



# 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 [<sup>F1</sup>, 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 [<sup>F2</sup>or that territory].

[<sup>F3</sup>(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 [<sup>F4</sup>, 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 [<sup>F5</sup>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 [<sup>F6</sup>or that territory].
- (3) A person born in the United Kingdom after commencement who is not a British citizen by virtue of subsection (1) [<sup>F7</sup>, (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*Status: Point in time view as at 31/12/2020.*

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- [<sup>F8</sup>(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) [<sup>F9</sup>, (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.
- [<sup>F10</sup>(5) Where—
- (a) any court in the United Kingdom [<sup>F11</sup>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 [<sup>F12</sup>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 [<sup>F13</sup>or in a designated territory].]
- (6) Where an order [<sup>F14</sup>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  
<sup>F15</sup> . . . .
- [<sup>F16</sup>(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).]

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### 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 modified (21.12.2018) by The Human Fertilisation and Embryology (Parental Orders) Regulations 2018 (S.I. 2018/1412), reg. 1(2), **Sch. 4 para. 10**
- C2** S. 1(1) explained by S.I. 1972/1613, **art. 6** (as inserted by S.I. 1982/1649, **art. 3**)
- C3** 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))
- C4** 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**
- C5** 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 [<sup>F17</sup>and the qualifying territories] after commencement shall be a British citizen if at the time of the birth his father or mother—
- (a) is a British citizen otherwise than by descent; or

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- (b) is a British citizen and is serving outside the United Kingdom [<sup>F18</sup>and the qualifying territories] in service to which this paragraph applies, his or her recruitment for that service having taken place in the United Kingdom [<sup>F19</sup>or a qualifying territory]; or
- (c) is a British citizen and is serving outside the United Kingdom [<sup>F20</sup>and the qualifying territories] in service under an [<sup>F21</sup>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 [<sup>F22</sup>the European Union].
- (2) Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) applies to—
- (a) Crown service under the government of the United Kingdom [<sup>F23</sup>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 [<sup>F24</sup>and the qualifying territories] of Her Majesty's government in the United Kingdom [<sup>F25</sup>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 [<sup>F26</sup>and the qualifying territories] shall be entitled, on an application for his registration as a British citizen made [<sup>F27</sup>while he is a

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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) 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 [<sup>F28</sup>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 [<sup>F29</sup>and the qualifying territories] in that period does not exceed 270.
- (4) <sup>F30</sup> .....
- (5) A person born outside the United Kingdom [<sup>F31</sup>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 [<sup>F32</sup>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 [<sup>F33</sup>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 [<sup>F34</sup>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; [<sup>F35</sup> 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; <sup>F36</sup> ...
  - <sup>F37</sup>(c) .....

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### 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)

- C6** 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\(2\)](#))
- C7** 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: [<sup>F38</sup>British overseas territories citizens]etc.

- (1) This section applies to any person who is a [<sup>F39</sup>British overseas territories citizen], [<sup>F40</sup>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

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- (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 [<sup>F41</sup>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 [<sup>F41</sup>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)

- C8** S. 4(2)(4) modified (7.11.2002, partly retrospective) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\), s. 11](#)
- C9** 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\(2\)](#))
- C10** S. 4(2)(4) modified (7.11.2002, partly retrospective) by [Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(c. 41\), s. 11](#)
- C11** 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\(2\)](#))

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**[<sup>F42</sup>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)**

**C12** 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\(2\)](#))

**[<sup>F43</sup>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, <sup>F44</sup> . . .
  - (c) British protected person. [<sup>F45</sup>, 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 [<sup>F46</sup>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—

- <sup>F47</sup>(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\(c\)\(i\)\(j\)](#)



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- 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\(c\)](#)

[<sup>F48</sup>4C [<sup>F49</sup>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 <sup>F50</sup> . . . before 1st January 1983.

[<sup>F51</sup>(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.]

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- (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<sup>F52</sup> (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)

- C13** 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)**)

#### [<sup>F53</sup>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.

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- (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\(e\)](#)

#### [<sup>F54</sup>4E The general conditions

For the purposes of sections 4F to 4I, a person (“P”) meets the general conditions if—

- (a) P was born before 1 July 2006;
- (b) at the time of P's birth, P's mother—
  - (i) was not married, or
  - (ii) was married to a person other than P's natural father;
- (c) no person is treated as the father of P under section 28 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990; and
- (d) P has never been a British citizen.

#### Textual Amendments

**F54** Ss. 4E-4J inserted (6.4.2015) by [Immigration Act 2014 \(c. 22\)](#), [ss. 65, 75\(3\)](#); S.I. [2015/371](#), [art. 4\(b\)](#)

#### 4F Person unable to be registered under other provisions of this Act

- (1) A person (“P”) is entitled to be registered as a British citizen on an application made under this section if—
  - (a) P meets the general conditions; and
  - (b) P would be entitled to be registered as a British citizen under—
    - (i) section 1(3),
    - (ii) section 3(2),
    - (iii) section 3(5),
    - (iv) paragraph 4 of Schedule 2, or
    - (v) paragraph 5 of Schedule 2,had P's mother been married to P's natural father at the time of P's birth.
- (2) In the following provisions of this section “relevant registration provision” means the provision under which P would be entitled to be registered as a British citizen (as mentioned in subsection (1)(b)).
- (3) If the relevant registration provision is section 3(2), a person who is registered as a British citizen under this section is a British citizen by descent.

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- (4) If the relevant registration provision is section 3(5), the Secretary of State may, in the special circumstances of the particular case, waive the need for any or all of the parental consents to be given.
- (5) For that purpose, the “parental consents” are—
- (a) the consent of P's natural father, and
  - (b) the consent of P's mother,
- insofar as they would be required by section 3(5)(c) (as read with section 3(6)(b)), had P's mother been married to P's natural father at the time of P's birth.

#### Textual Amendments

**F54** Ss. 4E-4J inserted (6.4.2015) by Immigration Act 2014 (c. 22), ss. 65, 75(3); S.I. 2015/371, art. 4(b)

### 4G Person unable to become citizen automatically after commencement

- (1) A person (“P”) is entitled to be registered as a British citizen on an application made under this section if—
- (a) P meets the general conditions; and
  - (b) at any time in the period after commencement, P would have automatically become a British citizen at birth by the operation of any provision of this Act or the British Nationality (Falkland Islands) Act 1983, had P's mother been married to P's natural father at the time of P's birth.
- (2) A person who is registered as a British citizen under this section is a British citizen by descent if the British citizenship which the person would have acquired at birth (as mentioned in subsection (1)(b)) would (by virtue of section 14) have been British citizenship by descent.
- (3) If P is under the age of 18, no application may be made unless the consent of P's natural father and mother to the registration has been signified in the prescribed manner.
- (4) But if P's natural father or mother has died on or before the date of the application, the reference in subsection (3) to P's natural father and mother is to be read as a reference to either of them.
- (5) The Secretary of State may, in the special circumstances of a particular case, waive the need for any or all of the consents required by subsection (3) (as read with subsection (4)) to be given.
- (6) The reference in this section to the period after commencement does not include the time of commencement (and, accordingly, this section does not apply to any case in which a person was unable to become a British citizen at commencement).

#### Textual Amendments

**F54** Ss. 4E-4J inserted (6.4.2015) by Immigration Act 2014 (c. 22), ss. 65, 75(3); S.I. 2015/371, art. 4(b)

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#### 4H Citizen of UK and colonies unable to become citizen at commencement

- (1) A person (“P”) is entitled to be registered as a British citizen on an application made under this section if—
  - (a) P meets the general conditions;
  - (b) P was a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies immediately before commencement; and
  - (c) P would have automatically become a British citizen at commencement, by the operation of any provision of this Act, had P’s mother been married to P’s natural father at the time of P’s birth.
- (2) A person who is registered as a British citizen under this section is a British citizen by descent if the British citizenship which the person would have acquired at commencement (as mentioned in subsection (1)(c)) would (by virtue of section 14) have been British citizenship by descent.

#### Textual Amendments

**F54** Ss. 4E-4J inserted (6.4.2015) by [Immigration Act 2014 \(c. 22\)](#), ss. 65, 75(3); S.I. 2015/371, art. 4(b)

#### 4I Other person unable to become citizen at commencement

- (1) A person (“P”) is entitled to be registered as a British citizen on an application made under this section if—
  - (a) P meets the general conditions;
  - (b) P is either—
    - (i) an eligible former British national, or
    - (ii) an eligible non-British national; and
  - (c) had P’s mother been married to P’s natural father at the time of P’s birth, P—
    - (i) would have been a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies immediately before commencement, and
    - (ii) would have automatically become a British citizen at commencement by the operation of any provision of this Act.
- (2) P is an “eligible former British national” if P was not a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies immediately before commencement and either—
  - (a) P ceased to be a British subject or a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies by virtue of the commencement of any independence legislation, but would not have done so had P’s mother been married to P’s natural father at the time of P’s birth, or
  - (b) P was a British subject who did not automatically become a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies at commencement of the British Nationality Act 1948 by the operation of any provision of it, but would have done so had P’s mother been married to P’s natural father at the time of P’s birth.
- (3) P is an “eligible non-British national” if—
  - (a) P was never a British subject or citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies; and
  - (b) had P’s mother been married to P’s natural father at the time of P’s birth, P would have automatically become a British subject or citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies—

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- (i) at birth, or
  - (ii) by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 3 to the British Nationality Act 1948 (child of male British subject to become citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies if the father becomes such a citizen).
- (4) A person who is registered as a British citizen under this section is a British citizen by descent if the British citizenship which the person would have acquired at commencement (as mentioned in subsection (1)(c)(ii)) would (by virtue of section 14) have been British citizenship by descent.
- (5) In determining for the purposes of subsection (1)(c)(i) whether P would have been a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies immediately before commencement, it must be assumed that P would not have—
- (a) renounced or been deprived of any notional British nationality, or
  - (b) lost any notional British nationality by virtue of P acquiring the nationality of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom.
- (6) A “notional British nationality” is—
- (a) in a case where P is an eligible former British national, any status as a British subject or a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies which P would have held at any time after P's nationality loss (had that loss not occurred and had P's mother had been married to P's natural father at the time of P's birth);
  - (b) in a case where P is an eligible non-British national—
    - (i) P's status as a British subject or citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies mentioned in subsection (3)(b), and
    - (ii) any other status as a British subject or citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies which P would have held at any time afterwards (had P's mother been married to P's natural father at the time of P's birth).
- (7) In this section—
- “British subject” has any meaning which it had for the purposes of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914;
- “independence legislation” means an Act of Parliament or any subordinate legislation (within the meaning of the Interpretation Act 1978) forming part of the law in the United Kingdom (whenever passed or made, and whether or not still in force)—
- (a) providing for a country or territory to become independent from the United Kingdom, or
  - (b) dealing with nationality, or any other ancillary matters, in connection with a country or territory becoming independent from the United Kingdom;
- “P's nationality loss” means P's—
- (a) ceasing to be a British subject or citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies (as mentioned in subsection (2)(a)), or
  - (b) not becoming a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies (as mentioned in subsection (2)(b)).

#### Textual Amendments

**F54** Ss. 4E-4J inserted (6.4.2015) by [Immigration Act 2014 \(c. 22\)](#), ss. 65, 75(3); S.I. 2015/371, art. 4(b)

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#### 4J Sections 4E to 4I: supplementary provision

- (1) In sections 4E to 4I and this section, a person's “natural father” is a person who satisfies the requirements as to proof of paternity that are prescribed in regulations under section 50(9B).
- (2) The power under section 50(9B) to make different provision for different circumstances includes power to make provision for the purposes of any provision of sections 4E to 4I which is different from other provision made under section 50(9B).
- (3) The following provisions apply for the purposes of sections 4E to 4I.
- (4) A reference to a person automatically becoming a British citizen, or a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies, is a reference to the person becoming such a citizen without the need for—
  - (a) the person to be registered as such a citizen by the Secretary of State or any other minister of the Crown;
  - (b) the birth of the person to be registered by a diplomatic or consular representative of the United Kingdom; or
  - (c) the person to be naturalised as such a citizen.
- (5) If the mother of a person could not actually have been married to the person's natural father at the time of the person's birth (for whatever reason), that fact does not prevent an assumption being made that the couple were married at the time of the birth.]

##### Textual Amendments

**F54** Ss. 4E-4J inserted (6.4.2015) by [Immigration Act 2014 \(c. 22\)](#), ss. 65, 75(3); S.I. 2015/371, art. 4(b)

#### [<sup>F55</sup> **Acquisition by registration: British overseas territories citizens having connection with Gibraltar**

A person who is a British overseas territories citizen by virtue of a connection with Gibraltar is entitled to be registered as a British citizen if an application is made for their registration as such a citizen.]

##### Textual Amendments

**F55** S. 5 substituted (31.12.2020) by [The Immigration, Nationality and Asylum \(EU Exit\) Regulations 2019 \(S.I. 2019/745\)](#), regs. 1(2), 7 (with Sch. 2 para. 2); 2020 c. 1, Sch. 5 para. 1(1)

##### Modifications etc. (not altering text)

**C14** 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.

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- (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, [<sup>F56</sup>or 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.

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**Textual Amendments**

**F56** 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 31/12/2020.

**Changes to legislation:**

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