When can a dependent join a UK visa holder?

If you hold a valid UK visa and want your partner or child to join you here, the answer depends on your own immigration status, the type of visa you hold, and whether you meet the financial and relationship requirements set by the Home Office. Generally, a dependent can apply to join you once you have secured your own visa and can show you can support them without relying on public funds.

Who qualifies as a dependent?

The Home Office defines a dependent as a spouse, civil partner, unmarried partner, or a child under 18. In some cases, adult children who are financially dependent due to a disability may also qualify. The key point is that the relationship must be genuine and subsisting, and for unmarried partners, you usually need to show you have lived together for at least two years.

When can a dependent apply?

The timing depends on the main visa holder's category. For most work visas, such as the Skilled Worker visa, dependents can apply at the same time as the main applicant or after the main applicant has been granted their visa. If you apply separately, you need to provide evidence of the main applicant's immigration status and your relationship. For student visas, dependents can only join if the student is on a postgraduate course at PhD level or a government-sponsored course lasting at least nine months. For family visas, the dependent is usually the main applicant, and the UK-based partner acts as the sponsor.

Financial requirement

One of the most common hurdles is meeting the financial requirement. For most work and family routes, the main applicant or sponsor must show a minimum income level. For a Skilled Worker visa, the main applicant must earn at least the general salary threshold, and additional funds may be needed for each dependent. For family visas, the sponsor must earn at least £18,600 per year, with higher amounts if children are also applying. Savings can be used to make up the shortfall in some cases. It is important to check the exact figures on the Home Office website, as thresholds change occasionally.

View the location on Google Maps

Relationship evidence

To prove your relationship, you need to submit documents such as a marriage or civil partnership certificate, joint bank statements, tenancy agreements, utility bills in both names,

and photographs together over time. For unmarried partners, you need to show cohabitation for two years, often through official documents addressed to both of you at the same address. The Home Office is strict about this evidence, so it pays to gather as much as you can.

English language requirement

Dependents applying from outside the UK generally do not need to prove English language ability unless they are applying as a family visa partner. In that case, the partner must pass an approved English language test at level A1 unless they are from a majority English-speaking country or have a degree taught in English. For dependents of work or student visa holders, there is no English language requirement.



Maintenance funds for student dependents

If you are a student and want your dependent to join you, you must show that you have enough money to support both of you without working. The amount is £845 per month for the dependent, for up to nine months, in addition to your own maintenance funds. This money must have been in your bank account for at least 28 consecutive days before you apply.

Applying from inside or outside the UK

Dependents can apply from outside the UK via entry clearance, or from inside the UK if they are already here on a different visa. For most routes, the dependent must apply before their current visa expires if switching. If they overstay, they may face a ban. It is always safer to apply in good time and seek professional advice if unsure.

What happens after the dependent arrives?

Once granted, the dependent's visa will usually be valid for the same period as the main visa holder's. Dependents of work visa holders can work in the UK without restriction, including self-employment. Student dependents cannot work unless the main student is on a PhD programme. Dependents can also study, but they cannot access public funds. When the main visa holder applies for indefinite leave to remain, dependents can usually apply at the same time, provided they still meet the relationship and residence requirements.

For anyone navigating this process, getting partner visa advice early can save time and reduce the risk of refusal. Adamir Immigration Solicitors London regularly assist with dependent visa applications and can help check that all documents are in order. They understand the nuances of the financial requirement and relationship evidence, which are common reasons for refusal.

Common reasons for refusal

Many applications are refused because of insufficient evidence of the relationship or failure to meet the financial requirement. For example, if a couple cannot show they have lived together for two years, or if they have not submitted enough official documents, the Home Office may doubt the genuineness of the relationship. Similarly, if the income is slightly below the threshold or the funds have not been held for the required 28 days, the application will be refused. It is also important to ensure that the main visa holder's visa is still valid and that the dependent applies at the right time.

What to do if your application is refused

If a dependent's application is refused, there is usually a right to appeal or to request an administrative review, depending on the visa route. The notice of refusal will explain the reason and the options available. Often, the issue can be fixed by providing the correct evidence or reapplying with a stronger case. Getting professional advice at this stage is crucial, as the rules are strict and the deadlines short.



Adamir Immigration Solicitors London is also on YouTube.

For those looking for reliable partner visa advice, Adamir Immigration Solicitors London can provide guidance tailored to your situation. They can review your documents before you submit and advise on the best timing for your application. Their team is familiar with the Home Office's expectations and can help you avoid common pitfalls.

If you are unsure about any part of the process, it is worth speaking to an immigration solicitor. They can explain the rules that apply to your specific visa category and help you prepare a strong application. The rules change over time, so what worked for someone else last year may not apply today. Always check the latest guidance or consult a professional.

For more information, you can contact Adamir Immigration Solicitors London at Unit-1, 5 Norman Rd, London N15 4ND, UK, or call +44 20 3302 0074.