



**South East
Strategic Partnership
for Migration**



**英國港僑協會
HONGKONGERS IN BRITAIN**

Hong Kong BNO Flowchart

This flow chart is the result of a collaboration between the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration and Hongkongers in Britain with help from the Citizens Advice North West Kent (CANWK).

Whilst the steps in this document are intended to assist with planning, they are a guide only. Immigration rules changes regularly and official guidance should be checked and legal advice sought if you have any queries.

We would like to thank the Hong Kong diaspora who participated in an online event reviewing this resource and whose feedback has helped to make this final document.

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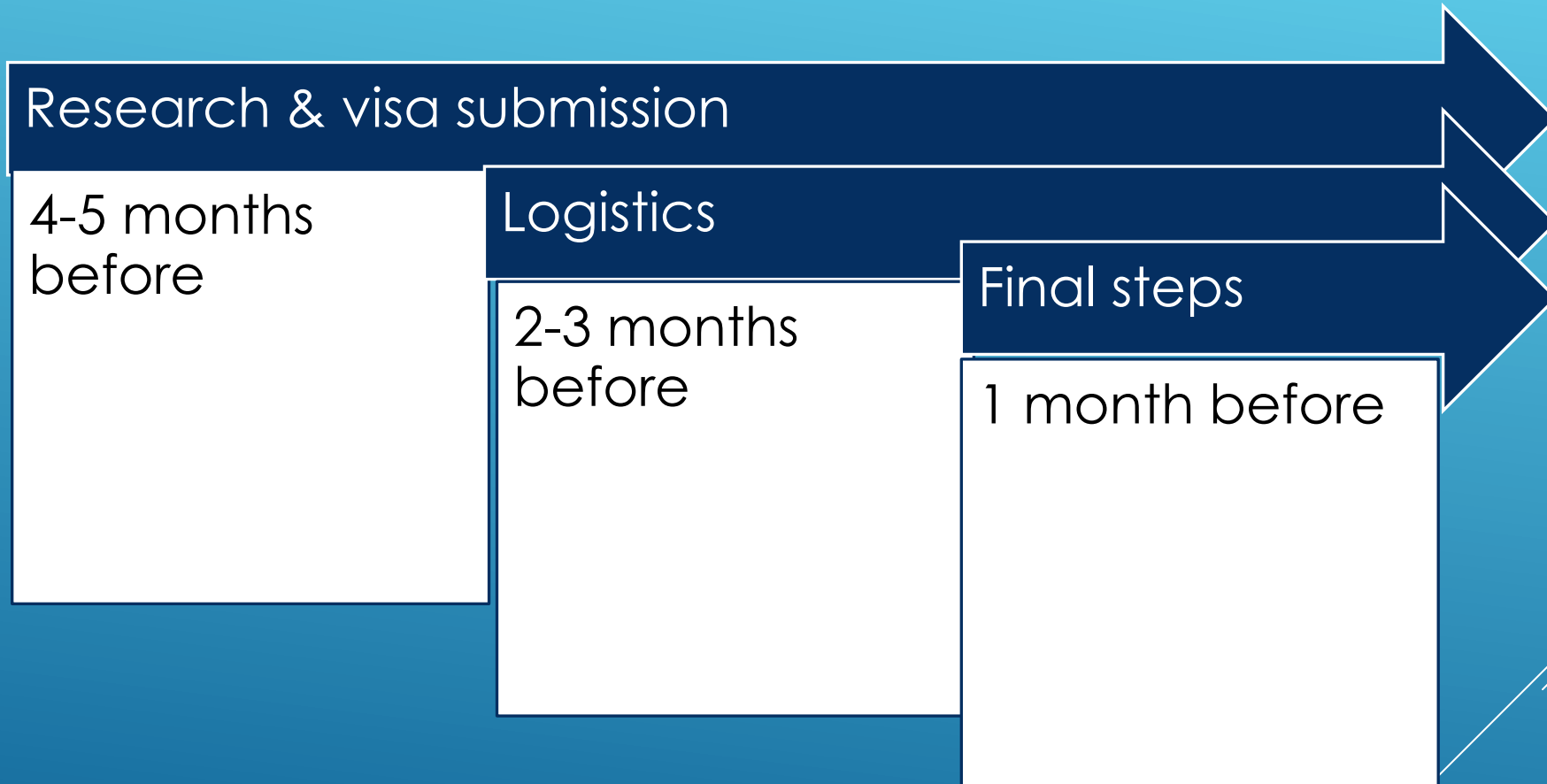
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Part 1 – Steps to take before coming to the UK



Research (4-5 months before)

Where to live:

Weather – (www.metoffice.gov.uk)

Property prices – (Key words: cost of housing + comparison +UK)

Compare school catchment areas–

(<https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/compare-schools>)

Crime rates -

(<https://www.police.uk/pu/your-area/>)

Existing Hong Kong communities –, Facebook sites, Signal and Whatsapp groups etc.

How to secure accommodation:

Purchase your own property – may need more than 5 months

(Search: Houses to buy+ location)

Rent (Search: Houses to rent + area)

Temporary (Search hostels+ area, short term accommodation + area)

Visa application:

TB certificate, Proof of financial state, proof of relationship to dependent , legal check of form with solicitor (all docs in English)

Logistics (2-3 months before)

! PLEASE NOTE: If you went to a visa application centre to prove your identity then you must travel to the UK within 90 days. If you used the "UK Immigration: ID Check" smartphone app then you must travel before your visa expires (as things currently stand, always check as rules change)

1) Considering your shipment to UK:

- Compare and choose a shipment company
- Contact and check the availability of the shipment company

2) Bank account possibilities:

- HK Bank which offer services in UK (can open UK bank account in HK)
- UK Retail bank online account
- Virtual bank account (UK address may not be necessary for this)

3) Planning travel & order of arrival into UK :

- It can be easier to claim Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) later if the whole family arrives at the same time

Logistics (2-3 months before)

4) Travelling with disabled or elderly:

- Consider preparing a year's medication with a letter from doctor saying that your medication was received legally

5) Bringing pets:

- Consider preparing their necessary inoculations/medication/documentation (<https://www.gov.uk/bring-pet-to-great-britain>).
- Research airlines which offer in cabin, in hold or cargo for travelling pets.

6) Documentation:

- Marital status justification, birth certificates, academic/professional qualification & certification, recording the info of **CNCC** application, etc)
- Ecctis(Education Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service) & UK ENIC (the UK National Information Centre) for the recognition and evaluation of international qualifications and skills can help with translating qualifications.
- Each professional board have their own criteria, consider consulting the particular professional body which you intend to register with in the UK to see what documentation they might require.
- Proof of Covid vaccination etc & check entry requirements

Final steps (1 month before)

Documentation:

- For arrival into the UK (passport, ID, air-tickets, Vaccine records), bank statements, salary & taxation records, medical history & immunisation records, CNCC, etc.

Transfer details

- Transfer/maintain HK mobile phone number, change address, buy UK Sim card, transfer money to UK bank accounts, etc. Consider obtaining Certificate of Driving Licence Particulars

(https://www.td.gov.hk/filemanager/common/td320_8.2018_e-fillable_eng.pdf)

or applying for an international Driving licence to help the process in the UK

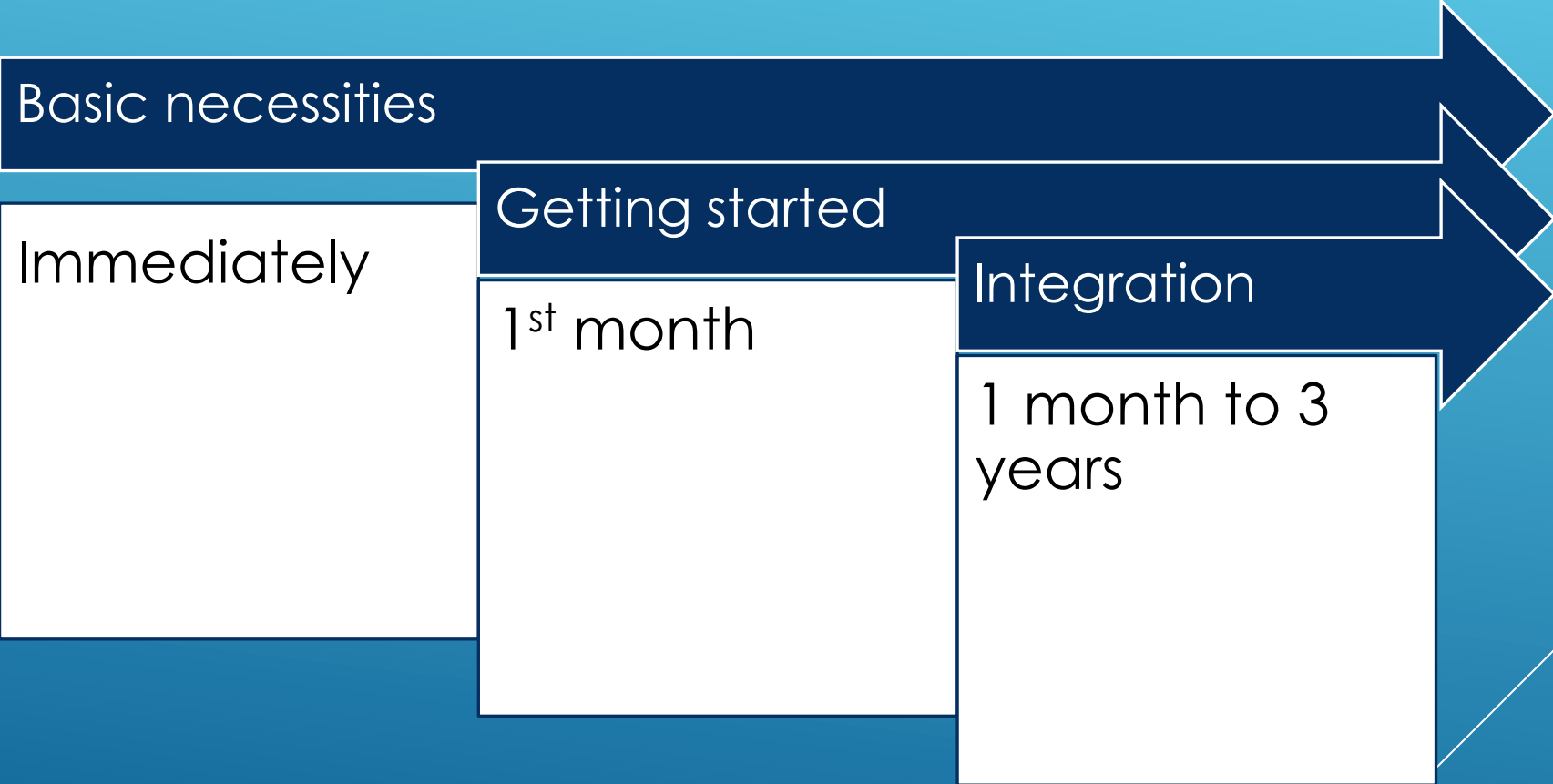
([https://www.td.gov.hk/filemanager/common/td51\(2017.05\)_e-fillable_eng.pdf](https://www.td.gov.hk/filemanager/common/td51(2017.05)_e-fillable_eng.pdf))

Manage accounts/membership

- Banks, utility bills, & clubs, etc.
- Combine MPF/ Vowing
- Tax clearance – (https://www.ird.gov.hk/eng/tax/ind_twl.htm)

Keep - Evidence of arrival into UK – important for claiming ILR later! (see slide 9)

Part 2 – Key things to consider immediately upon arrival up to year 1



Day 1 in the UK

What counts as day 1?

This is important to help you know when you need to apply for ILR (you can apply from 28 days before you have been in the UK 5 years, **you should apply before your visa expires**!)

If your BN(O) visa was obtained outside the UK –

First day = date of arrival into UK

Consider gathering several means of demonstrating your arrival, including but not limited to:

- Flight tickets or boarding pass showing the date of arrival
- Stamp in passport (note, not all passports are stamped)
- Bank statements which will help you to identify a pattern of payments where transactions take place to show the applicant was in the UK
- Independent evidence of activity following entry such as:
a letter from an employer stating when the applicant started their employment in the UK.

Day 1 in the UK

What counts as day 1?

BN(O) visa obtained within the UK –

Day 1 = First day of visa e.g the date of the decision is given in case the application is successful

(<https://www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa/apply-in-the-uk>)

* LOTR is not included as days in pathway to settlement, some other forms of leave might be, but this should be checked with a legal advisor.

Keep a record of any dates after Day 1 which have been spent outside of the UK in order to help with your application for ILR and Citizenship later on (see slide 31 on how to calculate days absent from the UK on path to settlement/ILR) !

Basic Necessities (Week 1 in the UK)

Find accommodation

Immediate/Short term – Airbnb, hotels, hostels whilst looking for accommodation,

Short-Medium term – Airbnb, rental accommodation – A useful resource is
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-rent/how-to-rent-the-checklist-for-renting-in-england>)

A useful letter from the UK Govt explaining the situation for Hongkongers to landlords and their eligibility to rent -
(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1000386/27.05.2021_Letter_from_MHCLG_SoS_to_Private_Rented_Sector_organisations.pdf)

Medium – Long term – Buying a property - (Search buy property + location). Useful resources are
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-buy-a-home/how-to-buy>)

Flooding areas (<https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk>)

Basic Necessities (Week 1-2 in the UK)

Register with GP –

To get a letter from the NHS that can act as a Proof of Address
Which can be useful for many purposes, e.g. opening bank account

- 1) <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/>
- 2) NHS App - <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/>

Enrol in schools for young people –

Contact your local council for further information

<https://www.gov.uk/schools-admissions>

Register with your local council –

- 1) Find your local council via postcode

<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

- 2) Register with your local council – e.g., moving house

Police Registration is **no longer** required.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-registration>)

Getting started (Week 2-4 in the UK)

Registration for regional utility bills –

E.g., gas & electricity, water, wifi, etc (if renting or in own accommodation).

There are sites that can help you to compare the price between different providers, choose what suits your family's needs

If married/living together consider taking this out in joint names or sharing the bills to help provide evidence of continuous residence in the UK for ILR & Citizenship

Driving licence registration –

i.e. exchange a foreign driving licence into UK driving licence, or

Applying for a new provisional driving licence.

1) HK licence to UK licence

<https://www.gov.uk/exchange-foreign-driving-licence>

2) New learner

<https://www.gov.uk/learn-to-drive-a-car>

Getting started (Week 2-4 in the UK)

Knowing public transport in UK –

1) Trains in UK

<https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

<https://www.thetrainline.com/>

2) Bus according to your local region

3) Crosscountry Bus/train

<https://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/bus>

Register to vote –

* If you are a passport holder, not a dependent. Former residents of Hong Kong who hold a British Overseas Territories, British Nationals (Overseas) or British Overseas passport qualify for registration

1) Register to vote

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>

2) The electoral commission

(<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/register-vote-and-update-your-details#commonwealth>)

Getting started (Week 2-4 in the UK)

Register with dental clinic –

Waiting list of dental clinic in the UK for NHS patients are longer than in HK and many UK residents use private dental providers as a result. To register with an NHS dentist please see

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/>

If urgent dental treatment is required:

Call 111 to seek assistance or follow this guidance

(<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/dentists/how-can-i-access-an-nhs-dentist-in-an-emergency-or-out-of-hours/>)

Alternatively, contact private providers to see if one has availability

Getting started (Week 2-4 in the UK)

Employment

Application of National Insurance Number (NiNo) –

Takes at least 16 weeks to process, better to register ASAP

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>

How to convert/obtain professional qualifications –

ENIC: <https://www.enic.org.uk/>

Or other relevant professional organisations of your profession (see slide 6)

How to set up business in UK / look for job opportunities –

1) <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-business>

2) <https://www.gov.uk/find-a-job>

There are also a lot of platforms that one can find job openings

National Career Services also has many useful resources that you would like to explore: <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/careers-advice#getting-a-job>

Many VCSE providers are running projects to help people from Hong Kong into work, contact your local Strategic Migration Partnership for more details (see page 19)

Getting started (Week 4 + in the UK)

Tax

Understand Tax implications – For basic overview see

- 1) For a basic overview see – (<https://www.gov.uk/income-tax>)
- 2) For a basic overview in Traditional Chinese and English see - (<https://www.hkbrits.com/post/tax-~-%E4%BA%A4%E7%A8%85>)
- 3) For a video in Cantonese and English on employment and tax see- (<https://www.ukhk.org/employment-1>)

Aspects involving tax due on Hong Kong assets and income and UK tax are more complex and professional advice may need to be sought. Useful resources include:

- 1) Official UK guidance – (<https://www.gov.uk/tax-foreign-income>)
- 2) A video by Migration Yorkshire in English and Cantonese with FAQ about UK tax- (<https://vimeo.com/showcase/9005856/video/678736365>)

Integration (Week 4 + in the UK)

English language training (if desired)

Government paid –

HK BNO visa holders and their dependents are eligible to £800 of free English language courses (known as ESOL, English for Speakers of Other Languages) from your local authority. It may be easiest to contact your Regional Strategic Migration Partnership (RSMP) located on next slide to find out details of how to access these classes.

Fee paying -

English language schools and online private courses (fee paying).

Free -

There may also be some community English language classes (generally free or at low cost). Again, please contact your RSMP to find a class.

For a resource in English and Chinese which explains the different English language provision and their different terminologies please see – https://southeastspm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/DR359A-HKBNO-Guide-Part-2-Learners_v2.pdf Chinese version https://southeastspm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/DR359A-HKBNO-Guide-Part-2-Learners_v2Chinese.pdf

Integration (Week 4 + in the UK)

UK Strategic Migration Partnerships



Region	Strategic Migration Partnership
London	https://www.london.gov.uk/what-wedo/communities/migrants-andrefugees/hong-kong-british-nationalsoverseas-bno-visa
South East	https://southeastspm.org.uk/hk-bnos/information-for-people-from-hong-kong/
South West	https://swcouncils.gov.uk/hong-kong-british-nationals-overseas-welcome-hub/
North East	https://www.nemp.org.uk/hk/
Yorkshire and Humberside	https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/?page=hong-kong-bno-hub
North West	https://northwestrsmp.org.uk/hong-kong-bno/
East of England	https://smp.eelga.gov.uk/hk-hub/
East Midlands	https://hkbno.emcouncils.gov.uk
West Midlands	http://welcomehub.wmsmp.org.uk/
Scotland	https://hongkongwelcomehub.migrationscotland.org.uk/
Northern Ireland	https://www.nilga.org/nilga-networks/bno-welcome-hub-nismp
Wales	https://www.wlga.wales/hong-kong-bno-visa-scheme-wales

Integration (week 4 +)

Schools –

Schools are a great aid to integration as children make friends and parents chat at the school gates waiting to pick up their children. There are also many school events parents are invited to and most schools have a parent led committee for parents who have the time to get more closely involved with the running of the school. This is generally known as the Parents Teachers Association (PTA). For more information on PTAs see

(<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2021/06/24/what-do-ptas-do-and-why-should-you-join-one-pta-members-answer-your-questions/>)

Understanding differences –

We understand that initially the different schooling system/culture can be confusing for you and your child/children. The following resources may help:

- 1) Hongkongers in Britain [educational project](#)
- 2) UKHK Education project - <https://www.ukhk.org/projects>

Integration (week 4 +)

Religious sites of worship –

Churches and other sites of worship have been one of the most common ways in which new arrivals from Hong Kong have found community, both with other new arrivals and also with local UK populations. Useful resources:

- 1) A list of Hong Kong friendly churches (<https://network.ukhk.org/>)
- 2) A list of Church of England churches
(<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/church-near-you>)
- 3) A list of Roman Catholic churches in the UK
(<https://catholicdirectory.org/>)
- 4) The UK Network of Buddhist organisations
(<https://www.nbo.org.uk/join-the-nbo/buddhist-links/>)
- 5) A list of Kadampa Buddhist sites in UK
(<https://enjoymeditation.org/information/info-uk-buddhist-centres/>)
- 6) The British Daoist Association
(<https://daoists.co.uk/>)
- 7) The Muslim council of Great Britain
(<https://mcb.org.uk/>)

Integration (week 4 +)

Volunteering -

Volunteering is a fantastic way of meeting new people at the same time as being introduced to UK working and social culture and gaining recent UK based work experience on your CV & references. It also improves language skills and helps you become more used to everyday English. Useful resources for volunteering:

- 1) A video in English and Cantonese by Migration Yorkshire on volunteering (https://vimeo.com/674472145?embedded=true&source=vimeo_logo&owner=94466666)
- 2) The UK government site on volunteering (<https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/volunteer>)
- 3) Your local authority's website

Career focused volunteering –

If you are principally interested in volunteering in order to assist with your career, look up organizations in the area you wish to be employed and send a polite but professional enquiry as to whether they accept volunteers. Many companies offer such opportunities and will not be surprised by such an enquiry. Search (chosen career + volunteer opportunities)

Integration (week 4 +)

Community groups –

In every town in the UK there will be local community groups. Some are linked to the church but many are not or do not expect you to hold that religion to join. This is a quick way of being introduced to matter close to the heart of the community. Useful resources include:

- 1) Your local council website
- 2) The government website on community groups
([https://www.gov.uk/find-a-community-support-group-or-](https://www.gov.uk/find-a-community-support-group-or-organisation)

[organisation](https://www.gov.uk/find-a-community-support-group-or-organisation))

Sports, art and culture –

Sports, art and culture are a great way of meeting both other Hong Kong families in the UK and the UK local population too. Many local HK diaspora organisations have running clubs or football teams. Useful resources include:

- 1) Your local council website
- 2) Social Media apps and Google.

Integration (week 4 +)

Mental health

For anyone arriving in a new country culture shock is a likely part of integration journey. In addition to this some may face issues of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Help is available. Useful resources include:

Mental health helplines and webchat facilities with Cantonese speakers:

Hongkongers in Britain

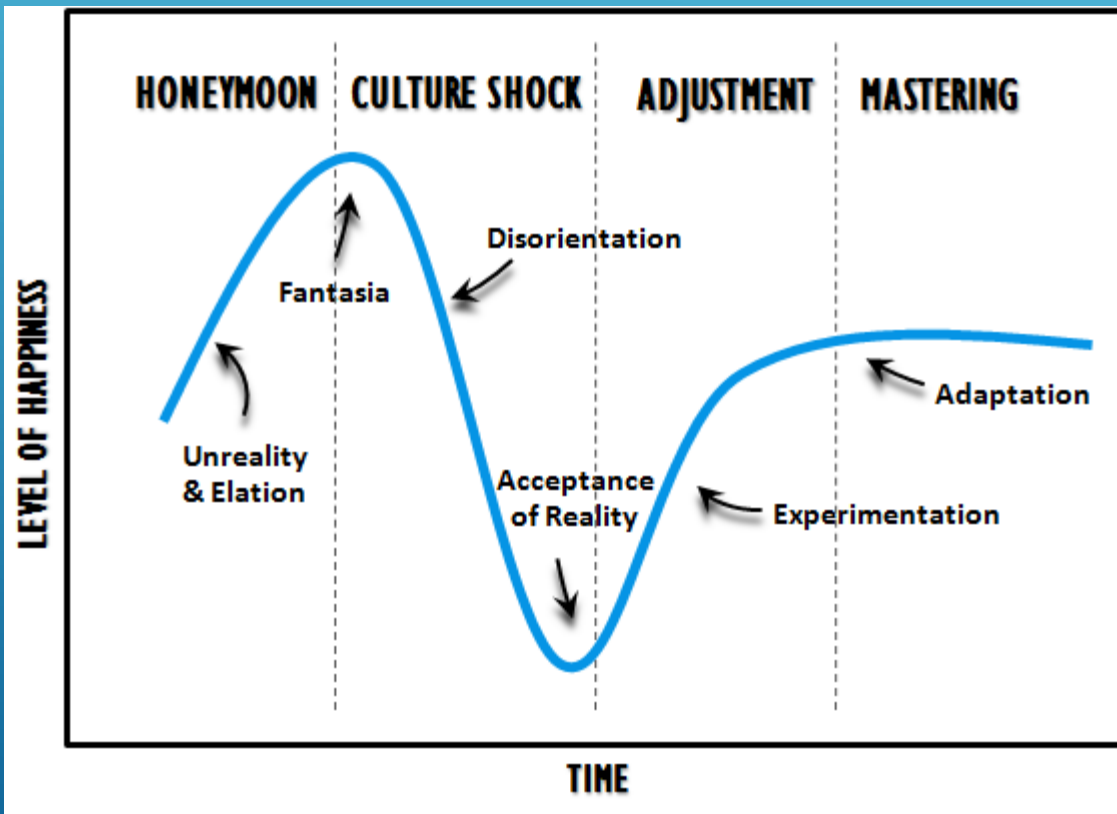
(<https://www.hongkongers.org.uk/mission-perm>)

Barnardos

(<https://helpline.barnardos.org.uk/hong-kong-bno>)

Mind (English only)

(<https://www.mind.org.uk/>)



Integration (week 4 +)

Hate Crime

Hopefully, hate crime is not something which you will encounter as a new arrival. The UK has strict legislation against hate crime.

However, if you were to, you do not have to suffer in silence, this is not part of the integration journey, there are services available to help. The following sites are useful resources

1) An East and Southeast Asian third-Party hate crime support and reporting service with access to Cantonese speakers and ongoing support.

Stop Hate UK (0800 138 1625) or www.stophateuk.org/talk-to-us which offers independent and confidential hate crime reporting services

2) The government site for reporting hate crime
(<https://www.gov.uk/report-hate-crime>)

Integration (week 4 +)

Within 1st year

Learn your rights and responsibilities in UK

Within 1st – 2nd year(s)

Elements for sustainable survival of HK new arrivals in UK:

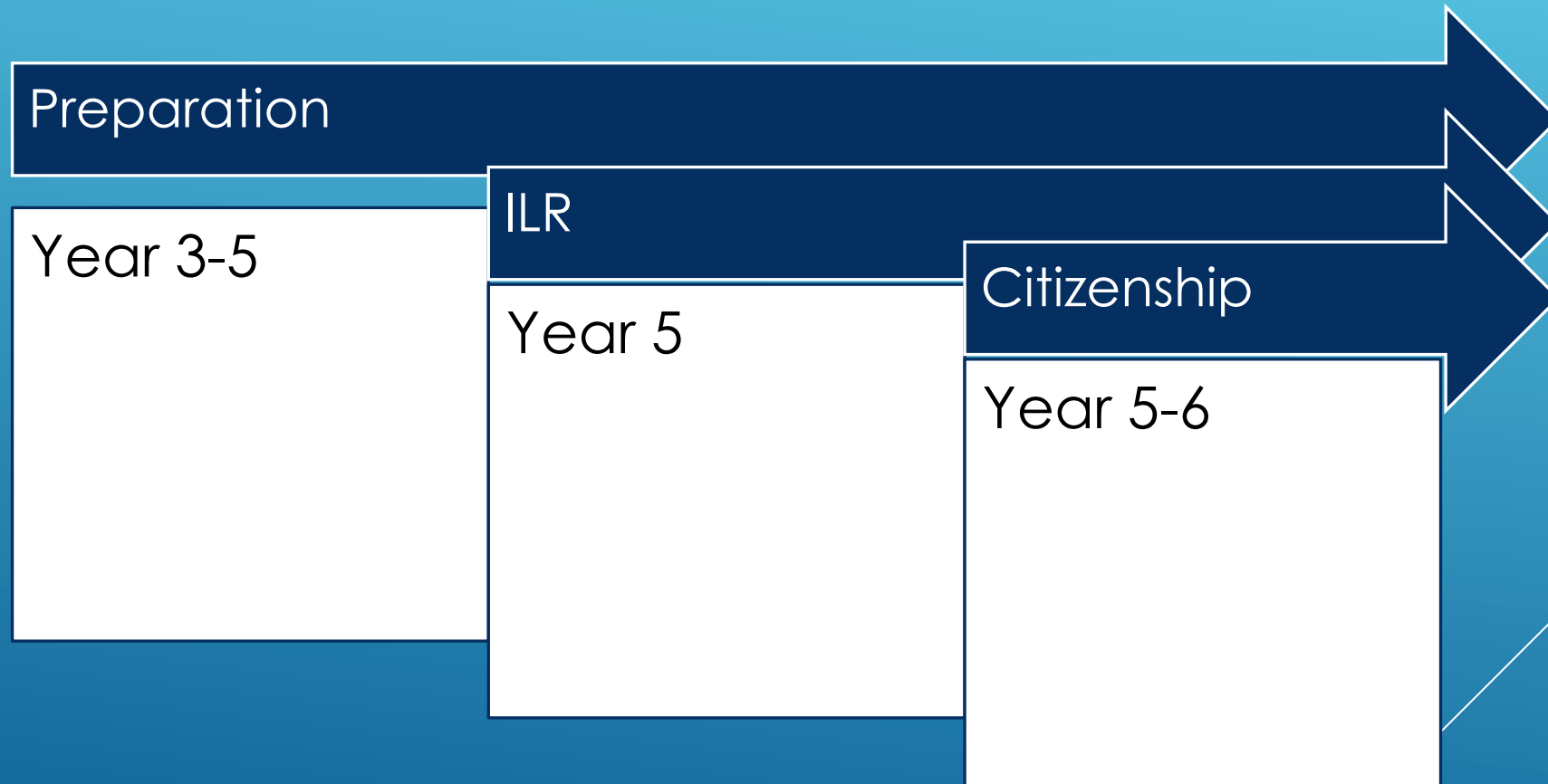
- 1) Housing - settled down in your own community
- 2) Financial state - career development, active & passive income
- 3) Language proficiency - developed proficiency according to your daily needs
- 4) Education - school-aged children from HK will hopefully have progressed in their integration into local schools & will have been provided support by the school or a particular department.

Year 2

Apply for an extension to your visa if you are on a 2.5 year visa

There is no limit to the number of HK BNO visa extension you can apply for

Part 3 – Preparing for Indefinite Leave to Remain(ILR) and Citizenship



Legal framework

Immigration Rules [Immigration Rules Appendix Hong Kong British National \(Overseas\) - Immigration Rules - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

UKVI's website [British National \(Overseas\) visa - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Guidance document : [Hong Kong British National \(Overseas\) route \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Statement from UK Parliament 24 February 2022 [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

** BNO passport holders can apply for and be granted other forms of immigration status too eg students, refugees and investors. /

Other relevant information

Continuous residence : [Continuous Residence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/continuous-residence)

Immigration Health Surcharge fees and refunds <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/refunds>

English language and Life in the UK

[Immigration Rules Appendix KOL UK - Immigration Rules - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/immigration-rules-guidance) [Knowledge of language and life in the UK caseworker guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/immigration-rules-guidance); [Immigration Rules Appendix KoLL - Immigration Rules - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/immigration-rules-guidance)

British nationality: Naturalisation for adults: [Guide AN: Naturalisation Booklet - the requirements \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444444/guide-an-naturalisation-booklet-the-requirements.pdf) and registration of children [Registration as British citizen: children \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444444/registration-as-british-citizen-children.pdf)

Note: This is not legal advice or exhaustive information but pointers towards how to access information for HKBNO visa applications./

Pre ILR & or Citizenship (Years 3-5)

Applies to people who either have a 5 years visa or have been granted an extension to a 2.5 year visa

Consider undertaking your Life in the UK and English language test ahead of the ILR deadline

Life in the UK test -

- Currently this test does not expire and can be taken as many times as is needed.
- (<https://www.gov.uk/life-in-the-uk-test>)
- Currently, those over 65 or with medical grounds for exemption do not need to do the test
- Many adult education organisations offer training for the life in the UK test. Your local authority or online google searches will help identify places, these are likely fee paying.

English language test –

- This is an area which changes regularly, it is always best to check the requirements nearer the time.
- (<https://www.gov.uk/english-language>)
- It is also possible that you may be exempt from needing to prove your English language level
- ([Prove your knowledge of English for citizenship and settling: Approved English language qualifications - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))
- If you do need to take an English language test, currently only a Secure English Language Test (SELT) is acceptable, these are currently only valid for 2 years prior to your ILR application.

Pre ILR & or Citizenship (Years 3-5)

Hong Kong BNO visa holders can apply for ILR once they have completed at least 5 years of continuous residence in the UK. It is important that the dates for residence are carefully checked as they will be calculated back from the date of the application. Usually, an application can be made 28 days before a visa expires. Please remember that other types of visas on a “settlement route” can count towards the 5 years. Please seek advice if you think this applies.

Hong Kong BNO visa holders can apply to extend their visas for periods of 2.5 years or 5 years until they wish to apply for settlement

Calculating time outside of the UK for ILR- (please always check the current guidance)

- Any absences outside of the UK need to be calculated in order to ensure that you meet the 5 year threshold for having been in the UK (as indicated above).
- Currently, you are allowed to have spent up to but not more than 180 days in any 12 month period outside the UK within the 5 year period.
- (<https://www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa/living-permanently-in-the-uk>)
- Some exceptions apply
- (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-continuous-residence>)

Pre ILR & or Citizenship (Years 3-5)

Continuous residence demonstration for ILR –

- Check the guidance to make sure you meet the continuous residence test. Keep original visa approval letter (if have) and evidence of residence: copies of passports entry/exit stamps, utility bills, council tax bills, HMRC and tax documents, health related documents etc.
- Continuous residency evidence for children can be demonstrated by a letter from their school(s).
- You can continue to work and exercise other rights in this period. Continue to meet suitability criteria
- Continue to meet the financial requirements and do not apply for public funds unless specifically allowed to. If you need public funds, seek advice on how to access it.
- If you have a child in the UK please make an BNO visa application in line with yours. If the child does not have a passport please rely on a full birth certificate.
- If you are in a post arrival relationship and your partner is from Hong Kong please consider including them in a future application and retain evidence of your relationship.
- Monitor changes in immigration rules

(<https://www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa/living-permanently-in-the-uk>)

ILR & or Citizenship (Year 5)

Apply for settlement –

- Pay fees and Immigration Health Surcharge.
- Gather evidence of residence in the UK (see previous section). Please remember that continuous residence is usually counted back from the date you make your settlement application.
- Gather evidence of relationships where necessary
- If you are in a post arrival relationship and your partner is from Hong Kong please consider including them in your application.
- Continue to meet suitability requirements
- Check that you meet the requirements before submitting your application

Citizenship, if desired (Year 5-6)

Applies to people who have been granted indefinite leave to remain under the Hong BNO visa rules.

People who have been granted ILR can live in the UK without having to apply for citizenship, however there are some advantages in applying for citizenship

- If you spend more than 2 years outside the UK you will lose your ILR.
- You can vote in UK elections (General election).
- It is relatively difficult to remove British citizenship (although this is subject to change).
- If you commit an offence (even just receiving a Police caution) this could possibly prevent you from being able to receive Citizenship, so it can be a good idea to apply sooner rather than later.
- You become a British citizen and can access the protections offered by the UK.

Consider applying for British citizenship after 12 months of being granted indefinite leave to remain. Points to note:

- Approach referees who can vouch for you and check the conditions that referees have to meet.
- Ensure that you meet the residence and good character requirements.
- Monitor changes in requirements for British nationality.
- (Apply for citizenship if you have indefinite leave to remain or 'settled status' - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk))