

GUIDE FOR NON-UK NATIONALS AND UNIT SUPPORT

PART 1

INFORMATION FOR INDIVIDUALS FROM OVERSEAS CONSIDERING A CAREER IN THE BRITISH ARMY



ARMY
BE THE BEST

From the start of their service, Regular non-uk SP should be encouraged by the Chain of Command to start saving money for the initial travel, payment and upkeep of visas for their family and the future substantial costs for applications to naturalise or settlement on discharge.



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Introduction

We are delighted that you are considering a career in the British Army. There is a long and proud history of people who have come to the UK from overseas and had a significant and fulfilling career.

The aim of this Guide is to inform you of the steps you (and your family) will need to take in order to meet the immigration requirements of the UK during the selection process, as a soldier and once you leave the Army at the end of your career. It is important to understand how immigration and visa requirements affect you as breaches are illegal and could jeopardise your Army career before it begins or impact on you being able to remain in the UK once you leave.

During the joining process you will be asked to confirm that you have read and understood the contents of this document. We strongly recommend that you also read the information on the British Army website which outlines the standards required to be accepted into the British Army.

Travelling to the UK for selection tests can cost a lot of money. You should be sure that you are committed to joining the British Army, and that you have done all you can to prepare for the selection process, before you travel to the UK.

The Selection Process and Visa Requirements

Selection and Visa Requirements.

The British Army website provides a guide to the basic entry requirements, [what the Army offers those joining, the roles that are open](#), and the selection process for both an [Officer](#) and a [Soldier](#). Unless you are applying to join the Brigade of Gurkhas as a soldier, you can only complete the selection process in the UK. Before you make a potentially life-changing decision to join the British Army, you must consider the following:

- a. You need to understand the requirements and restrictions laid down by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) that will apply to you until you join. If you require a visa, you should apply for a standard [visitor visa](#). You can usually stay in the UK for up to 6 months, and this will need to cover you for the entirety of the selection process and until you start training. You will need to meet all of the requirements to obtain the visit visa, including notifying where you will be staying while in UK and that you have sufficient funds to support yourself for this period. The visa application and costs are your responsibility, and the Army is not able to influence the process, cost or length, and cannot obtain an extension. Advice on obtaining a visitor visa can be found [here](#).
- b. Although you will have a letter inviting you to attend an assessment centre, which you should attach to your visa application, this will not guarantee the application will be successful. You will still need to convince the Entry Clearance Officer that you meet all of the requirements including the requirement of your intention to return home if you do not pass assessment. When booking your initial flight to come to the UK, you are required to book a return passage. If you overstay, the British Army will not be responsible, and this could affect your application to join.
- c. If your visa application is successful your visa should cover you until you start Basic Training at which point you will be given an exemption stamp in your passport. If you are from a non-visa national country then you will be given an Entry Stamp that will enable you to remain in the UK for six months.
- d. If you are close to your visa expiry date and have not started Basic Training, you may be required to return to your country of origin at your own expense, re-apply for a new visitor visa and re-enter the UK to continue your application.

- e. You will need to meet all accommodation and living costs prior to your start date for Basic Training. Prior to your intended travel to the UK you are required to find a UK host and UK address, which should match your visa application to UKVI. If at any point your host or UK address changes you are required to notify both the Candidate Support Manager ((CSM) - the officer in Army Recruiting handling your recruitment application - and UKVI..
- f. You will also need to meet any medical costs prior to your start date for Basic Training. You are strongly advised to take out insurance to cover any medical or other issues that may arise.
- b. You need to choose a host where you can feel safe. Don't be afraid to change host, but you do need to inform both the officer handling your application and UKVI.
- c. Hosts may offer to assist financially but you need to be happy that you can financially support yourself throughout the recruitment process.
- d. Host contact details must be provided so that your CSM can contact them in the event of any problems.
- e. For candidates who stay with family/friends who are already serving in the Armed Forces and living in Service Family Accommodation (SFA), the visit is to be no more than 28 days (aggregated or continuous) in any 93-day period unless the host has obtained the requisite permission. If this is the case, you should check with your host that permission has been granted before travelling to the UK.
- f. It is important to keep your host informed should your visit visa be close to expiry; they are encouraged to send a candidate home if the date for commencing initial training is after the visa expires.

Candidate awareness when selecting UK hosts.

If you intend to stay with family or friends, they may be required to provide evidence that they are permitted to accommodate visitors and that they are financially stable before your visitor visa is approved.

- a. Hosts may or may not permit you to use their residential address in the UK, therefore you should think carefully about who you choose as you will be required to provide a UK residential address for the duration of the recruitment process.

If you are already in UK.

You may already be in the UK on a student or work visa. If this is the case, you should note that the recruitment process might take you beyond the expiry of your visa. You should ensure that your CSM is fully aware of the expiry date of your visa, and if you have any concerns about the length of the recruitment process affecting your visa status you should speak with your CSM.

If you are successful with Army Selection and start Basic Training, your passport will be sent to the Home Office and you will become exempt from UK immigration control. If you discharge from the Army you will no longer be exempt from control and you may resume any previous leave unless it has expired or you no longer meet the requirements of that leave. This will normally be the case so you will need to make an application on discharge to remain in the UK.



Immigration and Citizenship as a Serving Soldier

Immigration Status of Service Personnel (SP).

If you are accepted for service in the Regular British Army as a Commonwealth citizen, or as a Nepali citizen in the Brigade of Gurkhas, you will be exempt UK immigration control under Section 8(4) (a) of the Immigration Act 1971 during your service. A vignette would be placed in your passport to show this. ***This exemption ceases on discharge and you must then regularise your immigration status if you wish to remain in the UK,*** or leave and return to your country of origin.

Overseas Postings.

As a soldier, you are likely to be posted to different countries around the world. Normally, your nationality would not be an issue, and you would be able to travel with your unit on your passport. Where there are special requirements, your unit will inform you.

Passport.

You are required to ensure that your passport is in date, for both Service and private reasons, as UK nationals are also required to do. You may wish to check whether you are able to renew your passport in the UK, otherwise you will need to travel to your country of origin at your own expense. If you choose to travel to countries outside the UK other than

with the Army you will need to ensure that you comply with that country's requirements as a private citizen. The Government websites of both your own country and that of the country you intend to visit should have this information, which you should check in advance of travelling.

British Citizenship.

British Citizenship is not required for service reasons. If you choose to apply for citizenship, it would be at your own expense. A serving Commonwealth SP can apply to become a British citizen by naturalisation providing they meet the main requirements - you can find out more from the AFF [website](#). A Nepalese national cannot be granted British citizenship while serving in the Brigade of Gurkhas, but can apply for settlement on discharge with four years' service and then apply for citizenship after holding settled status for at least one year.

Family joining you While Serving

If you intend to bring your spouse/partner and children to the UK once you join the British Army, you need to be aware of immigration rules and how they will affect you and your family. Some brief information is below. Further detail on the requirements for family members are given in UKVI [instructions](#), and you can find a simplified guide on the Army Families Federation (AFF) [website](#). You can also contact AFF to discuss issues relating to families.

Entering the UK

- 5 Year Armed Forces Visa.

All entitled family members should apply for a visa under the [Armed Forces rules](#) prior to entering the UK. If the main requirements are met they will be granted a visa for 5 years. Some of the main requirements are listed below; for full information on all of the requirements, the supporting documents and the visa application process please refer to the AFF [website](#). You should be aware that this type of limited leave does not entitle successful applicants to any public funds during the length of the visa. You will be able to work, study and be treated on the NHS.

Visit Visa.

If entry to the UK is on a standard visitor or marriage visitor visa the holder will not be able to extend or switch visas while in the UK. The holder of these types of

visas will not be entitled to be treated as a Service family. They should return to their country of origin, register via <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/uk-visit-visa> and re-apply for the correct UK limited leave entry visa under the [Immigration Rules Appendix Armed Forces](#). If you are unsure how to do this, contact AFF.

Minimum Income Requirement (MIR).

If you intend to bring your spouse/partner and any children to the UK you must meet the minimum income requirement and English language requirements, as set by the UK Home Office. The current minimum income requirements to bring in entitled family members are:

Partner (no children)	£18,600
Partner + 1 child	£22,400
Partner + 2 children	£24,800
Partner + 3 children	£27,200

Once you have completed initial training you will be earning enough to bring your spouse or partner to the UK (subject to them meeting the qualification criteria). If you have children please be aware that it will take you several more years' service before you earn enough to bring them to the UK as well. A rough guide to what you can earn can be found on the Army [website](#), but typically a soldier would need to serve from 5-6 years to earn £27,200.



If you have savings or some other forms of financial holding (such as property or cash savings) this could count towards the MIR. If you wish to know more, you can contact [AFF](#).

English Language Requirement.

In order to enter the UK, family members aged 18 or over would need to have an acceptable standard of English so that they can be part of daily life. Proof of this can be obtained in one of three ways:

- Passing an approved English language test with at least level A1 in speaking and listening;
- Having an academic qualification that was taught in English and is recognised by UK NARIC as being equivalent to a UK bachelor's degree;
- Being a national of a country where English is the main language.

Visa and Immigration Costs for Family Members.

It would be your responsibility to meet the entry visa application costs for your family members and any future application for naturalisation (citizenship) or settlement.

The Home Office publishes the [costs](#), which can be considerable. As an example, for 2020/21 these are:

- Visa to enter per person £1,523
- Indefinite Leave to Remain after 5 years £2,389 per applicant
- Citizenship £1,303

Family Joining You Overseas from Country of Origin.

If you are serving overseas at the time your family first come to join you they will need to come to the UK first on the correct UK limited leave to enter visa in order to be able have the correct immigration status as a Service family. The only exception to this is families of Gurkha soldiers serving in Brunei, who can travel directly from Nepal.

Service Family Accommodation (SFA).

SFA is the title given to housing for families of Service Personnel. To be entitled to SFA, you need to be married or in a civil partnership. For you and your family to be able to occupy SFA, they must enter the UK on the correct Armed Forces visa. Families entering the UK on a visit visa will not be able to occupy SFA, and you will be unable to claim other allowances connected with having a family with you.

Single Parents.

If you are a single parent, please be aware that you will have to spend time away on training/exercises and operations. You will have to make arrangements for your child(ren) to be looked after while you are in Basic Training.

On completion of training and posting to a Regular unit, you will be encouraged to provide a care plan to inform the Army of what arrangements you have made for someone to provide care for your child(ren) if you are sent away.



You and Your Family settling in the UK, and Naturalising as British Citizens

Settlement for SP.

You will be unable to apply for settlement - Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK or Indefinite Leave to Enter (ILE) the UK - while you are serving. For settlement after service see the next chapter.

Settlement for Entitled Family Members.

After 5 years limited leave your family members will be entitled to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. This is not linked to your service so they can stay on the Appendix Armed Forces route to settlement even if you have discharged from the Army. See [Immigration Rules Appendix Armed Forces](#).

Naturalisation as a British Citizen SP.

You are able to apply for citizenship without the need to apply for settle once all requirements are met, such as having five years' service in the Army. Unlike settlement, you can apply for Citizenship while serving, providing you meet the criteria, and without requiring ILR.

Naturalisation for Family Members.

Family members in the UK are required to have settlement for at least one year before they can apply for Citizenship, regardless of the nationality of the soldier. Spouses must also ensure they were physically in the UK on the first day of the residential qualifying period.

Different rules apply to spouses on overseas assignments. Also, different immigration rules apply to children. Please refer to the Gov.UK [advice](#) and the [AFF Website](#) before making an application.

Application Fees. [Immigration and](#)

[naturalisation fees](#) normally change annually in April. Care must be taken when submitting any application because if the application fails you will lose the fee, which can be substantial. If family members have any doubts about their application they should to contact [AFF](#) who have OISC-accredited immigration specialists.

Family Members' Employment.

Family members entering the UK on a limited leave visa are eligible to seek employment in the UK. They will then be liable to pay UK Income Tax and National Insurance in the same way as British citizens.

Access to UK State Benefits.

Where eligible, a serving soldier's UK immigration status normally enables them to claim some state benefits such as Child Benefit and Tax Credits.

No Access to UK State Benefits.

Family members who have limited leave visas with an endorsement stating 'no recourse to public funds' (e.g. spousal visas) are not eligible to claim state benefits or allowances.

Immigration Requirements after your Army Career

Settlement of SP in UK on Completion of Service. Non-UK SP cannot apply for settlement in the UK whilst serving. If you wish to settle in the UK once you have left the Army you can apply if you have at least four years' service or if you have been medically discharged as a result of your service. The will be at your own cost, and applications should be submitted up to 10 weeks prior to discharge to enable a faster decision. The UK Home Office considers whether an application for settlement can be granted.

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR).

SP can only apply for ILR on discharge after four years of service or if medically discharged, and it can only be granted to those discharged who are already in the UK on the date of application.

Indefinite Leave to Enter (ILE).

SP can only apply for ILE on discharge after four years of service, applicants must meet the relevant settlement rules. ILE can be granted to those living outside the UK on the date of application, which may be up to two years following discharge.

Further Leave to Remain (FLR).

Non-UK SP may be able to apply for FLR if they are medically discharged with less than four years' service, or if they discharge with a criminal conviction.

Those that naturalised in service do not need to complete or pay for any further applications on discharge.

Returning to Country of Origin on completion of Service.

Should you choose not to settle in UK following your Army career, you will have 28 days from discharge to return to your country of origin or another country. You will need to be prepared to pay the cost of your passage, together with the costs of transporting any possessions that you wish to take.

Annexes and Appendices

- A. Useful Sources of Advice.
- B. List of Abbreviations.



Useful Sources of Advice

Government Support.

Gov.UK is the website for all elements of national government. Some specific pages of interest are below:

Immigration Rules Appendix Armed Forces - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-armed-forces>

Citizenship application forms - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/citizenship-application-forms>

UK Visa and Immigration application forms - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-visa-forms#forms-for-a-visa-to-come-to-the-uk>

Visa Fees - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visa-regulations-revised-table>

Support Services for military and defence personnel and families - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/defence-armed-forces/support-services-military-defence-personnel-families>

British Army website

- <https://www.army.mod.uk/>

Home Office (HO).

The HO is the UK Government Ministry with overall responsibility for Immigration and Nationality matters. [UK Visas and Immigration \(UKVI\)](#) deals with Armed Forces applications, UKVI will not deal with general immigration enquiries.

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC).

[The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner \(OISC\)](#) regulates immigration advisers, ensuring they are fit and competent and act in the best interest of their clients. Advisers do not make immigration decisions and can only give advice. Applicants who require qualified immigration advice can access the [OISC guidance](#).

The Solicitors Regulation Authority.

[The Solicitors Regulation Authority](#) maintains a list of solicitors who deal in immigration matters.

Army Families Federation (AFF).

The Army Families Federation is the independent voice of Army families; see the AFF website's [Foreign & Commonwealth page](#). The AFF have OISC-trained staff who can advise on a wide range of immigration issues at no cost and have experience in dealing with issues raised by Armed Forces personnel and families.

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AFF Guide to Visa Applications.

[The AFF Guide for Visa Applications](#) is available to all internet users.

Cobseo F&C Cluster.

Cobseo is the confederation of service charities, bringing together all the main charities involved in assisting Service Personnel and their families.

AFF is the lead for this [Cluster](#), representing the Foreign and Commonwealth community.

Citizens Advice.

Provide free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>.

List Of Abbreviations

Annex B to
Guide for Non-UK Nationals
and Unit Support
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- AFF** Army Families Federation.
- BRP** Biometric Residence Permit.
- CoO** Country of Origin.
- CSM** Candidate Support Manager.
- FLR** Further Leave to Remain. A short-term extension granted by UKVI in exceptional cases in order that an individual might regularise their immigration status.
- ILE** Indefinite Leave to Enter. An application from overseas to be allowed residency in the UK.
- ILR** Indefinite Leave to Remain. An application from UK to be allowed residency in the UK.
- OISC** Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner. Sponsored by the UK Home Office, and regulates immigration advisers, ensuring they are fit and competent and act in the best interest of their clients.
- SP** Service Person(nel).
- UKVI** UK Visas and Immigration. Part of the UK Home Office, responsible for Visa and Immigration matters.





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