UK Partner Visa Requirements: What Couples Need to Know

Understanding the UK Partner Visa Route

For couples who want to live together in the UK, the partner visa (also known as a spouse visa) is one of the most common immigration routes. It applies to married couples, civil partners, and unmarried partners who have been living together for at least two years. The visa allows the non-British partner to join their British or settled partner in the UK for an initial period of 33 months (or 30 months if applying from outside the UK). After that, it can be extended, and eventually lead to settlement and citizenship.

The process is detailed and requires careful preparation. The Home Office expects applicants to meet several requirements, and missing even one can delay or derail the application. Knowing what those requirements are, and what evidence to provide, is the first step toward a successful application.

The Financial Requirement

One of the most significant hurdles is the financial requirement. The sponsoring partner (the one who is British or settled) must prove a gross annual income of at least £18,600. If the couple has children who are not British or settled, the threshold rises to £22,400, plus an additional £2,400 for each such child. Income can come from employment, self-employment, savings (over £16,000), pension, or certain benefits. The evidence must cover the six months before the application, unless the sponsor has been with the same employer for at least six months and earns enough, in which case a shorter period may be acceptable.

It is important to note that the financial requirement is a strict rule. There are no exceptions for couples who argue they can manage on less. If the sponsor does not meet the threshold, the application will be refused. For those who cannot meet it through income alone, savings can make up the difference. The formula is: savings over £16,000, divided by 2.5 (for applications from outside the UK) or 2.5 (for extensions), plus the income shortfall, must equal at least the required amount. For example, if the sponsor earns £15,000 but needs £18,600, the shortfall is £3,600. The couple would need savings of at least £16,000 + (£3,600 x 2.5) = £25,000.

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English Language Requirement

The applicant must also meet the English language requirement. This usually means passing an approved English language test at level A1 or higher, unless they are from a majority

English-speaking country or have a degree taught in English. The test must be taken at a Home Office-approved test centre. For an extension application, the requirement rises to A2, and for settlement (indefinite leave to remain), it rises to B1.

Some applicants are exempt, such as those over 65 or those with a physical or mental condition that prevents them from meeting the requirement. If an exemption is claimed, medical evidence will be needed.



Accommodation

The Home Office also requires that there be adequate accommodation for the couple and any dependants. This means the property must not be overcrowded, and it must be owned or rented by the couple. The accommodation must be available exclusively for the couple and their dependants (not shared with other households, unless it is a house in multiple occupation with separate tenancy agreements). Evidence can include a tenancy agreement, a mortgage statement, or a letter from a landlord confirming the couple can live there.

Relationship Evidence

Proving the relationship is genuine and subsisting is another key part of the application. For married couples or civil partners, the marriage or civil partnership certificate is essential. For

unmarried partners, evidence of living together for at least two years is required. This can include joint bank statements, utility bills in both names, council tax statements, tenancy agreements, and correspondence addressed to both partners at the same address. The Home Office will look for a pattern of cohabitation over time, not just a single document.

Photographs together, travel itineraries, and communication records (emails, messages, call logs) can also help demonstrate the genuine nature of the relationship. The key is to provide a range of evidence that covers the entire period of the relationship, not just the most recent months.

Dependants

Children of the couple who are not British or settled must be included in the application. They will need their own visa, and the financial requirement increases as noted. The Home Office will also want to see evidence that the child is dependent on the couple and that it would be unreasonable for the child to leave the UK. This is often straightforward if the child lives with the couple and is financially supported by them.

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For couples who are already in the UK on a different visa, switching to a partner visa may be possible in some cases. However, not all visa categories allow switching. Those on a visitor visa, for example, cannot apply for a partner visa from within the UK and must return to their home country to apply. It is important to check the rules carefully before making any plans.

Visa Extension and Settlement

The initial partner visa is granted for 33 months (if applied from outside the UK) or 30 months (if applied from inside the UK). Before it expires, the couple must apply for a further leave to remain (an extension). The extension is granted for another 30 months. After five years (two initial visas or one initial and one extension), the applicant can apply for indefinite leave to remain (settlement). This allows them to stay in the UK without time limits and to work or study freely.



For settlement, the applicant must still meet the financial requirement (now £18,600) and the English language requirement (now B1). They must also pass the Life in the UK test, which covers British history, culture, and laws. The test is taken at a designated centre and must be booked in advance.

The process can feel overwhelming, especially when gathering evidence and ensuring every form is filled correctly. Many couples choose to seek legal advice to navigate the requirements and avoid common pitfalls. A solicitor who specialises in UK immigration law can review the application, advise on the strength of the evidence, and help prepare the submission. For those based in or near London, Adamir Immigration Solicitors London offers services for partner visa applications, including advice on financial evidence, relationship evidence, and the English language requirement. Their team can guide couples through each stage, from the initial application to the extension and settlement.

What to Watch Out For

There are several common mistakes that lead to refusal. One is failing to provide enough evidence of the financial requirement. Another is submitting relationship evidence that does not clearly show a genuine and subsisting relationship. A third is missing the deadline for the English language test or taking a test that is not approved by the Home Office. Each application is judged on its own merits, and even a small omission can cause a refusal.

Refusals can be challenged through an administrative review or an appeal, but this adds time and cost. It is far better to get the application right the first time. That means reading the Home Office guidance carefully, preparing all documents in advance, and double-checking the forms before submission.

For couples who are already in the UK and need to extend their stay, the rules are similar but not identical. The extension application must be made before the current visa expires. Overstaying can have serious consequences for future applications. It is also worth noting that the financial requirement for extensions is the same as for the initial application, so the sponsor must still meet the £18,600 threshold.

Final Considerations

The UK partner visa route is designed to keep families together, but it is also a rigorous process that demands thorough preparation. Couples should start gathering evidence early, ideally several months before the application. They should also consider whether they need professional help. While it is possible to apply without a solicitor, the complexity of the rules and the high stakes mean that many find it reassuring to have expert guidance. **Adamir Immigration Solicitors London** can provide that support, helping couples understand what is required and how to meet it.



For anyone considering this route, the key is to be methodical and patient. The process takes time, but with the right preparation, couples can look forward to building their life together in the UK.

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.