



British Nationality Act 1981

1981 CHAPTER 61

PART I

BRITISH CITIZENSHIP

Acquisition after commencement

1 Acquisition by birth or adoption.

- (1) A person born in the United Kingdom after commencement [^{F1}, or in a qualifying territory on or after the appointed day,] shall be a British citizen if at the time of the birth his father or mother is—
- a British citizen; or
 - settled in the United Kingdom [^{F2}or that territory].

[^{F3}(1A) A person born in the United Kingdom or a qualifying territory on or after the relevant day shall be a British citizen if at the time of the birth his father or mother is a member of the armed forces.]

- (2) A new-born infant who, after commencement, is found abandoned in the United Kingdom [^{F4}, or on or after the appointed day is found abandoned in a qualifying territory,] shall, unless the contrary is shown, be deemed for the purposes of subsection (1)—
- to have been born in the United Kingdom after commencement [^{F5}or in that territory on or after the appointed day]; and
 - to have been born to a parent who at the time of the birth was a British citizen or settled in the United Kingdom [^{F6}or that territory].
- (3) A person born in the United Kingdom after commencement who is not a British citizen by virtue of subsection (1) [^{F7}, (1A)] or (2) shall be entitled to be registered as a British citizen if, while he is a minor—
- his father or mother becomes a British citizen or becomes settled in the United Kingdom; and
 - an application is made for his registration as a British citizen.

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- [^{F8}(3A) A person born in the United Kingdom on or after the relevant day who is not a British citizen by virtue of subsection (1), (1A) or (2) shall be entitled to be registered as a British citizen if, while he is a minor—
- (a) his father or mother becomes a member of the armed forces; and
 - (b) an application is made for his registration as a British citizen]
- (4) A person born in the United Kingdom after commencement who is not a British citizen by virtue of subsection (1) [^{F9}, (1A)] or (2) shall be entitled, on an application for his registration as a British citizen made at any time after he has attained the age of ten years, to be registered as such a citizen if, as regards each of the first ten years of that person's life, the number of days on which he was absent from the United Kingdom in that year does not exceed 90.
- [^{F10}(5) Where—
- (a) any court in the United Kingdom [^{F11}or, on or after the appointed day, any court in a qualifying territory] makes an order authorising the adoption of a minor who is not a British citizen; or
 - (b) a minor who is not a British citizen is adopted under a Convention adoption [^{F12}effected under the law of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom],
- that minor shall, if the requirements of subsection (5A) are met, be a British citizen as from the date on which the order is made or the Convention adoption is effected, as the case may be.
- (5A) Those requirements are that on the date on which the order is made or the Convention adoption is effected (as the case may be)—
- (a) the adopter or, in the case of a joint adoption, one of the adopters is a British citizen; and
 - (b) in a case within subsection (5)(b), the adopter or, in the case of a joint adoption, both of the adopters are habitually resident in the United Kingdom [^{F13}or in a designated territory].]
- (6) Where an order [^{F14}or a Convention adoption] in consequence of which any person became a British citizen by virtue of subsection (5) ceases to have effect, whether on annulment or otherwise, the cesser shall not affect the status of that person as a British citizen.
- (7) If in the special circumstances of any particular case the Secretary of State thinks fit, he may for the purposes of subsection (4) treat the person to whom the application relates as fulfilling the requirement specified in that subsection although, as regards any one or more of the first ten years of that person's life, the number of days on which he was absent from the United Kingdom in that year or each of the years in question exceeds 90.
- (8) In this section and elsewhere in this Act “settled” has the meaning given by section 50
^{F15}
- [^{F16}(9) The relevant day for the purposes of subsection (1A) or (3A) is the day appointed for the commencement of section 42 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 (which inserted those subsections).]

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

Textual Amendments

- F1** Words in s. 1(1) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 1\(2\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 2002/1252](#), [art. 2](#)
- F2** Words in s. 1(1)(b) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 1\(2\)\(b\)](#); [S. I. 2002/1252](#), [art. 2](#)
- F3** S. 1(1A) inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 42\(2\)](#), 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(a\)](#)
- F4** Words in s. 1(2) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 1\(3\)\(a\)](#); [S.I. 2002/1252](#), [art. 2](#)
- F5** Words in s. 1(2)(a) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 1\(3\)\(b\)](#); [S.I. 2002/1252](#), [art. 2](#)
- F6** Words in s. 1(2)(b) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 1\(3\)\(c\)](#); [S.I. 2002/1252](#), [art. 2](#)
- F7** Word in s. 1(3) inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 42\(3\)](#), 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(a\)](#)
- F8** S. 1(3A) inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 42\(4\)](#), 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(a\)](#)
- F9** Words in s. 1(4) inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 42\(5\)](#), 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(a\)](#)
- F10** S. 1(5)(5A) substituted (1.6.2003) for s. 1(5) by 1999 c. 18, [ss. 7\(1\)](#), 18(3); [S.I. 2003/362](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#)
- F11** Words in s. 1(5) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 1\(4\)](#); [S.I. 2002/1252](#), [art. 2](#)
- F12** Words in s. 1(5)(b) inserted (30.12.2005) by [Adoption and Children Act 2002 \(c. 38\)](#), [ss. 137\(4\)\(a\)](#), 148 (with [Sch. 4 paras. 6-8](#)); [S.I. 2005/2213](#), [art. 2\(m\)](#)
- F13** Words in s. 1(5A)(b) inserted (30.12.2005) by [Adoption and Children Act 2002 \(c. 38\)](#), [ss. 137\(4\)\(b\)](#), 148 (with [Sch. 4 paras. 6-8](#)); [S.I. 2005/2213](#), [art. 2\(m\)](#)
- F14** Words in s. 1(6) inserted (1.6.2003) by 1999 c. 18, [ss. 7\(2\)](#), 18(3); [S.I. 2003/362](#), [art. 2\(a\)](#)
- F15** Words in s. 1(8) repealed (30.12.2005) by [Adoption and Children Act 2002 \(c. 38\)](#), [ss. 137\(4\)\(c\)](#), 139(3), 148, [Sch. 5](#) (with [Sch. 4 paras. 2, 6-8](#)); [S.I. 2005/2213](#), [art. 2\(m\)](#); [S.I. 2005/2897](#), [art. 2\(b\)](#)
- F16** S. 1(9) inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 42\(6\)](#), 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(a\)](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 1(1) explained by [S.I. 1972/1613](#), [art. 6](#) (as inserted by [S.I. 1982/1649](#), [art. 3](#))
- C2** S. 1(3)(4) restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\)](#), [ss. 58](#), 62; [S.I. 2006/2838](#), [art. 4\(1\)](#) (subject to [art. 4\(2\)](#))
- C3** S. 1(5)(a) modified (6.4.2010) by [The Human Fertilisation and Embryology \(Parental Orders\) Regulations 2010 \(S.I. 2010/985\)](#), [regs. 1\(1\)](#), 5, [Sch. 4](#)
- C4** S. 1(5A)(a) modified (6.4.2010) by [The Human Fertilisation and Embryology \(Parental Orders\) Regulations 2010 \(S.I. 2010/985\)](#), [regs. 1\(1\)](#), 5, [Sch. 4](#)

2 Acquisition by descent.

- (1) A person born outside the United Kingdom [^{F17}and the qualifying territories] after commencement shall be a British citizen if at the time of the birth his father or mother—
- is a British citizen otherwise than by descent; or
 - is a British citizen and is serving outside the United Kingdom [^{F18}and the qualifying territories] in service to which this paragraph applies, his or her

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- recruitment for that service having taken place in the United Kingdom [^{F19}or a qualifying territory]; or
- (c) is a British citizen and is serving outside the United Kingdom [^{F20}and the qualifying territories] in service under an [^{F21}EU] institution, his or her recruitment for that service having taken place in a country which at the time of the recruitment was a member of [^{F22}the European Union].
- (2) Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) applies to—
- (a) Crown service under the government of the United Kingdom [^{F23}or of a qualifying territory]; and
- (b) service of any description for the time being designated under subsection (3).
- (3) For the purposes of this section the Secretary of State may by order made by statutory instrument designate any description of service which he considers to be closely associated with the activities outside the United Kingdom [^{F24}and the qualifying territories] of Her Majesty's government in the United Kingdom [^{F25}or in a qualifying territory].
- (4) Any order made under subsection (3) shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

Textual Amendments

- F17** Words in s. 2(1) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 2\(1\)\(2\)\(a\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F18** Words in s. 2(1)(b) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 2\(1\)\(2\)\(b\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F19** Words in s. 2(1)(b) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 2\(1\)\(2\)\(b\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F20** Words in s. 2(1)(c) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 2\(1\)\(2\)\(c\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F21** Words in Act substituted (22.4.2011) by [The Treaty of Lisbon \(Changes in Terminology\) Order 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1043\)](#), [arts. 2, 3, 6](#) (with [arts. 3\(2\)\(3\)6\(4\)\(5\)](#))
- F22** Words in Act substituted (22.4.2011) by [The Treaty of Lisbon \(Changes in Terminology\) Order 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1043\)](#), [arts. 2, 3, 4](#) (with [arts. 3\(2\)\(3\),4\(2\)](#))
- F23** Words in s. 2(2)(a) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 2\(1\)\(3\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F24** Words in s. 2(3) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 2\(1\)\(4\)\(a\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F25** Words in s. 2(3) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 2\(1\)\(4\)\(b\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, {art. 2}

3 Acquisition by registration: minors.

- (1) If while a person is a minor an application is made for his registration as a British citizen, the Secretary of State may, if he thinks fit, cause him to be registered as such a citizen.
- (2) A person born outside the United Kingdom [^{F26}and the qualifying territories] shall be entitled, on an application for his registration as a British citizen made [^{F27}while he is a minor], to be registered as such a citizen if the requirements specified in subsection (3) or, in the case of a person born stateless, the requirements specified in paragraphs (a)

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

and (b) of that subsection, are fulfilled in the case of either that person’s father or his mother (“the parent in question”).

- (3) The requirements referred to in subsection (2) are—
- (a) that the parent in question was a British citizen by descent at the time of the birth; and
 - (b) that the father or mother of the parent in question—
 - (i) was a British citizen otherwise than by descent at the time of the birth of the parent in question; or
 - (ii) became a British citizen otherwise than by descent at commencement, or would have become such a citizen otherwise than by descent at commencement but for his or her death; and
 - (c) that, as regards some period of three years ending with a date not later than the date of the birth—
 - (i) the parent in question was in the United Kingdom [^{F28}or a qualifying territory] at the beginning of that period; and
 - (ii) the number of days on which the parent in question was absent from the United Kingdom [^{F29}and the qualifying territories] in that period does not exceed 270.
- (4) ^{F30}
- (5) A person born outside the United Kingdom [^{F31}and the qualifying territories] shall be entitled, on an application for his registration as a British citizen made while he is a minor, to be registered as such a citizen if the following requirements are satisfied, namely—
- (a) that at the time of that person’s birth his father or mother was a British citizen by descent; and
 - (b) subject to subsection (6), that that person and his father and mother were in the United Kingdom [^{F32}or a qualifying territory] at the beginning of the period of three years ending with the date of the application and that, in the case of each of them, the number of days on which the person in question was absent from the United Kingdom [^{F33}and the qualifying territories] in that period does not exceed 270; and
 - (c) subject to subsection (6), that the consent of his father and mother to the registration has been signified in the prescribed manner.
- (6) In the case of an application under subsection (5) for the registration of a person as a British citizen—
- (a) if his father or mother died, or their marriage [^{F34}or civil partnership] was terminated, on or before the date of the application, or his father and mother were legally separated on that date, the references to his father and mother in paragraph (b) of that subsection shall be read either as references to his father or as references to his mother; [^{F35} and]
 - (b) if his father or mother died on or before that date, the reference to his father and mother in paragraph (c) of that subsection shall be read as a reference to either of them; [^{F36}and]
 - (c) [^{F37}if he was born illegitimate, all those references shall be read as references to his mother.]

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

Textual Amendments

- F26** Words in s. 3(2) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 3\(1\)\(2\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F27** Words in s. 3(2) substituted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 43\(2\)](#), 58; S.I. 2009/2731, [art. 4\(b\)](#)
- F28** Words in s. 3(3)(c)(i) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 3\(1\)\(3\)\(a\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F29** Words in s. 3(3)(c)(ii) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 3\(1\)\(3\)\(b\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F30** S. 3(4) repealed (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 43\(3\)](#), 56, 58, [Sch. Pt. 2](#); S.I. 2009/2731, [art. 4\(i\)\(j\)](#)
- F31** Words in s. 3(5) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 3\(1\)\(4\)\(a\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F32** Words in s. 3(5)(b) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 3\(1\)\(4\)\(b\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F33** Words in s. 3(5)(b) inserted (21.5.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [Sch. 1 para. 3\(1\)\(4\)\(b\)](#); S.I. 2002/1252, [art. 2](#)
- F34** Words in s. 3(6)(a) inserted (5.12.2005) by [Civil Partnership Act 2004 \(c. 33\)](#), [ss. 261\(1\)](#), 263, [Sch. 27 para. 71](#); S.I. 2005/3175, [art. 2\(2\)](#) (subject to [art. 2\(3\)-\(5\)](#))
- F35** Word in s. 3(6) inserted (1.7.2006 with effect as mentioned in s. 162(5) of the amending Act) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\)](#), [ss. 9\(2\)\(a\)](#), 162 (with s. 159); S.I. 2006/1498, [arts. 2\(b\)](#), 3
- F36** Word in s. 3(6)(b) ceased to have effect (1.7.2006 with effect as mentioned in s. 162(5) of the amending Act) and repealed (prosp.) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\)](#), [ss. 9\(2\)\(b\)](#), 161, 162, [Sch. 9](#) (with s. 159); S.I. 2006/1498, [arts. 2\(b\)](#), 3
- F37** S. 3(6)(c) ceased to have effect (1.7.2006 with effect as mentioned in s. 162(5) of the amending Act) and repealed (prosp.) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\)](#), [ss. 9\(2\)\(c\)](#), 161, 162, [Sch. 9](#) (with s. 159); S.I. 2006/1498, [arts. 2\(b\)](#), 3

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C5** S. 3(1) restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\)](#), [ss. 58](#), 62; S.I. 2006/2838, [art. 4\(1\)](#) (subject to [art. 4\(2\)](#))
- C6** S. 3(5) restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\)](#), [ss. 58](#), 62; S.I. 2006/2838, [art. 4\(1\)](#) (subject to [art. 4\(2\)](#))

4 Acquisition by registration: [^{F38}British overseas territories citizens]etc.

- (1) This section applies to any person who is a [^{F39}British overseas territories citizen], [^{F40}a British National (Overseas),] a British Overseas citizen, a British subject under this Act or a British protected person.
- (2) A person to whom this section applies shall be entitled, on an application for his registration as a British citizen, to be registered as such a citizen if the following requirements are satisfied in the case of that person, namely—
- (a) subject to subsection (3), that he was in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the period of five years ending with the date of the application and that the number of days on which he was absent from the United Kingdom in that period does not exceed 450; and
 - (b) that the number of days on which he was absent from the United Kingdom in the period of twelve months so ending does not exceed 90; and

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (c) that he was not at any time in the period of twelve months so ending subject under the immigration laws to any restriction on the period for which he might remain in the United Kingdom; and
 - (d) that he was not at any time in the period of five years so ending in the United Kingdom in breach of the immigration laws.
- (3) So much of subsection (2)(a) as requires the person in question to have been in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the period there mentioned shall not apply in relation to a person who was settled in the United Kingdom immediately before commencement.
- (4) If in the special circumstances of any particular case the Secretary of State thinks fit, he may for the purposes of subsection (2) do all or any of the following things, namely—
- (a) treat the person to whom the application relates as fulfilling the requirement specified in subsection (2)(a) or subsection (2)(b), or both, although the number of days on which he was absent from the United Kingdom in the period there mentioned exceeds the number there mentioned;
 - (b) disregard any such restriction as is mentioned in subsection (2)(c), not being a restriction to which that person was subject on the date of the application;
 - (c) treat that person as fulfilling the requirement specified in subsection (2)(d) although he was in the United Kingdom in breach of the immigration laws in the period there mentioned.
- (5) If, on an application for registration as a British citizen made by a person to whom this section applies, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the applicant has at any time served in service to which this subsection applies, he may, if he thinks fit in the special circumstances of the applicant's case, cause him to be registered as such a citizen.
- (6) Subsection (5) applies to—
- (a) Crown service under the government of a [^{F41}British overseas territory]; and
 - (b) paid or unpaid service (not falling within paragraph (a)) as a member of any body established by law in a [^{F41}British overseas territory] members of which are appointed by or on behalf of the Crown.

Textual Amendments

- F38** Words in s. 4 sidenote substituted (26.2.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\), s. 2\(2\)\(b\)](#)
- F39** Words in s. 4(1) substituted (26.2.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\), s. 2\(2\)\(b\)](#)
- F40** By [S.I. 1986/948, art. 7\(2\)](#) it is provided that s. 4(1) shall have effect as if after the words “British Dependent Territories citizen,” there were inserted the words “a British National (Overseas),”
- F41** Words in s. 4(6) substituted (26.2.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\), {s. 1\(1\)\(b\)}](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C7** [S. 4\(2\)\(4\)](#) modified (7.11.2002, partly retrospective) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\), s. 11](#)
- C8** [S. 4\(2\)](#) restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\), ss. 58, 62; S.I. 2006/2838, art. 4\(1\)](#) (subject to [art. 4\(2\)](#))
- C9** [S. 4\(2\)\(4\)](#) modified (7.11.2002, partly retrospective) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\), s. 11](#)
- C10** [S. 4\(5\)](#) restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\), ss. 58, 62; S.I. 2006/2838, art. 4\(1\)](#) (subject to [art. 4\(2\)](#))

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

[^{F42}4A Acquisition by registration: further provision for British overseas territories citizens

- (1) If an application is made to register as a British citizen a person who is a British overseas territories citizen, the Secretary of State may if he thinks fit cause the person to be so registered.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply in the case of a British overseas territories citizen who—
 - (a) is such a citizen by virtue only of a connection with the Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia; or
 - (b) has ceased to be a British citizen as a result of a declaration of renunciation.]

Textual Amendments

F42 S. 4A inserted (21.5.2002) by the [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), s. 4; S.I. 2002/1252, art. 2

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C11 S. 4A restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\)](#), ss. 58, 62; S.I. 2006/2838, art. 4(1) (subject to art. 4(2))

[^{F43}4B Acquisition by registration: certain persons without other citizenship

- (1) This section applies to a person who has the status of—
 - (a) British Overseas citizen,
 - (b) British subject under this Act, ^{F44} . . .
 - (c) British protected person. [^{F45}, or
 - (d) British National (Overseas)]
- (2) A person to whom this section applies shall be entitled to be registered as a British citizen if—
 - (a) he applies for registration under this section,
 - (b) the Secretary of State is satisfied that the person does not have, apart from the status mentioned in subsection (1), any citizenship or nationality, and
 - (c) the Secretary of State is satisfied that the person has not after [^{F46}the relevant day] renounced, voluntarily relinquished or lost through action or inaction any citizenship or nationality

[For the purposes of subsection (2)(c), the “relevant day” means—

- ^{F47}(3)
 - (a) in the case of a person to whom this section applies by virtue of subsection (1) (d) only, 19th March 2009, and
 - (b) in any other case, 4th July 2002.]]

Textual Amendments

F43 S. 4B inserted (30.4.2003) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\)](#), ss. 12(1), 162 (with s. 159); S.I. 2003/754, art. 2(1), Sch. 1 (with arts. 3, 4, Sch. 2 (as amended by S.I. 2003/1040, art. 2 and S.I. 2003/1339, art. 4))

F44 Word in s. 4B(1) repealed (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), ss. 44(2)(a), 56, 58, Sch. Pt. 2; S.I. 2009/2731, art. 4(c)(i)(j)

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- F45** S. 4B(1)(d) and preceding word inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 44\(2\)\(b\)](#), 56, 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(c\)](#)
- F46** Words in s. 4B(2)(c) substituted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 44\(3\)](#), 56, 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(c\)](#)
- F47** S. 4B(3) inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 44\(4\)](#), 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(c\)](#)

[^{F48}4C [^{F49}Acquisition by registration: certain persons born before 1983]

- (1) A person is entitled to be registered as a British citizen if—
- he applies for registration under this section, and
 - he satisfies each of the following conditions.
- (2) The first condition is that the applicant was born ^{F50} . . . before 1st January 1983.

[^{F51}(3) The second condition is that the applicant would at some time before 1st January 1983 have become a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies—

- under section 5 of, or paragraph 3 of Schedule 3 to, the 1948 Act if assumption A had applied,
- under section 12(3), (4) or (5) of that Act if assumption B had applied and as a result of its application the applicant would have been a British subject immediately before 1st January 1949, or
- under section 12(2) of that Act if one or both of the following had applied—
 - assumption A had applied;
 - assumption B had applied and as a result of its application the applicant would have been a British subject immediately before 1st January 1949.

(3A) Assumption A is that—

- section 5 or 12(2) of, or paragraph 3 of Schedule 3 to, the 1948 Act (as the case may be) provided for citizenship by descent from a mother in the same terms as it provided for citizenship by descent from a father, and
- references in that provision to a father were references to the applicant's mother.

(3B) Assumption B is that—

- a provision of the law at some time before 1st January 1949 which provided for a nationality status to be acquired by descent from a father provided in the same terms for its acquisition by descent from a mother, and
- references in that provision to a father were references to the applicant's mother.

(3C) For the purposes of subsection (3B), a nationality status is acquired by a person (“P”) by descent where its acquisition—

- depends, amongst other things, on the nationality status of one or both of P's parents, and
- does not depend upon an application being made for P's registration as a person who has the status in question.

(3D) For the purposes of subsection (3), it is not to be assumed that any registration or other requirements of the provisions mentioned in that subsection or in subsection (3B) were met.]

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (4) The third condition is that immediately before 1st January 1983 the applicant would have had the right of abode in the United Kingdom by virtue of section 2 of the Immigration Act 1971 (c. 77) had he become a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies as described in subsection (3) above.

[For the purposes of the interpretation of section 5 of the 1948 Act in its application^{F52} (5) in the case of assumption A to a case of descent from a mother, the reference in the proviso to subsection (1) of that section to “a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies by descent only” includes a reference to a female person who became a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies by virtue of—

- (a) section 12(2), (4) or (6) only of the 1948 Act,
- (b) section 13(2) of that Act,
- (c) paragraph 3 of Schedule 3 to that Act, or
- (d) section 1(1)(a) or (c) of the British Nationality (No. 2) Act 1964.]

Textual Amendments

- F48** S. 4C inserted (30.4.2003) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\)](#), **ss. 13(1)**, 162 (with s. 159); [S.I. 2003/754](#), **art. 2(1)**, Sch. 1 (with arts. 3, 4, Sch. 2 (as amended by [S.I. 2003/1040](#), **art. 2** and [S.I. 2003/1339](#), **art. 4**))
- F49** S. 4C title substituted (13.1.2010) by virtue of [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), **ss. 45(1)**, 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), **art. 4(d)**
- F50** Words in s. 4C(2) repealed (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), **ss. 45(2)**, 56, 58, **Sch. Pt. 2**; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), **art. 4(d)(i)(j)**
- F51** S. 4C(3)-(3D) substituted (13.1.2010) for s. 4C(3) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), **ss. 45(3)**, 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), **art. 4(d)**
- F52** S. 4C(5) inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), **ss. 45(4)**, 58; [S.I. 2009/2731](#), **art. 4(d)**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C12** S. 4C restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\)](#), **ss. 58**, 62; [S.I. 2006/2838](#), **art. 4(1)** (subject to **art. 4(2)**)

[^{F53}4D Acquisition by registration: children of members of the armed forces

- (1) A person (“P”) born outside the United Kingdom and the qualifying territories on or after the relevant day is entitled to be registered as a British citizen if—
 - (a) an application is made for P’s registration under this section; and
 - (b) each of the following conditions is satisfied.
- (2) The first condition is that, at the time of P’s birth, P’s father or mother was—
 - (a) a member of the armed forces; and
 - (b) serving outside the United Kingdom and the qualifying territories.
- (3) The second condition is that, if P is a minor on the date of the application, the consent of P’s father and mother to P’s registration as a British citizen has been signified in the prescribed manner.
- (4) But if P’s father or mother has died on or before the date of the application, the reference in subsection (3) to P’s father and mother is to be read as a reference to either of them.

Status: Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

- (5) The Secretary of State may, in the special circumstances of a particular case, waive the need for the second condition to be satisfied.
- (6) The relevant day for the purposes of this section is the day appointed for the commencement of section 46 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 (which inserted this section).]

Textual Amendments

F53 S. 4D inserted (13.1.2010) by [Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009 \(c. 11\)](#), [ss. 46, 58](#); S.I. [2009/2731](#), [art. 4\(e\)](#)

5 Acquisition by registration: nationals for purposes of the [F21EU] Treaties.

A [F54British overseas territories citizen] who falls to be treated as a national of the United Kingdom for the purposes of the [F21EU] Treaties shall be entitled to be registered as a British citizen if an application is made for his registration as such a citizen.

Textual Amendments

F21 Words in Act substituted (22.4.2011) by [The Treaty of Lisbon \(Changes in Terminology\) Order 2011 \(S.I. 2011/1043\)](#), [arts. 2, 3, 6](#) (with [arts. 3\(2\)\(3\)6\(4\)\(5\)](#))

F54 Words in s. 5 substituted (26.2.2002) by [British Overseas Territories Act 2002 \(c. 8\)](#), [s. 2\(2\)\(b\)](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C13 S. 5 restricted (4.12.2006) by [Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 \(c. 13\)](#), [ss. 58, 62](#); S.I. [2006/2838](#), [art. 4\(1\)](#) (subject to [art. 4\(2\)](#))

6 Acquisition by naturalisation.

- (1) If, on an application for naturalisation as a British citizen made by a person of full age and capacity, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the applicant fulfils the requirements of Schedule 1 for naturalisation as such a citizen under this subsection, he may, if he thinks fit, grant to him a certificate of naturalisation as such a citizen.
- (2) If, on an application for naturalisation as a British citizen made by a person of full age and capacity who on the date of the application is married to a British citizen, [F55or is the civil partner of a British citizen] the Secretary of State is satisfied that the applicant fulfils the requirements of Schedule 1 for naturalisation as such a citizen under this subsection, he may, if he thinks fit, grant to him a certificate of naturalisation as such a citizen.

Textual Amendments

F55 Words in s. 6(2) inserted (5.12.2005) by [Civil Partnership Act 2004 \(c. 33\)](#), [ss. 261\(1\), 263](#), [Sch. 27 para. 72](#); S.I. [2005/3175](#), [art. 2\(2\)](#) (subject to [art. 2\(3\)-\(5\)](#))

Status:

Point in time view as at 22/04/2011.

Changes to legislation:

British Nationality Act 1981, Cross Heading: Acquisition after commencement is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 April 2024. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations.