is correct before proceeding, as you will not be able to change your answers after this. You can at any point in the application click “return to this application later” (see below), if you need to pause. You will be sent an email with a link to resume the application from where you stopped.

GOV.UK Visas and Immigration John Applicant Example

1. Start 2. Application 3. Documents 4. Declaration **5. Pay** 6. Further actions

[Back](#)

Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)

You must pay your Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) before you can complete your visa application. You will pay your IHS on another website, then return to this site to complete and pay for your application.

If you are exempt, you will still need to get a reference number from the IHS website.

Your IHS reference number will automatically be included on your application once you pay and return to this site.

! Your answers will be locked when you go to the IHS website, even if you do not pay your IHS straight away. If you need to make any changes to your answers you must do so now.
[Check your answers](#)

[Go to IHS website](#)

[Save and continue](#)

[Return to this application later](#)

[Show and edit answers](#)


Click here to pause and receive a link to continue later

When you are happy to continue, click “**go to IHS website**”. You will be directed to pay the immigration health surcharge, although you will not be required to pay anything, as the surcharge is free when applying for a family reunion visa. Most of the information will be drawn from the visa application, but you will need to provide some additional information, which will be marked in red.

First, choose “**no**” to the question about whether your family member will be staying in the Isle of Man, Jersey or Guernsey (unless you live in one of these self-governing island territories). You will then need to add their **title** (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss) to the information already provided in the visa application. Then check the information and continue.

You will be asked about “**the person you’re joining or remaining with**”. As you are still filling this as if you were the applicant, this information is about **you**. For the question about IHS reference number, answer “**no**”. Then enter the date when your refugee or humanitarian protection leave expires.

Next, enter your details, such as your name and date of birth. For **visa route** enter “Settlement” and for **visa category** “family reunion”. Again, you see a summary of your details, please check they are correct and confirm. In the next page, read the declaration and click “**I agree**”. You will see that the sum to pay is 0.00 (USD). Once completed, you will receive the applicant’s IHS reference number, and will be able to return to the visa application.


Immigration health surcharge

ALPHA This is a new service – your [feedback](#) will help us to improve it.

✓ Complete

Your IHS reference number is

IHS018390279

 We have sent you a confirmation email.

What you need to do next

Finish your visa application. We'll make sure your IHS reference number is included.

If you're applying in person at a premium service centre, you'll need your IHS reference number when you attend your appointment.

Find out more

[Contact UKVI](#)

[Immigration health surcharge](#)

[Return to my visa application](#)

After being redirected to the visa application, you will first be told you must now pay for your application. However, once you click continue, you will be told “no payment required”. In the next page, you must choose your payment method. There is no payment but choose “pay online”. Once you click “**save and continue**”, you will receive a confirmation that your application has been submitted successfully.

Application submitted successfully

Reference number
UKVI_3RP0014122878

Date of submission	11 March 2020
Name	John Applicant Example
Application	Partner of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection (family reunion)
Fee paid	No payment required

Your confirmation has been sent to

test@test.com

[Print confirmation](#)



You have a few more steps before your application will be complete.

[Save and continue to final tasks](#)

What you now have left is the “**Further actions**” section, which means downloading the checklist that needs to be filled in and signed by the applicant and taken to appointment at the embassy. You or the applicant will have to print the checklist and then write down all the supporting evidence you will be submitting for the application. This will be for example birth certificate, marriage certificate, photos, contact records etc. In “further actions” you will also book the embassy appointment.

Please note, it may also be a good idea to at this stage to download a copy of your application forms and keep them for your records.

Booking your embassy appointment and uploading evidence

To move to the VFS website to book your family members appointment at the embassy, click the green button **‘Provide documents and biometrics’**.

1. Start 2. Application 3. Documents 4. Declaration 5. Pay **6. Further actions**

[◀ Back](#)

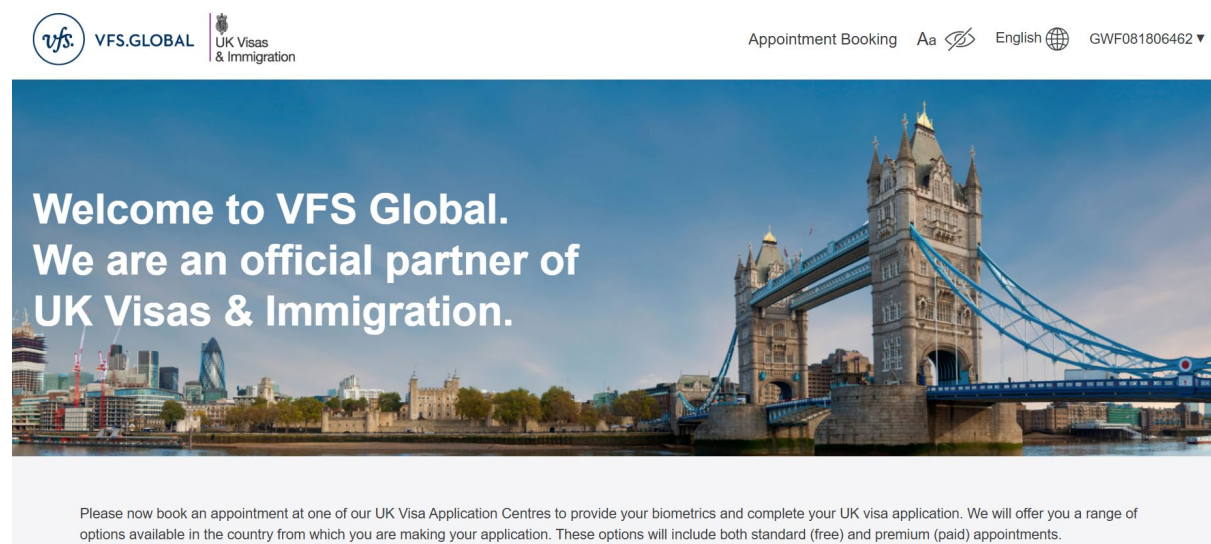
Provide your biometrics

You are about to be transferred to our commercial partner's website to make arrangements to provide your biometrics (fingerprints and facial photograph). You can return to your application at any time by logging in via the link sent in your payment confirmation email.

Your application may not be successful unless you complete all mandatory actions on the previous page. You must return to your application if there are incomplete mandatory actions.

[Continue](#)

The VFS website looks like this:



Next VFS will ask you **‘are you ready to book your appointment?’** Select the location your family wish to provide their biometrics at, and press ‘continue’. It should look like this:

Are you ready to book your appointment?

Please select your preferred location

* denotes mandatory fields

Your reference number

Group size

Email address

Select your preferred location*

Continue

Once you have selected where your family will be providing their biometrics, you will be offered all the available appointments at that location. Select you preferred date and time:

[Back](#)[April 2025](#)

Thu 3 Apr	Fri 4 Apr	Mon 7 Apr	Tue 8 Apr	Wed 9 Apr	>
-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	---

Standard Assisted (Free) ⓘ

Earliest available appointment : Thu 3 Apr 10:10 AM

1

10:00 AM

You will also be offered various types of appointments, some of which come with an additional fee. **Remember**, for family reunion applications your family do not have to pay to provide their biometrics at the Visa Application Centre.

You and your family need to choose which appointment type suits them best. The free options include, **'Document Self Upload'** and **'Document Upload Assistance'**.

If you wish to electronically upload your evidence prior to your family members biometric appointment, then select **'Document Self Upload'** (details of how to do this are shown further on in this guide).

If you your family would prefer to take their evidence with them to the Visa Application Centre and have a staff member scan their documents for them, then select **'Document Upload Assistance'**.

Paid Added Value Services	Units	Total (GBP)
Document Self Upload Upload digital copies of your supporting documents using our easy-to-use Read More →	1	FREE
Document Upload Assistance VFS Global will help with preparing, sorting, and arranging your supporting	1	FREE

Once you have decided how you would like to provide your evidence, select **‘Add’** and then **‘continue’**. Again, you will be offered many other services from the VAC which come with a fee, you do not have buy any of these if you do not want to.

Note: this is where you can choose the ‘Keep my Passport’ service. Select this if your family need to keep their passports whilst waiting for their decision. For example, if they have travelled from another country to attend the VAC, they will need to keep their passports to return to their country of nationality/country where they live.

After you have selected ‘continue’ you will then be required to review your booking summary:

Document Self Upload
1
 FREE
 [Read Less →](#)

Upload digital copies of your supporting documents using our easy-to-use self-upload option.

Document Upload Assistance
1
 FREE
 [Read More →](#)

VFS Global will help with preparing, sorting, and arranging your supporting

[Add](#)

Your services
 Price

Document Self Upload
 [Remove](#)
 GBP 0.00

Total price
GBP 0.00
 (Inclusive of all taxes)

Pay and Confirm
Please check the details carefully, including your appointment time and the services you have chosen.
 [Edit](#)

Application details

Your location
Pakistan

Going to
UK

Visa Application Centre
Islamabad

Your services
 Price

Document Self Upload
 GBP 0.00

Total price
GBP 0.00
 (Inclusive of all taxes)

Next you may be required to confirm your mobile phone number. Ensure you have selected the correct country code e.g. +44 for the UK. **Tick** that you have read and agree to the terms and conditions, and then click on **'continue'**. At this stage you can also select **'back'** if you need to change any of the details of your family members appointment. After clicking 'continue' your booking will be complete:

Appointment or Payment Status



Thank you for booking an appointment with us!

We've sent you a confirmation email with your appointment details, [here](#) to download a copy

You will be able to log in to your account and check or change your appointment details by [clicking here](#)

Now your booking is complete, and you will receive confirmation of the appointment booking via email. You can also click on the link on the page above to download a copy of your appointment confirmation. It should look something like this:




VFS.GLOBAL
EST. 2001

Appointment Confirmation

Appointment Details

[Download](#) the QR code.

Name [REDACTED]	Reference Number [REDACTED]	Appointment date & time 03 April 2025 10:10 AM-10:20 AM	
Visa Category Family Reunion Feeless	Appointment Type Standard (Assisted)	Visa Service Standard	

Visa Application Centre details



Islamabad
Gerrys Visa Pvt. Ltd
Park Road,
Chattha Bakhtawar Chak Shahzad,
Islamabad
Islamabad
Pakistan 92

Online application form in summary

1. Choose the visa type and register your email address
2. Fill in the online application form as if you were your family member abroad and complete the third-party declaration
3. Obtain Immigration Health Surcharge reference number
4. Print your online application form and document checklist
5. Book appointment at the Visa Application Centre (VAC) or relevant embassy and print your appointment confirmation
6. Upload your scanned bundle and print the list of the documents

6. Uploading evidence



I have completed the online form and booked appointments for my family. What happens now?

6.1 Next steps

- > **Print or save a copy of the completed online application form and appointment details** (for every family member) and add these to the evidence you have collected to make a **document bundle**.
- > **Write the immigration health surcharge (IHS) reference number** on the top of the printed version of the application form and/or on the cover letter of your bundle.
- > **Scan** all the documents you have – applications forms, appointment details, translations, evidence etc. so that you have a record of what is in your application. If you are uploading the evidence electronically, your family will need to email you copies of documents they have, such as birth certificates, or post you copies (not originals).
- > If you need a TB test certificate, **make sure your family have the details of the local TB test centre** where they should go to get their TB test completed. You will need to upload the TB Test Certificate before your family's appointment at the Visa Application Centre

Please note that if you are unable to scan the evidence and upload it in electronic form, you can choose to book an assisted scanning appointment at the visa application centre (see “Booking your embassy appointment and uploading evidence” in section 5.2 of this guide). If you choose the assisted scanning, your family will need to bring all the evidence and documents with them in paper form to their appointment. This means you must make sure your family has copies of all the documents, including a printed version of the online application form and appointment details, and all documents related to your status in the UK. Section 6.4 details how to send the documents if you have booked an assisted scanning appointment.

6.2 Creating an electronic bundle

Ensuring your electronic bundle is ordered clearly and correctly will help the Entry Clearance Officer see that you have followed all the rules. It may be useful to scan each separate form and piece of evidence that you plan to submit separately, and to add an explanation sheet as the first page of the pdf file stating what evidence is included in that file, unless that is clearly obvious by the documents. (For example: Birth certificate for Sarah; Lycamobile records from Jan – Dec 2014; Money transfer receipts from Jan –March 2015.) However, do not scan each piece of paper separately, but group ones that belong together in one pdf file, to make it as clear and easy as possible for the Entry Clearance Officer to go through your evidence.


In case you have very large documents, such as asylum interview records or photographs, you may need to break them to several pdf documents, or use software to compress the documents, as there is a size limit of 5MB for individual files. Also make sure the scans are of good quality, e.g. not too dark or grainy. Any documents that are not easy to read will not be considered by the Home Office.

Upload your cover letter as the first attachment of the bundle. It is up to you to decide in which order to upload your documents, but ensure that all translations are scanned together with their accompanying documents in the same pdf file. Once you are satisfied the bundle is clearly ordered and labelled, and all your evidence and forms have been compiled, then scan the documents on to your computer or phone. You will then need to upload the documents on to the VFS website after booking an appointment as shown in section 5.2.

6.3 Uploading the evidence

When you are ready to upload the evidence, use the link emailed to you when you submitted the visa application. Click “provide documents and biometrics” in the final tasks to get to the visa application centre’s appointment booking system.

Remember you **must** upload your documents at least 24 hours before your family’s appointment at the Visa Application Centre.




Visas and Immigration

▼ John Applicant Example

1. Start 2. Application 3. Documents 4. Declaration 5. Pay 6. Further actions

Further actions you must complete

There are some more actions below that you must complete. **Your application may not be successful** if you do not complete the mandatory actions.

 Any previously booked appointments are no longer valid due to a change in how we collect documents and biometrics. You must now make arrangements with our commercial partner to provide your documents and biometrics.

Mandatory actions

Download your supporting documents checklist

Download checklist

You must download your supporting documents checklist and print it for when you provide your biometrics. This document will only be available to download until 09 July 2020.

Make arrangements to provide your documents and biometrics




Provide documents and biometrics



You must make arrangements to provide your documents and biometrics (fingerprints and facial photograph) with our commercial partner.


When logged into the appointment booking system, to upload your scanned evidence bundle, click the option ‘**Provide your documents and biometrics**’. You will then be redirected to VFS website, which should look like this:


Upcoming Appointment Date **Thursday 03, Apr 2025**


Islamabad
 Gerrys Visa Pvt. Ltd
 Park Road,
 Chattha Bakhtawar Chak Shahzad,
 Islamabad
 92
 Pakistan

 [Cancel Appointment](#)
 [Reschedule appointment](#)
 [Resend confirmation letter](#)

 [Download appointment letter](#)
 [Download QR Code](#)

Customer details 

Document Self Upload 

Your services 

You will see confirmation of your family members appointment, as well as other options including rescheduling their appointment, or resending their appointment confirmation letter.

To upload evidence, click on **‘Document Self Upload’**

Document Self Upload 

 [Upload Files](#)


Your services 

You will see your family members name and GWF number listed and an option to ‘Upload files’. Select **‘Upload files’**.

Next a list of document categories will be displayed with instructions of how to upload files:

Upload Documents

- Please refer to the Document Checklist you received from GOV.UK as part of your application.
- We'd suggest uploading no more than five documents at once, and into one category at a time.
- We can't accept encrypted, password-protected, or 'Read-only' files. Please upload a scan of the printed document if you can't remove these restrictions.
- Please ensure your document name is in English and does not include special characters.
- You can upload PDFs/ JPG/JPEG/PNGs up to 5MB.
- If you close your browser, you'll lose your progress. If you can, upload all of your files in one session.



Please preview and check that each of your documents are legible before submitting. Once you've clicked 'Submit', you won't be able to preview your files again. **Please make sure you remember to click 'Save and Upload' once you have added your documents, otherwise they will not be submitted with your application.**


Once you have read and understood the above instructions you can start to upload. You will notice that you can upload your files under different categories. These categories look like this:

<input type="radio"/> Accommodation – Permanent / Temporary	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Educational Evidence	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Financial Evidence	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Other	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Proof of Application	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Life Events	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Proof of Business	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Sponsors / Employment	⌵
<input type="radio"/> Medical Information	⌵

Select the relevant category and then select **‘choose file’** to upload.

☒ Other

Examples may include: Photo, Driving licenses, Envelope, etc.

 [Choose file](#) or drag and drop files here

PDF, JPG, JPEG and PNG files up to 5 MB


Upload the relevant files. Continue with this process until all your documents have been uploaded. It is advisable to try and upload your files under the relevant category where possible, however, if you are unsure of which category to upload your documents under, we suggest you select ‘other’.


Note: the categories are just a guide provided by VFS and are applied to all immigration applications and not just family reunion applications. You do not have to upload a document in each category, it may be that some of the categories are not relevant to your family members application, for example, ‘Proof of Business’.


Once you have uploaded all the evidence you wish to submit, select **‘Save and Upload’**. You will then get confirmation that your documents have been uploaded successfully. Which should look like this:

Uploaded files

You can upload additional files here or delete unwanted ones. If you've finished uploading everything, please check your email for an updated Appointment Confirmation, which you'll need to print and bring to your appointment.

 Your documents have been uploaded successfully.

 Financial Evidence

 14 Money Transfer Confirmations.pdf

Once you have uploaded your documents, you will be given the option to **‘Upload more files’** or return **‘Back to my account’**. You can continue to upload more files until the day before your family members scheduled appointment.

If a technical error occurs whilst you are in the middle of the process of uploading evidence, and you are not sure whether the evidence has been uploaded successfully, it is advised to take a screenshot clearly showing the error message and email RefugeeFamilyReunion@homeoffice.gov.uk explaining the problem.

Finally, once you have uploaded all your evidence you will receive an updated appointment confirmation letter via email. Which looks like this:



Your family member will need to print the attached letter and take it with them to their appointment at the VAC/embassy.

6.4 Posting your documents

Posting or emailing the documents to your family is only necessary if you have chosen to book an assisted scanning appointment at the visa application centre. If you are able to scan and upload all the evidence electronically, your family will not need to bring paper copies of the evidence with them. However, they will still need bring printed copies of the appointment confirmation email, the document checklist, and the list of uploaded documents.

Using the assisted scanning service, you will still need to make sure the bundle is ordered clearly and completely. When sending the documents to your family, and when they take them to the embassy, it may be useful to use clear plastic pockets or wallets for each separate form and piece of evidence that you plan to submit, and to add an explanation sheet to be scanned with that piece of evidence stating what it is. You will need to make sure your family knows what documents to add where (e.g. birth certificates if they hold the original copies) to make sure everything is included, and that all documents are submitted with their corresponding translations.

Your family will not need to leave any original documents at the embassy, but they will be scanned and uploaded at the appointment and given back to your family. It is best you do not send originals of for example your identity documents or asylum decision letters but take photocopies to send to your family. If your family have access to email and a printer, you can also send all documents to them electronically, instead of posting paper copies. Your family can then print copies to take to the appointment for scanning.

If you are posting paper copies of your documents, ensure that you send them through a courier service and not by regular post. How much it will cost to post your bundle will depend on its size and weight.

Post the documents to a trusted address where your family can collect the documents. Do not post directly to the embassy.

Keep the receipt for your posted documents in a safe place. It can take anywhere between three to ten days for documents to be delivered to your family, so ensure you have left enough time before the embassy appointment for the documents to be delivered.

7. Preparing for, and attending the embassy appointment



Your family will be obliged to attend the visa application centre or embassy at the date and time for which you have booked their appointment.

7.1 Your family must...

- > Know the **date and venue of their appointment** at the Visa Application Centre / embassy.
- > Take with them to the appointment the documents detailed in an email sent by the Home Office, which usually involve the following (they may not be allowed into the VAC without these documents):
 - Their ID (original and not a copy)
 - Appointment confirmation email (printed)
 - Document checklist (see section 5.2, this is to be printed in “further actions” after submitting the application)
 - Confirmation that the documents have been uploaded (the list printed from the document upload portal as shown in section 6)
- > Be prepared to be asked questions **at interview** at the Visa Application Centre. Your family may not be interviewed; however it is good to be prepared for this.

7.2 What happens at the VAC/Embassy?

The Visa Application Centre (VAC) is a commercially-run organisation, which operates a ‘front-desk’ for the Entry Clearance Officers of the Home Office.

Your family need to attend the VAC at the appointment time given, it is often advised they arrive 15 minutes prior to their appointment to ensure they are seen. Please also note, appointments are given in the local time of the VAC and not UK time. If using the assisted scanning service, they will need to have all evidence documents (copies are fine) with them ready for scanning. They will also be required to provide their biometrics (photograph and fingerprints) at the VAC.

Your family may be interviewed at the embassy. They could be asked to discuss their relationship with you, and when you last saw each other etc. It is important that your family understands in advance that this could happen and are prepared. However, this interview can be a good opportunity for them to explain in their own words why they want to join you, the sponsor, in the UK.

If your family are making their application in a country where they do not usually live, they can ask for their passports to be returned to them at the end of their appointment so that they can travel back home. (Note: this may need to be arranged in advance with the embassy, and the reason given.)

7.3 Changing or cancelling embassy appointments

If you need to change the appointment date for your family, you can normally do this by logging into the online VSF Global website. You can log in to the website through the visa application website, using the link emailed to you when you submitted the application.

How to change your appointment

Click the “reschedule appointment” button and choose a new time for your application. Make sure to choose the right kind of an appointment (self-service or assisted), and not to choose any costly additional services.

You will need to do this separately for each family member if you want to change all their appointment times. You will need to log in to the appointment system separately by using the links emailed to you after submitting each application. Your family will need to print the new appointment confirmation email and make sure to take the right confirmation with them to the appointment.

It is worth bearing in mind that making changes to appointments may not be possible immediately before your appointment is due to occur. Also, the Home Office periodically suspends the ability to do this if (for example: if they are making changes to the VFS website). If you do need to change your appointment, try to do it as far in advance as possible.

7.4 I have missed my embassy appointment

If you miss your embassy appointment, it may not be possible to rearrange it online. If this occurs, you may have to follow the process to re-apply online and book entirely new appointments. You would need to ensure your family had copies of the new online application and appointment details.

8. Decisions and outcomes

8.1 How will I know when a decision has been made?

The Home Office will send a notification to tell you that a decision has been made. This often arrives in the form of an email. Usually they **will not** tell you whether the decision is positive or negative in their initial email. You will then receive a further email from the Home Office containing your decision, this email will outline if your application has been successful or not. Finally, you will then receive notification from the VAC that your documents are ready to be collected. Please note, sometimes emails from the Home Office can end up in your 'junk' folder, make sure to check all

If you have not heard anything within 60 working days of your family proving their biometrics, you should contact the Home Office at Refugeefamilyreunion@HomeOffice.gov.uk. Please note, although the service standard is 60 working days, the wait times for a decision can vary. Please check the gov.uk website for the latest visa processing times.

8.2 What happens if my visa(s) are approved?

If your visas are approved, your family needs to attend the embassy to collect each of the passports with the visa in place, or to receive the one-way travel document with the visa attached. They will be given a date after which the visa can be collected.

If your family made an application in a country other than the one in which they live, they will need to travel to the relevant embassy to leave their passports – **sometimes the embassy will ask that they do this within 14 days of the request**. It can take several days for the visa to be issued in their passport, so such families may have to arrange accommodation in the embassy country for up to seven days.

Once the visa(s) have been received, you can start to make travel arrangements. You may wish to enquire about the British Red Cross family reunion travel assistance programme.

Your family will get issues a visa which is valid for 90 days. Your family must be able to enter the UK within these 90 days. If they do not enter within this timeframe they may have to apply for another visa.

After 31/12/2024 the Home Office stopped issuing physical BRP cards and replaced them with electronic visas. Once your family have had their applications granted and collected their visas they will need to [create a UKVI account](#) so they can access their eVisa. They can do this before they enter the UK or after entering.

Please note, some family reunion applicants will get their eVisa account set up for them by the Home Office. You will receive an email from the Home Office confirming this if your family fall into this category.

Once your family have created their UKVI account. They will be able to:

- View their immigration status (the type and length of their permission to stay)

- Get a 'Share Code' so that others can check their immigration status (for example, landlords or employers)

More information about eVisas is available at: www.gov.uk/guidance/online-immigration-status-evisa.

You can find a list of organisations who can help with eVisa issues and queries here: [List of organisations - GOV.UK](#)

Additionally, you can also email the Home Office at: refugeefamilyreunionEvisa@homeoffice.gov.uk

What is family reunion travel assistance?

The British Red Cross family reunion travel assistance scheme pays for and arranges travel to reunite refugee families. The scheme organises and pays for family members' travel to the UK only.

The service is for people who already have Family Reunion visas for their family to enter the UK and meet all the below criteria:

- 1) Have 3 or more family members abroad; or
Are sponsoring unaccompanied minor(s); or
Have a family member with a medical need for whom it would be impossible to board a flight without extra assistance.
- 2) Your local British Red Cross refugee Support team has sufficient budget remaining according to the FRTA Budget Tracker tool,

Once the family reunion visas of your family members are in place, contact your local Red Cross office for an appointment to apply for travel assistance.

If the application is accepted, the Red Cross will work with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to organise your family's travel. **The scheme cannot refund tickets that you buy privately and cannot give you cash to buy tickets.** It currently takes around **six weeks** from the application being made until the family member(s) arrive in the UK. Some applications can take much longer. The scheme has limited funds and approval of applications is not guaranteed. The criteria can change, so please contact your local Red Cross office for more information.

Email: Familyreunion@redcross.org.uk

Tel: 020 7877 7292

What else do I need to think about before my family arrive?

Preparing for your family to arrive in the UK is an important step. You will have a lot to think about, including the following:

- ✓ **Housing** –will you need to move to accommodate your family?
- ✓ Do any of your family members have special requirements in terms of housing (for example: difficulty with stairs; requirement to be near a hospital, park or school?)
- ✓ **Education** - do any of your family members need to be enrolled in school? Have you looked into English classes?
- ✓ **Health** - can you register your family member(s) at your doctor, and do they have any special medical issues that need to be checked immediately after arrival?

- ✓ **Recreation activities** – where would you want to take your family, and where could they meet other people who might become their friends?

Preparing your family for their new home

It might be a good idea to send pictures of where you live to your family members (if you haven't already), and to describe your local area. Children might like to see postcards of nearby places, and learn a few basic words if English is not their first language. There are some great value language books available that you could send over. Your family might want to start buying clothes and shoes to suit a different climate.

8.3 What happens if my family members' applications are rejected?

Appeals

If the Entry clearance Officer (ECO) refuses to grant a visa for any or all applicants, you have the option of **appealing** their decision. This can take many months, but the case will be heard in a UK based tribunal. For more information, visit: www.justice.gov.uk/tribunals/immigration-asylum

It is very important that you **lodge an appeal**, along with the appropriate payment (preferably online via the above website), within the **28-day timeframe**. These 28 days start from the date when your family receive the notice of refusal. (Note: you will have 56 days to appeal if the refusal notice was posted.)

You can appeal your decision online or on a paper appeal form (an IAF 6). To apply online you'll need to create an account and complete the online appeal form, which can be found here: [Start your appeal - Appeal an immigration or asylum decision - HMCTS \(appeal-immigration-asylum-decision.service.gov.uk\)](http://Start.your.appeal-Appeal.an.immigration.or.asylum.decision-HMCTS-(appeal-immigration-asylum-decision.service.gov.uk))

If you do not wish to appeal online, an appeal form – **an IAF 6** - will need to be completed within 28 days of your family members receiving the refusal notice. The form can be found here: [Form IAF6: Appeal a visa decision from outside the UK \(ECO\) – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://Form.IAF6:Appeal.a.visa.decision.from.outside.the.UK(ECO)-GOV.UK(www.gov.uk)).

Following recent changes in the law, you can only appeal on human rights grounds. The relevant human rights ground for family reunion appeals will normally be Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights:

Article 8 – Right to respect for private and family life

1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

All parts of the form need to be completed. You need to write down anything you think the ECO has got wrong, and state why it is wrong. If you have extra evidence (more proof of contact, DNA evidence, statements or letters etc.) you can submit it with this form.

The appeal process can take between 9 – 12 months.

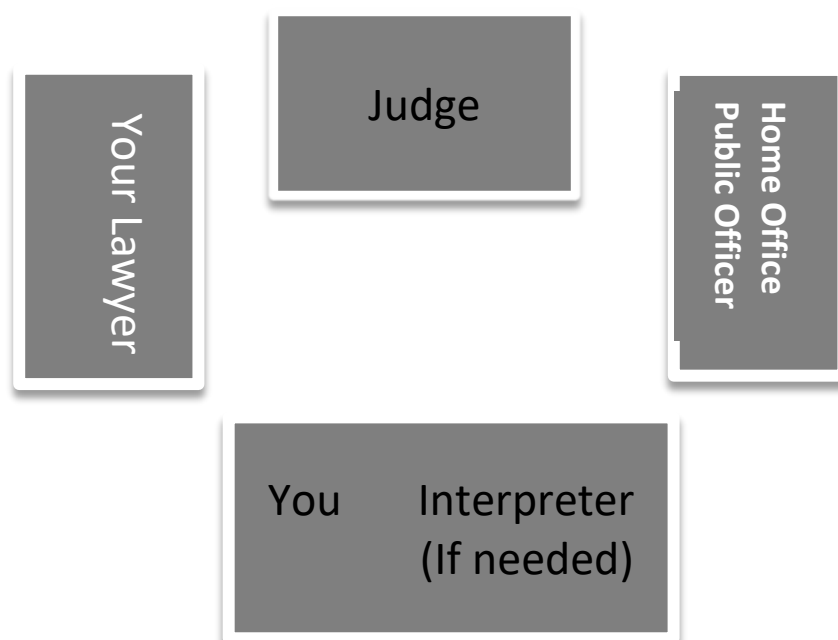
When you lodge your appeal, you need **to tell the court if you want an interpreter**. Be clear about the language and dialect you speak, and whether you would prefer a male or female interpreter.

It is always preferable to have a professional representing you during an appeal. However, if you are not able to find one, you can represent yourself at the hearing. You can decide to have the appeal heard in person (this means you attend court) or 'on papers' (where the judge makes a decision without meeting you). It is generally considered better to be present at court and appeal in person, since you can then respond to questions from the **Home Office Presenting Officer (HOPO)** or **judge** in your own words.

If you decide to represent yourself, you may want to read this guidance from the Bar Council: www.barcouncil.org.uk/media/203109/srl_guide_final_for_online_use.pdf

You can also consider asking for help to be referred to the Bar Pro Bono Unit: enquiries@barprobono.org.uk.

What does a hearing room look like?



Will I be asked to speak?

You will be questioned by the judge, Home Office presenting office and your own lawyer if you have one. You can have an interpreter who will help you communicate to court. The court is a very formal setting and you should dress appropriately and remember that the Judge is addressed as "Sir" or "Madam". It is important to understand that in court, it is better to say "I

don't remember" or "I don't know" when you are unable to answer a question rather than fabricate something.

Will the judge give a decision on the day?

The judge will most likely not make a decision on the day. Instead you or your representative will have to wait until she/he promulgates (sends out or hands down) a decision.

What decisions can the court make?

The appeal is upheld

If the appeal is "upheld" this means you have won your appeal and the Home office will be asked to grant the VISA. They will send this request to the Entry Clearance Officer

The appeal is dismissed

If the Appeal is "dismissed" this means that the appeal has not been successful, and you will need to decide whether to appeal again to the Upper Tribunal on a point of law error, or whether to make a fresh application at a future date.

Adjourned

The court can decide to adjourn your case during the hearing either because it has run out of time or because more information is needed or one of the parties needs to consider fresh evidence or take instruction. It can also be adjourned if one of the parties has not attended.

Home Office withdrawal

It is also possible for the Entry Clearance Officer or Manager or the Home Office to withdraw their refusal notice **at any point** during the appeal process. This means that no decision need be made by the judge. The VISA in this case should be granted by the Entry Clearance Office in the Embassy where your family submitted their application. However, this is not automatically done. In this situation, there is no court decision which means that the ECO at the embassy could refuse the application again however; if this is the case there would be good reason to appeal.

It is also possible that the Home Office can withdraw one refusal notice only to revise their decision and give new or amended reasons for refusal.

Making a fresh application

You can also make a fresh application: sometimes, this can be the best and quickest option.

Summary

You can:

- 1) **Appeal** the decision.
- 2) Ask for a **reconsideration**.
- 3) Submit a **new application**.

...or a combination of the above.

This might be the best option if:

There is an issue of **credibility**, or a complicated legal area.

There are missing documents; DNA test needed.

Numerous refusal points (ie: incomplete application).

Glossary

Appeal – This allows you to take your case before an impartial judge who will decide whether the Home Office was correct in refusing a visa to your family members. The appeal is heard in the UK.

Appeal hearing notice – A letter you will receive after lodging your appeal, which will confirm that you have an appeal.

Appendix 4 – This is the paper form you used to have to print and complete for every family member who is applying to join you in the UK. It asks for details regarding your family relationships. However, this is no longer applicable.

Appendix Family Reunion (Protection) – Where the rules relating to family reunion can be found.

Appendix TB – Where the rules relating to TB requirements for applicants can be found.

Applicants – This is the term used to describe your family. In family reunion cases, your family are known as the ‘applicants’ because they are applying to join you in the UK.

British embassy / Consulate – These represent the UK government abroad.

British Red Cross caseworker – A British Red Cross caseworker can help you prepare for lawyer’s appointments, understand general information about family reunion, and solve any problems that might arise with your application. You do not need a Red Cross caseworker to apply for family reunion.

Certified - When you are unable to send original documentation, you may need copies to be ‘certified as a true copy’ by a solicitor or notary public. It is important to note that the person signing is not saying that the document is genuine, just that the copy is a true copy of the document.

Credibility – Whether the Home Office choose believe you.

Discretion – The Secretary of State may choose to exercise discretion in particular cases if there are serious reasons why someone should still be allowed to enter or stay in the UK despite not meeting the requirements of the Immigration Rules. This is very rare in family reunion cases.

English language requirement – Some visa applications require your family to speak and understand a certain amount of English. Family reunion applications do not have this requirement and your family do not need English language skills to apply.

Entry Clearance Manager – This person is responsible for managing an Entry Clearance Officers’ work. An ECM will re-examine your refusal before appeal.

Entry Clearance Officer (ECO) – This is a person who works for UKVI at the British embassy and is usually the person who will make a decision about your family reunion VISAs.

Exceptional case funding – This is a type of legal aid available in limited ‘exceptional’ circumstances.

Financial and accommodation requirements – Some visa applications require that you are able to financially support and accommodate your family members, and you must prove this as part of your visa application. These requirements do not apply to refugee family reunion applications.

Form for Affixing a Visa (known as a FAV) - This is a one way travel document that the Home Office can issue to applicants if they do not have a passport

Home Office guidance and policy documents – These guidance and policy documents are not the same as UK law, but the Home Office uses them for guidance when it is uncertain how to interpret particular Immigration Rules. Immigration Rules take priority over guidance.

Home Office Presenting Officer (HOPO) – This is the legal representative who will represent the Secretary of State for the Home Office in an immigration tribunal hearing.

ICRC – This is the International Committee of the Red Cross, which provides help to people who are victims of war and violence. It works to try and put people back in touch with their families. The ICRC has offices all over the world.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) – This organisation works with the British Red Cross on its travel assistance project. If you apply for travel assistance with the British Red Cross, it will be someone from IOM who calls your family to arrange their flights and help them on their journey. IOM have offices all over the world.

Immigration Rules – These are the rules that state who can enter and stay in the UK, and under what circumstances.

Judge – In any Immigration Tribunal, the judge is impartial and independent from the Home Office. The judge must follow the law as it applies to your case, and will decide your case.

Lawyer / Solicitor – Your lawyer (sometimes called a solicitor) can tell you whether you and your family have a right to family reunion, explain what you need to do to apply for family reunion, and help you to prepare an application. They must be qualified to do this. It is possible to make an application for family reunion without a lawyer, but it is always best to get advice from a lawyer if you can.

Lodge an appeal – If you wish to appeal against the Home Office's decision to refuse your family member a visa, you must 'lodge' an appeal. This requires you to submit form IAF-2, along with your appeal grounds and tribunal fees.

Not leading an independent life – This is defined in the introduction to the Immigration Rules as: 'the applicant does not have a partner as defined in Appendix FM; is living with their parents (except where they are at boarding school, college or university as part of their full-time education); is not employed full-time (unless aged 18 years or over); is wholly or mainly dependent upon their parents for financial support (unless aged 18 years or over); and is wholly or mainly dependent upon their parents for emotional support.'

Notice of decision to refuse entry clearance – This document is received by applicants, either by post or in person at the embassy, when their application for family reunion is refused. Normally, an IAF-2 form is also provided.

Part 11 asylum Immigration Rules – Where the rules relating to family reunion used to be found before April 12 2023.

Pre-existing / Pre-flight family – This means family members who you normally lived with before you had to leave your last country of residence. It is normally defined as people you are related to who lived in the same house as you, and / or that you supported financially, emotionally and practically. Both terms are used. However, the correct term is pre-flight.

Protection Status - This means refugee leave or permission to stay on a protection route, e.g a resettlement programme.

Review and or reconsideration – If your application is refused, you can ask the Home Office to review or reconsider the decision. This essentially asks them to check the documents they received, and that their reasoning is in line with the Immigration Rules. It is not the same as ‘appealing’ a case, as the review is conducted by the Entry Clearance Manager and not an Immigration Appeal Tribunal judge.

Secretary of State for the Home Office – This is a senior member of the government who is responsible for regulating all immigration to the UK. They have the power to make decisions outside of the Immigration Rules, provided that the decision is not illegal under UK law.

SET10 – This is Home Office guidance around refugee family reunion. The guidance document is used by the Entry Clearance Officer when they make the visa decision.

Sole responsibility – This is an issue that sometimes needs to be looked at carefully in cases involving children. Having sole responsibility for a child requires you to show that you have been solely responsible for making important decisions in a child’s life and ensuring their welfare. This is particularly important if the other parent of the child is not planning to join you in the UK.

Sponsor (person in the UK) – In family reunion cases, you are known as the sponsor.

Subject access request – This is an application that you can make to get information or documents from the Home Office.

TB test – The UK requires people who are planning to stay in the UK for longer than six months, and who are applying from certain countries, to undertake a tuberculosis screening test

UNHCR – This is the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNHCR provides protection and assistance to the world's refugees. It is a non-political organisation and has offices all over the world. You might need help from them if your family have had to flee their home country and are living somewhere else before they join you in the UK.

UK Law – In this context, we use UK law to refer to those laws made by or approved by the British parliament. UK law can also include binding decisions made by courts, which act as precedent.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) – This is the department of the Home Office that decides who can come into and remain in the UK.

UFF (Uniform Format Form) – This is a one-way travel document issued in particular circumstances, such as when a visa is granted but it is not possible for the applicant to obtain a passport. This is now referred to as a ‘FAV’.

VAC (Visa Application Centre) – The VAC takes people’s visa applications and passes them to the Entry Clearance team to make a decision on the visa. This is where your family will go to submit their family reunion applications.

Valid marriage – This is a technical legal term used to determine whether a marriage is lawfully recognised under UK law. Typically, a marriage is ‘valid’ if it was legally recognised in the country where it took place, when it occurred.

Visa – This is the document that grants you entry to the UK.

Witness statement – This is a document recording the evidence of a person, which is signed by that person to confirm that the contents of their statement are true.