



Home Office

Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP
Minister for Border Security &
Asylum

2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/home-office

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

DECS Reference: MIN/1285694/25
Your Reference: MP01719

27 February 2025

Dear Manuela,

Thank you for your letter of 27 February to the Home Secretary about the change to the nationality good character policy that was announced on 10 February in relation to illegal entry to the UK. I am replying as the Minister for Border Security & Asylum.

British citizenship is a privilege, not a right. The requirement for an individual to be of good character is a statutory one, which is considered reasonable and proportionate, when assessing whether to grant British citizenship.

The good character requirement for British citizenship is set out in primary legislation (section 41A and Schedule 1 of the British Nationality Act 1981) and applies to all applicants aged ten or over - the age of criminal responsibility.

The British Nationality Act 1981 does not define good character. However, the Secretary of State must be satisfied that an applicant is of good character, considering all aspects of that person's character. This includes negative factors such as criminality, as well as positive factors such as contributions a person has made to society.

In addition to UK based criminality, applicants are not normally considered to be of good character if they have been involved in, or associated with, international crimes, terrorism and other non-conducive activity; are financially unsound; have deployed deception or dishonesty in their dealings with the UK Government; or if they have previously been deported, excluded or deprived of citizenship.

We consider that individuals seeking to become British citizens should demonstrate equal regard for immigration legislation as we expect them to show for other aspects of the law, including the Criminal Justice System.

On 10 February we strengthened good character policy for citizenship to make it clear that anyone who enters the UK illegally, or who arrives without a required valid entry clearance or electronic valid authorisation having made a dangerous journey, including small boat arrivals regardless of their date of entry, will normally be refused British citizenship.

Each citizenship application will continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis and the Secretary of State may choose to apply discretion to grant citizenship on an exceptional basis where there are particularly exceptional, compelling or mitigating circumstances, and where necessary to comply with our international obligations.

The policy guidance also contains example scenarios, based on the above factors, of when an exceptional grant might be appropriate. This is intended to assist decision makers when assessing individual cases rather than being a prescriptive list. The full guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/good-character-nationality-policy-guidance>.

Thank you for raising this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Angela Eagle".

Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP
Minister for Border Security & Asylum