

Dear Head of Mission,

**A note from Marc Owen, Director of Visas and Citizenship, UKVI**

I am writing to update you on provisions made by the Home Office for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

As you will be aware, the impact of COVID-19 is now widespread and we are seeing the implementation of strict measures worldwide to control the spread of the disease. This situation has placed foreign nationals in the United Kingdom at risk of overstaying beyond the end date of their visa, due to circumstances outside of their control.

The Home Office has now published updated guidance on GOV.UK ([gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents)), for visa customers and applicants and those travelling to and from the UK, and we recommend **all concerned to check this regularly**. Please also continue to refer to, and follow, NHS and PHE guidance.

**Summary:**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic we are providing visa extensions for those affected by coronavirus. Nobody will be penalised for circumstances outside of their control. The Home Office aim is to ensure that individuals here legally, but who are unable to leave because of COVID-19 related travel restrictions, will not be regarded as an overstayer; will not suffer any immigration detriment in the future; and will not be pursued during the crisis. **This temporary extension applies to all foreign nationals in the UK whose permission to be here has expired since 24 January 2020 and are unable to leave the UK due to COVID-19**

**Detail:**

**Visa Customers in the UK**

Individuals who cannot leave the UK before the expiry of their leave due to travel restrictions or self-isolation, and who do not wish to stay in the UK in the long-term, **must contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team (CIT) by email** to advise of their situation. This requirement to contact CIT applies to individuals of any nationality whose leave has expired since or after 24 January 2020 to 31 May 2020.

The CIT email is: [CIT@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:CIT@homeoffice.gov.uk)

Individuals should include the following in their email:

- full name (including any middle names)
- date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy)
- nationality
- previous visa reference number
- why they can't go back to their home country, for example if the border has closed

The CIT will update details on Home Office databases. Individuals will be advised that the Home Office has noted their details; they will **not** be subject to enforcement action; and this period will **not** be held against them in future applications.

If circumstances require, the Home Office will update this position further ahead of 31 May 2020.

For individuals who cannot leave the UK due to travel restrictions or self-isolation and wish to stay in the UK in the long-term, who would ordinarily need to apply for a visa from their home country, for a limited period the Home Office will allow in-country switching between routes to allow them to apply from the UK.

In the first instance, the Home Office will allow this for people whose leave has expired between 24 January 2020 to 31 May 2020 inclusive. This includes the cohort of individuals who have already had their leave auto-extended to 31 March.

Those affected would still need to **meet all of the requirements** of the route they are applying for before being granted a visa and will be required to pay the requisite fee (as they would if they had applied from abroad).

Making a valid, in time application, and paying the required fee, will mean individuals **will automatically be in the country lawfully**, until their application is determined.

**There is no fee for individuals whose permission to stay in the UK short-term is extended until 31 May. For those applying for long-term visas, the usual fee will apply.**

#### Visa customers outside of the UK

I would also like to update you that many of the UKs Visa Application Centres (VACs) are currently closed and we anticipate more closing. Many that are open are offering a limited service.

For up to date advice on services in each country, individuals should access the relevant commercial partner:

- Europe, Africa and parts of the Middle East visit: [uk.tlscontact.com](https://uk.tlscontact.com)
- All other countries visit: [vfsglobal.co.uk](https://vfsglobal.co.uk)

#### Next Steps

I hope that this provides you with the information you need to reassure your nationals who are currently in the UK.

We welcome you sharing this information, and the contact email, on your own website and consular pages.

Please note that the quickest route to individuals feeling confident in their immigration position is to follow the steps set out above.

1. Contacting the CIT team for short term or
2. making an in country application for longer term.

Please ensure your nationals are following the correct advice and up to date contact and application details.

All concerned should continue to regularly monitor **the gov.uk webpage** ([gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents](https://gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents)), where all updates will be posted. We have also attached a factsheet.

Finally, we will be hosting a telephone call to discuss this position in more detail and will be in touch shortly to arrange. Please await further details.

Missions may also contact [VCStakeholderEngagement@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:VCStakeholderEngagement@homeoffice.gov.uk) with any queries not addressed by the gov.uk webpage or the telephone call. Please do not share this email externally.

Thank you

Marc Owen