



# ANNEX FM

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A Guide to understanding and  
completing Annex FM  
applications

**AUGUST 2025**



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## Why does immigration status matter?

At least **1 in 10 children** in care in England are not British. This figure is likely to be much higher in Manchester where just under 1/3 of the population is not British.

It's important that children have permission to be in the UK and their future in the UK is secure.

Local authorities have a duty to support children in care to regularise their immigration status in the UK before they turn 18. It's estimated that there are **215,000 undocumented children** living in the UK. These are children who may go on to miss out on things like university, driving, housing, employment and benefits if their immigration status doesn't get regularised. They are also at risk of removal or deportation from the UK.

Included in the recent 2025 immigration white paper there is a commitment to support children who have been in the UK for some time and turn 18 without having their immigration status resolved. This will include children in care and care leavers.

Immigration status and nationality should be included in care planning for all children in care, to ensure they are not missed or assumed to be British or have leave to remain. It also ensures that all options of family or kinship care, including those overseas, are explored.

## What are the options for children in care without leave to remain?

This is not an exhaustive list of all potential immigration applications. If you are a local authority in Greater Manchester and are unsure on what route to take, please contact us to book a consultation session for immigration advice. We can explore the child's situation and advise on the best application to make.

Many children in care in the UK without family in the UK will be eligible to claim asylum. Separated children can claim asylum when they have a



well-founded fear of persecution in their country due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group. They must be unable or unwilling to seek protection from this fear in their country, and unable to internally relocate. It is important to explore with a child how they came to the UK, and whether they fear a return to their own country. You can refer for immigration advice for separated asylum-seeking children from GMIAU [here](#). If a child wishes to claim asylum they need to be supported to claim before they turn 18. Please ensure that the young person has registered their asylum claim before referring to GMIAU. This needs to be arranged by the local authority if the child did not claim immediately on arrival.

For some children in care with immigration issues in the UK, claiming asylum will not be the appropriate application for them. The local authority might assess that it is a child's best interest to remain in the UK, but they might not have a well-founded fear of persecution in their country. The local authority can make an application under Annex FM.

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### What is Annex FM?

Annex FM is the guidance for caseworkers dealing with applications from children under the Immigration rules based on family or private life. Where the child cannot meet the requirements of the Rules the Home Office should consider whether to grant leave to remain anyway, in line with this guidance; you can find it [here](#). Section 8 applies to children in care. It says:

*"Decisions about the future of children in the care of the local authority should be left primarily in the hands of their social services department as they will be best placed to act in the child's best interests."*

Although an application through Annex FM is an immigration application, the guidance explains that the local authority are best placed to act in a child's best interest and make decisions about the future of a child. Local authorities routinely make decisions about children under their care's



future; this includes where they should live and how they will be best supported to thrive in the future.

The guidance goes on to say:

*"While the local authority may look into the possibility of arranging the repatriation of a child in their care, such action will only be taken if it is in the child's best interests. Where they consider it may be in the child's best interests to be repatriated, they will normally make full enquiries to ensure that suitable arrangements are made for the child's care and to satisfy themselves that repatriation is indeed in the child's best interests. We should ask to be kept informed of developments."*

Social work guidance and legislation states that in many circumstances children being with their family is in their best interest. It is important to explore if returning a child to their family overseas would be the best thing for them. Children may have family members overseas who are willing and able to care for them and children may wish to live with them. If exploring overseas placements, or kinship care we recommend contacting Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB) for further advice on how to do this.

However, there will also be circumstances where being with family is not in a child's best interest, and it is decided for them to stay under the care of the local authority in the UK. The guidance says:

*"If the social services advise that it would be appropriate for the child to remain in the United Kingdom, consideration should be given to granting the child leave to remain."*

Local authorities can apply for leave to remain if they assess it is in the child's best interest for them to remain in care in the UK. Children can be granted limited leave for 12 months. This will happen where there is a "realistic possibility of the child returning to his parent(s) and/or country of origin in the future". Local authorities could apply for this leave whilst they are still exploring the possibility of return but wish to secure the child's leave to remain in the interim.



The guidance says, “*where there is no prospect of the child leaving, the child may be granted leave to remain for 4 years*”. Therefore, if the local authority has assessed that it is in a child’s best interest to remain in the UK, they should be granted leave to remain for four years. If there is still no prospect of return after 4 years, indefinite leave to remain (ILR) may be granted.

So, settlement can be achieved for young people on this route after 4 years. ILR / settlement should be applied for before their 4 years’ leave expires. This can be applied for even if the young person has turned 18 during that time. There is a fee for the settlement application. You should seek legal advice when a child / care leaver’s 4 years’ leave is due to expire.

The local authority should also consider if a child is eligible for British citizenship, you can read more in our guide [here](#). The chances of success in **[British Citizenship](#)** applications are increased if the child is settled.

### **When might I consider Annex FM?**

It is impossible for us to cover every situation where Annex FM might be a possible application. There are likely to be lots of children in your care who would be eligible to apply under this route.

Here are some examples of situations where it should be possible:

- Child born in the UK with no links to their country of nationality (also explore British citizenship if they are over the age of 10)
- Child left in the UK by parents, no successful contact with family, or they do not wish to be reunited with them
- Child trafficked to the UK, unsure of family background (may also explore if an asylum claim is possible)
- Child brought to the UK by unknown adults and left here, unable to contact family overseas
- Child brought to the UK by parents who did not renew the child’s immigration status. Child has been taken into care, parents still in the UK but not involved.



If you are unsure if the child's situation would make them eligible for Annex FM and in Greater Manchester, please contact us for an immigration consultation session.

The local authority as always, should assess what is in the best interest of the child. As with any assessment, it will be important to speak to the child about what they want for the future and, if they wish to remain in the UK, why. Other countries might have adequate social work services that could support a child if they are not able to return to their family. However, the local authority must assess if this is in the child's best interest, or if it would be best for them to stay in the UK.

Things to consider may include:

- Support networks in the UK vs. country of nationality
- Do they have contact with friends or family in their country of nationality?
- How long they have been in the UK and if they have built a life here
- How settled they seem under their current care plan. Have they built relationships with the foster carers/placement which would be damaging to them to end?
- Do they see their future in the UK?
- The impact not having leave to remain in UK has had on them?
- Has care planning focused on the assumption that they would remain in the UK and under the care of the local authority? What reason would there be to change that plan?

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**What evidence is needed?**

It is important to evidence as much as possible why the local authority has come to the assessment that remaining in the UK under their care, is in the child's best interest.

This may include:

- Any ID documents or birth certificates the local authority holds
- Care planning and assessments carried out by the local authority. Especially if there has been exploration of the child remaining in the UK or planning for their future

- Care order if there is one (this should always be explored even if a child has immigration issues as it may be needed to keep the child safe in the UK)
- We would recommend completing a subject access request to the Home Office, so the local authority is aware of all the information they hold on the child. You can do that by asking for detailed version [here](#)
- Proof of contact, or attempts of, with authorities in country of nationality, and with birth family if appropriate
- Supporting letter from the social worker (template found below). This is a really important piece of evidence as it will show why the local authority has assessed remaining in their care in the UK is in the child's best interest
- Supporting letter from placement or foster carers (template found below)
- Statement from the child about their views about remaining in the UK (template found below)
- Supporting letters from any other professional with a view on the child's best interest

### Can social workers apply for Annex FM?

If you are a social worker in Greater Manchester, you can book onto a consultation session to discuss the application and process if needed. If the application is more complicated, we may be able to take it on, depending on capacity, however this application can be completed by social workers on behalf of the child.

Immigration advice is heavily regulated and should only be given by those accredited to do so. However, social workers are permitted to complete citizenship applications on behalf of looked after children as stated in this OISC, now IAA, practice note on Immigration Assistance, which states:

*"Organisations such as Local Authorities may have court ordered authority to act on behalf of a vulnerable adult or child in care. In such circumstances assisting the vulnerable adult or child by providing free immigration advice or assistance does not require OISC regulation, as the assistance is given in a relationship which is akin to that of a parent or family member with care responsibilities."*

## How to apply?

The application should be completed online using [this](#) form. This application can be saved and returned to before being submitted.

**It is important to be aware that as this is an immigration application social workers must ensure all the information submitted to the Home Office is correct.** We recommend downloading a copy of the completed application form.

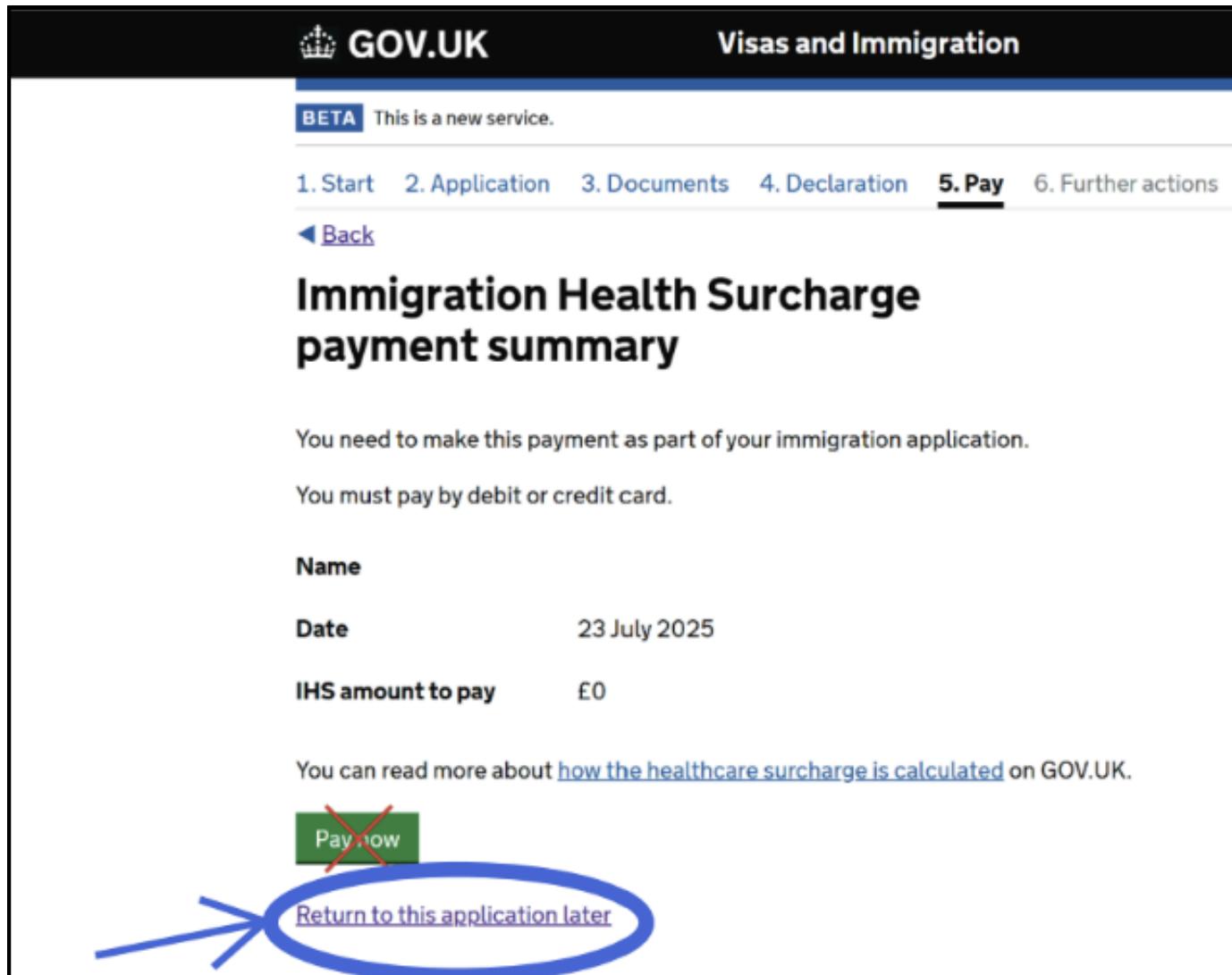
The form will ask for information about the child that the local authority should already have.

This includes:

- Child's details
- Address history including dates moved
- Nationality and where they were born
- Confirmation that they are receiving support from the local authority
- Date arrived in the UK
- Time spent outside of the UK
- Details of other countries lived in
- Details of ties and social groups in other countries
- If required to leave the UK, where they would go? (check with the child as they may have family elsewhere.)
- Any factors that would prevent return to their country
- Questions around criminality and links to terrorist organisations
- Previous Home Office reference number (if known)
- Details of application. You can give a brief explanation here as more detail will be submitted in the evidence. For example: "XXX is a child in care with no prospect of return to their Home Country. The LA have looked into the possibility of arranging the repatriation but this is impossible. The LA cannot establish and contact with their family. The LA have made other attempts, but these have all been unsuccessful. Evidence of this will be provided alongside the application. The LA deem it to be in their best interests to remain in the UK as there is no other realistic option for them. Please see accompanying evidence for more detail".
- If the child is under 16, they may need the details of who will support them to a biometric appointment.

## Top tips

- Towards the end of the online form, you will reach a page which asks you to 'pay' the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). This is £0 and just involves clicking 'Pay Now' on the form.
- **HOWEVER**, once you have clicked 'Pay Now' you cannot go back and edit any of your answers.
- We recommend clicking 'Return to this application later' so that you can save a PDF of the incomplete form AND email yourself the link to sign back in.
- **ONLY** click 'Pay Now' once you have checked that all of the details are correct and you are ready to submit the application.
- Otherwise, you will have to start a whole new application if you need to amend anything.



GOV.UK Visas and Immigration

BETA This is a new service.

1. Start 2. Application 3. Documents 4. Declaration **5. Pay** 6. Further actions

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## Immigration Health Surcharge payment summary

You need to make this payment as part of your immigration application.

You must pay by debit or credit card.

**Name**

**Date** 23 July 2025

**IHS amount to pay** £0

You can read more about [how the healthcare surcharge is calculated](#) on GOV.UK.

**Pay Now**

[Return to this application later](#)



## Next steps:

- You will then need to download a copy of the supporting documents checklist, which advises you what evidence to upload.
- You should download the PDF of the final submitted version of the application.
- You will need to upload the supporting evidence.
- You will need to book a biometrics appointment.

## Uploading evidence:

- Once the application form is submitted, you will receive an email titled 'Document upload account creation' which includes a link to the UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services Document Upload Portal.
- You need to click the link and create an account using the 12-digit Unique Application Number (UAN) which you will find on the email and on the saved PDF form.
- Follow the instructions on the email. You need to create/reset password in order to login.
- You will need to do this for each application you make.
- Keep all passwords securely recorded.
- When you upload your supporting evidence, the documents need to be in PDF format.
- Then you need to select which category of document it is (eg. Passport = 'Proof of Identity and Travel'. Most supporting letters will be categorised as 'Other Evidence'). There is a useful table in the Document upload account creation email to help you with this.

## Biometrics:

- Biometrics are fingerprints and photographs. The Home Office record these to make sure applications are not being made on behalf of others / to prevent fraud.
- You can book the biometrics appointment immediately after submitting the application by clicking the link which is on the 'what you need to do next' page after submission. This tells you the deadline which the biometrics appointment must be booked by.

- (You can also return to this page at a later time by clicking on the sign in link which would have been emailed to you once submitted.)
- The biometrics link on the online form takes you to the online booking system which shows dates which are available.
- Select a time slot on an available date.
- You will receive an email with the booking confirmation and an attached QR code which will need to be shown at the biometrics appointment along with the ID of the applicant and the person supporting them.
- When booking the biometrics appointment you will have the option of available dates and need to select a time slot.
- The nearest places to Manchester are Liverpool and Sheffield. If you are elsewhere you can check your nearest place here: <http://www.gov.uk/visas-and-immigration-service-and-support-centres/locations>



#### Further information:

If you are unsure on if this application is appropriate or need support in completing and are within Greater Manchester, please contact us to arrange a consultation session. You can contact [kathleen@gmiau.org](mailto:kathleen@gmiau.org)

- If you are outside Greater Manchester, or we do not have capacity, you could contact legal aid solicitors or consider paying for a private solicitor.

## Templates

### Support letter template for Annex FM

- [Download template](#)

#### Local Authority headed paper

Date

To whom it may concern,

**Regarding [Name, DOB]**

#### **My current role:**

Explain your current role, for example:

"I am a social worker in the cared for children team at XXXX Local Authority. I have worked in this role since XXXXX. I hold a current case load of XXXXX children. I regularly carry out assessments of needs and consider children's best interests when completing these".

#### **My experience:**

Include any relevant qualifications, experience and training, especially those related to working with children with insecure immigration status, carrying out assessments and recommending the best interests of children. For example:

"Before my current role I worked as a duty and assessment social worker in XXXX Local Authority. I was in this role for XXX years. My duties included XXXXXX.

I am a qualified and registered social worker, I completed my training in XXXX. I have undertaken further training in XXXXXX."

#### **Work with XXXX:**

Detail your relationship with the child whose application you are supporting, how long you have supported them, how regular you have had contact with them, and the type of contact. For example:

"I have been working with XXX since XXX as their social worker. Over that time I have been in regular contact with XXXX, I have carried out XXXX face to face visits every XXX weeks, and completed XXXX looked after child reviews. I have further been in regular contact with their carers and other professionals supporting them. XXX has been under the care of XXX Local Authority since.

#### **Professional view on Annex M application:**

Include:

- Length of time you have worked with the child and how you have built a relationship with them.
- Examples of times you have tried to make contact with family overseas, or authorities and why you feel they cannot return to their country. Include details of exploration the Local Authority has had of contact with any family overseas, or if it would be suitable to remove the child to family overseas. Include reference to any care planning documents, or decisions/recommendations made through the care order.



- Information the child has shared with you about their lack of contact with their family etc. And what they have shared about being unable to return.
- Information on why you believe it is in the child's best interest to stay in the UK, and how that assessment has been made.
- Any examples of times the child has expressed that they see the UK as their home and their future here. This again could include their aspirations for the future including education or work depending on their age.

Any examples of times other professionals have reported to you that the child has expressed wishing to remain in the UK.

- Detail any impact lack of leave to remain has had on the child's mental health and wellbeing. You could also include other professionals' concerns that have been passed onto you.

If you need any further information please don't hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

XXX



## Foster Carer Template

- Download template

Date

To whom it may concern,

**Regarding [Name, DOB].**

**My relationship with XXXX:**

For example:

I am the foster carer for XXX. They have lived with me at my address [insert address] since XXX.

Detail the support and care you provide for child.

Detail how settled they seem with you, any connections they have made (for example friends, community groups and your wider family).

Detail any extracurricular activity they have taken part in whilst under your care and the impact this has had on them.

Explain the long-term care plan for the child if appropriate, for example if this is a long-term placement with the plan for them to stay until 18 or after.

**Views on Annex FM application:**

To include:

- Any conversations you have had with the child about their hopes, dreams and ambitions for the future, and if they have indicated if they would like to stay in the UK.
- Any negative impact you have seen due to the child not having leave to remain in the UK.
- Comment on the child's character, share any redeeming qualities.
- Your view on how leave to remain would impact on the child, and their future.
- Do you believe it is in their best interest to remain in the UK?

If you need any further information please don't hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

XXX

## Child Statement Template

### Statement of [CHILD'S NAME]

#### Include:

- My Name is \_\_\_\_\_
- My DOB is \_\_\_\_\_
- I live at [ADDRESS]

#### Things to explore:

- Your memories of coming to the UK, what were your first impressions?
- How long you have been in the UK, the links you have built here (including through school, friends, hobbies, contact with any family in the UK, accommodation and carers/professionals supporting you).
- How well have you settled into the UK?
- Your sense of identity, if you feel British already, why do you want to stay here?
- Your hopes and ambitions for the future and how having leave could impact on this.
- The impact not having leave to remain has had on your well being and mental health. Any opportunities you feel you have missed out on, and any difference you may feel to your peers.
- Your good character and positive attributes.
- Any contact you have or haven't had with family overseas and how you would feel about living in that country (if appropriate) / the fact that you could not return to that country.

#### **Tips:**

- The statement should be written in first person using your own words.
- Sign and date the statement at the bottom.

