



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

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**Ministry of Housing, Communities &
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**To: All Council Leaders in England
(cc. Chief Executives)**

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Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) Visa

I wanted to update you following the Government's announcement of a Hong Kong Visa for British Nationals (Overseas) (BN(O)s), and the creation of a new bespoke immigration route for BN(O) citizens from Hong Kong.

This decision follows the imposition by the Chinese Government of a national security law on Hong Kong that restricts the rights and freedoms of the people in Hong Kong and constitutes a clear and serious breach of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

The Government plans to open the Hong Kong BN(O) Visa for applications from January 2021. This bespoke set of arrangements has been developed for the unique circumstances we face and in light of our historic commitment to the people of Hong Kong. There will be no skills, economic needs tests, minimum income requirements or caps on numbers. BN(O) citizens will have the opportunity to acquire full British citizenship after 5 years in the UK. They do not need to have a job before coming to the UK; they can look for work once here. They may also bring their immediate dependants, including non-BN(O) citizens.

However, the offer is not completely unconditional, and BN(O) citizens will need to consider whether coming to the UK to settle permanently is the right choice for them. BN(O) citizens will need to support themselves independently while living in the UK, as they will have no recourse to public funds until they acquire settled status. They must meet strict criminality checks and stay of good character, and they will need to pay visa fees, the Immigration Health Surcharge and, if they subsequently apply for citizenship after they become settled, the fee for the application process.

I recognise that you may have questions about how best to support BN(O) citizens in your area, and I encourage you to share your views with the Local Government Association at info@local.gov.uk who will collate and provide feedback to my officials. My department and others across government are working with the Home Office to ensure that any new burdens for local areas are identified.

This new route demonstrates that the United Kingdom will keep its word and honour our responsibilities to the people of Hong Kong. I hope you will join me in celebrating this historic step and in welcoming BN(O) citizens who may choose to come and build a new life here.

RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP