

Community
Legal Service



COVENTRY LAW CENTRE

IMMIGRATION

ministers of religion

This leaflet explains what the Immigration Rules say about ministers of religion.

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Although every effort is made to ensure the information in this leaflet is accurate and up to date, it should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law and does not constitute legal advice - we cannot be held liable for any inaccuracies and their consequences. The information in this leaflet is written for people resident in, or affected by, the laws of United Kingdom only.

What is a minister of religion?

A minister of religion is a religious worker whose main duty is to lead a congregation in prayer and preach about their religious beliefs.

How do I qualify as a minister of religion?

You must show that:

- you have either been working for at least one year as a minister of religion or you have been ordained as a minister of religion after at least one year's full-time or two years' part-time training for the ministry;
- you plan to work full time as a minister of religion; and
- you can support and accommodate yourself and any dependants without help from public funds.

You must get entry clearance as a minister of religion before you travel to the United Kingdom.

Can I extend my stay as a minister of religion?

You can apply to extend your stay if:

- you entered the United Kingdom with a valid United Kingdom entry clearance as a minister of religion;
- you are still doing the work that you were granted entry clearance for;
- the leadership of your congregation still needs you to work as a minister of religion; and
- you have supported and accommodated yourself and any dependants without help from public funds, and can continue to do so.

What are public funds?

If you come to live or stay in the United Kingdom, you must be able to support and accommodate yourself without claiming certain state benefits. These are:

- Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA);
- housing and homelessness assistance;
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit;
- Working Families Tax Credit;
- a social fund payment
- Child Benefit, or
- any disability allowance.

Can I change my job?

You cannot change your job without permission from the Home Office. The Home Office will only approve any change in your work as a minister of religion if you are still working as a minister of religion and you continue to meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules.

How do I qualify to live in the United Kingdom permanently?

You can apply to live in the United Kingdom permanently if:

- you have worked in the United Kingdom as a minister of religion for four years continuously;
- you have supported and accommodated yourself and any dependants without help from public funds; and
- the leadership of your congregation still needs you to work as a minister of religion.

How do I apply?

You will need to complete an application form. Applications (except those for asylum and work permits or under European Community law) will not be valid unless they are made on the appropriate application form. You can get application forms from the Coventry Law Centre.

To apply for further leave to remain, please use form FLR(O).

To apply for indefinite leave to remain, please use form SET(O).

If you require an application form contact Coventry Law Centre on our free legal advice line on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10:00am and 12:00noon on 024 76253168.

You should send the completed form to the Home Office by post, before your permission to stay ends. The application form will give you details of **all** the documents you will need to send with your application and where you should send it.

If you need to travel urgently, you can apply in person at one of the Immigration & Nationality Directorate's public enquiry offices.

All documents should be originals unless you have a good reason why you cannot produce them with your application. The Home Office will not normally accept photocopies.

What is entry clearance?

Entry clearance is a visa or entry clearance certificate that you are given so you can travel to the United Kingdom. You must apply for entry clearance to the British Embassy, High Commission or other British Diplomatic Missions (known as British Diplomatic Posts) in the country where you live.

You can get advice about which British Diplomatic Posts can issue entry clearance from **any** British Diplomatic Post abroad.

You can get guidance leaflets and information about visas from Coventry Law Centre.

Coventry Law Centre offers free legal advice and representation.

APPEALS

The Law Centre will advise you about appealing and may represent you at the hearing. You can contact the Law Centre for an appeal appointment or telephone our free legal advice line on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10:00am and 12:00noon on 024 76253168.