



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

BRITISH VISA REQUIREMENTS

INFORMATION ABOUT ADMISSION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM TO SET UP IN BUSINESS, TO BE SELF-EMPLOYED, BE AN INVESTOR, BE A RETIRED PERSON OF INDEPENDENT MEANS, OR BE A DEPENDANT OF SOMEONE COMING IN ONE OF THESE CATEGORIES

This leaflet explains:

- o the requirements you will have to meet; and
- o how to apply for a visa.

BUSINESSMEN AND SELF-EMPLOYED PERSONS

Visitors to the United Kingdom are free to transact business during their stay. If you are a visa national (see leaflet INF 1) you will need to obtain a visa in order to visit the United Kingdom. If you are not a visa national, you do not need a visa to come to the UK for a short business visit in order to attend meetings and briefings, fact find, negotiate or make contacts with UK business or to buy or sell services.

If you want to come to the United Kingdom permanently to set yourself up in business or self-employment (or to join as a partner, or take over, an existing business) you must have a visa. You will need to complete forms IM2A and IM2C, and you will need to satisfy the visa officer that you can meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules relating to business and self-employment.

The most important requirements are:

- (a) you must bring at least £200,000 of your own money, not held by a trust or another investment vehicle, to invest in the business;
- (b) your investment must create new, paid, full-time employment for at least two people, who are already settled in the United Kingdom;
- (c) you must show that you will be occupied full-time in running the business, that there is a genuine need for your services and investment and that you will have a controlling/equal interest in the business and the level of financial investment will be proportional to the interest in the business.

You will need to show the visa officer documentary evidence that you qualify for a visa. The visa officer can give you a further guidance letter, entitled 'Business Application', setting

out the evidence and information you must produce in order for your application to be decided. In addition to this, it would be helpful if you could provide full details of any experience you have had relevant to your proposed business activities, and, if available, letters from United Kingdom firms with which you have done business or hope to do business in the future.

Whatever your business proposition, it will be given careful consideration. If you are not sure whether your proposals are acceptable under the Rules the visa officer will be able to advise you.

As a business or self-employed person you will not be allowed to take any other employment in the United Kingdom except running your business. You should advise the visa officer if you intend to retain business interests abroad.

If you are a national of Hungary, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia or Poland you must meet the requirements under the provisions of EC Association Agreements. You should obtain further advice from the nearest British mission offering a visa service.

INVESTORS

If you wish to come to the United Kingdom as an investor you must have a visa for this purpose. You should complete forms IM2A and IM2C.

You will need to produce documentary evidence (e.g. in the form of a statement from your accountant) that you have your own money, under your control and which is disposable in the UK amounting to no less than £1 million. If you own property in the UK you should show evidence of it to the visa officer.

You will also need to show that you intend to invest not less than £750,000 of your capital in the UK by way of UK Government bonds, share capital or loan capital in active and trading UK registered companies (other than those principally engaged in property investment and excluding investment by you by way of deposits with a bank, building society or other enterprise whose normal course of business includes the acceptance of deposits).

You must intend to make the UK your main home and be able to maintain and accommodate yourself and any dependants without taking employment (other than self-employment or business) or recourse to public funds.

The Invest in Britain Bureau, which operates through the commercial sections of British Embassies, High Commissions and Consulates-General, can assist firms with all aspects of locating or relocating a business in the United Kingdom or expanding existing facilities.

The Bureau's address in the United Kingdom is:

Invest in Britain Bureau
Department of Trade and Industry
Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Tel: 0171-215 5000
Fax: 0171-215 5651
Email: andrew.fraser@iibb.dti.gov.uk
http: [//.www.dti.gov.uk/ibb](http://www.dti.gov.uk/ibb)

RETIRED PERSONS OF INDEPENDENT MEANS

If you wish to come to the United Kingdom as a retired person of independent means you must have a visa. You should complete forms IM2A and IM2C.

You must be at least 60 years of age.

You will need to show that you have an annual income of not less than £25,000. This money must be under your control and you must be able to transfer it freely to the United Kingdom. Evidence should be in the form of bank statements or statements of income received from investments. If you own property in the United Kingdom you should show evidence of it to the entry clearance officer. You should also forward a letter from your bank or other authority confirming that there are no regulations which would prevent you from transferring your money to the United Kingdom. If you are in doubt about the acceptability of your evidence the visa officer will be able to advise you.

You must also satisfy the visa officer that you are able and willing to maintain and accommodate yourself and any dependants indefinitely in the United Kingdom without working, without assistance from anyone else and without recourse to public funds. The phrase 'without working' means without working in the United Kingdom or abroad, and usually includes business interests or activities but not investment income. If you are not sure on this point the visa officer will advise you.

In addition to the financial requirements you will also need to show that you have a close connection with the United Kingdom.

You will be expected to provide supporting documentary evidence and intend to make the UK your main home.

If you have close relatives settled in the United Kingdom, if you have lived there at any time, if you have long service with a British company or if you have long-established business contacts in the United Kingdom you may meet the close connection requirement. You should describe your circumstances in detail and forward any letters of support you may have.

DEPENDANTS

The spouse and children under 18 of someone who is admitted to the United Kingdom as a businessman or self-employed person, or as an investor or as a retired person of independent means, may be admitted to the United Kingdom with them if they have a visa for this purpose. To apply for a visa, dependants should fill in form IM2A. They will have to show that there will be adequate accommodation in the United Kingdom for them, and that they will be adequately maintained, without recourse to public funds and, for dependants of retired persons of independent without working.

HOW TO APPLY FOR A VISA

You must apply at a British mission in the country where you are living. Where there is none in the country where you are, or it does not offer a full service, another mission will have been designated to handle applications. Any British mission will advise at which Post an applicant should apply.

You must fill in application forms IM2A and (except in the case of business visitors and dependants) IM2C, which you can get free of charge from the nearest British mission offering a visa service.

You should post or hand in the application forms together with:

- * your passport
- * 2 recent passport-sized photographs
- * the visa fee which is non-refundable
- * other documents, evidence or information required in the category in which you are applying.

to the British mission able to process your application. You may have to attend an interview.

Fees must be paid in local currency: you should not send cash through the post, but bank drafts, postal or money orders payable to the mission may be enclosed.

PLEASE NOTE

In no circumstances should you submit documents which you know to be false as this may result in the refusal of your application.

Because of the risk of loss, however, original documents should not be sent by post. Attested copies (certified as true copies by a notary public or solicitor) may be sent instead or you can produce the originals when you are interviewed.

DRUGS WARNING – The UK has severe penalties against drug smuggling. Drug traffickers may try to bribe travellers. If you are travelling to the UK avoid any involvement with drugs.

CUSTOMS & EXCISE – Advice on importing personal effects and goods into the UK may be obtained from:

HM Customs and Excise
Dorset House
Stamford Street
LONDON SE1 9PY

IMMIGRATION ADVISORY SERVICE (IAS) – The IAS is an independent charity which gives free and confidential advice, assistance and representation to persons who are applying for an entry clearance for the UK. Their address is:

County House
190 Great Dover Street
LONDON SE1 4YB.
Telephone: 44 171 357 6917
Duty Office 24 hrs: 44 181 814 1559
Fax: 44 171 378 0665

Printed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (SSD) 8/98.

WHILE EVERY CARE HAS BEEN TAKEN IN PREPARING THESE LEAFLETS THEY ARE INTENDED ONLY FOR GENERAL GUIDANCE, AND MAY, IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, HAVE BEEN OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS. HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT CANNOT ACCEPT ANY LIABILITY FOR ANY LOSS OR DAMAGE ARISING IN RESPECT OF ANY STATEMENT CONTAINED IN THIS LEAFLET. APPLICANTS SHOULD ALWAYS CLARIFY THEIR POSITION WITH THE BRITISH MISSION OFFERING AN ENTRY CLEARANCE SERVICE BEFORE TRAVELLING. IN THESE GUIDANCE LEAFLETS THE TERM "VISA" IS USED TO REFER TO ALL TYPES OF VISA, ENTRY CERTIFICATE OF OTHER ENTRY CLEARANCES AS SPECIFIED IN THE UK IMMIGRATION RULES.