

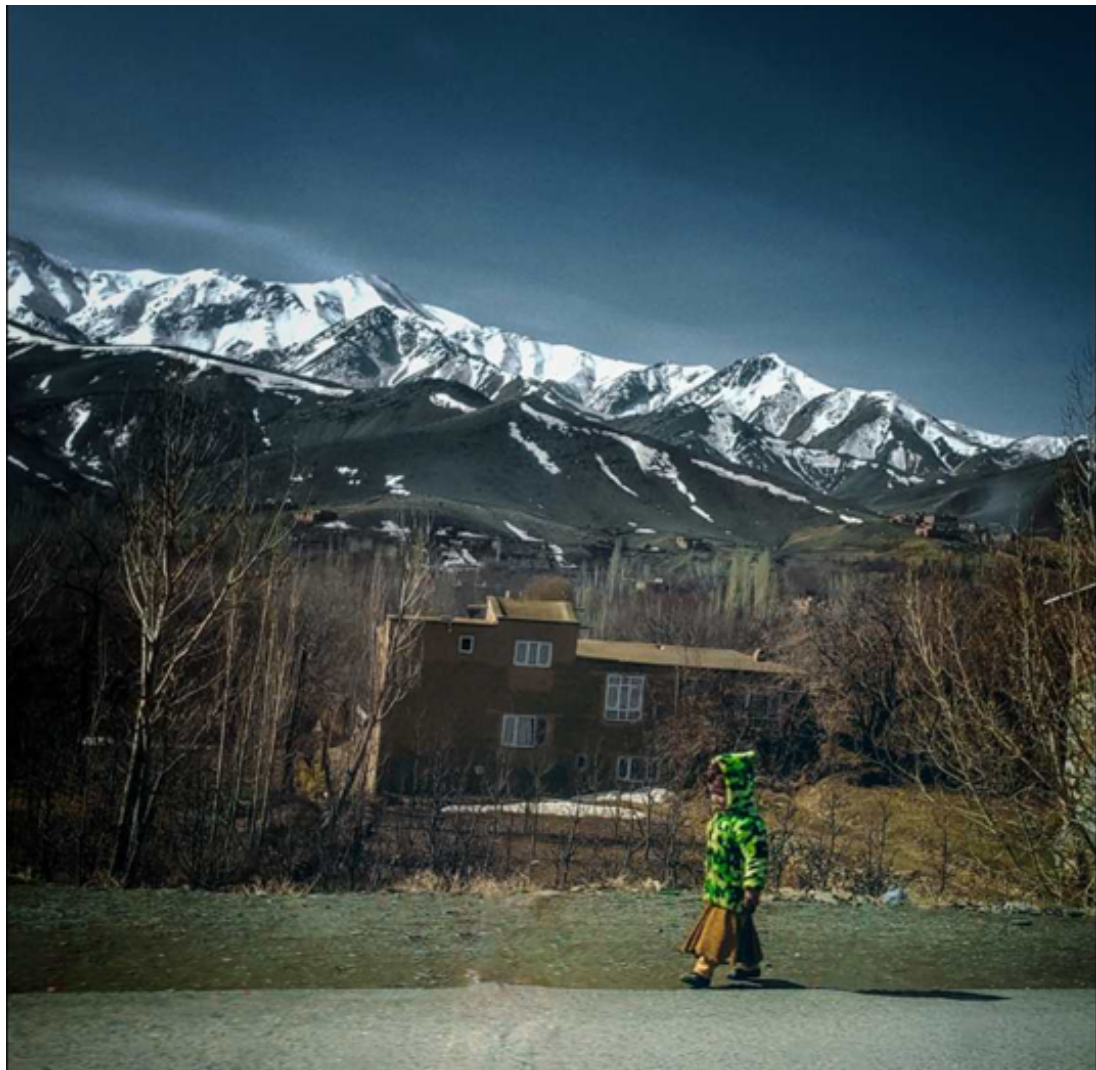


**Afghan  
Pro Bono  
Initiative**

Hosted by **Refugee Legal Support**  
and **Safe Passage International**



## Self-Help Guide for the ACRS Separated Families Pathway (Pathway 1, Stage 2)



## DISCLAIMER

Please note that this guide has been written as a resource to help Afghan nationals and their family members understand and access the new Separated Families Pathway under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme ('ACRS'). While it is always preferable to seek specific legal advice for your particular circumstances, this guide is intended to help when it is not possible to obtain legal advice.

The ACRS Sponsor Referral Form is not an application for entry clearance or leave to remain in the UK. It is an initial expression of interest by an eligible Afghan sponsor based in the UK for their family members to join them in the UK. Nonetheless, the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form should be completed thoroughly to reduce the risks of an ineligibility decision at a later date by the Home Office.

Following this guide will help you to understand if you are eligible for the Separated Families Pathway and to prepare your referral as an ACRS sponsor. It does not guarantee that your application will be successful. For this reason, we encourage you to seek legal advice. It is impossible to cover all aspects of the Separated Families Pathway and this guide therefore only covers the key points.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	4
Chapter 1. WHAT IS THE NEW SEPARATED FAMILIES PATHWAY?.....	6
Chapter 2. WHO CAN MAKE A REFERRAL? .....	7
Chapter 3. HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO MAKE A REFERRAL?.....	8
Chapter 4. WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED? .....	8
Chapter 5. WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR MAKING A REFERRAL? .....	9
Chapter 6. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?.....	9
Chapter 7. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	12
Chapter 8. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	14

## **DEFINITIONS**

<b>ACRS</b>	Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme
<b>AFM (Additional Family Member) rules</b>	The Immigration Rules that apply to different family members
<b>BRP</b>	Biometrics Residence Permit
<b>APBI</b>	Afghan Pro Bono Initiative
<b>DARR team</b>	UK Government's Defence Afghan Relocation and Resettlement team
<b>Dependent</b>	Family member who is eligible for resettlement under the ACRS, Pathway 1, Stage 2
<b>Operation Pitting</b>	UK military operation that evacuated British nationals and eligible Afghans from Afghanistan between 13-28 August 2021
<b>Sponsor</b>	Afghan person based in the UK who is eligible under the ACRS scheme to bring their family members to the UK from Afghanistan
<b>VAC</b>	Visa Application Centre

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose of this guide

This guide has been developed by the Afghan Pro Bono Initiative ('APBI').

APBI is a collaborative project delivered jointly by Refugee Legal Support and Safe Passage International in collaboration with 13 commercial law firms. Neither organisation is affiliated with the UK Government and both provide independent legal advice and support services for people navigating the UK immigration system.

The project is a response to the increased need for Afghan nationals and their family members to have accessible information, legal advice and representation regarding safe routes to the UK following the Taliban takeover in August 2021.

APBI focuses upon delivering high-quality legal advice, signposting and representation in a range of cases, including family reunion, Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), the ACRS and others.

**Please note that this guide has been provided as a resource to help Afghan nationals and their family members understand the new Separated Families Pathway under the ACRS. If possible, you should seek legal advice regarding this route. However, if you are unable to do so, this guide is intended to help you understand this ACRS route.**

### B. Who should read this guide

This guide is for Afghans who believe they may be eligible for the new Separated Families Pathway of the ACRS and who want to complete the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form.

Please see Appendix A of this guide for more information on completing the referral form.

### C. How to use this guide

This guide can be used to help you understand whether you and your family members are eligible for the new Separated Families Pathway. It should also be read with other resources including the law and guidance relating to the ACRS written by the Home Office. This will prevent any confusion or misunderstandings regarding your eligibility. Some of these resources are included in the final chapter of this guide.

This guide does not constitute legal advice. Every person's circumstances are different and it is important to seek legal advice where possible.

#### **D. Feedback**

We would appreciate your feedback on this guide. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions on this guide, please share these with us [via this form](#).

#### **E. Acknowledgments**

The APBI would like to thank the volunteer lawyers for their assistance with drafting this guide, and to Shamim Sarabi at Refugee Legal Support for her feedback and Dari translation review of this document.

## **CHAPTER 1. WHAT IS THE NEW SEPARATED FAMILIES PATHWAY?**

### **1.1 What is the ACRS?**

The UK Government opened the ACRS on 6 January 2022. The scheme was set up to support Afghan citizens who had assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights and freedom of speech and the rule of law. It was also created to support vulnerable Afghans including women and girls at risk and members of minority groups at risk.

### **1.2 What are the different ACRS pathways?**

The ACRS is not an application for entry clearance or leave to remain. Afghan citizens can only be resettled under the ACRS if they are referred onto one of the three pathways set out below. Each pathway has different criteria and is designed to help groups who are most at risk of persecution by the Taliban in Afghanistan.

There are three pathways for resettlement to the UK under the ACRS:

#### **Pathway 1:**

- 1) Individuals who were evacuated as part of Operation Pitting.
- 2) Individuals who were notified by the UK Government that they had been called forward with assurance of evacuation but were not able to board flights and do not hold nationality or lawful status in any country other than Afghanistan.

#### **Pathway 2:**

- 1) Referrals from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

#### **Pathway 3:**

- 1) Individuals who are at risk because they supported the UK and international community efforts in Afghanistan. These are individuals who worked in affiliation with the British Council, GardaWorld contractors or were Chevening alumni. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office ('FCDO') will contact those who submitted an expression of interest for this route to resettlement in 2022.
- 2) Individuals who are particularly vulnerable.

This guide focuses on Pathway 1, Stage 2 which is the new Separated Families Pathway. On 30 July 2024, the UK Government announced that Stage 2 of the ACRS was open for Afghan citizens settled under the scheme to bring eligible family members to resettle in the UK.

## CHAPTER 2. WHO CAN MAKE A REFERRAL?

### 2.1 Who can make a referral for their family under the new route?

Afghan individuals who were evacuated to the UK from Afghanistan under Pathway 1 between 13-28 August 2021 and who have since received indefinite leave to remain in the UK may make a referral. They are the person who completes the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form to express their wish to bring their family to the UK under Pathway 1, Stage 2.

### 2.2 Which family members are eligible for a referral?

A family member who meets the criteria for resettlement in the UK under Pathway 1, Stage 2 is eligible.

If the person making the referral was **over 18 at the time of evacuation**, their dependents are:

- Their husband, wife, civil partner or unmarried partner. Only one partner can be sponsored under Pathway 1, Stage 2. If the sponsor already has a partner in the UK then they will not be able to refer another partner.
- Their child who was born on or after 28 August 2003. These children must not now be living independently or have their own family.

If the person making the referral was **under the age of 18 at the time of evacuation**, their dependents are:

- Their parents.
- Their siblings who were under the age of 18 at the time of the evacuation and have not now formed a separate family unit.
- Other family members who may be referred if exceptional circumstances apply.

Exceptional circumstances require the person in the UK to show that the family member has specific vulnerabilities that have led to an exceptional level of dependence on the sponsor in the UK.

The additional family member must show that they cannot access the care that they need in their current location and that there is no one else who can reasonably provide it. There is no definition of what exceptional circumstances may be but these could include physical health issues, mental health issues, care needs or learning difficulties, among other vulnerabilities.



## **CHAPTER 3. HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO MAKE A REFERRAL?**

### **3.1 What is the fee for making a referral?**

No fee is required to make a referral to the ACRS Pathway 1, Stage 2.

## **CHAPTER 4. WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE REQUIRED?**

### **4.1 What documents does the sponsor need to access the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form?**

- Their Biometric Residence Permit ('BRP') number, or
- Their Unique Application Number ('UAN').

If you applied for an e-visa then you can use your old BRP card for the referral form. If you no longer have your BRP card, please contact the Home Office for further assistance: [ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk).

### **4.2 What documents does the sponsor need to complete the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form?**

You do not have to include any specific documents but it is important that you upload documents that show the identity of the family member(s) and your relationship with them.

Evidence will also be helpful to demonstrate any vulnerabilities that may make family member(s) eligible. This is particularly important where you are making a referral for an adult family member who falls outside of the defined categories of eligible family member(s) noted in Chapter 2.

- Tazkira
- Copies of passports
- Copies of marriage certificates
- Copies of adoption certificates
- Family photographs
- School reports
- Bank transfers between you and the family member(s)
- Social media or other messages or communication between you and the family member(s)
- Medical records of the family member(s)
- Other documents that demonstrate your relationship with the family member(s).

All evidence must be provided in English or translated into English.

## CHAPTER 5. WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR MAKING A REFERRAL?

### 5.1 What is the deadline for referrals?

The ACRS Sponsor Referral Form will be open for referrals **until 30 October 2024**. An example of the questions on the referral form and guidance on how to answer each question is provided at Appendix A (page 10).

### 5.2 Is it possible to make a referral after the deadline?

It is important that you do not miss this deadline. If you are unwell or have other reasons why it was not possible to complete the referral form before the deadline, then you should contact the Home Office on [ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk) with an explanation as to why you missed the deadline.

There is no guarantee that referrals after the deadline will be considered.

## CHAPTER 6. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

### 6.1 What will happen after the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form is submitted?

It is not explicitly clear what the exact timeline will be for processing the referrals. The policy guidance indicates the following stages to the process:

1. An eligibility decision notification will be provided as to whether family member(s) are eligible for resettlement under Pathway 1, Stage 2.
2. Family member(s) will be helped with applying for UK entry clearance at the nearest Visa Application Centre ('VAC'). They will be required to provide identity documents (Tazkira, valid passport or other combination or other official documents such as a photo driving licence or birth certificate) and biometrics information will be taken. Please do not make travel arrangements before receiving the eligibility decision.
3. A visa will then be issued providing that family member(s) pass medical and security checks. Any family member under the age of 18 must travel with an adult.

Please note that an eligibility decision is not an immigration decision.

## APPENDIX A

An example of the questions on the referral form and guidance on how to answer each question is provided in this appendix.

Provide **your** personal details.

### ACRS Referral Submission

#### Referral Details:

Biometric residence permit number	
Date of birth	
Who is completing this form?	
What is your full name?	
Is this your email address?	
Can you provide a telephone number?	

**Your relationship** with the family member. If you are referring your father, you would say "son of referred person" or "daughter of referred person".

This was given to you when you were evacuated to the UK. The format of this number is two letters followed by seven numbers, e.g. AB1234567.

If you do not have a BRP number, you can use a unique application number (UAN). The UK Home Office will have sent you this number. The format of this number is four sets of four numbers, e.g. 1234-1234-1234-1234.

Your full name as it appears on your Home Office records.

If you have received help completing your form from a regulated immigration advisor, you should ask them for these details.

#### Immigration Adviser's Details:

Full Name	
Organisation or Law Firm	
Postal Address	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	

#### Family in your Referral:

Are you referring a partner to come to the UK?	
Are you referring your children to come to the UK?	
Are you referring your additional family members to come to the UK?	
Partner's Name	
Telephone Number	
Email Address	

Provide the personal details of **the family member you are referring** to come the UK.

You should say where your partner is, in what sort of accommodation they are living and who they are living with right now. If they have to move around or do not have a fixed address, you should say this here.

If your partner is living under threat because of their family's role helping the UK Government efforts in Afghanistan, you should talk about how it is affecting their life.

You should say where your child is, in what sort of accommodation they are living and who they are living with right now. If they have to move around or do not have a fixed address, you should say this here. If your child is over 18, you should also explain why they do not lead an independent life and that they do not have their own family.

If your child is living under threat because of their family's role helping the UK Government efforts in Afghanistan, you should talk about how this is affecting their life.

If you do not have electronic documents, you can take a photograph of documents and upload the photo.

All documents must be uploaded in English.

Date of Birth	
Country they live in	
Partner's Living Situation	
Not evacuated together because:	
Child's name:	
Date of Birth:	
What country do they live in?	
Their living situation	
Not evacuated together because:	

**Family that live in the UK:**

Do you have family that live in the UK?	
Evidence (Files Uploaded)	

**Where to send you decision:**

How to send decision	
Where to send decision	

Please explain why your partner was not evacuated with you. You should assume that the person who is reading your form is not familiar with your case and may not be familiar with the circumstances of your evacuation from Afghanistan.

Please explain why your child was not evacuated with you. You should assume that the person who is reading your form is not familiar with your case and may not be familiar with the circumstances of your evacuation from Afghanistan.

If you have family members that live in the UK, say who they are and where they live. Please be aware that the UK Home Office are likely to have a stricter definition of family than Afghans. If there are people that you consider family but are not biologically related, you should include them in this section and describe why you have a close relationship.

**Remember: the deadline for completing the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form is 30 October 2024**

## CHAPTER 7. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. *What should I do if I am still unsure about my eligibility for the Separated Families Pathway?*

It is important that you seek legal advice for your specific circumstances. It is also important that you verify what immigration status you are settled under in the UK i.e. ACRS, ARAP, refugee status etc.

2. *I want to bring my uncle/aunt/grandparent/other family member who does not meet the criteria for Pathway 1, Stage 2. What should I do?*

It is important that you seek legal advice for your specific circumstances as it may be possible for you to make an application under one of the other routes to resettlement.

3. *Where can I find the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form?*

The ACRS Sponsor Referral Form is available [here](#) on the Government website.

4. *Can I complete the form without my BRP or UAN?*

You will not be able to access the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form without your BRP number. If you cannot find it/do not have it, please email the Home Office for help on [ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk).

5. *The ACRS Sponsor Referral Form is giving the error 'details not found' when I try to start the form even though I have ACRS status. What should I do?*

There have been reports that some sponsors have not been able to access the ACRS Sponsor Referral Form online even though they have an eligible BRP number. If so, please contact [ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk) and explain that you are having difficulties accessing the referral form.

If possible, please also send an email to Freya at Refugee Legal Support ([freya.morgan@refugeelegalsupport.org](mailto:freya.morgan@refugeelegalsupport.org)) as it would assist us in monitoring errors with the referral process.

6. *Do my family need to book a VAC appointment in advance?*

There is no need to book a VAC appointment in advance.

7. *Can my family have an exemption from travelling to the VAC?*

There is no guidance on exemptions from travelling to VACs. It is not recommended that an exemption from travelling to a VAC is sought as it may delay the process. However, if there is no way that family member(s) can travel to the VAC then they should contact the Home Office and give reasons why it is not possible for them to make the journey at [ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:ACRSP1SeparatedFamiliesInfoRequests@homeoffice.gov.uk).

The Organisation for Migration (IOM) will support family member(s) by providing them with accommodation and food during the application process.

8. *What should I do if I receive an ineligible decision from the Home Office?*

Please seek legal advice if you receive an ineligible decision. An immigration advisor will be able to advise you on the best course of action regarding your specific circumstances.

You can also get in contact with us at [cases@afghanprobono.org.uk](mailto:cases@afghanprobono.org.uk) and provide us with a copy of your ineligibility decision letter.

9. *Where can I get more information about [completing the ACRS](#)?*

There are further resources included below that may be helpful to you.

## CHAPTER 8. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **ACRS Sponsor Referral Form:**

<https://www.refer-afghan-family-to-come-to-the-uk.homeoffice.gov.uk/sign-in>

### **Home Office policy guidance on referrals made under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) Pathway 1, Stage 2: Separated Families:**

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66a7513449b9c0597fdb05ee/Afghan+Citizens+Resettlement+Scheme+Pathway+1+Stage+2+Separated+Families.pdf>

### **APBI mailing list for updates on the Afghan UK resettlement schemes, ministerial updates on Afghan refugees and updates on APBI services for Afghans:**

<https://afghanprobono.us14.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=61d24b5c0b7ef24ebe5d503fa&id=f22a3f56a5>