



# APPLYING FOR REFUGEE FAMILY REUNION

A guide to the family reunion process

Updated 1 July 2020

The power  
of kindness

# 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 the family reunion project caseworkers Helen Mead, Joanne Hooper and Lilian Rose has been equally invaluable.

The legal professionals at Asylum Aid and Rochdale Law Centre, 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 aggregating 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 individuals granted refugee or humanitarian 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 deciphering 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 complex process, and because the resources available to families to navigate such applications have diminished, we are seeking out fresh ways to ensure that families can reunite. We think a new application form and guidance will help, but maintain the view that legal support is also vital. 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 designed the guide to help people who have no support or who are trying to better understand what the application process entails. Despite our efforts to ease the burden of applying, we maintain that the only durable solution is publicly funded legal support.

## Updated version July 2020

The guide has been updated in 2020 to reflect changes made by the Home Office to the family reunion visa application process. Changes have been made to sections 5.2, 6 and 7 of this guide. These changes concern the move to a new online application portal ([www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk)) and changes to the appointments at visa application centres are booked. Also, the way evidence is submitted has changed, all evidence now being uploaded electronically instead of submitting original documents in paper form.

At the time of this updated version being published, a few countries are still using the old online application portal and the old system of submitting evidence. Therefore, the previous version of this guide, from June 2017, will continue to co-exist with this version. Which version of this guide you should use depends on in which country the family members applying for visas will attend the visa application centre to provide their biometrics, not on their nationality. The countries using the old application system are detailed on the front page of the old application portal ([www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk](http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk)).

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# 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 sequence 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 Vanessa Cowan ([vcowan@redcross.org.uk](mailto:vcowan@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 complex 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 the application. While it is always preferable to obtain tailored legal advice to your particular circumstances, this guide is intended to help when it is not possible to obtain 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 Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) or 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 OISC or who is registered with the Law Society, and IAAS accredited. For a list of OISC-regulated advisors in your area, visit [www.oisc.gov.uk](http://www.oisc.gov.uk). To find a representative who is both registered with the Law Society and IAAS accredited, visit [www.lawsociety.org.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk).

### 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 obtain 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](http://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/](http://weareadvocate.org.uk/)
- > Citizens Advice Bureau - [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)
- > Free Representation Unit (FRU) - [www.thefru.org.uk](http://www.thefru.org.uk)
- > Law Centres Network - [www.lawcentres.org.uk](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk)

- > Refugee legal aid information - [www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/united-kingdom-pro-bono-directory](http://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/united-kingdom-pro-bono-directory)
- > Public Law Project - [publiclawproject.org.uk/](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration)

Family reunion information

[www.gov.uk/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection/family-reunion](http://www.gov.uk/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection/family-reunion)

Information on where to apply

[www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk)

Online applications, IHS reference number and booking embassy appointments for the few countries specified on the website (old system)

[www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk](http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk)

Appendix 4 application form

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-uk-visa-family-joining-refugee-form-appendix-4-vaf4a](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-uk-visa-family-joining-refugee-form-appendix-4-vaf4a)

Country-specific information on how to make settlement applications

[www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/visa-processing-times)

Information on TB test requirements

[www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/requests-for-personal-data-uk-visas-and-immigration)

### Commercial partner websites

VFS Global

## 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 govern 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 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 and 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 **Part 11 of the Immigration Rules**.

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

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-rules](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immigration-rules)

## 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:**

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/541818/Family\\_reunion\\_guidance\\_v2.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/541818/Family_reunion_guidance_v2.pdf)

This guidance replaced the following instructions on the 29 July 2016:

- Family reunion Asylum Instruction (AI)
- Family reunion / leave in line interim AI
- Settlement (entry clearance) guidance (SET10)

## 3.2 The family reunion process

A road map of the family reunion process is included below, which will hopefully clarify 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



## Evidence gathering

> Understand what evidence documents you need.



> If you are uploading the evidence electronically, ask your family to scan the relevant documents.

Do your family need to apply for passport?

Do you need to write a statement or letter?

Do you need documents translated into English?

Do you need DNA testing?

## Form filling



> Complete Appendix 4 form for every family member.

> Complete online application form for every family member ([www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk))

> From the application, follow a link to corporate partner website to book appointment for your family to attend the VAC/embassy.

> Your family need to provide details of their address, their parents details, their travel history and passports.

Check carefully that all names and D.O.B on the application forms match your family's details on their passport or ID

## Uploading evidence



- > Scan all paper documents and arrange the evidence you have, as well as copies of the completed online application and Appendix 4 forms and your cover letter, into clearly ordered PDF files.
- > Follow a link from the VAC's appointment booking website to eDossier portal.
- > Upload all documents through the eDossier portal before the appointment.
- > If you have booked an assisted scanning appointment, send copies of all the documents to your family by courier or email. If uploading documents by yourself, this is not necessary.
- > Register for Immigration Health Surcharge.

## Preparing for the embassy appointment

- > Family may need to attend a TB test appointment and get a TB test certificate which they scan and send to you to upload with evidence.
- > If you have chosen an assisted scanning appointment, family prepare all evidence and other documents for scanning.
- > Family may need to travel to access the embassy.

## Attending the embassy appointment



- > Your family will need to provide their biometrics and may be interviewed at this point.

If you have booked an assisted scanning appointment, the bundle will be scanned.

Ensure your family know that the person receiving their application is not the person making the decision on their visa



**You have now submitted your Family reunion applications. A decision can take up to three months.**

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

### The sponsor (person in the UK)

The sponsor may apply under family reunion rules under the following conditions:

- > They have been recognised in the UK as a refugee, and do not yet have British citizenship.
- > They have been granted five years' humanitarian protection, and do not yet have British citizenship.
- > They have come to the UK through the UNHCR's resettlement programs (for example: the Gateway Protection Programme, Mandate Refugee Programme or Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme).

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 normally 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 have arrived in the UK and you otherwise meet the criteria for family reunion, you may be able to make an in-country application.

### 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:

- > A spouse (wife or husband), A civil partner or an unmarried / same sex partner, providing that you and your partner had been together for two years or more before you fled your own country to seek asylum.

- > A 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.
- > 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.
- > A child who had been conceived but was born after you left to seek asylum.
- > Step-children who are under the age of 18 and who were part of your family unit before you fled to seek asylum in the UK. This only applies if the child's biological mother / father is dead.

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. Rule 297 or 319X or under Appendix FM).

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 paragraph 352A of the Immigration Rules. 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
- You have met each other
- the evidence produced establishes that the relationship between you and your partner genuine
- each of the parties intends to live together permanently with the other and that the relationship is subsisting

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

- You have met each other
- You have been living together in a relationship akin 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 subsisting

## 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.

## 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 paragraphs 352D of the Immigration Rules. You must show that:

- You, the sponsor, are 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 such an application has been lodged, but before it has been decided, the caseworker must consider the applicant's eligibility under paragraph 352D of the Immigration Rules 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

Step parents are unable to sponsor step-children under the rules unless the child's biological parent has died and you were married to the other biological parent of that child. Eg. You are the step-mother of a child and are married to the child's father, and the biological mother has passed away. In these circumstances, provided you can show a death certificate, you would qualify as a "parent" under the rules.

## 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. It is more or less impossible for de facto adopted children to meet the requirements of the immigration rules as they must have lived with their sponsor for a length of time immediately preceding the application for entry clearance – usually this is impossible in refugee circumstances. With sufficient evidence it may be possible to succeed in making an application outside the rules.

## Applications outside the rules – Exceptional and compassionate factors

Occasionally, it is possible that applicants who are not pre-existing family members, or who do not fall into the 'eligible' applicant's category, 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 ECHR Article 8 right to respect for their private and family life.

The Home Office guidance on family reunion states that; *"Where an application does not meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules, caseworkers must consider the family exceptional circumstances guidance or whether there are any compassionate factors which may warrant a grant of leave outside the rules."*

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."*

An example (given in the Home Office guidance) of circumstances which may be considered exceptional and compassionate could be where an applicant who cannot qualify to join parents under the rules because they are over 18 but all the following apply:

- their immediate family, including siblings under 18 qualify for family reunion and intend to travel, or have already travelled, to the UK
- they would be left alone in a conflict zone or dangerous situation
- they are dependent on immediate family in the country of origin and are not leading an independent life and there are no other relatives to turn to and would therefore have no means of support and would likely become destitute on their own



## 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 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 papers 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 itemised telephone 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.

If you are not sending original documents (for example, your biometric residence permit or ID card) these copies should be **certified** if possible. Certification means that someone will say that the photocopied document you are providing is a true copy of the original. For information on how to get a document certified in the UK see [www.gov.uk/certifying-a-document](http://www.gov.uk/certifying-a-document)

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 refugee status (or humanitarian protection/ILR following refugee status)

- > Refugee status / humanitarian protection status document / Gateway protection status documents or biometric residence permit. If you have Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), proof of your previous refugee status and current status.
- > 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 an **EU Uniform Format Form** (known as a **UFF**), 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 really 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 partners 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** and that you have lived together with your partner. 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. (Videos can be sent and have been known to be accepted on a CD-ROM but this could vary between VACs.)
- > **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.

**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, Skype, 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 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 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.
- > 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.

**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 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		
	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, and witness statements from people who attended the wedding.

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, and that we lived together

Both you and your partner will need to write statements discussing your relationship and for how long you have lived 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 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.

DNA tests can be conducted under the government scheme or on a private basis. The government scheme (see Entry Clearance Guidance SET 7.11) means that the government/embassy will occasionally offer to test free of charge, but only for first-time family reunion applications as a last resort when every other means of verifying the relationship has been exhausted, and where 'related as claimed' would be the sole reason for refusal.

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 embassy, in your covering letter, to accept the family reunion application and issue the visa using a one-way travel document called a Uniform Format Form (UFF).

## 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 cover letter or 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 arranging this application?

Family reunion applications are not time-limited in themselves, provided you meet the eligibility criteria. If you have had refugee status / humanitarian protection for a few years before starting to submit 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](http://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](http://whatsapp.com) > FAQ > Android > Chats > How to save your chat history?

[faq.whatsapp.com/android/chats/how-to-save-your-chat-history](http://faq.whatsapp.com/android/chats/how-to-save-your-chat-history)

### Skype

Log in to a computer and click View > Recent history. You should then be able to select your family members' contact history and scroll through their messages over the past few months. You can print these by taking a screen print (press Control and Print Screen on your keyboard) and pasting the print screen image into a word document. If you only use Skype on your phone, you may need to take screenshots of the relevant Skype messages then email the saved pictures so you can either print them, or save them on a CD-ROM or USB stick.

### 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.

### 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 screen shots 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 send off for them. 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](http://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](http://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](http://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, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](http://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](http://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:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/requests-for-personal-data-uk-visas-and-immigration](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/requests-for-personal-data-uk-visas-and-immigration)

You complete the relevant form (if you are requesting your own documents, complete form A) giving details of what information and / or documents you require. Post the form to the

given address, along with a cheque or postal order for £10 and a photocopy of your ID.

## **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 material 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 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 refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK. The Home office acknowledge that your family may not always know the full details of the sponsor's 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.

**Make sure you can provide original documents to the Entry Clearance Officer wherever possible.** If you cannot provide originals (for example: your UK biometric residence permit) try to enclose a certified photocopy – you can ask a solicitor to stamp and sign the photocopy. If you cannot get the photocopy of the document certified, always provide a written explanation of why the original is not available.

### Sample cover letter

YOUR NAME AND  
ADDRESS

Entry Clearance Officer  
[EMBASSY ADDRESS]

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 part 11 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) Completed VAF4A online application form for applicant [insert name]
- 2) Completed Appendix 4 form for applicant [insert name]
- 3) Copy of the sponsor's, [insert name]'s biometric residence permit / status document
- 4) Witness statement of the sponsor [insert name]
- 5) 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.

**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. 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 need to send the original statement as part of your bundle of evidence. 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, Lycamobile, 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.

**Please note:** The guide has been updated in 2020 to reflect changes made by the Home Office to the family reunion visa application process. Changes have been made to sections 5.2, 6 and 7 of this guide. These changes concern the move to a new online application portal ([www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk)) and changes to the appointments at visa application centres are booked. Also, the way evidence is submitted has changed, all evidence now being uploaded electronically instead of submitting original documents in paper form.

At the time of this updated version being published, a few countries are still using the old online application portal and the old system of submitting evidence. Therefore, the previous version of this guide, from June 2017, will continue to co-exist with this version. Which version of this guide you should use depends on in which country the family members applying for visas will attend the visa application centre to provide their biometrics, not on their nationality. The countries using the old application system are detailed on the front page of the old application portal ([www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk](http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk)).

### 5.1 Applications: before you begin

**There is no British embassy 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 that your family can attend for an appointment. (For example: at the moment, nationals of Iran can go to the United Arab Emirates or Turkey.)

You can find out where to go by looking at [www.gov.uk/find-a-VISA-application-centre](http://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 particular embassy to have the visa fixed into their passport.

**WARNING! Embassy staff may decide to check on how your family have come into a third country, so their travel arrangements to the third country need to be thought through and planned if possible.**

**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:

- > 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 send your documents through a courier service. Postage can be expensive, and prices vary depending on how many documents you are sending and the country they are being posted to. Aim to save at least £50 for postage: you should start saving for these costs from the moment you begin your application, to avoid last minute stress and delays. If your family can scan evidence and email it to, and you can upload the evidence electronically, there is no need to post documents.

\*\*While the application itself is free, some Visa Application Centres (VACs) charge you for using their services.

## 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](http://www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa).

You can also refer to Appendix T of the Immigration Rules for more information: [www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-t-tuberculosis-screening](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-t-tuberculosis-screening)

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. The test certificate is only valid for six months, so you need to think about the timing 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 forms. Both an **online form** and a **paper (appendix 4) 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](http://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)

### 2. VAF4A Appendix 4

This must be printed and completed on paper, and can be found here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-uk-visa-family-joining-refugee-form-appendix-4-vaf4a](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-uk-visa-family-joining-refugee-form-appendix-4-vaf4a).

## 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 **Access UK** website. You will need an email address to do this. (Visit [www.gov.uk/apply-to-come-to-the-uk](http://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.
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

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. It is also worth noting that some Visa Application Centres charge a fee for their use. You may check which VACs are free to use in [pos.tlscontact.com/tls-service-options#mup-ftu](https://pos.tlscontact.com/tls-service-options#mup-ftu). “FTU” in the last column means the centre is free to use, whereas “MUP” means the centre is “user pays”.

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	These are the two visa types covered by this guide.	Visa application fee (GBP)	
Partner of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection ( <b>family reunion</b> )		Free of charge	<a href="#">Apply now</a>
▶ <a href="#">Find out if you are eligible to apply</a>			
Child of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection ( <b>family reunion</b> )		Free of charge	<a href="#">Apply now</a>
▶ <a href="#">Find out if you are eligible to apply</a>			
Other family member of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection		£388	<a href="#">Apply now</a>
▶ <a href="#">Find out if you are eligible to apply</a>			
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	<a href="#">Apply now</a>
▶ <a href="#">Find out if you are eligible to apply</a>			

Below is shown the application for a partner. An application for a child has the same structure but includes fewer 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:

## 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 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]@[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.

 **Visas and Immigration** Application menu

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

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## 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 your family member does not have a passport, you will still need to choose “**yes**”, as otherwise you will not be able to in a later stage to move to the visa application centre’s appointment booking system. You can put in for example “000000000” for the passport number and 01/01/1900 and 01/01/2100 for the issue and expiry dates.

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 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.

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## 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. 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.

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.

Next, you will be asked to download the relevant appendix that needs to be filled in and signed by the applicant and taken with them to the appointment at the embassy. The correct appendix for you to download is **Appendix 4**. You will find this by scrolling down to “Partner or child of someone in the UK with refugee leave or with humanitarian protection (family reunion)”. Check the box to confirm you have downloaded the form.

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

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## 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	<a href="#">Change</a>
Do you have an email address?	No	<a href="#">Change</a>
Provide your telephone number	+44 7654321098	<a href="#">Change</a>
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

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### 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 m

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.

After continuing, you will move to the section called "**Pay**". In this section, you will first be asked to choose the location where your family member will collect their **Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)** card. Choose "collect from a UK Post Office" to put in your post code and see what the Post Office is where your family member's BRP card will be sent. Usually the post office is one which is close to your address in the UK but it is not necessarily your local post office.

## 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.

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## 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](#)

The screenshot shows three green buttons: "Go to IHS website", "Save and continue", and "Return to this application later". A red box highlights the "Return to this application later" button, with a red arrow pointing to it from a text box that says "Click here to pause and receive a link to continue later". Below the buttons is a blue link: "Show and edit answers".

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 –under part 11 Asylum, Immigration rules”. 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.

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

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.

## Booking your embassy appointment and uploading evidence

To move to the TLS website to book your family member’s appointment at the embassy, click the green button “**provide documents and biometrics**”. When you continue, you will be moved to TLScontact website. Please note that this website does not work properly in Internet Explorer, so you may need to copy the address line and continue in another browser, such as Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox. TLScontact is a commercial partner of UK Visas and Immigration that operate the front desk services at the visa application centre.

Some countries use a service provider called VFS global instead. Their website looks somewhat different, but the main functions are the same. As the countries where most people make refugee family reunion visa applications use TLScontact, we are only showing their website step by step in this guide.

The TLScontact website looks like this:

**TLScontact**  
A Teleperformance Company

Welcome to TLScontact's website for UK Visa Applications in Ethiopia.

**1. Please confirm your identity:**

Application reference	GWF055651676
Full name	John Applicant Example
Date of Birth	1991-00-04
Passport	000000000

*If you need to change any of your information, you must submit a new application on [GOV.UK](#).*

**2. Please choose the Visa Application Centre where you would like to submit your supporting documents and biometrics:**

*Please note that this selection is final. You will not be able to change the location of your appointment. If you have already purchased a priority visa service, please verify [here](#) that this service is available at the location which you wish to submit your application.*

Addis Ababa

By continuing to use this site you are agreeing to our website: Terms of Website Use, Terms and Conditions of Sale, eDossier Solo End-User License Agreement, Privacy Notice, and the use of Cookies.

**CONTINUE**

Check that the details on the left correspond to the applicant's details, and that the location selected on the right is where your family member is going to attend to provide their biometrics. Tick the box to agree to the terms and conditions, then continue.

You will be presented with a wide variety of options, some of them very expensive. However, your family will not need to pay for the appointment.

Choose "Free Assisted Scanning Appointment" if you are unable to upload the scanned documents and will post the bundle for your family to take the paper versions to the embassy. However, if you have the evidence scanned and are able to upload them, click to "see more services" and choose "Appointment Self Service – Regular".

## STEP 1: TLScontact Services

None-Regulated services

If you cannot upload evidence, choose this

The screenshot displays a grid of service cards. Each card includes an icon, a title, a description, a price, an 'ADD TO BASKET' button, and an information icon. A red callout box points to the 'Free Assisted Scanning Appointment' card. Another red callout box points to the 'See more services' dropdown button at the bottom right of the grid.

Service	Price
Express Courier Return	£14.95
Free Assisted Scanning Appointment	£0.00
Upgrade to Assisted Scanning Settlement Priority	£28.75
Express Courier Return (international)	£50.00
Premium Lounge	£65.00
Prime Time Appointment	£86.25

See more services ▾

If you can upload documents, see more options here

This screenshot shows a continuation of the service grid. A red callout box points to the 'Appointment Self Service - Regular' card. To the right, a summary panel titled 'TLScontact Services' is visible, showing a total of £0.00 and a green button for 'STEP 2: UKVI SERVICES'. A 'Close' button is located at the bottom right of the summary panel.

Service	Price
Settlement Priority	£28.75
Express Courier Return (international)	£50.00
Premium Lounge	£65.00
Prime Time Appointment	£86.25
Flexi Appointment	£90.00
Form Filling Assistance	£40.00
SMS Notification	£1.20
Appointment Self Service - Regular	£0.00

Choose this if you can upload the scanned bundle

Close ▲

Once you have chosen your appointment type, click the green button in the right that says: “step 2: UKVI services”. You will be presented with an option to buy a very expensive priority service, but you **DO NOT** need to choose this. Click the green button in the right that says: “step 3: book an appointment”.

Choose your appointment time from the calendar selection:

**SELF SERVICE**

February 2020      March 2020      April 2020

Wed 18th    Thu 19th    Fri 20th    Sat 21st    Sun 22nd    Mon 23rd    Tue 24th

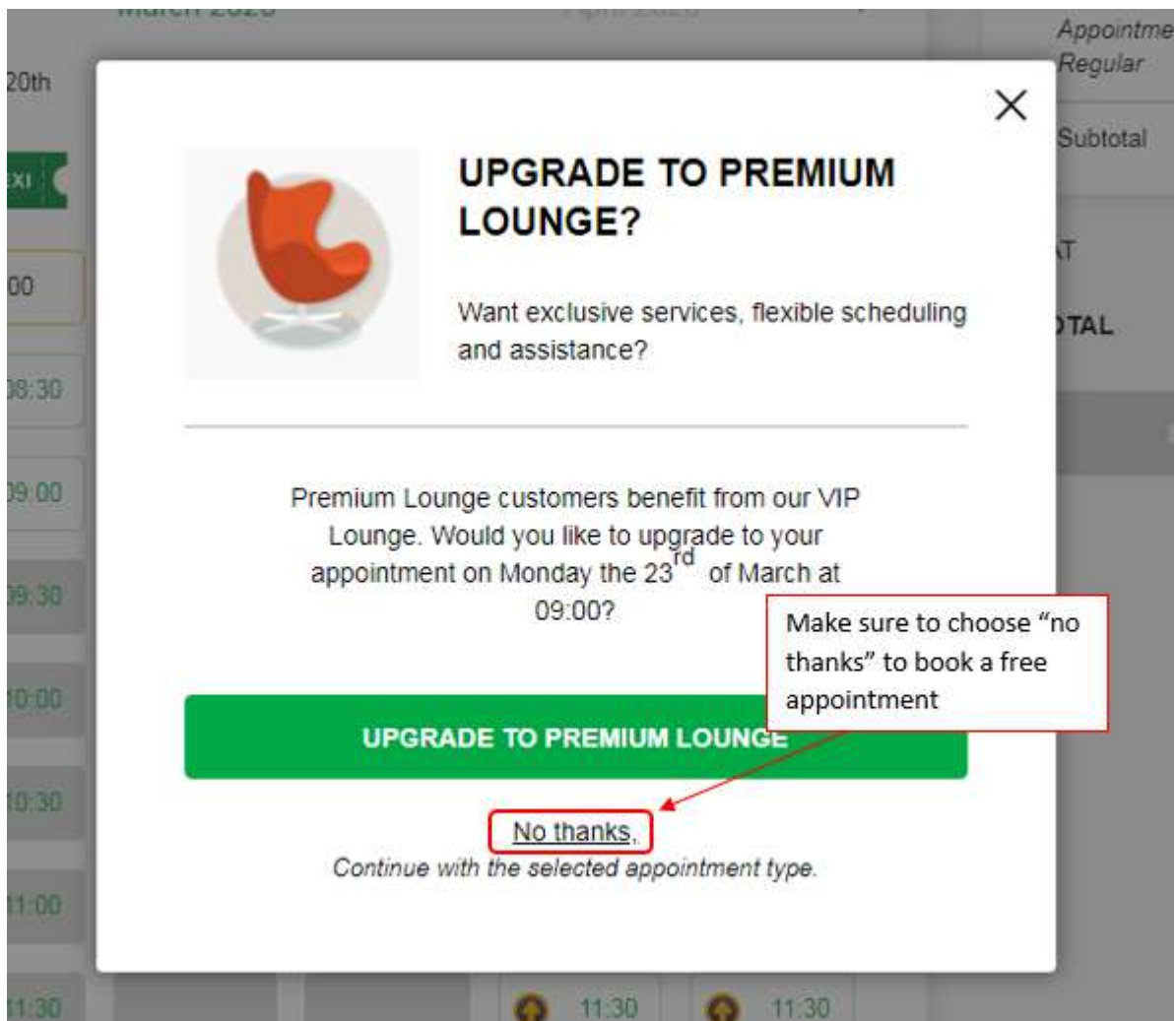
Use the arrows to see more dates.

Choose an appointment with a white background. The grey ones are for payable priority services.

08:00	08:00				08:00	08:00
08:30	08:30				08:30	08:30
09:00	09:00	09:00			09:00	09:00
09:30	09:30	09:30			09:30	09:30
10:00	10:00	10:00			10:00	10:00
10:30	10:30	10:30			10:30	10:30
11:00	11:00	11:00			11:00	11:00
11:30	11:30	11:30			11:30	11:30
13:00		13:00			13:00	13:00

If you selected an appointment time with an optional premium upgrade, you will be asked if you want to upgrade. The premium lounge is a payable service, to continue with booking a free appointment, click "no thanks":





Check that the appointment time is the one you wanted, and the total cost is £0.00, then click “proceed to checkout”. Then click “view my application”. You will see the appointment you have booked and can amend the time, as well as track your application. You can return to this page via the visa application link, by “provide documents and biometrics” in the final tasks. This page also has a link to the portal where you can upload the evidence to support the visa application. Please see section 6 of this guide for instructions.

You will need to book an appointment time for each family member who is applying for a visa. Try to book subsequent appointment times so that your family can all go at the same time. Even if you are not able to get them appointments at the same time, your family should all attend at once, and explain they are all applying together.

### Online forms 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 fill 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
6. Upload your scanned bundle and print the list of the documents

## Appendix 4 (pre-flight family reunion) application form

You should print the Appendix 4 (pre-flight family reunion) form. This form asks for details on your family relationship. **You will need to complete an Appendix 4 for every family member who is applying.**

- > If you are applying for a partner, complete parts 1, 3 and 4.
- > If a child is applying, complete part 2, 3 and 4.

When completing the Appendix 4 form, it would be helpful to have the following documents and information close to hand:

- > Marriage certificate.
- > Death or divorce certificate (from any previous relationships).
- > Passports of your family members and your own travel document.
- > Birth certificates of your children.

In 'Additional information', you can remind the Entry Clearance Officer that this is a refugee family reunion application – and provide a list of supporting evidence and documents you have included.

'Additional information' can also be used to give details not already provided in other sections, perhaps because there was not enough space to include all the information. (For example: sibling details from part 2 where there are more than four children).

**Remember:** if you run out of space on the form, you can attach additional pages. Just make sure to mention that you are doing this on the application form in part 4.

### Form completion – Summary

- 1) Complete an online VAF4A application form for each family member
- 2) Select a Post Office for family members to collect their Biometric Residence Permit from when they enter the UK
- 3) Register all family members for an NHS immigration health surcharge reference number.
- 4) Book an appointment for each family member with the VAC website (if applicable).
- 5) Complete an appendix 4 application form for each family member.

## 6. Uploading evidence



I have completed the online forms and Appendix 4 form and booked appointments for my family. What happens now?

### 6.1 Next steps

- > **Print 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.
- > **Include completed copies of the Appendix 4 form** for every family member in your evidence 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, the Appendix 4 form 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 TLS website after booking an appointment as shown in section 5.2.

## 6.3 Uploading the evidence

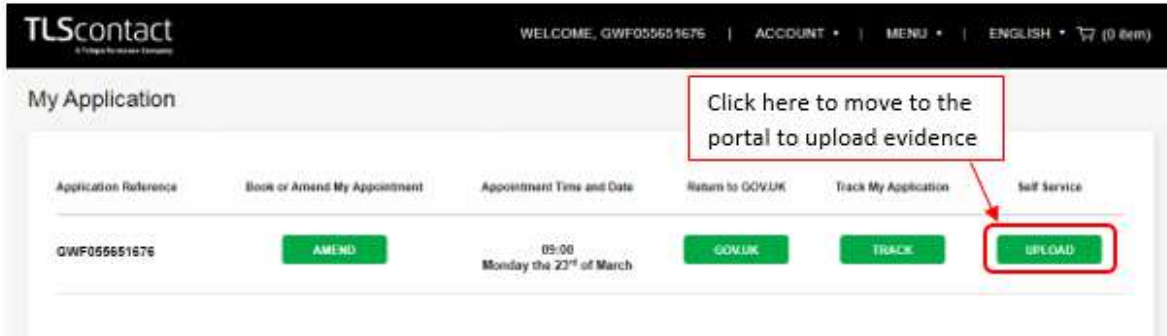
When you are ready to upload the evidence, use the link emailed to you when you submitted the visa application. Click “provide documents and biometrics” in the final tasks to get to the visa application centre’s appointment booking system.

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

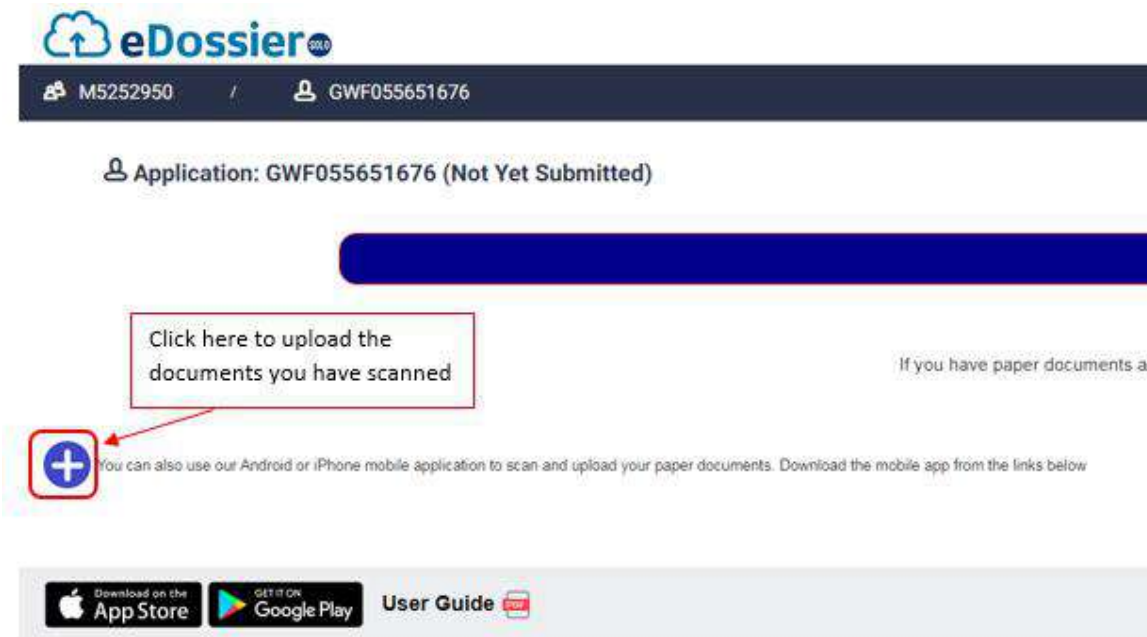
The screenshot shows the GOV.UK website interface for 'Visas and Immigration'. The breadcrumb trail is: 1. Start > 2. Application > 3. Documents > 4. Declaration > 5. Pay > 6. Further actions. The main heading is 'Further actions you must complete'. A warning icon and text state: 'Any previously booked 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.' Below this, there are two mandatory actions listed in a table-like format:

Mandatory actions	Action
<b>Download your supporting documents checklist</b> 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.	Download checklist
<b>Make arrangements to provide your documents and biometrics</b> You must make arrangements to provide your documents and biometrics (fingerprints and facial photograph) with our commercial partner.	Provide documents and biometrics

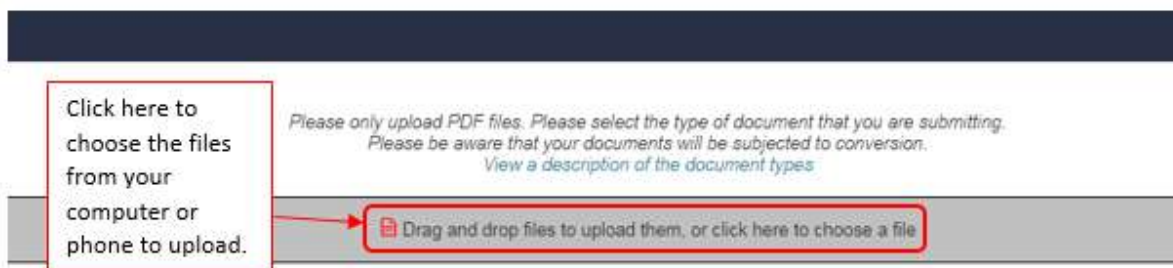
When logged in to the appointment booking system, to **upload the scanned evidence bundle**, click the green button “upload”. You will be directed to an eDossier platform, where you can attach the evidence bundle to the visa application.



Make sure you have all the evidence ready and scanned in pdf format. To upload the documents, click the blue plus sign in the left.



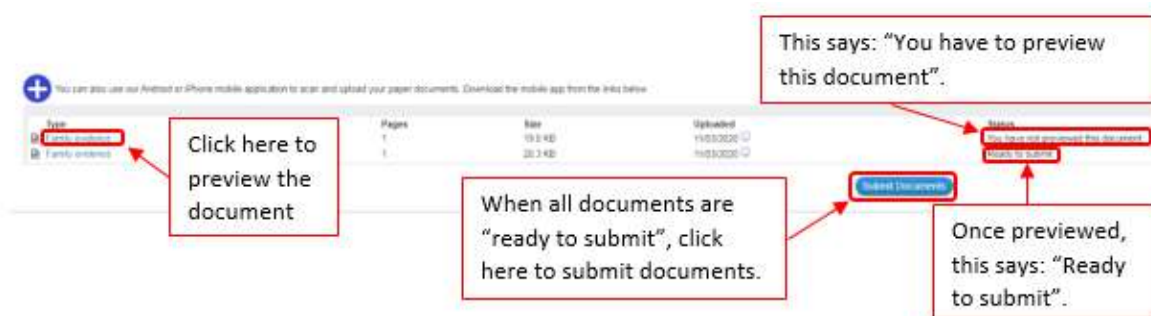
Then, click in the middle of the grey bar to choose the files you want to upload from your phone or computer.



Once you have chosen a file, you need to choose the file type, which will be “family evidence”. Click “confirm” to confirm your choice. You can upload multiple documents. Once you are sure you have uploaded all the evidence, click “done”.

You will then see a list of the documents again and will need to preview them. Do this by clicking at the line. The document will open, and you can check it has uploaded properly.

You will need to do this for every document you uploaded. You can still go back to upload more documents by clicking the blue plus sign. Once you have uploaded all documents, click “submit documents”. Do not click this until you are sure everything is included, as you will **not** be able to add more documents later.



Remember to print the list of the uploaded documents. It may be a good idea to also print it to pdf and save electronically, to make sure you have a copy of the document list. You can then send the electronic copy to your family member to print before their appointment. All documents must have been uploaded before the appointment at the visa application centre, and your family member must bring the printed list to the appointment.



You can then click “back to applicant portal” to exit the document submitting portal.

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 may be good to take a screenshot clearly showing the error message and email [SheffieldFamilyReunionEnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:SheffieldFamilyReunionEnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk) clearly explaining the problem.

## 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
  - Appointment confirmation email
  - 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 eDossier portal as shown in section 6)
- > Be prepared to be asked questions **at interview** at the Visa Application Centre.

### 7.2 What happens at the overseas mission / 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. If using the assisted scanning service, they will need to have all evidence documents (copies are fine) with them ready for scanning.

**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 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

In the event that you need to change the appointment date for your family, you can normally do this by logging into the online TLScontact or 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 green “amend” button and choose a new time for your application. Make sure to choose the right kind of an appointment (standard 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 of 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 TLScontact 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 embassy 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 before you go to collect your documents.

It is worth noting that it takes several months for decisions to be made. Decision times do vary between various embassies: however, the embassy officially has up to 90 days to make a decision. If you wish to check how long your specific embassy generally takes to make a decision, visit: [www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-decision-waiting-times-applications-outside-the-uk).

If you have not heard anything within 12 weeks / 90 days of submitting the application, you should contact the embassy.

### 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.

**Please note that some embassies are issuing visas which are valid for only 30 days.** Your family must be able to enter the UK within these 30 days. If they do not enter within the 30 day period on their visa they will have to re-apply for another visa.

Once they have entered the UK they must collect their Biometric Residence Permit from the Post Office you selected when you completed the online application form. This information should also be on the letter they receive when they attend the embassy to collect their visa. The Biometric Residence Permit should give them leave to remain in the UK in line with your own status as a refugee. It is important to check the Biometric Residence Permit and ensure all details are correct. If not please notify UKVI immediately.

#### 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 families to enter the UK
- earn less than £240 a week, before tax and rent, or get means-tested benefits.

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](mailto:Familyreunion@redcross.org.uk)

Tel: 020 7877 7292 or 0207 877 5029

## 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](http://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.)

An appeal form – **an IAFT 6** - will be attached to the refusal notice and needs to be completed within 28 days of your family members receiving the refusal notice. The form can be found here: [www.gov.uk/immigration-asylum-tribunal/appeal-from-outside-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/immigration-asylum-tribunal/appeal-from-outside-the-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.**

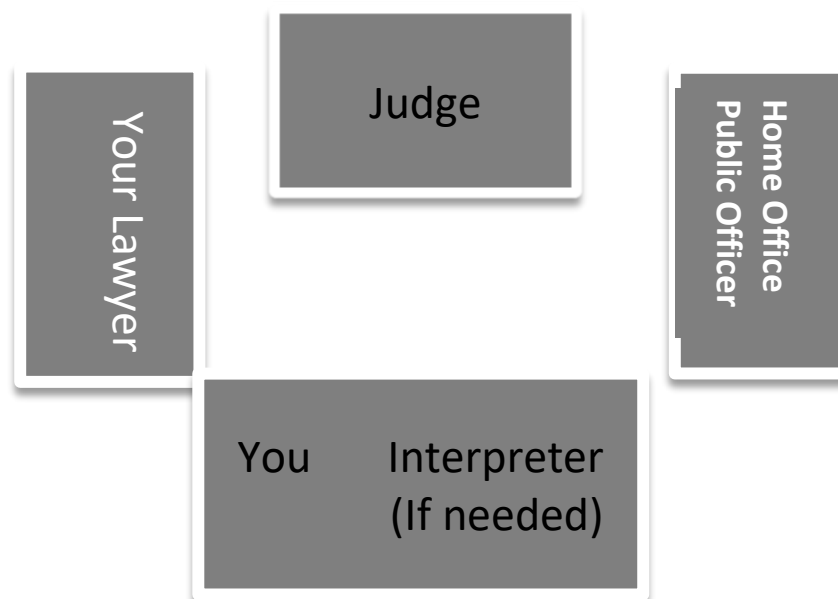
When you lodge your appeal, you need **to tell the court if you want an interpreter**. Be clear about the language and dialect you speak, and whether you would prefer a male or female interpreter.

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](http://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](mailto: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.

### Reconsideration

When an application has been refused, you or an advisor may also seek a **review or reconsideration** of that decision. To do this, contact the embassy or High Commission directly and in writing. New evidence that responds to the points in the refusal notice can be sent with the request. Once the review request has been received, the case will be passed to the **Entry Clearance Manager (ECM)** who will review the case and the decision of the Entry Clearance Officer. They will decide whether the original decision should remain or be over-turned, or if further information or evidence is needed.

### 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 must print and complete for every family member who is applying to join you in the UK. It asks for details regarding your family relationships.

**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.

**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 IAFT-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 IAFT-2 form is also provided.

**Part 11 asylum Immigration Rules** – Where the rules relating to family reunion can be found.

**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.

**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.

**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.

