

Your Questions Answered:

Applying for British Citizenship

Some migrants who have lived in Northern Ireland are keen to apply for British citizenship. This leaflet answers some questions you might have and gives you some things to think about before applying.

This document was produced in December 2018. For up-to-date advice tailored to your circumstances about any aspect of this FAQ please call (028) 9024 4401 and ask to speak with an immigration adviser.

How do I qualify for British citizenship?

To qualify you must meet the following requirements:

- Residence requirement
- English language requirement
- Knowledge of life in the UK requirement
- 'Good character' requirement

You must also pay the application fee.

What is the residence requirement?

To meet the residence requirement you must have held:

- Indefinite leave to remain for at least 12 months (for non-European nationals)
- A permanent residence card for at least 12 months (for European nationals)

In addition, you must not have spent more than 450 days outside the UK during the last five years, or more than 90 days in the last 12 months.

What is the English language requirement?

Applicants aged 18 years+ might be required to prove their knowledge of the English language (or Welsh or Scots Gaelic). You must have an English language qualification of at least B1. Depending on your nationality, and your previous education, you might not need to complete a language test. Check in advance.

The English language requirement is strict and you must make sure your qualification is from an approved test centre.

What is the knowledge of life in the UK requirement?

Most applicants aged 18 years+ are required to prove their knowledge of life in the UK. There are restrictions on which test centres you can sit your test at.

What is the 'good character' requirement?

You must declare any criminal record when applying for British citizenship. You must also declare any fixed penalties (eg. speeding / parking tickets) as well as any cautions, bankruptcy, or community sentences etc.

Whether a criminal record will impact on your application for British citizenship depends on the date of the offence and its severity. Seek specialist immigration advice before you apply.

How much does British citizenship cost?

British citizenship is extremely expensive and can amount to almost £2,000 per person. Costs increase each year. Note that refugees are also required to pay the application fee.

	Cost (as of Dec 2018)
British citizenship application fee	£1,330 (adults: £1,012 (children))
Life in the UK test	£50
Life in the UK handbook	£13
English language test	£150
Citizenship ceremony	£80
Registering biometric information	£19.20
British passport application (online)	£75.50 (adult) £49 (child)
TOTAL	£117.70

What else do I need to know before applying?

- If your British citizenship application is not successful, you risk losing the full application fee. It is therefore advisable to obtain specialist immigration advice to ensure you meet all the requirements.
- Detailed information about British citizenship, including the 'good character' requirement is found on the Home Office website. This information is regularly updated. Be wary about using other sources of information as it might be old or inaccurate.
- Some countries do not allow their citizens to hold more than one nationality. Applying for British citizenship could result in you losing your entitlement to your current nationality. This could have serious implication eg. on your right to return to your country of origin or access services there etc.
- Refugees lose their refugee status when naturalising as a British citizen.
- European nationals used to be able to apply for British citizenship directly. However, it is now necessary to hold an EEA permanent residence card for at least 12 months.
- After the UK exits the European Union, British citizenship no longer provides citizenship of the EU. Depending on your future plans, you may wish to consider if

you are eligible to naturalise in a different EU country through birth, marriage or residence eg. in the Republic of Ireland.

- Given the expense of applying for British citizenship, you may wish to consider whether you actually need it. Depending on your reasons for applying, you might find that settlement (ie. indefinite leave to remain or permanent residence) is sufficient.
- Finally, remember that Brexit means that all European nationals and their family members will be required to apply under the EU Settlement Scheme. This requirement applies even if you intend to apply for British citizenship.

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Our advice line:

Monday to Friday: (028) 9024 4401

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