

Spouse Visa Application Checklist & Requirements

DESC: In this step-by-step guide we explain every aspect of the partner visa application process. [Click here to learn more.](#)

H1: A Guide to Visa Applications for Partners, Husbands & Wives.

Making an application for a spouse or partner visa can be a highly stressful experience. This is natural since being free to live with your life partner in the UK – or continuing to do so – is bound to be one of the most important things in your life.

The natural stress involved in any partner visa application is likely to be made worse by the detailed and bureaucratic nature of the process itself, and the level of detail involved in making sure that all parties meet the various requirements set out in law. Our immigration law experts have helped multiple clients to make successful partner visa applications, and staying on top of what are frequently shifting requirements is at the heart of the service we deliver.

From our offices in Harrogate, Leeds and Hull we've helped clients from across the UK and the rest of the world. In this detailed guide we break the partner visa application process down into a series of manageable steps, explaining the laws which apply at the time of writing and working through things like the application process, the relationship requirements, financial requirements and language requirements.

We'll do our best to update this guide with the latest information at all times, but our advice would always be to contact us for a free, no obligation consultation no matter what stage in the partner visa application process you have reached.

The complex and frequently changing nature of immigration law and the sheer number of boxes which need to be ticked for a spouse visa application to be successful mean that the support of an expert lawyer can make all the difference.

The definition of partner

To simplify matters, we'll refer to the *partner* visa application process throughout this guide, using the Home Office definition of partner, which covers a range of relationship statuses:

- Unmarried partner – defined as a 'person who has been living together with the applicant in a relationship akin to a marriage or civil partnership for at least two years prior to the date of application'
- A spouse
- A civil partner
- A fiancé or proposed civil partner

What is a UK partner visa?

A UK partner visa falls within the wider category of family visas, and it allows non-UK residents to live in the UK with a partner who is a British citizen or is already UK settled. A

successful application enables the holder to enjoy a settled family life within the UK and to plan for the future with a degree of certainty.

After you've lived in the UK for five years with a partner visa you are eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR). Other benefits of successfully obtaining a UK partner visa include the following:

Work and study

Once you're in possession of a UK partner visa you have the right to work in the UK without any restrictions and to engage in further education at UK institutions.

A gateway to permanent residence

Obtaining a partner visa acts as a gateway, opening up the route toward obtaining permanent residence in the UK. Once you have been resident in the UK for five years while holding a partner visa you have the legal right to apply for indefinite leave to remain (ILR). Once you've been granted ILR you are ultimately entitled to seek full British citizenship, provided you meet the criteria.

Access to healthcare

As the holder of a UK partner visa you'll have full access to the National Health Service (NHS), meaning that your healthcare requirements will be met, free at the point of delivery, throughout your time in the UK.

How long does a UK partner visa last for?

The length of time a UK partner visa lasts for will vary depending upon your individual circumstances. If you are applying from outside the UK in the position of being engaged to be married, or planning on entering a civil partnership, then you'll be given permission to come to the UK for 6 months, during which time you can get married or enter a civil partnership.

Following this, you will then have to apply for a partner visa on the basis of this marriage or civil partnership.

If you make a successful application for a partner visa from outside the UK and are also given entry clearance then the visa will be granted for an initial period of 33 months. If you already live in the UK and apply for leave to remain as a partner and are successful, then leave to remain will be granted for a period of 30 months.

It's then possible to apply for your partner visa to be extended for another period of 30 months, meaning that the full length of time you can stay in the UK under a partner visa is 5 years. After living in the UK with a partner visa for 5 years you will have the right to apply for ILR.

If you are granted ILR then you will no longer be subject to any applicable immigration restrictions and will also, if you meet the eligibility criteria, be able to make an application for full British citizenship.

Does the partner visa application need to be made in the UK or outside?

If you're living outside the UK then the answer is relatively straightforward – you'll have to make the partner visa application from the country in which you are resident. If you're visiting the UK without having to apply for a visa – i.e. from a country such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA - then you will be regarded as a visitor, and cannot shift into the category of partner/spouse.

Anyone in this position wishing to apply for a partner visa will have to make the application from outside the UK. If you're living in the UK, having been granted leave to remain within another immigration category (as the holder of a work permit or student permit for example), then you can shift to the 'partner' category while still inside the UK.

Can you apply for a partner visa if you don't have lawful status?

If you're in the UK but don't have a legal right to remain – i.e. if you have overstayed an existing leave to remain – then you can only make an application for a partner visa if you can prove that there are 'insurmountable obstacles' preventing you and your partner living together in another country. This is a strict test, and unless you can meet it then you should return to your home country to make your application.

Which documents are required for a partner visa application?

Knowing which documents are required for a partner visa application will help you to be as prepared as possible before working through the actual application process itself. The precise documents required will vary from case to case – governed by factors such as the country you're applying from – and there are certain 'specified documents' which need to be provided by anyone applying for a UK partner visa. If the right specified documents aren't provided with the application then it is likely to be refused.

These specified documents generally concern the financial requirements of an application, the English language requirements, the relationship requirements and the accommodation requirements, but this is by no means a definitive list. Working with immigration law experts like our team is the safest means of ensuring that you have all of the documentation required by your specific personal circumstances.

Whether we work on the whole of your partner application, or simply review the documentation you're planning on providing in support, we can help to make sure that you're not tripped up by any of the strict rules in place regarding the application process or the accompanying documentation.

Most of the financial documentation you need to provide to prove that you meet the earning requirements of a partner application needed to be dated within 28 days of the application being made, for example. A delay of more than 28 days between gathering the financial documentation and submitting your application could be enough for the application to be refused.

In addition, standard proof of earnings such as payslips and bank statements have to be accompanied with a recent letter from your employer setting out specified facts about your employment circumstances.

The list of documents – some specified, others only applying in particular circumstances – will include but isn't limited to the following:

- A valid passport – Your valid current passport or travel documents – as well as previous passports – needs to be provided. It must have at least one page blank for the addition of a visa vignette.

A visa vignette is a sticker which is placed in a passport to flag up the official permission to enter the UK that has been granted by the government. [Examples of visa vignettes](#) can be seen on the Gov.uk website.

- A valid passport for your UK partner – You need to provide a copy of the passport issued to your partner, whether they are a British citizen or have been granted settled status. Other documentation you could provide to prove the immigration status of your partner would include proof of their limited leave to remain, ILR or a Biometric Residence Permit.
- Proof of the status of your relationship – This could include a marriage or civil partnership certificate, as well as evidence that the relationship is ‘genuine and subsisting’. Evidence for the latter – particularly in the case of a partnership which hasn’t yet been made ‘official’ – would include photographs, joint bills and other correspondence.
- Evidence of your accommodation – Documentation which confirms that you have suitable accommodation enabling you to live in the UK. This could include items such as a tenancy agreement, proof of home-ownership like a mortgage statement, or property inspection reports.
- Financial evidence – Documentation proving that you meet the financial requirements for a partner visa. This could include payslips, bank statements and self-employment accounts, as well as correspondence from any employer.
- Evidence that you meet the English language requirement – Proof that you meet the English language requirements of a UK partner visa could take the form of a certificate from an approved SELT centre at CEFR A1 level or higher, or a qualification which is taught in English and recognised in the UK.
- TB test certificate – If you are applying from a listed country, having lived there for more than 6 months, then you will need to provide a TB test certificate issued by an approved clinic. Countries to which the TB testing rule applies include Angola, Hong Kong and Pakistan. [A full list is available](#) at the Gov.uk website.
- Children’s documents – if any children are included in a visa application you will need to provide documentation such as proof of sole or shared responsibility, birth certificates and evidence of dependency for each child included as part of the application.

In all cases, any documentation in a language besides English or Welsh will need to be provided in translation.

What are the suitability requirements and general grounds of refusal?

The question of suitability requirements and general grounds of refusal applies to the past conduct of any applicant. In simple terms, it means that there are some grounds on which an

application can be refused, and these are set out in [Part 9 of the immigration rules](#) on the Gov.uk website. The rules themselves are complex when set out in detail, but for the purposes of this guide they generally refer to the conduct of an individual, either in the past or at the time of the application, with reference to the following:

- Exclusion or Deportation Order – this refers to a partner visa application being refused because the applicant is subject to an exclusion or deportation order, or where the Home Office has directed that they should be excluded from the UK.
- Non-conducive – a partner visa application will fail if it is felt that the presence of the applicant in the UK is not conducive to the public good. This often relates to issues of national security or public safety, or directly to the character, conduct and associations of the applicant.
- Criminality – The UK partner visa application will fail if you have been convicted of any criminal offence prompting a custodial offence of at least 12 months. If the sentence is shorter, or an offence led to a non-custodial punishment, then the refusal of a visa will be discretionary rather than mandatory.
- Sham marriage or civil ceremony – Your partner visa application could fail or be withdrawn if it is felt that you are or have been involved in a sham marriage or civil partnership.
- False representations – If your application includes false documents, information or representations then it may fail. The same rules apply if any information is withheld from the application, either knowingly or not.

If the failure of an application is based on a claim of deception, the Home Office will need to provide evidence which directly links the applicant to any dishonesty.

- Previous breaches – The failure of your application is mandatory if you have previously breached immigration law within a relevant timeframe – i.e. in the 10 years following a deportation.
- Failure to provide the necessary information – A partner visa application may fail – or permission may be withdrawn – if you fail to do any of the following without having reasonable grounds to do so:
 - Provide information
 - Attend an interview
 - Provide a medical report
 - Undergo a medical examination
 - Provide biometrics

If you're concerned that some aspect of your past or present life may lead to your UK partner visa application being refused then please contact our team. We've dealt with many complex visa applications of every type, and while some refusals are mandatory many are

discretionary, and we'll be able to explain the position you are in and what – if anything – you can do now to make your application more likely to succeed.

The eligibility requirements for a UK partner visa

We've already mentioned the documentation you'll need to pull together to support a UK partner visa application, and in this section we'll outline each of the eligibility requirements these documents, together with the application itself, are intended to demonstrate.

The criteria as a whole are designed to demonstrate that the relationship is genuine, that you have a degree of financial stability (including employment and somewhere to live), and that you will integrate and contribute positively to life in the UK.

As an overview, these criteria are as follows:

- Both parties need to be over 18 years old.
- Finances – at the time of writing you need to be able to show that you have a minimum gross income of £29,000 per year, or savings of £88,500.
- Accommodation – you must be able to provide proof that, once in the UK, you will have access to adequate housing.
- Language – you must be able to provide proof of proficiency in the English language.
- Partner - to successfully apply for a partner visa in the UK you need to be the partner of a British citizen ('partner' as defined above), or of an individual with settled status or ILR. Alternatively, you could be the partner with refugee status or humanitarian protection, or a Turkish Worker or Turkish Businessperson visa.

Your relationship

The relationship status of you and your partner needs to meet one of the following criteria for a partner visa application to be successful:

- You are in a marriage or civil partnership that is legally recognised in the UK. The validity of any marriage or civil partnership is based on it being legally recognised in the country in which it took place.

For example, a Nikah marriage is a form of Islamic marriage contract which is not recognised as legal for immigration purposes if it took place in the UK. A Nikah marriage which took place in Pakistan, where Nikah is a legal form of marriage, would be recognised as a valid marriage for the purposes of a partner visa application however.
- You and your partner can prove that you will enter into a civil partnership or marriage within 6 months of arriving in the UK.

Since the definition of 'partner' was revised by the UK government in January 2024, a 'partnership' can now mean two people who have been in a relationship akin to a marriage or civil partnership for at least 2 years.

This will clearly be easier to demonstrate if you can produce documentation which proves cohabitation, or else provide evidence of a compelling reason for living separately. The compelling reason most likely to be accepted by the Home Office is that you have to live separately in order to do the work needed to meet the financial requirements of your partner application.

The last possible category – you and your partner are not married and do not intend to enter into a marriage or civil partnership if granted leave to remain in the UK – is the one which throws up the most issues in terms of proving the genuine and subsisting nature of the relationship without official documentation. If the Home Office feel that you haven't fully demonstrated that you 'intend to live together permanently in the UK' then they are likely to refuse your application.

The evidence to support the genuine nature of a relationship which is neither a current nor planned marriage or civil partnership could include any documentation of the contact maintained during periods of living apart. If you are married or in a civil partnership then something as simple as photographs of a wedding reception could be provided alongside a marriage certificate in order to demonstrate the genuine nature of your relationship.

If you have been living together prior to making the application then you need to provide documentary evidence of the fact. The simplest means of doing so is to provide things like bank statements, utility bills, rent statements or mortgage statements in your name, your partners name or, ideally, in joint names.

These documents should be dated across the period of cohabitation. Other evidence which could help to establish the genuine nature of your relationship could include the following:

- Printing communication in the form of emails, WhatsApp messages, Facebook messages and texts
- Providing evidence of visits made to each other, such as hotel receipts, boarding passes, flight details etc.

You could also put together your own personal statement providing information on the nature of your relationship with your partner, detailing aspects such as how and when you met, how the relationship has developed and what your plans for the future are.

In some cases – particularly if documented evidence on the genuine nature of the relationship is harder to come by – you could provide more evidence in the form of a witness statement from a third party such as a family member or close friend. If you opt to do this then the witness must also provide a copy of their ID.

Finances

The financial requirement of a partner visa application is intended to demonstrate that you and your partner have the ability to support yourselves and any dependent children. At the time of writing this means that the minimum income threshold is set at £29,000, although you should always check before making an application as this level could rise higher if the government issues new guidance.

You can rely on various sources of income to meet the financial requirement, combining some from both parties to reach the £29,000 figure. The sources which can be used to meet the financial requirement currently include the following:

- Earnings generated through employment over the last 6 months
- If your partner hasn't been with a current employer for 6 months they can reference earnings generated through employment over the last 12 months
- Other forms of income that can be used to meet the financial requirement include earnings generated through self-employment, dividends paid to company directors, rental income from property owned and pension payments. You can also meet the financial requirement by showing that you have savings to rely upon.
- If your income will consist of only the savings then the amount you have saved has to be at least £85,000. This figure is based on the standard minimum income threshold of £29,000 multiplied by 2.5 and added to £16,000. £16,000 is the threshold above which savings can be counted toward the financial requirement, while 2.5 is the number of years a partner visa initially lasts for.
- If you and your partner have some income, but need to add to it from your savings to meet the £29,000 threshold, then only the savings you have above £16,000 will be counted for the purposes of the application. To work out the amount of savings needed, you have to multiply any shortfall in other income by 2.5 and then add it to £16,000.
- If your income is £23,000, for example, then the savings needed will be the shortfall of £6,000 multiplied by 2.5 and added to £16,000, which equals £31,000. In order to be eligible to play a part in your application the savings need to have been kept in the form of cash in a personal or joint account for a minimum of 6 consecutive months before the application.
- The financial institution providing the account needs to be regulated and the funds have to be under your control and/or that of your partner.

If your application is being made from outside the UK then only the income from the partner based in the UK can be included, even if you are in full time employment and would meet the minimum income requirement. If you're in the UK when making the application, however – applying to switch to a partner visa or extend your stay – then the joint income of you and your partner will be taken into account.

If your partner is receiving specific UK allowances or benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance then you won't have to meet the income threshold when making your application for a partner visa. Instead, you will have to demonstrate that, if living in the UK, you will be maintained and accommodated without having to claim public money.

In practical terms, this means being able to show that once rent and council tax have been paid from the income derived from benefits, allowances and other sources, you are left with an amount greater than the level of income support which would be paid to a family of your size.

Accommodation

If a partner visa application is successful it will be expected that you live with your partner permanently while in the UK. Your partner must therefore be able to show that they can provide and/or fund accommodation which is adequate for you and any dependant family.

In this case 'adequate' accommodation is that which is suitable for the number of people in the family and will be so without you having any requirement to claim state support or benefits. For every child in the family over the age of one year, for example, the accommodation must provide an additional bedroom.

The accommodation should be sufficient to house all members of a family without overcrowding or other public health issues.

English language

Unless you are a national from a country in which English is the majority spoken language then one of the requirements of a partner visa involves proving that you have sufficient command of the English language to be able to integrate easily. A list of the territories regarded by the Home Office as being majority English speaking can be found at the Gov.uk website [here](#). Other applicants who are exempt from the English language requirement include:

- Those aged 65 and over
- Those with a physical or mental disability preventing them from meeting the requirement
- Those who can demonstrate exceptional circumstances preventing them from meeting the English language requirement before entering the UK

Anyone who is not exempt will be expected to provide evidence of having an academic qualification taught in English that is recognised as being equivalent to a UK PhD, master's degree or bachelor's degree. Alternatively, you will have to pass a Secure English Language Test (SELT) taken at a Home Office approved test centre.

Currently, the approved test providers are as follows:

In the UK

- LANGUAGECERT
- Pearson
- Trinity College London
- IELTS SELT Consortium

Outside the UK

- LANGUAGECERT
- Pearson

- PSI Services (UK) Ltd
- IELTS SELT Consortium

The Gov.uk website offers links to lists of approved test centres around the world, as well as precise details of the pass-levels of the various test components. The SELT needs to have been taken and passed in the two years prior to your partner visa application.

Partner requirements

So far, many of the criteria we've listed have applied to you as the partner visa applicant, but it needs to be noted that requirements such as financial and relationship apply equally to your UK based partner. The main criteria which your partner needs to meet for the partner visa application to be successful are as follows:

- They need to be a British citizen, have settled or pre-settled status in the UK or hold ILR
- If the application is being made from another country, and the financial requirement is met through earnings, only the earnings of the UK partner will count toward the minimum applicable amount. If you are making an application from inside the UK – either shifting from another immigration category or applying for an extension – then you can use your earnings and those of your partner combined.
- They need to provide evidence of the relationship status, so that the documentation is consistent across the whole application and between both partners

How much does a UK partner visa application cost?

The cost of a UK partner visa application includes standard Home Office fees, a mandatory Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) and various other fees which only apply in specific circumstances. There are also some 'hidden' costs which many applicants will find themselves having to pay, and the fees and costs charged will vary depending upon whether the application is made in the UK or from another country.

In this section of the guide we'll list the standard, mandatory fees and also flag up some of the extra costs which you may find yourself having to deal with. All of the figures will be correct at the time of writing, but you should always check what the current fees are before starting a partner visa application of your own.

The standard UK partner visa fee is £1,938 if the application is made outside the UK and £1,321 if the application is made inside the UK. Both of these fees are charged 'per applicant', which means that if you are applying on behalf of dependent children as well as yourself, the fee will need to be paid for each of them.

The fee has to be paid at the time the application is made, on the payment page of the official online application form. The date on which the fee is paid is the official 'date of application'.

This is an important date to take note of, as it applies to factors such as the financial documentation provided having to be dated within 28 days of the date of application and is also the date around which the other date-sensitive requirements need to apply.

Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)

The IHS for applications made outside the UK is £3,105, while for applications made inside the UK it is £2,587.50. This is the cost for a three year visa and it has to be paid at the time of the application – it can't be paid in instalments or on a yearly basis.

If you're making a partner visa application for dependent children as well as for yourself, the IHS, like the standard Home Office fee, will have to be paid for each individual child included.

Tuberculosis (TB) Test Cost

The cost of a TB test will only apply to applications made from outside the UK, and even then only to applications made from certain countries (see the link to a Home Office list of these countries provided above). The current fee for a TB test at an officially approved test centre can range from £65 to £110.

In some cases this costs could rise considerably if you have to travel over long distances to reach the nearest approved test centre, which may be located in another country entirely.

English Language Test Costs

If you need to pass an English language test to satisfy the language requirement of the application it will add another cost to the process. You will need to pass a Secure English Language Test (SELT) at one of two levels:

- A1 level for a first partner visa
- A2 level for a second partner visa after an initial 30 or 33 month visa has expired

The average costs of a SELT at a Home Office approved test centre is £150. It should be noted that if you fail the test and have to retake it you will generally have to pay the initial fee again.

It may save money in the longer term to take a SELT at a higher level than that needed for a partner visa application, because a B1 level test, for example, could also then be used for:

- Extending a partner visa
- Making an application for ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain)
- Applying for British naturalisation

Document translation costs

The Home office stipulates that certain specified documents that are not written in English or Welsh must be translated. Once this has been done the original document and the translation have to be submitted with the application.

The kind of documents which you may have to pay to have translated includes the following:

- Marriage certificates for either partners or both

- Paperwork – such as divorce certificates - to demonstrate that a previous relationship has permanently broken down
- Specified documents such as bank statements

The cost of translating documents will vary depending upon the service used and the nature of the document. An average figure, however, would be around £40 per page

Priority services costs

You can pay an additional fee when making your partner visa application to access priority visa services with the intention of having your application processed more quickly. For applications made outside the UK, you can pay an average cost of £500 for the Priority visa service, which promises to place your application 'at the front queue at every stage of the decision-making process' and will reduce the time taken to process it to an average of 30 working days.

For applications made inside the UK you can also purchase the 'super priority' service, which promises a decision from the Home Office within 1 working day, and comes with an additional £1,000 fee. The Priority service alone isn't offered for applications made in the UK, and all priority services are offered subject to availability.

Conversion rates

One final factor which needs to be taken into account when calculating the full cost of a partner visa application, but which is often forgotten about, is the cost of converting a currency into pounds sterling. When you make an application outside the UK the fees mentioned are generally not charged in pounds sterling, but are instead charged in a currency such as US Dollars or Euros.

The exchange rate used by the Home Office to convert the payments into pounds sterling can result in you paying 5% more or less in your local currency than would otherwise have been the case.

The application process

The actual process of applying for a partner visa in the UK is complex and getting even a small detail wrong can often be enough to see your application being refused. Understanding as much as possible before starting your application is vital, particularly when it comes to aspects like the various requirements, the 28 day limit on some supporting documentation and the fees which will have to be paid when the application is made.

It will also help to understand that the online application itself is only one part of the process, and that you will then also have to attend a biometrics appointment at which, in some cases, you will also upload all of your supporting documents. In order to keep things as simple as possible we've broken the partner visa application process down into a series of individual steps:

Access the online portal

Your application for a UK partner visa will be submitted via the UK Government Visas and Immigration website. This is where you will create an account, fill in the application form and track the progress of your application once it has been made.

For applications outside the UK you will have to apply through this website - <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/apply-visa-type/appendixfm>

Applications from inside the UK are made through a different website - <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/family-routes>

Once you're sure you have the right documentation in place and can pay the fees – or have them paid on your behalf – you should create an online account at the relevant website.

Complete the application form

You need to fill in the online application form which requires detailed information about you as applicant and your UK-based partner. Take the time to ensure that all parts of the application form are filled in correctly and that the information provided is accurate in order to avoid the application being delayed or rejected entirely.

Pay the fees

At the time of filling in the application form you will be asked to pay the aforementioned fees, including the IHS and the cost of any priority services you opt to access. Once the fees have been paid the date becomes your 'date of application' – you should keep the receipts confirming the payments for your own records and as proof to show anyone handling your application.

Book your biometric appointment

Once the fees have been paid you'll be able to book an appointment to attend a visa centre to enrol your biometrics – i.e. a photograph of your face and your fingerprints. If you're making an application inside the UK then your biometrics appointment will be at a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) service point.

Upload your supporting documents

You can opt to upload copies of all required documentation at the time of making your online application, or take the documents with you to your biometric appointment. All documents should be scanned clearly and in a format which is supported, such as a PDF or JPEG.

If your application is made outside of the UK you will be given the option to upload your documents on the [VFS Global](#) or [TLSContact](#) website. These are both third-party providers used by the UK government to process supporting documents for partner visa applications (amongst other things).

Alternatively, you could opt to take your supporting documents with you to your biometrics appointment and have them uploaded by staff at the visa centre for an additional fee. Our own experience of handling partner visa applications has taught us that uploading your own documents at the time of filling in your application form is the best way to ensure that you provide all of the information needed to successfully support your application.

If your application was made inside the UK than it is relatively simple to upload scanned copies of the documents needed to the UKVCAS website. Once again, you can opt for having the documents uploaded on your behalf by a member of the UKVCAS team at the time of your biometrics appointment, in return for a fee.

In all cases you should double check that you have all of the documentation asked for, all from within the correct timeframe (paying particular attention to the 28 day limit for financial documents) and translated into English where needed.

Attend your biometric appointment

If your application was made from outside the UK you will have to attend a visa centre to enrol your biometric information. You should also take your current passport, the checklist of documents provided at the time of the online application and, if you opt to do so, your supporting documents to have them uploaded.

If you provide your supporting documents in person for them to be uploaded you should ensure that they are organised according to the checklist, as this will make it your application easier to process. You should also make sure that any translations required are provided alongside the original non-English or Welsh documents.

It is possible to pay to have supporting documents translated into English at your chosen visa centre, although you will have to email them to the centre ahead of time to make sure that they are translated by the date of your biometrics appointment.

If you've already uploaded your documents online then when you attend your biometrics appointment you will need to take the following:

- A printed copy of the email confirming your appointment
- A printed receipt for any premium services paid for
- A printed copy of the first page of your visa application form
- A printout of the checklist provided by Gov.uk when you completed your application form
- A valid passport or other travel document, with at least one page blank

If your application was made from inside the UK you will be given a biometrics appointment via the [UKVCAS website](#). When you attend the appointment you need to take your passport and a printed copy of your appointment confirmation. You will also need to take any supporting documents you want the UKVCAS team to upload.

Wait for your application to be processed

Once you have made an application, uploaded your supporting documents and attended a biometric appointment you can track the progress of your application via the online portal. The standard processing time for a partner visa application is as follows:

- For an application made outside the UK – 12 weeks
- For an application made inside the UK – 8 weeks

In some circumstances you may be asked to attend a partner visa interview while your application is still being processed.

Receive your decision

If you applied for a partner visa outside the UK you should be invited to the visa application centre to collect a copy of the decision and your passport. If you applied from inside the UK then you will normally be sent a letter informing you that your application has been successful. After this you will be sent a biometric residence permit.

If the application was made from outside the UK and it is approved then your passport will have a vignette attached – a sticker which initially provides 90 days of clearance to enter the UK. Once you're in the UK you will need to collect your biometric residence permit within 10 days of arriving, or within 10 days of your 90 day vignette expiring, whichever of the two dates is the later.

Once your partner visa application is approved you will be issued with a visa in the form of an eVisa – an electronic visa. This means that your visa is stored digitally and linked to your passport, making it easy to manage your visa details via a secure online portal.

By logging on to a UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account you can view the details of your visa, print off a copy of the visa confirmation if you should need it and update any changes in your details, such as changes to your passport.

When you travel to the UK, you won't need a physical visa, as your passport is linked to your eVisa, allowing border officers to verify your visa electronically. However, you may wish to print off a screenshot of your eVisa to carry with you when you travel.

If your application is refused

If your application for a UK partner visa is refused, the letter informing you of the fact will outline the reasons for the decision. If you have a legal right to appeal, the letter will state so.

You can then decide whether to submit a new, improved visa application, dealing with the issues which led to this application being refused. If you opt to make a new application you will have to pay all of the fees and charges again, although any approved English language test passed the first time will still be valid for two years from the date it was passed.

If the refusal letter states that you have the right to appeal then you will have to make that appeal within 28 days if the application was made outside the UK and 14 days if it was made inside the UK. In both cases the time limit will run from the date on the refusal letter.

At the time of writing, an appeal to the first-tier immigration tribunal will cost £80 without a hearing, or £140 if you wish to attend an oral hearing. It would be wise to seek expert legal advice before deciding whether to launch an appeal or make a new partner visa application, as the complex nature of the law involved means that it often takes expertise and experience to decide which course of action is most likely to be successful.

In some cases you may need to lodge a judicial review following the refusal of a partner visa application. Examples would include the application being found to be 'clearly unfounded', or further submissions of information not being accepted as constituting a fresh claim.

A judicial review of this kind needs to be lodged within 3 months of a refusal.

Why might a partner visa application be refused?

Every case is unique, of course, but the more common reasons why a partner visa application might be refused include the following mistakes:

- Financial Requirement – failing to meet the financial requirement of the application generally concerns failing to provide sufficient documentation to demonstrate your financial situation. Presumably, you know whether you earn enough to get over the threshold (currently £29,000), or have sufficient savings as an alternative, so a refusal on these grounds is often because specified documents haven't been provided, or don't fall within the prescribed timeframe.
- Relationship Requirement – The Home Office may question whether a relationship is 'genuine and subsisting'. As with the financial requirement, this will often happen because insufficient documentation has been provided. It is particularly important to collect and provide clear and compelling evidence of factors such as past cohabitation or the lengths gone to stay in touch when not cohabiting.

In the case of a couple who have never cohabited, it is particularly important to provide as much documentary evidence as possible to build a clear image of a genuine and committed relationship. If you're asked to attend an interview as part of the process you must make sure you turn up, and be fully prepared for questions such as how and where you met your partner, whether you have met their friends and family, how much they earn and where you both intend to live.

- Language Requirement – No matter how sure you are of your abilities in regard to the English language, your application will be refused if you fail to provide documentary evidence where needed, and in an approved form. The only test certificates accepted will be those from an approved Secure English Language Test, for example, or a UK equivalent degree taught in English.
- Partner – The Home Office may determine that your unmarried partner doesn't meet the official definition of a partner. If you cannot provide evidence of 2 years cohabitation you will need to provide a good reason why you live separately. In many cases, partners have to live apart in order to meet the work commitments needed to satisfy the financial requirement of a visa application.

If this is the case you should explain it in detail as part of your application.

- Incomplete Information – You should double and triple check the application form before submitting it to ensure that all information provided is correct and complete. Be especially careful to make sure that any details provided on the form match the details given in supporting documents, particularly with regards to financial circumstances and planned accommodation.
- Documentation – Make sure that all of the documentation you submit is comprehensive, detailed and easily understood. This applies to both the content of the documents themselves and the way in which they have been scanned and uploaded.

Make sure that documents such as bank and rent statements apply to the relevant periods and never assume that the detail you provide is sufficient to render other documents unnecessary. If a document such as a letter from your employer is specified – meaning it is an obligatory part of the application – you have to include it.

You should also ensure that any documents not in English or Welsh are submitted in the original alongside a full translation. Failure to do so could result in your application being delayed or refused.

Summary

Applying for a partner visa in the UK is a long and complex process. Our immigration law experts are ready and waiting to help as much or as little as you like, from assessing whether you meet the requirements before starting your application to taking you through the process itself.

The fact that there are multiple questions to answer and requirements which have to be met, and that even a small issue with any one of them could be enough for an application to be refused, is what makes it so stressful for many people to deal with. Having expert advice could help to ease that stress and increase the chances of a successful outcome.

It would also be advisable to take some kind of legal advice if your application has been refused and you're wondering what your next steps should be. An experienced immigration lawyer will be able to interpret the reasons given by the Home Office and work through the multiple aspects of your original application to pinpoint whether you could appeal, or what you could change if you decide to make another application.

What follows is a checklist of the requirements which need to be in place before starting your application for a UK partner visa:

- Age – You as the applicant and your partner need to be aged 18 or over
- Relationship – You and your partner need to be in a 'genuine and subsisting' relationship. This could be a civil partnership, a marriage – as long as it is legally recognised in the country in which it took place - or a relationship which has been akin to a marriage or civil partnership for at least two years.

In all cases you need to be able to provide evidence that your relationship is genuine and that you fully intend to live together permanently in the UK. You need to be able to show that any relationship either of you was involved in previously has permanently ended.

- Partner Status – Your partner needs to be a British citizen or have ILR or settled status in the UK. They could also have humanitarian protection or refugee status.
- Financial – The financial requirement of the UK partner visa application is an income of £29,000 or savings of £88,500. In some circumstances you can combine income with savings to reach the minimum threshold.
- Accommodation – You need to prove that you will have adequate accommodation when living in the UK, for you, your partner and any children.

- Language – Outside certain exemptions, you need to be able to prove proficiency in the English language. In most cases you can do this by passing an English language test to at least CEFR level A1, taken at an approved test centre.