

Indefinite leave to remain or enter (domestic violence or abuse)

1. Overview

You may be able to apply for permission to settle in the UK permanently if your relationship has broken down because of domestic violence or abuse.

Domestic violence and abuse can be emotional, psychological, physical, sexual or financial. It includes threatening or controlling behaviour to try to harm, isolate or frighten someone.

Permission to settle in the UK is sometimes called 'settlement', 'indefinite leave to remain' or 'indefinite leave to enter'.

Permission to settle gives you the right to live, work and study here for as long as you like, and apply for benefits if you're eligible. You can use it to apply for British citizenship.

[Check if you're eligible \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/eligibility\)](/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/eligibility).

You must [tell the Home Office \(/visas-when-you-separate-or-divorce\)](/visas-when-you-separate-or-divorce) if you separate from your partner and your visa is based on that relationship.

When to apply

Apply for permission to settle in the UK as soon as possible after the relationship breaks down.

If you have a current visa, do not wait for it to expire.

You can [apply to settle from inside the UK \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-inside-uk\)](/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-inside-uk) or [apply to settle from outside the UK \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-outside-uk\)](/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-outside-uk).

Fees and how long it takes

The application fee is £3,029 per person, unless you do not have enough money to support yourself.

You can include any [eligible children \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/children-dependants\)](/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/children-dependants) on your application form if you're applying from inside the UK. If you're outside the UK, you'll need to make a separate application for each child coming with you.

You'll each need to have your biometric information (fingerprints and a photo) taken - there's no fee for this.

You'll usually get a decision about your application within 6 months.

If you do not have enough money to support yourself

If you cannot pay the fee

You do not have to pay the fee if you can provide evidence that you:

- do not have a place to live and cannot afford one
- have a place to live but cannot afford essential living costs like food or heating
- have a very low income and paying the fee would harm your child's wellbeing



Evidence can include bank statements, a signed letter from your local authority or a signed letter from an agency that's been giving you support.

If you're in the UK and need support while waiting for a decision

You can apply for the 'Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession' to:

- get permission to stay in the UK until you get a decision on your application to settle
- be able to apply for benefits if you're eligible, for example so you can find somewhere safe to live

Fill in the [application form \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-benefits-for-visa-holder-domestic-violence\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/application-for-benefits-for-visa-holder-domestic-violence). Post or email it to the address on the form.

If you do not have pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme, you must do one of the following within 3 months of applying for the 'Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession':

- [apply for indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic abuse \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-inside-uk\)](/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-inside-uk)
- apply for another type of [permission to stay in the UK \(/browse/visas-immigration/settle-in-the-uk\)](/browse/visas-immigration/settle-in-the-uk)

Your permission to stay in the UK will end if you do not apply within 3 months.

If you have pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme, you can also apply for the concession. You must [apply for indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic abuse \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-inside-uk\)](/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/apply-inside-uk) within 3 months of doing this, or your benefits might end.

You cannot apply for the 'Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession' if you're outside the UK.

If you apply for the concession and then resume your relationship with your partner, you may not be eligible to settle as their partner.



Get help

You can [get immigration advice \(/find-an-immigration-adviser\)](/find-an-immigration-adviser) if you need help with getting permission to stay in the UK. You may be entitled to legal aid (free legal advice).

You can [report domestic abuse to the police or contact organisations for help or advice \(/report-domestic-abuse\)](/report-domestic-abuse).

You can get [advice about staying in the UK \(https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/stay-in-uk/visas-after-a-divorce/\)](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/immigration/stay-in-uk/visas-after-a-divorce/) on the Citizens Advice website.

2. Eligibility

Whether you can get permission to settle in the UK permanently (indefinite leave to remain or enter) depends on:

- your current immigration status (the type of visa you have, for example)
- how your relationship broke down

Your immigration status

Your current immigration status usually must be based on your relationship with your partner. Your partner must be one of the following:

- a British citizen
- a person with permission to settle in the UK permanently (indefinite leave to remain or enter)
- a member of the UK armed forces who has served for at least 4 years
- a person with permission to stay in the UK as a refugee
- a person with settled status under the EU settlement scheme
- a citizen of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein with pre-settled status under the EU Settlement scheme



If your partner has pre-settled status, they also need to have been living in the UK by 31 December 2020.

If you have pre-settled status

You can also apply if your relationship has broken down permanently because of domestic violence or abuse and you have pre-settled status either:

- as a spouse, civil partner or unmarried partner
- based on a retained right of residence because you used to have a spouse, civil partner or unmarried partner who was living in the UK by 31 December 2020



How the relationship broke down

You must show your relationship broke down because of domestic violence or abuse from your partner or your partner's family.

If you're applying from outside the UK, you'll need to show that you've been abandoned there.

You'll be asked to give a statement about your circumstances when you apply.

You should also include supporting evidence if you have it, but you do not need it to apply.

3. Apply from inside the UK

You must apply online.

You can include any [eligible children \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/children-dependants\)](https://www.gov.uk/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/children-dependants) on your application form.

Apply from inside the UK

Once you've started your application, you can save your form and complete it later.

You'll need to send your current original passport or travel document if you have it.

Get help to apply online

You can [get help with completing the online form \(/assisted-digital-help-online-applications\)](/assisted-digital-help-online-applications) if you:

- do not feel confident using a computer or mobile device
- do not have internet access



You cannot get immigration advice through this service.

4. Apply from outside the UK

You can apply from outside the UK if you've been abandoned. You must apply online.

You'll need to make a separate application for any [eligible children \(/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/children-dependants\)](/indefinite-leave-to-remain-domestic-violence-abuse/children-dependants) coming with you.

Apply from outside the UK

Once you've started your application, you can save your form and complete it later.

You'll need to send your current original passport or travel document if you have it.

5. Children (dependants)

You can apply for your children to settle in the UK with you if one of the following applies:

- they were born in the UK
- they have, or have had, permission to stay in the UK as your dependent child
- they were born outside the UK after you got permission to stay as a dependent partner

They must also:

- have been living with you and your ex-partner
- have proof they'll be supported and accommodated adequately without using public funds
- not be married, in a civil partnership or living an independent life



Children over 18

Children over 18 may also need to:

- pass the [Life in the UK Test \(/life-in-the-uk-test\)](/life-in-the-uk-test)
- meet the [English language requirements \(/english-language\)](/english-language)

6. After you apply

After you submit your application you'll be asked to provide your biometric information (fingerprints and a photo).

You'll be told how to make an appointment after you apply.

Any children aged 6 and over who are applying on your form must also provide biometric information.

If you need your passport or documents back

You can [ask for your passport and other documents to be returned \(/visa-documents-returned\)](/visa-documents-returned) if you've provided them with your application but need them urgently.

You might have to cancel your application to get your documents back.

Getting a decision

You'll usually get a decision within 6 months.

You'll be contacted if your application is complex and will take longer, for example:

- if your supporting documents need to be verified
- if you need to attend an interview
- because of your personal circumstances, for example if you have a criminal conviction



If your application is approved

You can do the following:

- work
- run a business
- study
- use public services, such as healthcare and schools
- apply for public funds (benefits) and pensions
- apply for [British citizenship \(/apply-citizenship-indefinite-leave-to-remain\)](/apply-citizenship-indefinite-leave-to-remain), usually after a minimum of 12 months

If you stay outside of the UK for more than 2 years

You can lose your indefinite leave to remain if you stay outside the UK for more than 2 years at a time. You may need to apply before you can [return to the UK \(/returning-resident-visa\)](#).



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