# Information on Family Reunion visas and Travel in the context of Covid-19

## What is happening with Family reunion visa applications?

* Official guidance from the Home Office says that most relevant Visa application centres (VACs) overseas are still closed, with the exception of Egypt and Turkey. You can follow updates on the following websites:
  + <https://pos.tlscontact.com/default/>
  + <https://www.vfsglobal.co.uk/in/en/vacs>
* As a result, the processing of most Family reunion visa applications is on hold until further notice, but it is likely that this will restart in the near future.

## What if my family already had a visa which has now expired?

* The Home Office have confirmed that family members with expired visas to join their family in the UK will be able to have them reissued free of charge until the end of the year.
* It has also been announced that any new and replacement visas will be issued with validity dates valid for **up to 90 days** may be requested free of charge until the end of this year.
* The visas will be replaced once the Visa Application Centre (VAC) has been reopened and the family member is able to hand in their passport or travel documents
* In the meantime, you or your legal representative can request your family’s replacement visa to [CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk)
* They should include the following:
  + *Sponsor’s name and date of birth*
  + *Names and date of birth of all family members who have a visa*
  + *GWF reference number (this can be found on the grant of visa letter)*
  + *Contact number and email*
  + *The VAC where the application was submitted*
  + A request that the visa is valid for 90 days
  + *In the subject line: Replacement 30-day visa*
* Once the VAC reopens, they will contact the family and request them to bring/send their passport or travel document to the VAC for the replacement visa to be issued
* **It might be worth taking into account the situation with International travel and your ability to fund to flights before requesting your visa to be re-issued.** We encourage you to discuss this with your legal advisor.
* Please note that arranging travel will depend on UK guidance even if lockdown is lifted in your home country and your family has valid visas.

## Will I be able to benefit from the British Red Cross’ Travel assistance programme when my visa is re-issued?

* The British Red Cross Family reunion travel assistance programme operates in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), who organise all flights for families with visas.
* At the moment, IOM operations are extremely limited and we are exploring together how to best resume our travel assistance service in the new circumstances.
* When this happens, we will prioritise families whose applications had been accepted before the lockdown, **subject to availability and cost of flights.** Please note that the FRTA criteria is still **3 or more family members.**
* If you or your family have the means to pay for travel, we encourage you to do so as there is likely to be a high demand for our programme**. Please note that we will not be able to offer any refund.**

## Will my family need to go into quarantine when they arrive?

* From 8 June 2020 anyone arriving into the UK will need to self-isolate for 14 days. This means your family will not be able to leave their accommodation for the full 14 days. Please see detailed information below:

What should my family do before starting their journey to the UK?

* + Your family will be required to fill in a Passenger Locator Form online. This form requires your family to provide their details, when and how they are entering the UK, the address where they are staying in the UK and emergency contact details. You can fill in the form [here](https://www.gov.uk/provide-journey-contact-details-before-travel-uk).
  + Each person over the age of 18 will be required to fill in their own form. Those travelling with someone under 18 can add the details to their own form.
  + The form can only be submitted 48 hours before travelling.
  + If you do not have an address where you family can self-isolate this can be mentioned in the form.
  + Plan how your family will arrive at your accommodation from the airport. If you will be travelling within the UK and will need to stop overnight your family must provide that address in the form.
  + If your family do not fill in the form before arriving to the UK they can be fined £100.
  + Print a copy of the form once it has been submitted it or make sure your family have a copy on their phone and that it can be accessed without relying on an internet connection. They will need this when the arrive to the UK.

What will happen when my family arrives at the airport?

* When your family arrives, they will need to go through immigration control. They will be asked to provide evidence that they have submitted the form. Anyone who hasn’t filled in the form can be fined up to £100.
* The immigration officers may ask your family about the property they will be staying at. Make sure your family knows the details of the property you live in.
* If you do not have accommodation that would be adequate for your family to self-isolate, for example you are in shared accommodation, your family will need to tell the border force officers this information. Your family will then be provided with details of a booking service which your family can use to obtain accommodation and self-isolate in at their own expense.
* If your family member develops coronavirus symptoms (see below) when they are travelling to the UK they should let the staff at the airport know as soon as possible. They will then need to show that the accommodation they will be self-isolating is safe.
* There is no current information on what that accommodation will and what will be provided. We will give you updates when we have more information.

How does my family travel to my home from the airport?

* Your family must go straight to your address after leaving the airport and stay there for 14 days. They can use public transport if there is no other option. It is advised that your family wears something that would cover their nose and mouth and stay 2 meters apart from other people.
* If you arrive in London after 15 June 2020 your family **must** wear face masks on London underground and buses.
* If your family develops coronavirus symptoms whilst travelling to the UK they will **not** be allowed to use public transport.
* If your family will need to take a long journey within the UK to arrive at your home they can stop overnight in a safe accommodation if necessary. They must provide this address on the passenger locator form. It is important you plan the travel to your home before your family starts their journey to the UK.

What will my family be allowed to do in those 14 days?

* + Remember you do not have to self-isolate only your family who has travelled is required to. If your family develops symptoms of coronavirus in within the 14 days, you will need to self-isolate for a further 14 days and your family will remain self-isolating for a further 7 days. Please see below for where to obtain information on coronavirus.
  + You and your family can not have any visitors to your home unless they are providing essential care
  + Your family cannot go to work, school or visit public places.
  + Your family is advised not to go shopping to buy essentials. If you are able you can travel to the shops or ask relatives or friends for help and they can drop it outside your house.
  + In England, your family can only exercise in the home and/or garden. They cannot leave the house for exercise.
  + Your family can only leave the accommodation if:
    - They need urgent medical assistance
    - They need access to food and medicine in exceptional circumstances and you can’t arrange for these to be delivered
    - They need access to critical public services (social services, victim support) and only in exceptional circumstances
    - They need to attend a funeral of a close relative
    - They need to fulfil a legal obligation, that is taking part in legal proceedings
    - There is an emergency
  + Your family can only change the place where they are self-isolating in very limited circumstances:
    - A legal obligation requires you to change your address i.e. you are evicted from the accommodation
    - There is an emergency
    - If this happens your family will need to provide full details by updating the form as soon as possible.
  + If your family do not comply with these rules they can be fined up to £1000.
* For detailed information, please read and follow the guidance from the government: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate-when-you-travel-to-the-uk/coronavirus-covid-19-how-to-self-isolate-when-you-travel-to-the-uk>

What do I need to do before my family arrives?

* Plan for their arrival
* Ensure you have enough food, clothes and other essentials as they will be self-isolating for 14 days
* Approach your council and inform them your family is arriving and when they plan to arrive. Try arrange accommodation before they come and explain that they would not have anywhere to self-isolate
* Save money where possible as your costs will increase when they arrive
* Plan the journey from the airport to your home avoiding public transport if possible

## Where can I find information on Coronavirus?

* If you or your family members are experiencing symptoms of Coronavirus, please follow government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
* If you can find information on Coronavirus on several languages at <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/>