



British Nationality Act 1981

1981 CHAPTER 61

PART I

BRITISH CITIZENSHIP

Acquisition after commencement

[^{F1}4L Acquisition by registration: special circumstances

- (1) If an application is made for a person of full age and capacity (“P”) to be registered as a British citizen, the Secretary of State may cause P to be registered as such a citizen if, in the Secretary of State’s opinion, P would have been, or would have been able to become, a British citizen but for—
 - (a) historical legislative unfairness,
 - (b) an act or omission of a public authority, or
 - (c) exceptional circumstances relating to P.
- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(a), “historical legislative unfairness” includes circumstances where P would have become, or would not have ceased to be, a British subject, a citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies or a British citizen, if an Act of Parliament or subordinate legislation (within the meaning of the Interpretation Act 1978) had, for the purposes of determining a person’s nationality status—
 - (a) treated males and females equally,
 - (b) treated children of unmarried couples in the same way as children of married couples, or
 - (c) treated children of couples where the mother was married to someone other than the natural father in the same way as children of couples where the mother was married to the natural father.
- (3) In subsection (1)(b), “public authority” means any public authority within the meaning of section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998, other than a court or tribunal.
- (4) In considering whether to grant an application under this section, the Secretary of State may take into account whether the applicant is of good character.]

Changes to legislation: British Nationality Act 1981, Section 4L is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 23 January 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) [View outstanding changes](#)

Textual Amendments

F1 S. 4L inserted (28.6.2022) by [Nationality and Borders Act 2022 \(c. 36\)](#), **ss. 8(2)**, 87(1); S.I. 2022/590, regs. 1(2), 2, Sch. 1 para. 7

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Changes and effects yet to be applied to the whole Act associated Parts and Chapters:

Whole provisions yet to be inserted into this Act (including any effects on those provisions):

- s. 6(3)(4) inserted by [2009 c. 11 s. 40\(2\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- s. 41(1)(bc)-(be) inserted by [2009 c. 11 s. 41\(2\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- s. 41(1B)(1C) inserted by [2009 c. 11 s. 41\(3\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 2(1)(ba)(bb) inserted by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(5\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 2(1)(ca) inserted by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(7\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 2(5) inserted by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(10\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 6(2)-(4) inserted by [2022 c. 36 Sch. 1 para. 3\(4\)\(d\)](#)
- Sch. 1 para. 2(1)(c) repealed by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(6\)](#)[Sch. Pt. 2](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 2(1)(a) substituted by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(4\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 2(2)-(4) substituted for Sch. 1 para. 2(2)(3) by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(9\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 2(1)(d) word substituted by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(8\)\(a\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))
- Sch. 1 para. 2(1)(d) words substituted by [2009 c. 11 s. 39\(8\)\(b\)](#) (Amending provision prospectively repealed by [2022 c. 36, s. 9\(3\)\(a\)](#))