

A blurred background image showing two people in an office environment. On the left, a woman is sitting at a desk, looking down at a laptop. On the right, a man is also at a desk, looking at a laptop. There are papers, a mug, and a small potted plant on the desks. The overall atmosphere is professional and focused. 

# Immigration Specialists for Every Journey

Guidance Document: BRITISH NATIONALITY

# British Nationality

*"I have to be very honest I have been travelling all around the world and working with many different departments. I haven't seen this precise services!!! They care about every detail, they reply really fast, they're up to date with you about all the steps. They're fast in the process in general, we are very happy to have chooses to work with them."*

SA, Skilled Worker visa applicant

British citizenship is the most secure form of nationality status in the UK. It gives a person the right to live, work, study, and access services in the UK without immigration restrictions. British citizens can hold a British passport, vote in UK elections, and are protected by the full rights granted under UK nationality law.

## **What Is British Nationality?**

Some people are British automatically by operation of law—for example, those born in the UK to a parent who was British or settled at the time of birth, or those born abroad to a British parent who is British otherwise than by descent.

Others become British through a formal process known as registration or naturalisation, depending on their circumstances and entitlement.

Registration is the process of applying to the Home Office and providing evidence that you qualify under specific sections of the British Nationality Act 1981.

Many registration routes are designed for children, and several of these rights are time-limited, ending on the child's 18th birthday.

Some adults are also eligible to register, particularly where they would have been born British if nationality laws had not been discriminatory at the time of their birth.

A successful registration application results in a certificate of registration, confirming the date and the legal basis on which citizenship was granted.

Anyone aged 18 or over must then attend a citizenship ceremony and swear an oath of allegiance. Naturalisation is the legal process through which an adult who is not automatically British and does not have a claim to register can apply to become a British citizen at the Home Office's discretion.

# British Registration

*“Have had a wonderful experience dealing with Migrate UK twice over. I got prompt and clear answers to all my queries and constant support from all levels in the organisation”*

*SB, UK Ancestry Visa Applicant*

## Who Can Apply for British Nationality?

Many people—especially children and some adults—may still have a legal entitlement to register as a British citizen under the British Nationality Act 1981.

## Who Can Register as a British Citizen?

Several groups may qualify for British citizenship through registration. These are the most common routes:

### 1. Children Born in the UK Who Were Not British at Birth

Children born in the UK on or after 1 January 1983 can be registered if:

- A parent becomes British or settled, or
- A parent joins the UK armed forces

while the child is still under 18.

This is one of the most widely used registration routes.

### 2. Children Born Abroad to a British Citizen “By Descent”

A child born outside the UK to a parent who is British by descent may register if:

- The British parent lived in the UK for three continuous years before the child’s birth or
- The child and both parents later live in the UK for three continuous years.

### 3. Discretionary Registration for Children

Under section 3(1) of the British Nationality Act 1981, the Home Secretary may grant citizenship to any child at their discretion, based on the child’s circumstances and the Home Office’s policy.

# British Registration

*“Amazing Team, seamless experience.”*

*SP, GBM Visa Applicant*

## 4. People of Any Age Born in the UK Who Lived Here for 10 Years

Adults and children can register if they:

- Were born in the UK,
- Have lived here for the first 10 years of their life, and
- Have not exceeded 90 days' absence in any of those years.

Some discretion can apply for unavoidable longer absences.

## 5. Children Born Abroad to a Parent Serving in the UK Armed Forces

Children born overseas on or after 13 January 2010 to a parent serving abroad in the UK armed forces may register under section 4D of the British Nationality Act 1981.

## 6. Adults Born Abroad Before 1983 to a British Mother

Before 1983, British women could not pass on citizenship. Section 4C now allows adults born abroad before 1983 to a British mother to register and correct historic gender discrimination.

## 7. People Born Before 1 July 2006 to an Unmarried British Father

Children born before this date could not inherit citizenship from a father who was not married to their mother. Section 4F now allows them to register.

## 8. Stateless Children and Adults

Stateless people born in the UK, a British Overseas Territory, or abroad may be eligible to register if:

- They have remained stateless since birth, and
- They meet residency requirements under Schedule 2 of the British Nationality Act 1981.

# Naturalise As British

*"I highly recommend Migrate UK ! From start to finish, the entire visa application process was incredibly smooth and stress-free, all thanks to their expert guidance. Dealing with visa applications can be confusing and overwhelming, but the team at Migrate UK made it feel completely manageable. They were thorough, professional, and exceptionally responsive to all my questions, often getting back to me within the hour. "*

*MK, Skilled Worker visa applicant*

## Who can Naturalise as a British citizen?

Naturalisation is the route used when a person does not have a specific legal entitlement to register—for example, where citizenship cannot be acquired through birth, descent, or historic provisions. Naturalisation is not an automatic right—it is granted only when a person meets the detailed requirements under the British Nationality Act 1981 and the Home Office is satisfied that the applicant is of good character and fully qualifies.

It applies primarily to:

- Adults aged 18 or over:
- Children cannot naturalise; they must register instead.
- who have lived in the UK for a qualifying period
- Usually 5 years of lawful residence, plus 12 months of Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) if not married to a British citizen
- OR 3 years of lawful residence if married to a British citizen but only once ILR/settled status has been acquired
- Have been physically present in the UK exactly 3 or 5 years prior to their application
- Have not exceeded the maximum amount of time they can spend outside the UK during their qualifying period:
  - 450 days if not married to a British citizen
  - 270 days if married to a British citizen
  - Not more than 90 days of which can fall during the final qualifying year.
- Have passed the Life in the UK test if aged between 18-64
- Meet the English language requirement at level B2 of the CEFR framework (if aged between 18-64 and not the national of a majority English speaking country) and
- Intend to make the UK their home.

# About us

*"We are a fast-growing SME in the utilities and property tech sector, and we've been delighted to work with Migrate UK to support members of our team transitioning from graduate visas into longer-term roles. From the very beginning, they have been professional, transparent, and an absolute pleasure to work with. Communication has been clear and supportive throughout, which made what could have been a complex process feel seamless."*

Skilled Worker Sponsor

We are very proud of our heritage and our successes. Here are some of our headlines:

22

Years of providing immigration advice, making us one of the longest serving specialist immigration law firms in the UK

9000+

Applications processed

50+

Years of combined immigration experience in our team

5

Star rating on [Google](#) and [Trustist](#)

Read more about us online via our [website](#), [LinkedIn](#), and via [HR Ninjas](#)