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Refugee Family Reunion

UK



The UK immigration rules allow refugees to apply for some members of their family to join them. It is only possible to start the process if you have been accepted as a refugee or been granted humanitarian protection. You cannot start the process if you are still an asylum seeker.

The family reunion rules allow refugees to apply for a spouse (your husband or wife), partner, or children to join them. It is possible to apply for other family members to come, but it is much harder. The same rules apply if your family are in your home country or any other country e.g. in Europe.

The application process is complex. You should start collecting evidence before you make an application.



Arriving in the UK

- You should have a screening interview shortly after you arrive in the UK. **If you want to make a family reunion application, it is very important to name your family members during the interview.**
- This is because the Home Office may look at the notes from your screening interview when they are making a decision about your family reunion.
- If you did not mention someone which you later make a request for, the Home Office might ask why you didn't share this with them as soon as possible.
- You should say their name, nationality, date of birth, and how you are related. It is also helpful to say how long it has been since you last had contact with them.



When can I make an application?

To apply for family reunion, you must have protection status in the UK. This means refugee status or humanitarian protection status.

It can take a long time to get protection status. At the moment, most people wait more than one year, and often more than three years.



Can my partner or spouse join me?

The rules allow you to apply for your spouse or one partner to join you through family reunion, so long as:

- you were married or in a civil partnership **before** you left your country of origin
- if you are not married, you lived with your partner for 2 years **before** you left your country of origin
- you and your partner intend to live permanently with each other
- your relationship is genuine and subsisting / ongoing



Can my child or children join me?

You can apply for your child or children to join you while they are under 18 years old, so long as they were born or conceived **before** you left your country of origin.

You can also apply for your child to join you if they are 18 years old or over, so long as:

- they are still dependent on you; and
- they are not married or in a civil partnership.



What about other family members?

It is possible to apply to bring someone that is not your child or your spouse, for example your brother or aunt. This is called an 'outside the rules' application.

It is more difficult because you must show that there are "exceptional" reasons why your family member should join you. For example: they depend on you for money or support, or that they are living in a very dangerous situation.

You should try to find a lawyer if you want to make an application like this.



How do I make an application?

When you make an application for family reunion, you are called the **sponsor**. You must make a separate application for each one of your family members.

To make a family reunion application, you must:

1. **Collect evidence to prove that you and your family members are related**
2. **Complete the application form on the Government website, including the evidence you have collected**
3. **Arrange for your family members to provide biometric information at a Visa Application Centre**



What evidence do I need to collect?

The Home Office asks all people applying for family reunion to prove that they are related to their family. For families thinking about making a family reunion application, it is important to collect as much evidence as possible to prove that you are related.

This could include:

- witness statements, from you, your family members, and other important people in your life
- birth certificates, marriage certificates and other religious certificates such as for baptism if you are a Christian
- bills and any documents that you have proving that you used to live together
- telephone records, emails, letters, or WhatsApp and Facebook conversations which show that you stay in contact with your family even though you are not with them
- photographs and videos of your family, including weddings or births
- DNA evidence (you have to pay for this yourself)
- proof of any financial support that you provide to your family.



How much does it cost?

The family reunion application is **free**. **There is no minimum income requirement for refugee family reunion.**

However, there may be some things that you need to pay for. This includes:

- applying for any passports or identity cards
- getting copies of birth certificates
- having documents translated into English (this is required)
- travel costs to the Visa Application Centre
- travel costs to the UK
- DNA tests, if you choose to do this
- a mandatory test for Tuberculosis



How long does it take?

Family reunion applications take a long time. The Home Office says that it will take at least three months, but it can be much longer. It also takes a lot of time to prepare your application before you submit it.



What happens if my application is rejected?

If your application is rejected, it is possible to make an appeal. **You must speak to a lawyer as soon as possible if you want to appeal.** This is because you only have a short amount of time to make an appeal once your application is rejected.

