



## Hong Kong British National Overseas Scheme Frequently Asked Questions

The Wales Strategic Migration Partnership (WSMP) was established in 2001 and is funded by the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to facilitate strategic leadership, advice and coordination on migration. The WSMP is hosted by the [Welsh Local Government Association](#) (WLGA) to reflect the Partnership's All-Wales role around migration.

The Hong Kong BN(O) Scheme Project Coordinator at the WSMP works with partners to develop an online [Welcome Hub](#) and other initiatives in support of the scheme, to ensure the appropriate services and support are in place to welcome BN(O) visa-holders to Wales.

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## What is the Hong Kong British National Overseas/HKBN(O) Scheme?

The [BN\(O\) route](#) was launched by the Home Office on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 and reflects the UK's historic and moral commitment to those people of Hong Kong who chose to retain [their ties to the UK](#) by taking up BN(O) status at the point of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997.

People from Hong Kong are classed as British National (Overseas) and can apply for a [British National \(Overseas\) visa](#).

Children of a British National (Overseas) aged 18 or older and born on or after 1 July 1997, can apply separately from their parent. Family members can also apply with the main applicant.

## What entitlements do HKBN(O) visa holders have?

BN(O) visa holders and their family members are entitled to live, work, and study in the UK but are also subjected to No Recourse to Public Funds/NRPF policy, which means they cannot access public services like benefits and councils housing assistance.



BN(O) visa holders are eligible to apply for a “change of condition” to lift their NRPF status and access public funds when facing destitution and this will not affect their visa and eligibility for settlement. [Apply to change your permission to allow access to public funds - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-change-your-permission-to-allow-access-to-public-funds)

Under HKBN(O) Schemes, visa holders are able to work and live anywhere in the UK. They will need to prove their right to work by using their Biometric Residence Permit or using an online service provided by the Home Office. [Prove your right to work to an employer: Get a share code online - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-right-to-work-to-an-employer)

Similarly to any British Citizens, visa holders wishing to work will need a National Insurance number. [Apply for a National Insurance number: Who can apply for a National Insurance number - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-national-insurance-number)

Children are able to access education, but will not be entitled for “[Home Fees](#)” in higher education until they have been granted “settled / Indefinite leave to remain”.

## **Do Hong Kong BN(O) Visa Holders need to pay the International Health Surcharge?**

Yes, Hong Kong BN(O) Visa Holders including family members will each need to pay the healthcare surcharge in order to use the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK.

For each adult (18 or older) it costs:

- £2,587.50 if you're staying for 2 years and 6 months
- £5,175 if you're staying for 5 years

For each child (under 18), it costs:

- £1,940 if you're staying for 2 years and 6 months
- £3,880 if you're staying for 5 years

The healthcare surcharge is part of the online visa application process.

For further details please click on [British Nationals Overseas Visa](#)

### Are there any exemptions to paying the international health surcharge?

There is no need to pay the healthcare surcharge if all of the following apply:

- The Hong Kong BN(O) Visa is being extended for 30 months
- Benefits are being received
- The applicant cannot afford to pay the fee or healthcare surcharge

The applicant will have to pay if they're extending their visa for 60 months.

The applicant will need to give evidence that they're receiving benefits and cannot afford the fee or healthcare surcharge when they apply to extend their visa - for example, bank statements dated within the last 3 months.

For further details please click on [British Nationals Overseas Visa](#)

## What is a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) / eVisa?

A Biometric Residence Permit is a card which holds the immigration status on it. It can be used to prove a person's rights and entitlements to study, benefits, or council assistance.

An [eVisa](#) is an online record of immigration status and the conditions of permission to enter or stay in the UK. UKVI are replacing physical documents with an online record – eVisa. Holders of a BRP that expires on 31 December 2024 will need to create a UKVI account and access the eVisa before the expiry date of their BRP.

## What do we know about Hongkongers?

When people arrive in the UK under the Hong Kong BN(O) Visa they are free to choose where they wish to live. No records exist of how many Hong Kong BN(O) Visa holders live in Wales and where. Nevertheless, it is known that 150,000 people have arrived in the UK under the Hong Kong BN(O) Visa route up to the end of June 2024 [Safe and Legal \(Humanitarian\) routes to the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

## Are there any support organisations?

In April 2021, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) launched a new UK-wide [Welcome Programme](#) to support those on the BN(O) visa settle into the UK.

A network of 12 Virtual Welcome Hubs across the whole of the UK to prepare for the arrival of those on the BN(O) route were established using the existing infrastructure of the Strategic Migration Partnerships (SMPs). The [Wales Strategic Migration Partnership](#) (WSMP) delivers information and support to the Hong Kong community through the [Wales Welcome Hub](#).

In Wales and the UK, there are a number of organisations which support BN(O) visa holders:

Wales:

[Cardiff Hong Konger CIC](#)

[Cardiff Chinese Christian Church](#)

[Nomad Reading Group CIC](#)

[Friends of Hong Kong in Cardiff](#)

Nationwide:

[Hearth Talk](#) (mental health)

[Hong Kong Well UK](#) (mental health)

[On Your Side - ESEA Hate Crime and Incident Reporting - On Your Side \(onyoursideuk.org\)](#) On Your Side East and Southeast Asian Hate Crime and Incident Reporting

Further Reading:

- WSMP with Cardiff University: [“Building a New Life in Wales: Hong Kong BN\(O\) Visa Holders Welcome Survey” Research Report](#) (2023 March)
- Welcoming Committee for Hong Kongers: [From HK to UK: Hong Kongers’ new lives in Britain](#) (2023 November)
- Liverpool University: [A Study Report on Hong Kong Migrants Recently Arrived in the UK](#) (2023 July)
- Home Office [Hong Kong BN\(O\) survey results](#) (2022 January)
- HongKonger in Britain [Publications](#) (2021 June - 2023 Aug)

## What are your contact details for further information?

Please email [WSMPComms@wlga.gov.uk](mailto:WSMPComms@wlga.gov.uk) adding ‘Hong Kong BN(O)’ in the subject line.