

UK immigration law

Visitors

There are many reasons why individuals may come to the UK for a short period. Visits may be for different reasons such as sightseeing, seeing family and other reasons as more specifically set out below. Not everyone who is coming for a short holiday or to visit friends or family requires a visa; whether or not you do will depend upon your country of origin.

General requirements

In order to qualify for entry to the UK as a visitor you must show that:

- You want to visit the UK for no more than 6 months;
- You intend to leave the UK at the end of your visit;
- You have enough money to support yourself during your stay in the UK without working or needing help from public funds; and
- You do not intend to take paid or unpaid employment.

Duration of a visitors visa

Visitors visas are granted for a maximum of 6 months or in certain circumstances under some of the categories listed below for longer.

Categories explained

Business visitors (6 months)

As a Business Visitor you may come to the UK to carry out a number of activities which would be permitted under the immigration rules such as attending meetings, negotiating and making contracts, provided you ensure your business base remains overseas at all times and you continue to receive your salary abroad.

If you intend to work and/or to produce goods or provide services in the UK during your visit, it will be necessary to apply for a visa under the appropriate Tier of the Points Based System, for example, as a Tier 2 General Migrant or as a Tier 2 (Intra Company Transferee) Migrant or under Tier 1.

Business visitors may also be:

- Academic visitors;
- Visiting professors;
- Doctors coming for a Professional and Linguistic Assessment Board test (PLAB); or
- Doctors or dentists undertaking clinical attachments and clinical observer posts.

Entertainers and sportspeople (6 months)

You may come to the UK to attend a specific event or tournament or for personal appearances and promotions, provided you do not intend to charge members of the public for services provided or goods received.

Medical visitors (6 months)

You may come to the UK for private medical treatment if you can show that you can support yourself and meet the cost of your medical treatment. The duration of the visa will be for the fixed period of your treatment, for example an operation.

These visas are given for a maximum of 6 months. It is possible in certain circumstances to apply for an extension where this is supported by the medical practitioner giving the treatment.

Marriage or civil partnership visitors (6 months)

Marriage Visitors are people who are coming to the UK only for their wedding or civil partnership ceremony and do not intend to live in the UK afterwards. These visas are given for a maximum of 6 months and you must leave the UK within that period. If you intend to live in the UK after your wedding or civil partnership ceremony, you need to return to your country of origin and obtain entry clearance to come to the UK under the "spouse rules".

Child visitors (6 months)

Under this category, it will be necessary to show that the child is under 18 years of age and that suitable arrangements have been made for the child's travel and stay in the UK. It is also necessary to identify the person responsible for the child in his/her own country.

If an adult is named as accompanying the child visitor on the visa, then the child must travel with that person; however, if the child visitor is likely to be travelling with another adult it may be better to apply for an "unaccompanied child visitor".

Parent of a child at school (up to 12 months)

This category is for parents of children under 12 years of age who are attending a private day-school in the UK.

As a parent in the UK, you are not permitted to work, must be able to support yourself in the UK and do not intend to make the UK your main home. In addition only one parent can stay with the child in the UK with the other being based overseas.

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Student visitors (6 months)

This category is designed for those who wish to undertake a short course of study whilst visiting the UK – for example, a beginner's English language course or a work related training course.

You can only study whilst on a visit to the UK if you apply as a Student Visitor or, if you are under 18, as a Child Visitor. You will not be able to extend your stay either into full time study or to do a new course whilst you are in the UK. Importantly, as a student visitor, you will not be able to work part-time or undertake work experience or a work placement.

Visitors in transit

The UK requires people from certain countries to have a visa even if they do not intend to stop in the UK, but only pass through the UK on their way to another country. Visas for visitors in transit can be issued to people who are going to be in the UK for less than 48 hours and can satisfy the UK authorities that they intend and are able to travel on to their destination and that they will be admitted there.

Disclaimer

The information provided on this page is designed to provide general guidance. Nothing in this page constitutes legal advice.

For detailed advice please contact Laya by telephone on 020 7105 6178 or 020 7357 9494 or e-mail: Laya Falsafi lf@lzwlaw.co.uk