

9th April 2020

Biometric enrolment during COVID-19

This information has been put together by the Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU)

What is biometric enrolment?

When someone applies for leave to remain they must give their photo and fingerprints as part of the process. This is called "biometric enrolment".

Biometric enrolment centres closed

The centres where biometric enrolment take place are now closed because of COVID-19.

This applies to the centres that operate for free applications (where no application fee applies or there has been a fee waiver):<https://www.gov.uk/visas-and-immigration-service-and-support-centres>. Existing appointments have or will be cancelled and applicants will be told how to rebook in due course.

It also applies for centres where there is a fee paid application:<https://www.ukvcas.co.uk/flash-message-detail?flashmessageId=950> - They will automatically reschedule existing appointments for 6 weeks ahead of the original appointment.

New appointments cannot be booked.

It is not sure when the centres will reopen.

I want to apply for leave to remain for the first time

If you have no leave to remain and want to apply for it you should do this as normal.

You can apply as normal using the online process for applications, if this is the best route for you, and get legal advice on the application. Immigration lawyers are still working and legal aid is available for any victim of trafficking with a positive RG or CG to get advice and assistance about an application for leave to remain of any kind.

[[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716499/Clarification of immigration funding in trafficking cases.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/716499/Clarification_of_immigration_funding_in_trafficking_cases.pdf)]

If you have a free online application, as many victims of trafficking will, there is no facility to upload documents online before your biometric enrolment appointment. Documents are scanned when you attend the biometric appointment in person.

If you have a fee paid online application there is a facility to scan and upload supporting documents ahead of a biometric appointment. Those documents will sit there waiting to be considered.

We have contacted the Home Office to ask if we can email them with supporting documents and photos so that applications waiting on biometrics can progress. We will share any information received. We would suggest that if it is in a client's interests to progress their application that legal representatives contact relevant Home Office departments to ask what contingency measures can be put in place so that an application is not on hold for too long. **If the client is not already represented they should seek legal advice if they are concerned about not being able to progress an application, to see if representations can be made for alternative ways to proceed.**

Individuals should always get advice on the best application or action to take about leave to remain in their circumstances. There may be times they would not need to use Home Office online application forms, for example, when claiming asylum or making further submissions, or if they have never received a decision on their discretionary leave to remain from the SCA after getting a positive CG so this application remains pending and further information could be sent to the SCA by email.

I want to extend my leave to remain

If you have leave to remain and want to extend it then you should apply online as normal, before your leave to remain expires, and get advice from an immigration lawyer if you need it. See above about what to do regarding provision of documents to the Home Office. It may be that the Home Office can be asked to use existing biometric information stored on their systems from past applications for your current application.

I wanted to leave the UK but I can't

If someone had a visa that expired between 24 January 2020 or is due to expire before 31 May 2020 and cannot leave the UK because of COVID-19 they will not be seen as an overstayer or suffer any detriment. They can fill in a form with the Home Office to let them know why they cannot travel and to extend their visa to 31 May 2020:

<https://gov.smartwebportal.co.uk/homeoffice/public/webform.asp?id=199&id2=5C97E7>

Any questions?

Please contact ATLEU if you would like general advice about someone you are supporting. If the query is urgent you can ring our office number **on 020 7700 7311** but otherwise please email us on advice@atleu.org.uk.