

PART 1

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

AUG 2024



From the start of their service, Regular non-uk SP 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 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.

Please note that if you require medical treatment in order to meet British Army requirements, this will be at your own expense, and the time taken may mean that you cannot complete the process before your visa expires. Please ensure that you meet medical standards before travelling, as this will be thoroughly tested.

If you are accepted into the British Army, Part 2 of this Guide provides further information on the topics covered here.

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, 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. Some roles may be closed to new entrants at the time you apply. You may wish to ask your Candidate Support Manager ((CSM) - the officer in Army recruiting handling your recruitment application) which roles are available..
- b. You need to understand the requirements and restrictions laid down by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) that will apply to you until you join. Check if you need a visa to enter the UK. If so, you need to 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.
- c. You will need to meet all the requirements to obtain the visit visa, including notifying UKVI of your host and address where you will be staying while in UK and that you have sufficient funds to support yourself for this period.
- d. 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](#).
- e. 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 visa application will be successful. You will need to convince the Entry Clearance Officer that you meet all entry requirements, including your intention to return home if you do not pass assessment.
- f. When booking your initial flight to the UK, you must book a return passage. If you overstay, the British Army will not be responsible, and this could affect your application to join. **You must inform your CSM of your travel plans before you travel.**
- g. 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 the assessment process.

- h. You will need to meet all accommodation and living costs prior to your start date for Basic Training. The details of the UK host and UK address that you provide with your application should match your visa application to UKVI. If at any point your host or UK address changes you are required to notify both the CSM and UKVI.
- i. 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.
- j. Your visa, if granted, should cover you until you start Basic Training. Once you join, and all the time while you serve in the British Army, you will be exempt from immigration control in the UK. You will be given an exemption stamp in your passport.
- k. If you are from a country that does not require a visa to enter the UK you will be given an Entry Stamp that will enable you to remain in the UK for six months - you will also become exempt on commencement of Basic Training.

Length of the Selection Process

Your visa, if granted, should cover you until you start Basic Training. If there are any delays in the selection process that will take you beyond the expiry of your visa, you should make staff aware. If you are deferred for medical reasons, the advice

you are given may not take into account your visa status, and you must inform the medical staff.

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. You should think carefully about who you choose as host in the UK. You will be required to provide a UK residential address for the duration of the recruitment process and you must be sure that they can accommodate you for that time.
- b. Don't be afraid to change host if you need to, but you do need to inform both the CSM handling your application and UKVI.
- c. Hosts may offer to assist you financially but you still need to make sure that you are able to support yourself financially throughout the recruitment process.
- d. Host contact details must be provided so that your CSM can contact them in the event of any problems. You need to be sure that your host is happy to have their details disclosed to both UKVI and Army Recruiting.

- 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 permission for you to stay longer. 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.



You have the right to feel safe and secure with your host. If you are concerned about any form of abusive behaviour you should inform the local police and the staff at the assessment centre. If you are in immediate danger, call 999.

If you are already in UK

You may already be in the UK on a student or work visa. Not all visas are suitable - you will need to check with your CSM whether you are able to apply. If your current visa is confirmed as acceptable, you should note that the recruitment process might take you beyond the expiry of your visa. You must ensure that your CSM is fully aware of the expiry date of your visa. If you have any concerns about the length of the recruitment process affecting your visa status you should speak with your CSM as soon as possible.

If you are successful with Army Selection and start Basic Training, you will become exempt from UK immigration control and your passport will be sent to the Home Office and. If you discharge from the Army you will no longer be exempt from control and you will need to make an application on discharge to remain in the UK, unless your previous leave has not expired.

If you are in the UK on a visitor visa, you cannot then choose to apply to join the Army. You have to apply from your home country and apply for a visit visa with the express intent to join the British Army.

Immigration and Citizenship as a Serving Soldier

Immigration Status of Service Personnel (SP)

If you are accepted for service in the Regular British Army, you will be exempt from UK immigration control under Section 8(4) (a) of the Immigration Act 1971 during your service. A stamp will be inserted in your passport to show this (known as a 'vignette'). *This exemption ceases on discharge and you must regularise your immigration status if you wish to remain in the UK.*

This information is correct at the time of publication. However, the UK Home Office will be moving to a system of e-visas at the end of 2024, to replace the vignette.

If you are not accepted, you must leave the UK and return to your country of origin.

Overseas Postings

As a soldier, you are likely to be posted to different countries around the world. Generally, your nationality will allow you to travel with your unit on your own national passport. Where there are special requirements, your unit will inform you.

Passport

All SP must ensure that their passport is in date, for both Service and private reasons. You should check whether you are able to renew your passport from within 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 visa 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

The British Army does not require you to obtain British Citizenship. If you choose to apply for citizenship, it will be at your own expense. A serving Commonwealth soldier can apply to become a British citizen by naturalisation providing they meet the requirements - the Home Office advice may be found [here](#), while the [AFF website](#) provides additional guidance for soldiers and spouses.

A Nepali national cannot be granted British citizenship while serving in the Brigade of Gurkhas but can apply if they transfer out of the Brigade of Gurkhas to serve in the wider Army/Armed Forces. Gurkhas 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/civil 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.

Minimum Income Requirement (MIR)

If you intend to bring your spouse/civil partner and any children to the UK you must meet the minimum income requirement

As at April 2024, the minimum income requirement for Armed Forces personnel to bring in entitled family members is £23,496, which equates to the 2023/24 salary for Privates on completion of training

If you have savings or some other forms of financial holding (such as property or cash savings) this could count towards the MIR, see the Home Office [guidance](#). [AFF](#) can advise further.

If you are a single parent looking to bring your child(ren) to the UK, their entry is not subject to MIR.

Entering the UK under HM Armed Forces Rules

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](#). This type of visa, known as Limited Leave, does not entitle successful applicants to many state benefits. They will be able to work, study and be treated on the NHS.

Visit Visa

If family members enter the UK on a standard visitor or marriage visitor visa they will not be able to extend their stay or switch to another visa while in the UK. The holder of these types of visas will not be entitled to be treated as a Service family and not able to occupy housing provided for Armed Forces families, known as Service Family Accommodation. They should return to their country of origin and re-apply for the correct UK limited leave entry visa under the [Immigration Rules Appendix HM Armed Forces](#). You can find out more about the application on the AFF website.



English Language Requirement

To enter the UK, family members aged 18 or over must 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 ARIC 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

You will be responsible for meeting 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, at July 2024 these are:

- Visa to enter per person £1,846
- Indefinite Leave to Remain/Indefinite to Enter after 5 years £2,885 per applicant
- Citizenship £1,630

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 5-year UK limited leave to enter visa. This is to ensure they 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.

The Home Office will not allow you to have a relative or friend come to the UK from your country of origin in order to provide childcare, whether paid or unpaid.



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

Once family members have completed five years on a Limited Leave (Armed Forces) visa they will be eligible to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK (if they apply from outside of the UK for any reason this is known as Indefinite Leave to Enter).

Indefinite Leave 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. Further information is available from AFF.

Naturalisation as a British Citizen SP

If you are a Commonwealth citizen serving in the British Army you will be eligible to apply directly for British citizenship without having to first apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. You will be able to apply whilst serving, providing you meet the eligibility and residential criteria.

Naturalisation for Family Members

Family members in the UK are required to have settlement (ILR/ILE) for at least one year before they can apply for Citizenship,

Spouses must also ensure they were physically in the UK on the first day of the residential qualifying period.

Different immigration rules apply to children. Please refer to the Gov.UK [advice](#) before making an application. The [AFF Website](#) also has detail.

Application Fees

[Immigration and naturalisation fees](#) can be subject to change. 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 an Armed Forces Limited Leave visa will have the right to work in the UK. They will be liable to pay UK Income Tax and National Insurance.

Access to UK State Benefits for You and Family Members

Where eligible, your UK immigration status as a member of the Armed Forces normally enables you to claim some state benefits such as Child Benefit and Universal Credit.

For immigration purposes, some UK benefits and services are classed as public funds. Family members entering the UK

on an Armed Forces visa will have a 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF) condition applied to their leave to enter. This will prevent them from accessing some benefits and services such as Universal Credit. Not all benefits and services are classed as public funds, for example Statutory Maternity Pay and Statutory Sickness Pay. The Home Office provides guidance on [public funds](#).

If you have any queries, you can contact the Government Department responsible for issuing the benefit. In most cases this will be the Department for Work and Pensions.



Immigration Requirements after your Army Career

Settlement of SP in UK on Completion of Service

Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)

While you are serving in the British Army you will be exempt from immigration control in the UK. As a result of this you will not be able to apply for settlement in the UK while serving.

If you wish to live in the UK after you have left the Army (and have not applied for British citizenship while serving) you will need to apply for settlement.

You will be eligible to apply directly for ILR to take effect after your discharge. You must have at least four years' service or, if you have served for less than four years, been medically discharged as a result of your service. It can only be granted to those discharged who are already in the UK on the date of application.

If you have served for six years or more or have been medically discharged as a result of service, then you will not have to pay the visa application fee. If you have served for less than six years and have not been medically discharged as a result of your service you will have to pay the fee.

You can submit an application for ILR up to 18 weeks before your discharge. This should ensure that your application is processed and a decision made in time for the day you discharge.

Indefinite Leave to Enter (ILE)

You may choose to return to your home country on discharge. Should you then wish to come back to the UK to live you will be able to apply for ILE up to two years after discharge. The criteria for not paying the application fee for ILR, outlined above, also apply here.

Limited Leave to Remain

Where a non-UK SP is medically discharged with less than four years' service, or discharged with a criminal conviction, the Home Office may decide to grant Limited Leave.

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 and your family wish to take.

Annexes and Appendices

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



Useful Sources of Advice

Annex A to Guide for Non-UK
Nationals and Unit Support
Part 1
Dated May 24

Government Support

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

Immigration Rules Appendix HM Armed Forces - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-HM-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-avisa-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.

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
Part 1
Dated May 24

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). An individual (or group) serving in Her Majesty's Armed Forces as a soldier, sailor or airman.
UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration. Part of the UK Home Office, responsible for Visa and Immigration matters.



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