Euraxess UK

The guide for international researchers moving to the UK
The pursuit of knowledge in the modern age is no longer primarily an individual endeavour, with scientists working alone in their laboratories, isolated from the rest of the world. Instead it is a global venture with interaction and collaboration among people of many nations. It is now considered usual, and even desirable, for researchers to spend a part of their career in a foreign country, and this can be an exciting and rewarding experience, expanding both professional and personal horizons. However, it is not always easy to uproot oneself from familiar surroundings, and sometimes the move to another country can seem daunting. Simple things, like how to open a bank account or find childcare assistance, become more difficult in a foreign country. With this guide, and the associated website at www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk, we hope to make your move to the UK easier, so that instead of worrying about practicalities you can relax and enjoy the experience.

Welcome to the UK.

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are a non-political organisation which operates at arm’s length from government. We have a dedicated science department with a dual remit: to enhance the standing of science in society and promote public engagement with science, and to create and foster links between researchers in the UK and around the world.

The British Council acknowledges the support of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the European Commission in this project.

Euraxess UK is part of the European Commission EURAXESS Services Network involving 35 countries across Europe. EURAXESS aims to remove the barriers to free movement of knowledge within Europe, to strengthen cross-border mobility of researchers, students, scientists and academic staff, and to provide researchers with better career structures. Find out more at http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/services
Contents

Entry formalities
- Visas 8
- Work permits 9
- UK points-based system 10

Getting started
- Accommodation 12
- Banking 15
- Health 19

Working
- Finding a job 24
- Tax 25
- Social security 27
- Pensions 28
- Qualification recognition 29

Research
- PhD status 32
- Funding 33
- Career development 34
- Research policy 36
- Industry 37
- Research enterprise and intellectual property 38
- Working with animals 40
- Working with humans or human tissue 42
- Laboratory safety 43
- Science in England 46
- Science in Scotland 48
- Science in Wales 50
- Science in Northern Ireland 52

Families
- Status 56
- Pregnancy and maternity 57
- Child care 60
- Education 62
- Benefits 64

Everyday life
- Cost of living 66
- Keeping in touch 68
- Culture and leisure 71
- Public transport 76
- Driving 78
- Politics and voting 81
- Safety 83
- Learning English 84

Checklist
- Before you arrive 86
- Once you get here 87

Useful contacts 88
Entry formalities

Visas
Work permits
UK points-based system
Visas

If you are a national of one of the EEA countries, or Switzerland, you should not need a visa to come to the UK. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU from 1 January 2007. This means that nationals from Bulgaria and Romania do not require a visa to come to the UK, and can remain in the country so long as they are a student, self-employed or otherwise self-sufficient. However, they do not automatically have the right to work. If you are from outside the EEA you will probably need a visa, which you should apply for before you enter the country. Visit UK Visas for more information: www.ukvisas.gov.uk

### European Economic Area (EEA) countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
<td>Liechtenstein</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td></td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Switzerland is not in the EEA but an international treaty means that Swiss nationals have similar rights to live and work in the UK as EEA nationals.

**A8 countries:** Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

If you are a national from one of the above countries you must apply for the worker registration scheme if you plan to work for more than one month for an employer in the UK.

### Work permits

If you are an EEA or Swiss national you are normally entitled to work in the UK, although special rules exist for nationals of Bulgaria and Romania, and the A8 countries (see box).

 Anyone who wants to work in the UK, and who is not a national of the EEA or a Swiss national, will probably need permission to do so. During 2008 and 2009 the UK changed its work permits system to a new points-based system. Under the new system, migrants will need to pass a points-based assessment before they are given permission to enter or remain in the United Kingdom.

However, if you are a visiting academic (perhaps on sabbatical leave or taking part in an exchange) you may be able to stay and perform research for up to 12 months without applying through the points-based system. Several conditions apply to this and you should see the guidance for visiting academics for more details.

For more information visit the Working in the UK website: www.workingintheuk.gov.uk

If you are a national of Bulgaria or Romania and wish to work in the UK you must first get permission to do so. If you are highly skilled you could apply for a registration certificate, allowing you full access to the UK labour market. You do not need a registration certificate if you are a student (and not working), self-employed, or otherwise self-sufficient. If you do not qualify for a registration certificate you can apply for an accession worker card but you will normally need a company in the UK to obtain approval for you to work with them before you can apply for the card. Seasonal workers may work in the UK if they come under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme. Visit the UK Border Agency website at www.workingintheuk.gov.uk for more information for Bulgarian and Romanian nationals.
UK points-based system

The points-based system consists of five tiers. Points are awarded for different attributes (for example, your qualifications, age, previous earnings, English language skills, and your available funds) and you need a certain number of points depending on the tier under which you apply. You can perform a self-assessment online to determine how many points you might be awarded when you apply.

If you have enough points to qualify under tier 1 you can come to the UK (or remain here after studying – the post-study workers category) and look for work without needing to be sponsored by a UK employer. For all other tiers you will need a UK sponsor: either an employer or, for tier 4, an educational institution.

You can find out more information and details of how to apply on the UK Border Agency website.

If you are a student your right to work will depend on your immigration status. The UKCISA (The Council for International Student Affairs) website provides advice on when students can and cannot work legally in the UK: www.ukcisa.org.uk

Identity cards for foreign nationals

The UK is introducing a National Identity Scheme and the first phase of this will involve the issuing of compulsory identity cards for some foreign nationals. Initially this will apply only to people from outside the European Economic Area who apply for an extension of their stay in the United Kingdom as students or as the husbands, wives or partners of permanent residents. Identity cards for other foreign nationals will be phased in over the next few years. For more information visit the UK Border Agency website at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk
Accommodation

If you can, arrange accommodation before you arrive in the UK, even if it is only temporary, as having a UK address will help you to set up a bank account more quickly. If you can’t manage this, don’t worry; there is plenty of choice when it comes to private rental accommodation and finding a house or flat to rent is usually not a problem. You could also think about buying a house if you plan to stay for a longer period.

University accommodation
Many universities offer accommodation to international students (including PhD students) at a reasonable rate. Some may also be able to arrange accommodation for international researchers.

Private renting
There are plenty of online search engines for finding private rental accommodation in the UK. You could try the National Association of Estate Agents (www.naea.co.uk) which allows you to search for property type and price within a particular area. If you do not want to rent through an agency, you could search the local papers for housing advertisements and rent directly from the owner. There are also free papers, such as Loot, where rental accommodation is advertised.

Accommodation falls into several categories, although there is often some blurring of the boundaries, particularly when referring to a bedsit or studio apartment. In general, the following terms are used (starting with the cheapest options):

- **Flat or house share.** You have your own bedroom but other facilities (living room, kitchen, bathroom) are shared with other people.
- **Bedsit.** You have your bedroom and living room combined. These are normally smaller than studio flats and often you have cooking facilities either within the room, or as a separate shared facility. You often have to share a bathroom.
- **Studio flat.** Your bedroom and living room are combined. Often there is a separate kitchen. These should be self-contained (i.e. not sharing facilities with anyone).
- **Flat/apartment.** This is self-contained accommodation, with a separate living room and at least one bedroom. Often on only one level and part of a larger building.
- **Maisonette.** Apartment/flat on two levels with internal stairs.
- **Bungalow.** House with only one level.
- **Terraced house.** House attached to two other houses, often in a row of similar houses.
- **Semi-detached house.** House sharing one wall with another house.
- **Detached house.** House standing alone.

Directgov has useful information (in the Home and Community section of the website) for people who want to rent accommodation, including information on the different types of landlord and tenancy agreements, and advice on what to do if you have a problem with your landlord. Landlords are generally responsible for the maintenance and safety of the property, and if you would like to know what this includes, visit the Directgov pages on health and safety in rented accommodation.

Accommodation costs
The costs of accommodation and related costs vary greatly throughout the UK and often depend on your type of accommodation. Below is a list of the sort of expenses that you may incur. For further information see page 66 or the Euraxess UK website.

- Deposit
- Rent/mortgage repayments
- Furniture
- Council tax
- Building and contents insurance
- Utility bills
- Telephone
- Internet
- Television licence
Banking

There is a lot of variation in bank accounts in the UK and it’s important to look around at different banks and building societies to find out which suits you best. You can find out more about different types of bank accounts at Money Made Clear (www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk), the information service from the Financial Services Authority. The two main types of account are the basic bank account and the current account (see table for general features, although these do vary from bank to bank). Most bank accounts are free but many banks offer additional services such as insurance packages, for which you will have to pay a monthly fee. Think carefully about whether these are useful for you, and good value for money, before you commit to a monthly charge for your bank account.

### Bank versus building society
Banks and building societies both offer current accounts, savings accounts and investments. The main difference between them is that banks operate for their shareholders, while building societies are mutual institutions. This means that people with an account are effectively members and have a right to vote on issues affecting the society.

For example, there are special bank accounts for foreigners coming to the UK, which can be opened either before you arrive in the UK, or a few months after you arrive. You will probably have to pay a subscription charge to open these accounts, but they often include additional services such as discount offers and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Basic bank account</th>
<th>Current account</th>
<th>Savings account</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash card for cash machine</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit or debit card</td>
<td>✘</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up direct debits</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set up standing orders</td>
<td>✘</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheque book</td>
<td>✘</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overdraft facility</td>
<td>✘</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High interest on balance</td>
<td>✘</td>
<td>✘</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Buying**

If you will stay for a substantial period of time in the UK it may make sense for you to buy a house. However, you should probably wait until you have settled in before you take this step, and get to know the area in which you would like to buy. Some of the things you should bear in mind are:

- **Arranging a mortgage.** This may be more difficult if you have a short-term grant or stipend instead of a regular salary.
- **Saving up for a deposit.** The deposit is normally around five to ten per cent of the purchase price.
- **Solicitor’s/conveyancer’s fees.** These can vary according to the area and property.

- **Surveyor’s fees.** There is a basic valuation survey (around £250), which you will have to pay for, but you may also want a more complete structural survey and the costs of this vary.
- **Stamp duty.** This is a tax that you must pay if the property you buy is more than £175,000 (until 31 December 2009). It is currently one per cent of the total purchase price for a property worth between £175,001 and £250,000.

Directgov has useful information about buying a house and choosing mortgage lenders in the Money section of the website.
are sometimes easier to open than regular accounts if you do not have official proof of a UK address.

When choosing a bank account you should think about whether you will use your bank card abroad or make many transactions in other currencies; some banks charge for this but others do not. There is also a variation in the amount that banks charge for international money transfers. If you plan to send money abroad regularly you may be better off using a reputable foreign exchange broker rather than sending it through your bank.

**Opening a bank account**

In the past few years it has become more complicated to open a bank account in the UK, owing to the tight laws designed to prevent money laundering or terrorist activity. You will be able to open a bank account only close to where you live or work, not in a third region. Most banks require proof of identity and proof of your UK address (bank statement, EU/EAA identity card, Tenancy agreement, utility bill, Council Tax bill, official letter from employer), and for certain accounts you may also need proof of income. If you cannot obtain proof of income, you should still be able to open a basic bank account, but may not be entitled to credit facilities, such as an overdraft or credit/debit cards. Remember that banks and building societies have different policies on opening bank accounts and therefore if one bank will not let you open an account this does not mean that you cannot get one: you just may have to look around a bit more. Try asking other international researchers what they did, or talk to your personnel department, as sometimes banks on university campuses have special arrangements regarding bank accounts for foreigners. The British Bankers’ Association produces a leaflet, *Opening a bank account if you are new or returning to the UK*, which you can access online at www.bba.org.uk

**Useful websites**

More information about insurance and banking
www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk

Money Made Clear from the Financial Service Authority
www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk

**Bank opening hours**

Opening hours are decided by the individual banks and may differ considerably from branch to branch. Banks are usually open 0900 – 1730 weekdays, although some in Scotland close for an hour at lunchtime.

Some banks are open all day on Saturdays and a few are now open on Sundays for limited hours. Cash may be drawn from cash machines (ATMs). Many branches also have 24-hour banking lobbies where a range of services can be obtained through machines.

**Irish and Scottish bank notes**

Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own bank notes. These can be used elsewhere in the UK, but shops are sometimes reluctant to accept them. If you have any trouble getting them accepted ask a bank to swap them for Bank of England notes. This can be done free of charge.

**Using a cheque book**

Cheques can be used as an alternative way of payment, and are useful for sending payment through the post. If you use a cheque in a shop you will probably be asked to show a cheque guarantee card, which should have been issued with your chequebook. Make sure that you have enough money in your account to cover any cheques that you write; otherwise you may have to pay a fine and will get a bad credit rating, which can make things difficult for you in the future. Follow the guide below for filling in a cheque, and if you’re paying a bill it is advisable to write your reference number or account number on the back of the cheque.
Health

The National Health Service

The National Health Service (NHS) was set up in 1948 and is designed to provide free or low-cost medical treatment to all legal residents of the UK. The type of care is classified as primary (the first point of contact for patients) or secondary (e.g. hospital treatment after being referred by a doctor).

Primary care providers

- **Pharmacists.** Pharmacists can advise on minor medical conditions (such as skin allergies); some can offer repeat prescriptions or prescribe medicine; and some offer tests to monitor conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Advice from pharmacists is free but unless you are exempt you will have to pay a charge for prescriptions (except in Wales where there are no prescription charges).

- **Opticians.** These carry out eye and sight examinations. Unless you are entitled to a free eye test (for example if you are under 18, have diabetes or glaucoma, or are claiming certain benefits), you will have to pay for these services.

- **Dentists.** Dentists offer routine and specialist care for teeth and gums. Most dental practices take a mixture of NHS and private patients. Even if you are registered as an NHS patient, you will still have to pay some charges for dental treatment unless you are exempt from charges (for example if you are under 18, if you are pregnant or have had a baby in the past 12 months, or if you are claiming certain benefits).

Standing orders and direct debits

A standing order is an instruction you give to your bank to pay a set amount, usually each month, to a particular person or supplier. The amount can only be changed by you.

A direct debit is an instruction to your bank to let a supplier have money from your bank account to settle your bills. Normally the amount can be changed by the supplier so long as they give you ten working days’ notice of the amount so that you can cancel the direct debit if you are not happy.

You can cancel direct debits and standing orders by writing to your bank. If there is not enough money in your account to pay a standing order or direct debit, the bank does not have to pay it, and you may be charged a fee.

Online banking

Many banks now offer an online banking service, which can be a convenient way of managing your finances. If you do open an online banking account make sure that you have the necessary security measures on your computer, and never disclose your user name or password by e-mail.

Standing orders and direct debits

A standing order is an instruction you give to your bank to pay a set amount, usually each month, to a particular person or supplier. The amount can only be changed by you.

A direct debit is an instruction to your bank to let a supplier have money from your bank account to settle your bills. Normally the amount can be changed by the supplier so long as they give you ten working days’ notice of the amount so that you can cancel the direct debit if you are not happy.

You can cancel direct debits and standing orders by writing to your bank. If there is not enough money in your account to pay a standing order or direct debit, the bank does not have to pay it, and you may be charged a fee.

Online banking

Many banks now offer an online banking service, which can be a convenient way of managing your finances. If you do open an online banking account make sure that you have the necessary security measures on your computer, and never disclose your user name or password by e-mail.

Online banking

Many banks now offer an online banking service, which can be a convenient way of managing your finances. If you do open an online banking account make sure that you have the necessary security measures on your computer, and never disclose your user name or password by e-mail.

Standing orders and direct debits

A standing order is an instruction you give to your bank to pay a set amount, usually each month, to a particular person or supplier. The amount can only be changed by you.

A direct debit is an instruction to your bank to let a supplier have money from your bank account to settle your bills. Normally the amount can be changed by the supplier so long as they give you ten working days’ notice of the amount so that you can cancel the direct debit if you are not happy.

You can cancel direct debits and standing orders by writing to your bank. If there is not enough money in your account to pay a standing order or direct debit, the bank does not have to pay it, and you may be charged a fee.

Online banking

Many banks now offer an online banking service, which can be a convenient way of managing your finances. If you do open an online banking account make sure that you have the necessary security measures on your computer, and never disclose your user name or password by e-mail.
This includes free hospital treatment and treatment by a GP, but you will still have to pay other costs, such as prescription charges unless you are exempt from these charges.

Everyone, whether considered ‘ordinarily resident’ or not, is entitled to free emergency treatment given at a GP practice, an Accident and Emergency department or a similar centre. Subsequent treatment as an in-patient or outpatient is not free. Treatment for some communicable diseases is also exempt from charges.

You can find out more about NHS charges and help with NHS costs on the Directgov website and for more information for overseas visitors, go to the Department of Health website.

The European Health Insurance Card

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), which has recently replaced the E111 form, entitles you to reduced-cost, sometimes free, medical treatment in the EU and Switzerland. If you are ordinarily resident in the UK you can apply for a UK-issued EHIC card, but there are some restrictions to cover, depending on your nationality. For more information and to register online for an EHIC card, visit the Department of Health EHIC website.

Private medical care

There are also private healthcare providers in the UK, and many NHS practitioners also perform services for private patients. These services are more expensive than treatment on the NHS and are often paid for through private medical insurance schemes. In some cases this allows patients to obtain treatment earlier than they would have been able to on the NHS.
Working

Finding a job
Tax
Social security
Pensions
Qualifications recognition
Finding a job

Research jobs
If you are looking for a research job there are several resources that might be useful to you. The majority of these are available on the internet and allow you to search for jobs, post your CV (curriculum vitae) and access support and advice about vacancies and careers. Below are a few examples, but a more complete list is available on the Euraxess UK website.
- The European EURAXESS Jobs portal has a searchable database of research jobs throughout Europe. http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/jobs
- Jobs.ac.uk, which is a specialist jobsite for careers in academic, research, science and related professions. www.jobs.ac.uk
- New Scientist. The weekly New Scientist magazine has many adverts for UK and worldwide jobs, and you can search the database online, as well as accessing careers resources. www.newscientistjobs.com
- Science Careers. This website from Science magazine offers careers advice and information about jobs, funding, meetings and events. www.sciencecareers.org

Non-research jobs
If you decide to change career, or would like to find a job for your partner, you could use one of the many general job resources available. One example is the Guardian Jobs website at www.jobs.guardian.co.uk, which has vacancies from all sectors and helpful advice about how to prepare for interviews and how to write CVs and covering letters. You could also visit your local Jobcentre to find local job vacancies and advice, or call Jobseeker Direct on 0845 6060 234. For more details visit the Jobcentre Plus website at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

Tax

When you arrive in the UK you should register with your local tax office and fill in form P86, issued by Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC – the UK body dealing with tax).

If you live and work in the UK you will normally have to pay tax here as well. However, if you have income which is from a foreign country and is taxed in that country, you may be entitled to an exemption from paying tax in the UK when there is a double taxation agreement in place.

Types of tax
The most probable types of tax that you will have to pay are:
- Income Tax
This is a tax on your income, including wages, interest from savings and investments, and rent from any property you own. You will also have to pay Income Tax on pensions and on certain benefits. The amount of Income Tax you have to pay depends on how much you earn.
PhD students do not normally have to pay tax on their grants from outside the UK but if you are a post-doctoral researcher, you may have to pay tax on your grant or fellowship. Contact your tax office to find out.
- Capital Gains Tax
This is a tax on any profit from an asset which you have sold or given away. For example, if you sell a house which was not your main home, you would have to pay Capital Gains Tax on the profit that you make. You do not have to pay Capital Gains Tax when you sell a house which you have been using as your home.
- Stamp duty
If you buy property for £175,000 (until 31 December 2009) or more, you have to pay Stamp Duty Land Tax. If you buy shares, you may also have to pay a type of stamp duty.
There are also other types of taxes, such as inheritance tax and taxes on goods and services.

Tax year
The tax year in the UK runs from 6 April until 5 April. If you come to settle in the UK in the middle of a tax year you will normally only have to pay tax on income from the moment that you arrive, but there are exceptions to this.
Social security

Are you covered by social security in the UK?
This depends on your nationality and whether you have previously paid any UK National Insurance contributions. If you are a national from the European Economic Area (EEA) you will normally be entitled to the same benefits as a UK citizen, provided you have the right to reside in the UK. EURES, the European Job Mobility Portal, has useful information regarding specific benefits and your entitlement to them as an EEA national (http://europa.eu.int/eures). If you would like personalised advice in your own language you can contact the Citizens Signpost Service at http://ec.europa.eu/citizensrights

If you are from outside the EEA, your home country might have a separate agreement with the UK regarding social security. You can find a list of these agreements on the Department for Work and Pensions website at www.dwp.gov.uk/lifeevent/benefits/social_security_agreements.asp

National Insurance contributions
You pay National Insurance contributions (NICs) to build up your right to social security, benefits and a pension. NICs are automatically deducted from your wages or will be calculated from your self-assessment tax return. There are different classes of NIC depending on the situation: if you’re employed and earning over a minimum threshold, you pay Class 1 NICs; if you are self-employed you pay Class 2 NICs at a basic flat rate and Class 4 NICs as a percentage of your taxable profits. If you have gaps in your national insurance record, or are not paying national insurance contributions because you are on a grant, you can make voluntary contributions (Class 3 NICs) if you wish to protect your right to a UK pension.

National Insurance number
To get a National Insurance number you need to have an interview with your local Jobcentre Plus or social security office. Call Jobcentre Plus on 0845 600 0643.

Paying tax
If you are employed, Income Tax and National Insurance contributions will be automatically deducted from your salary (Pay As You Earn: PAYE), and you will not normally need to fill in a tax return each year. If you are self-employed, or have a substantial income from property or other means (for example foreign income), you will need to fill out a self-assessment tax form.

To find out more about tax in the UK, or to find your local tax office, visit the website for HM Revenue and Customs at www.hmrc.gov.uk

2009/2010 tax bands
The first £6,475 that you earn is not taxed and then the rest of your income is subject to different rates of tax:
- £0–£37,400 – 20 per cent (basic rate)
- Above £37,400 – 40 per cent (higher rate)

2009/2010 tax bands
The first £6,475 that you earn is not taxed and then the rest of your income is subject to different rates of tax:
- £0–£37,400 – 20 per cent (basic rate)
- Above £37,400 – 40 per cent (higher rate)
Qualification recognition

If you want to work, study, or carry out research in the UK, you may need to confirm that your qualifications are recognised here. Exam bodies will give you information on recognition of their exams in the UK, from education institutions, professional bodies, employers or government departments. Exam bodies will also inform you of any equivalence or placement on qualification frameworks.

You can also find information on qualification equivalence and recognition from UK NARIC, the National Recognition Information Centre for the UK, at www.naric.org.uk

Qualifications for training or studying in the UK

If you are planning to study or train in the UK, visit our Education UK website at www.educationuk.org to find out about entry requirements for different courses. You may be required to demonstrate that your level of English is sufficient, in which case we can help you with an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam.

Pensions

There are several types of pension available in the UK, which fall into three main categories and are briefly explained here. For more detailed information visit the Euraxess UK pensions web page.

State pension

The state pension in the UK is currently in two parts: the basic state pension, and the state second pension. Both depend on the National Insurance contributions (NICs) you have made, but whereas the basic state pension is currently a flat rate, depending only on the number of years that you have paid NICs, the state second pension is linked to how much you earned and how much National Insurance you have actually paid. NICs are automatically deducted from your salary by your employer.

The age at which you can claim basic state pension is currently 65 years for men and 60 years for women, but by 2020 the state pension age for women will also be 65. This is anticipated to further increase, for both men and women, to 68 years by 2044.

If you have paid NICs in the UK you should be able to claim the state pension even if you no longer live in the UK. However, the amount will depend on the number of qualifying years of NICs you have made, and the country in which you live.

Occupational pensions

Occupational pension schemes are also called work pensions or superannuation schemes. These are where your employer offers you an additional pension scheme and normally both you and your employer pay contributions to the scheme.

Personal pensions

You can take out a private pension with a pension provider and regularly contribute to it yourself. Some employers may also contribute to your personal pension. If you pay income tax in the UK you also get tax relief on pension contributions, effectively increasing the amount in your pension pot. Stakeholder pensions are a special type of flexible pension scheme where you do not have to pay in a fixed amount of money each month and the management charges are low. Current legislation states that if you take out a stakeholder pension while you are resident in the UK you can continue paying into it for five years after you leave the UK to take up residence elsewhere.

You can get advice about all types of pensions from the Pensions Advisory Service at www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk
Research

- PhD status
- Funding
- Career development
- Research policy
- Industry
- Research enterprise and intellectual property
- Working with animals
- Working with humans or human tissue
- Laboratory safety
- Science in England
- Science in Scotland
- Science in Wales
- Science in Northern Ireland
PhD status

In the UK, unlike in some other European countries, researchers studying for a PhD have student status. This means that if you are a PhD student you may be exempt from paying council tax (a local tax, set by councils to help pay for local services like policing and refuse collection) and you may qualify for student discounts and other benefits. You may also get extra support from the international office of the university where you are registered as a PhD student.

Funding

There are a number of different sources of funding for research in the UK. Money from the government is allocated mainly through the seven Research Councils, which each cover a different research area (see box). There are also several large charitable organisations that provide funding for research (particularly medical research) such as the Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK. Some learned academies, such as the Royal Society, offer fellowships or travel grants for researchers. The rules about eligibility differ from scheme to scheme and several programmes only accept non-UK citizens if they have already been living in the UK for several years. Many researchers coming to the UK obtain funding from Europe, either through the 7th Framework Programme (the European Commission’s framework for funding research) or independent organisations such as the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO) and the Human Frontier Science Program (HFSP). For more detailed information about funding, and access to a funding database on the European level, visit Euraxess UK www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk (working – funding).

Some support for international networking of researchers is also available from the British Council. For more information visit www.britishcouncil.org/science-research-funding

The UK’s Research Councils

- Arts and Humanities Research Council
  www.ahrc.ac.uk
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
  www.bbsrc.ac.uk
- Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
  www.epsrc.ac.uk
- Economic and Social Research Council
  www.esrc.ac.uk
- Medical Research Council
  www.mrc.ac.uk
- Natural Environment Research Council
  www.nerc.ac.uk
- Science and Technologies Facilities Council
  www.scitech.ac.uk
- Research Councils UK (umbrella organisation)
  www.rcuk.ac.uk
Career development

A career in research can sometimes be complicated and competitive. Researchers are frequently required to be highly mobile and flexible and are encouraged to consider the wide range of career options that this opens up. In the UK there are a number of ways in which researchers are supported throughout their careers, including dedicated funding (known as ‘Roberts Funding’) for skills development. Researchers are encouraged to develop both their transferrable skills (e.g. communication skills; management skills) and their research-specific skills, and you should find that there are many opportunities for training or career support available to you. One good place to start is by asking your human resources department what they offer, or by visiting the Vitae website at www.vitae.ac.uk (see box opposite) where you will find a range of development opportunities and resources.

The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
The main instrument setting out policy on researcher career and mobility issues in the UK is The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers’. This has been mapped on to the principles set out in the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers (see EURAXESS Rights http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/ rights for further information). The Concordat sets out the expectations and responsibilities of researchers, their managers, employers and funders. It consists of a set of principles for the future support and management of research careers, and under each principle, an explanation of how it may be embedded into institutional practice. The Concordat was most recently revised in 2008, all the major public sector institutions undertaking research in the UK are signatories to it. Implementation of the Concordat is undertaken at the level of the individual HEI or other research organisation.

The Concordat’s main principles:
1 Recognition of the importance of recruiting, selecting and retaining researchers with the highest potential to achieve excellence in research.
2 Researchers are recognised and valued by their employing organisation as an essential part of their organisation’s human resources and a key component of their overall strategy to develop and deliver world-class research.
3 Researchers are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly diverse, mobile, global research environment.
4 The importance of researchers’ personal and career development, and lifelong learning, is clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career.
5 Individual researchers share the responsibility for and need to pro-actively engage in their own personal and career development, and lifelong learning.
6 Diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of the recruitment and career management of researchers.

The sector and all stakeholders will undertake regular and collective review of their progress in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of research careers in the UK.

Vitae is a national organisation dedicated to realising the potential of researchers. It is funded by the UK Research Councils and supports the implementation of the Concordat at national level by championing the personal, professional and career development of researchers.
Vitae works with higher education institutions and research institutes to provide doctoral researchers and research staff with development opportunities. Vitae also works with policy-makers to develop policy in the interests of researchers and undertakes research to build the evidence base necessary for policy development in this area.

www.vitae.ac.uk
Research policy

The UK is a world leader in research, second only to the United States in terms of the number of influential research publications produced. However, to maintain this position, more investment and development of the research base is necessary. In recent years the UK government has commissioned a number of reports into different aspects of research in the UK. These include the 2002 Roberts Review, which looked at the supply of scientists, engineers and technologists, and how this could be improved; and the 2003 Lambert Review, which investigated the links between businesses and universities, and focused on how these links could be strengthened. The government has also published the Science and Innovation Investment Framework, which sets out the long-term vision for UK science and innovation, and shows how the government intends to strengthen the UK research base.

Visit Euraxess UK for more information about UK and European science policy, and for links to the Roberts and Lambert reviews, as well as to the Science and Innovation Investment Framework: www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk (research – industry R&D)

Industry

The UK has a thriving private sector, and the government has a range of incentives which support innovation and investment in research and development (R&D). There are many different business sectors with large R&D activities, and if you are considering a research career in industry, the UK has a lot to offer. The major sectors which invest heavily in R&D are: aerospace and defence; the automotive industry; biotechnology and pharmaceuticals; the chemical industry; electronics, telecommunications and information technology; and healthcare.

For more information about R&D in industry, visit Euraxess UK at: www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk (research – industry R&D)

Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004–14

Main points of the Framework:

- To maintain the delivery of world-class research.
- To increase the investment (public and private) into research and development (R&D) from 1.9 per cent of the GDP to 2.5 per cent of the GDP by 2014.
- To ensure that funding of research in universities and public institutions is sustainable.
- To increase the responsiveness of publicly funded research to the needs of the economy and public services.
- To increase the links between business and R&D; more business investment into R&D and more use of the UK science base as a source of ideas and talent.
- To improve the supply of scientists, engineers and technologists.
- To improve public confidence and awareness of scientific research.
Research enterprise and intellectual property

The UK government has a number of drivers to increase the interaction between academia and business, and offers support to universities and researchers who wish to commercialise their research. For more information visit the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills website.

**Intellectual property**

Even if you have no links to business, it is helpful to know about intellectual property (IP). If in case you perform research which could lead to a patentable or exploitable invention or discovery. IP is a term given to ideas or other creative or innovative subject matter, including discoveries or inventions which could be patented. The rights to IP (IPR) can be owned by an individual or a group, and this allows them to control its use, or in some cases benefit from its application. Some types of IPR are owned automatically, as in the case of copyright, where the creators of a piece of literature, music, art, film, etc., automatically own the copyright to their material. For other types of IP the issue of who owns the rights could be more complicated. In the case of patents, this depends upon the situation in which the discovery or invention was made. If a researcher or student produces a potentially patentable or exploitable invention or discovery during their work at an institute or university, in most cases their employer would own the IPR. This means that the employer would assume the responsibility for claiming the IPR, and receive any benefits arising from these. However, many universities and institutes have revenue sharing schemes or other policies to recognise and reward staff and students who perform research that produces IP-related revenue.

**IP protection and commercialisation**

Most universities are beginning to recognise the benefits that can arise from the commercialisation of research, and are working towards effective and responsible policies to manage it. Issues may come up when research in a university is performed in partnership with another external organisation or sponsor, but in general the rights to any IP will be agreed at the onset of the research. In response to the Lambert Review on the collaboration between universities and businesses, a set of model agreements for this has been made available, which could be used at the outset of any collaboration. These make it clear who owns and has the right to exploit any IP arising from the research. In addition to this, as any knowledge regarding IP could be potentially exploitable, employees and students must keep secret any confidential information to which they have access as an employee or student of the university.

You can find out more about research enterprise and intellectual property on Euraxess UK or the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills websites.

**Useful websites**

UK Intellectual Property Office
www.ipo.gov.uk

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
www.bis.gov.uk
Working with animals

Experimentation on animals is highly regulated in the UK and if you do need to use animals for your research you will need a personal licence, for which you will have to undergo training, and a project licence, which gives the details of your research. You can find out more by visiting the Home Office Science and Research website. In addition, the establishment where you carry out the experiments needs to be licensed under a Certificate of Designation.

■ Personal licence
The training that you must undergo before obtaining a licence is organised into modules. Even if you are an experienced researcher with a qualification in laboratory science from outside the UK, you will still be required to complete one or more modules to ensure that you are familiar with UK regulations.

■ Project licence
If you will be working on a project which is already running, the project licence should have been granted. However, if you plan to alter the number or type of animals which will be used, or the experimental procedures, you will need to apply for an amendment to the licence. If you are starting up a different project, you or your group leader must apply for a new project licence.

■ Certificate of Designation
Every establishment where scientific procedures on animals will be performed must hold a Certificate of Designation. The holder of this is responsible for ensuring that training is available for staff, and appropriate standards of animal welfare are upheld. If you are unsure whether the place where you work/intend to work holds a Certificate of Designation, you should contact the administration.

Ethical considerations
The Medical Research Council has produced a booklet discussing the ethical and legal aspects of using animals in medical research, ‘Responsibility in the use of animals in medical research’. This is available online at www.mrc.ac.uk

Animal rights extremist groups
The animal rights movement is very active in the UK, and contains some extremist elements. Although legislation exists to prevent the harassment of people carrying out legitimate animal research, it may be advisable not to discuss your research in public.

Useful website
Home Office – Science and Research
http://scienceandresearch.homeoffice.gov.uk
Working with humans or human tissue

Any research involving human subjects, or using human tissue or biological samples, is subject to strict regulations and guidelines. If you will be working with humans or human tissue, make sure you are fully aware of all of the regulations. The MRC has produced a series of booklets outlining good clinical and laboratory practice, as well as the legal and ethical issues surrounding the use of humans and human tissue.

Clinical trials
On 1 May 2004, the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004 came into force, and these help to protect the rights, safety and well-being of clinical trials subjects. A short description of the regulations is available online at the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency website at www.mhra.gov.uk

Research using human embryos or embryonic stem cells
The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (www.hfea.gov.uk) is responsible for regulating all research involving human embryos, including all work on human embryonic stem cells. Any work involving embryos or embryonic stem cells must be performed under a project licence, but personal licences for individual researchers are not necessary.

Laboratory safety

Safety in the laboratory is primarily the responsibility of the employer, and different institutes often differ slightly in their policies, although all must adhere to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH). You may find it useful, however, to be aware of some of the types of additional training or record-keeping that can be necessary in certain lines of scientific research. To find out more visit the Health and Safety Executive and Defra websites.

Working with radioactivity
Most universities and institutes have their own local policies on the use of radioactivity, so check with your employer what these are. You may be required to undergo a training course before you start to work with any sources of radioactivity, and when you do start work you will need to be monitored to ensure that you are not being overexposed.

Useful websites
Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.gov.uk
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
www.defra.gov.uk
Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

There are strict regulations controlling the generation and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), in order to protect the environment and ensure the health and safety of researchers and the public at large. The legislation depends on whether the GMOs are contained, for example in a laboratory, or released into the environment.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) regulates the use of contained GMOs and places legal requirements on anybody who works with GMOs in a contained unit. These requirements focus on risk assessment and accurate record keeping, and can be read in detail on the HSE website.

The Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for regulations regarding the deliberate release of GMOs into the environment and you can find more information on the Defra website.

Risks for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding

The laboratory environment may be associated with extra risks for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding; for example exposure to radioactivity, solvents or teratogenic substances. If you are pregnant or have given birth within the last six months you should notify your employer and they must carry out a risk assessment specific to you, taking into account any advice given to you by your doctor or midwife. Any identified risks to you or your child must be removed or controlled. You can contact the Health and Safety Executive for more details on this subject.
Science in England

Science cities
The best known scientific centres in England are Oxford, Cambridge and the capital, London, and between them these three cities host some of the best research institutes in the world. However, excellent science is not confined to these regions, and to foster other hubs of science and technology, the government has designated six cities around England as ‘science cities’. These are Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and York, and each has its own strategy and areas of expertise.

Useful website
England’s Regional Development Agencies
www.englandsrdas.com

Research in England

Universities
There are around 90 universities in England and you can find out about them on the Universities UK website (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)

Research Council institutes
The UK Research Councils support research institutes in their own particular fields and these can be found on their websites, via www.rcuk.ac.uk

Government institutes
The Food and Environment Research Agency
www.fera.defra.gov.uk
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
www.cefas.co.uk
Veterinary Laboratories Agency
www.vla.gov.uk
National Physical Laboratory
www.npl.co.uk

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory
www.dstl.gov.uk
Meteorological Office
www.metoffice.gov.uk

Independent research organisations
There are many independent research organisations in England and you can find a list of these on the RCUK website. Below are a few examples:
Cancer Research UK
www.cancerresearchuk.org
European Bioinformatics Institute
www.ebi.ac.uk
Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute
www.sanger.ac.uk
Royal Botanic Gardens
www.kew.org
Science in Scotland

Although Scotland is a relatively small country, its output in terms of scientific research is outstanding. It has just 0.1 per cent of the world’s population but produces 1 per cent of the world’s published research, ranking very highly in terms of research citations per capita. Fifty-five per cent of this comes from international collaboration, the highest of any country in the world.

Science policy
Scotland has its own devolved parliament, and the Scottish Government is responsible for all issues which have been devolved, such as education and health. In 2008, the Scottish Government published Science for Scotland, which will help:

- deliver improvements in public services, such as to the NHS
- identify strategic growth opportunities for existing businesses using science to solve their problems, develop new products or exceed their customers’ needs
- attract inward investment, and provide jobs – for the highly skilled and qualified – in sectors that underpin our economy
- find answers to global issues which affect our daily lives, such as climate change and food security, and develop technology to enhance our living and work spaces and keep us connected or entertained.

The government is committed to working with business and institutions on developing the science base, international profile and attracting inward investment, and developing knowledge exchange.

Research pooling and collaborative science
One of the unique aspects of science in Scotland is the collaborative atmosphere between universities and research institutes. Research facilities and expertise are often shared between different institutions so that scientists and students have access to the best opportunities for furthering their research and education. Research pooling has been implemented in various fields including chemistry, physics, economics, engineering and mathematics, geosciences, environment and society, and the life sciences.

Technology and enterprise
Scotland has a good reputation for the transfer of knowledge from the research base to industrial and commercial applications. The Scottish Institute for Enterprise promotes an enterprise culture within universities and boosts the commercial potential of university science and technology research. This is supported by three intermediary technology institutes (ITI). These act as centres to support the transfer of knowledge to the marketplace and are focused on three principal areas: energy, life sciences and techmedia.

Useful websites
The Scottish Government
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/science
Scottish Enterprise
www.scottish-enterprise.com
Intermediary Technology Institutes
www.itiscotland.com
Scottish Institute for Enterprise
www.sie.ac.uk
The Royal Society of Edinburgh
www.science.org
Science in Wales

Wales has had a National Assembly since 1999, and in November 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government unveiled the first Science Policy for Wales. This focuses on the three main strands of health, low carbon energy systems and enabling sustained economic and social renewal. The Welsh Assembly Government actively supports innovation through its Technology and Innovation team, and initiatives such as SmartCymru which is designed to support businesses in their research and development strategies.

**Sustainable development**

‘Sustainable development is not an option that will go away – it is the only way forward.’ (Right Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM, First Minister for Wales)

Sustainable development is a priority area in Wales, and is one of the research and development strengths of the country. From environmental design to alternative energy sources, Wales is at the forefront of innovation in this field. The newly established Low Carbon Research Institute (LCRI) represents a consortium of Welsh University departments committed to such aims: www.lcri.org.uk

**Industry–academia collaboration**

Wales has a network of world-class research centres with a track record for successful collaboration with industry. These Centres of Excellence for Technology and Industrial Collaboration carry out a wide range of research, from marine sciences to advanced software systems.

**Useful websites**

- Official Gateway to Wales www.wales.com
- Welsh Assembly Government www.wales.gov.uk
- Wales on the Web www.walesontheweb.org
- Technium www.technium.co.uk
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales www.hefcw.ac.uk
- Research Assessment Exercise www.rae.ac.uk/Results/

**Universities/research centres**

- Aberystwyth University www.aber.ac.uk
- Bangor University www.bangor.ac.uk
- Cardiff University www.cardiff.ac.uk
- Glyndŵr University (NE Wales Institute) www.glyndwr.ac.uk
- Swansea University www.swan.ac.uk
- Swansea Metropolitan University www.smu.ac.uk
- Trinity University College www.trinity-cm.ac.uk
- University of Glamorgan www.glam.ac.uk
- University of Wales Institute Cardiff www.uwic.ac.uk
- University of Wales – Lampeter www.lamp.ac.uk
- University of Wales – Newport www3.newport.ac.uk
- Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) www.cat.org.uk

**Techniums**

(Incubators where companies can access technical, financial and research expertise)

- Technium Swansea
- Technium Sustainable Technologies – Baglan
- Technium Performance Engineering – Llanelli
- Technium Aberystwyth
- Technium OpTIC – St Asaph
- Technium CAST (Centre for Advanced Software Technology) – Bangor
- Technium Digital – Swansea
- Technium Digital @ Sony – Pencoed
- Technium Pembrokeshire
- Technium Springboard – Cwmbran
Science in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is part of the UK and governed by the Northern Ireland Assembly since 1998. There is no separate science policy for Northern Ireland, but science and innovation remain of key importance for the economic growth of the country. Research is strong in the areas of biomedical sciences, nanotechnology, sensors, forensic science, astronomy, electronics and engineering.

Research and development
Invest Northern Ireland is the region’s economic development agency, which supports and encourages businesses to invest in research and development. It runs programmes for industrial research, knowledge transfer, technology collaboration and support for research infrastructure with a view to commercialisation. A lot of help is available for researchers and organisations who wish to bridge the gap between the laboratory and the marketplace. The life sciences, communications, software, and manufacturing industries are key business sectors which invest in research and development.

Innovation
Commitment to innovation in Northern Ireland is demonstrated by the opening of the Northern Ireland Science Park in 2006. This world-class science park in Belfast houses a community of knowledge-based enterprises, from small start-ups to established companies.

Academia
Research Institutes and Centres of Excellence with high calibre staff, technical support staff and doctoral and postdoctoral research staff are integral parts of Northern Ireland’s two universities. ‘Blue skies’ and strategic/industrial related research is carried out. The Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT) at Queen’s University, for example, is a new €60 million world-class centre and University of Ulster invested £20 million in an Intelligent Systems Research Centre.

Useful websites
Invest Northern Ireland
www.investni.com
Northern Ireland Science Park
www.nisp.co.uk
Northern Ireland Assembly
www.niassembly.gov.uk

Universities/research centres
Queen’s University, Belfast
www.qub.ac.uk
University of Ulster
www.ulster.ac.uk
Armagh Observatory
www.arm.ac.uk
Forensic Science Northern Ireland
www.fsni.gov.uk
Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
www.afbini.gov.uk
Status

In most cases, as long as you can support them financially, your spouse (husband or wife) should be allowed to join you when you come to the UK to work, although they may need a visa. However, if you are from outside the EEA, your children may not be allowed to join you in the UK if their other parent remains abroad, unless you have sole responsibility for the child.

If you are not married but have a registered civil partnership, in most cases your partner will have the same rights as a spouse. Even if your partnership is not registered, if you can prove that you have been living together as if married for two years or more (bank account details, rental agreements, etc.), you will often be treated in the same way as married couples. For more information visit UK visas at www.ukvisas.gov.uk

Useful websites

- Directgov Parents section www.direct.gov.uk/parents
- National Childbirth Trust www.nct.org.uk
- UK Border Agency www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

Pregnancy and maternity

The Directgov web pages have lots of information for parents and prospective parents, including the kind of scans and screening tests that are available during pregnancy, advice on healthy eating during pregnancy, and support after the birth. Another useful source of information is the National Childbirth Trust, which offers advice and practical support through its local branches, which organise antenatal classes and mother and baby groups, and practical support.

Since 1 January 1983, children born in the UK do not have the automatic right to British Citizenship, but if you are ordinarily resident in the UK and not restricted to how long you can stay here, your child might be granted citizenship. To find out whether this is possible contact the UK Border Agency. Under British law, a child can hold dual nationality, but under some other countries’ laws this is not possible. Therefore if you want your child to have dual nationality you should check with your country of origin whether this is allowed.

Parental rights

For full and up-to-date details of the rights of parents or prospective parents, visit the Directgov section on Work and Families. A brief summary of your rights as an employee are given on the next page, with the figures taken from April 2009. If you are not officially an employee (for example if you have a personal fellowship which does not give you employee status), you should contact the organisation that funds you to find out their maternity or paternity policy. You may be entitled to maternity allowance. To qualify for this you must have paid a minimum amount of national insurance contributions, either in the UK or in another EU country, and you must have been working for at least 26 weeks out of the 66 weeks before your baby is due. There are other eligibility criteria and to find out whether you qualify visit the Directgov website or your local Jobcentre plus.

For all entitlements such as maternity leave, parental leave, etc., you must inform your employer of your wish to take leave well in advance.
Maternity rights for employees

- Protection against unfair treatment or dismissal
- Paid time off for ante-natal care
- Maternity leave of 52 weeks
- Maternity pay benefits, depending on your status:
  
  Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) – You should qualify for this if you earn an average of at least £90 a week and have been working for your current employer for at least 26 weeks into the 15th week before the baby is due. SMP is currently 90 per cent of your salary for the first six weeks of leave and then for the next 33 weeks it is either £123.06 per week or 90 per cent of your average earnings, whichever is lower.

  Some companies have their own maternity pay schemes, which will be at least as high as Statutory Maternity Pay.

  If you have recently come to the UK you may still qualify for maternity pay, depending on your employer and the amount of insurance contributions you have made in the UK or certain other countries.

Maternity Allowance (MA). If you don’t qualify for SMP you might get MA, so long as you have worked (either on an employed or self-employed basis) for at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the week your baby is due, and earned an average of £30 in any 13 of those 66 weeks. MA is currently £123.06 per week or 90 per cent of your average earnings, whichever is lower, and can be taken for up to 39 weeks.

Some companies have their own maternity pay schemes, which will be at least as high as Statutory Maternity Pay.

If you have recently come to the UK you may still qualify for maternity pay, depending on your employer and the amount of insurance contributions you have made in the UK or certain other countries.

Paternity rights for employees

- Paternity leave. You may be entitled to either one or two weeks’ paternity leave at any time up to the 56th day after either the birth or the expected birth date if the child is premature. To qualify for this you must:
  
  - have, or expect to have, responsibility for the child’s upbringing
  - be the biological father of the child or the mother’s husband or partner
  - have worked continuously for your employer for 26 weeks into the 15th week before the baby is due.

- Paternity pay. If you qualify for paternity leave, unless you earn below £90 a week, you will probably qualify for Statutory Paternity Pay, which is £123.06 a week or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Adoptive parent rights

If you are adopting a child and are employed, you (or your partner if you have one) may be entitled to adoption leave (up to 52 weeks’ adoption leave and up to 39 weeks’ adoption pay). Adoption pay is again at a rate of £123.06 a week, or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Parental leave

This is different from maternity or paternity leave and allows you to take unpaid leave to care for your child. If you have been an employee at the same company for a year or more and are legally responsible for the upbringing of a child, you should be entitled to take up to 13 weeks’ unpaid leave in total for each child up until their fifth birthday (or up to five years after the placement date of an adopted child). You cannot take more than four weeks’ leave in any one year. If the child is disabled you should be entitled to take up to 18 weeks’ leave until their 18th birthday.

For all of these entitlements you must inform your employer of your wish to take leave well in advance.

Sure Start

Sure Start is the UK government’s programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, child care, health and family support.

www.surestart.gov.uk

Maternity rights for employees

- Protection against unfair treatment or dismissal
- Paid time off for ante-natal care
- Maternity leave of 52 weeks
- Maternity pay benefits, depending on your status:

  Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) – You should qualify for this if you earn an average of at least £90 a week and have been working for your current employer for at least 26 weeks into the 15th week before the baby is due. SMP is currently 90 per cent of your salary for the first six weeks of leave and then for the next 33 weeks it is either £123.06 per week or 90 per cent of your average earnings, whichever is lower.

  Some companies have their own maternity pay schemes, which will be at least as high as Statutory Maternity Pay.

  If you have recently come to the UK you may still qualify for maternity pay, depending on your employer and the amount of insurance contributions you have made in the UK or certain other countries.

Maternity Allowance (MA). If you don’t qualify for SMP you might get MA, so long as you have worked (either on an employed or self-employed basis) for at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the week your baby is due, and earned an average of £30 in any 13 of those 66 weeks. MA is currently £123.06 per week or 90 per cent of your average earnings, whichever is lower, and can be taken for up to 39 weeks.

Some companies have their own maternity pay schemes, which will be at least as high as Statutory Maternity Pay.

If you have recently come to the UK you may still qualify for maternity pay, depending on your employer and the amount of insurance contributions you have made in the UK or certain other countries.

Paternity rights for employees

- Paternity leave. You may be entitled to either one or two weeks’ paternity leave at any time up to the 56th day after either the birth or the expected birth date if the child is premature. To qualify for this you must:

  - have, or expect to have, responsibility for the child’s upbringing
  - be the biological father of the child or the mother’s husband or partner
  - have worked continuously for your employer for 26 weeks into the 15th week before the baby is due.

- Paternity pay. If you qualify for paternity leave, unless you earn below £90 a week, you will probably qualify for Statutory Paternity Pay, which is £123.06 a week or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Adoptive parent rights

If you are adopting a child and are employed, you (or your partner if you have one) may be entitled to adoption leave (up to 52 weeks’ adoption leave and up to 39 weeks’ adoption pay). Adoption pay is again at a rate of £123.06 a week, or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Parental leave

This is different from maternity or paternity leave and allows you to take unpaid leave to care for your child. If you have been an employee at the same company for a year or more and are legally responsible for the upbringing of a child, you should be entitled to take up to 13 weeks’ unpaid leave in total for each child up until their fifth birthday (or up to five years after the placement date of an adopted child). You cannot take more than four weeks’ leave in any one year. If the child is disabled you should be entitled to take up to 18 weeks’ leave until their 18th birthday.

For all of these entitlements you must inform your employer of your wish to take leave well in advance.

Sure Start

Sure Start is the UK government’s programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, child care, health and family support.

www.surestart.gov.uk

Maternity rights for employees

- Protection against unfair treatment or dismissal
- Paid time off for ante-natal care
- Maternity leave of 52 weeks
- Maternity pay benefits, depending on your status:

  Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) – You should qualify for this if you earn an average of at least £90 a week and have been working for your current employer for at least 26 weeks into the 15th week before the baby is due. SMP is currently 90 per cent of your salary for the first six weeks of leave and then for the next 33 weeks it is either £123.06 per week or 90 per cent of your average earnings, whichever is lower.

  Some companies have their own maternity pay schemes, which will be at least as high as Statutory Maternity Pay.

  If you have recently come to the UK you may still qualify for maternity pay, depending on your employer and the amount of insurance contributions you have made in the UK or certain other countries.

Maternity Allowance (MA). If you don’t qualify for SMP you might get MA, so long as you have worked (either on an employed or self-employed basis) for at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the week your baby is due, and earned an average of £30 in any 13 of those 66 weeks. MA is currently £123.06 per week or 90 per cent of your average earnings, whichever is lower, and can be taken for up to 39 weeks.

Some companies have their own maternity pay schemes, which will be at least as high as Statutory Maternity Pay.

If you have recently come to the UK you may still qualify for maternity pay, depending on your employer and the amount of insurance contributions you have made in the UK or certain other countries.

Paternity rights for employees

- Paternity leave. You may be entitled to either one or two weeks’ paternity leave at any time up to the 56th day after either the birth or the expected birth date if the child is premature. To qualify for this you must:

  - have, or expect to have, responsibility for the child’s upbringing
  - be the biological father of the child or the mother’s husband or partner
  - have worked continuously for your employer for 26 weeks into the 15th week before the baby is due.

- Paternity pay. If you qualify for paternity leave, unless you earn below £90 a week, you will probably qualify for Statutory Paternity Pay, which is £123.06 a week or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Adoptive parent rights

If you are adopting a child and are employed, you (or your partner if you have one) may be entitled to adoption leave (up to 52 weeks’ adoption leave and up to 39 weeks’ adoption pay). Adoption pay is again at a rate of £123.06 a week, or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

Parental leave

This is different from maternity or paternity leave and allows you to take unpaid leave to care for your child. If you have been an employee at the same company for a year or more and are legally responsible for the upbringing of a child, you should be entitled to take up to 13 weeks’ unpaid leave in total for each child up until their fifth birthday (or up to five years after the placement date of an adopted child). You cannot take more than four weeks’ leave in any one year. If the child is disabled you should be entitled to take up to 18 weeks’ leave until their 18th birthday.

For all of these entitlements you must inform your employer of your wish to take leave well in advance.

Sure Start

Sure Start is the UK government’s programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, child care, health and family support.

www.surestart.gov.uk
Child care

There are many types of child care available, which differ in the environment in which the care is given, the age of the children cared for and the period for which the care is given.

**Full-time child care options** (these also offer part-time care)

- **Nannies** – provide child care in your own home and can look after children of any age. Some parents share a nanny with other parents to reduce costs.
- **Chilmdinders** – usually look after children under 12 in the childminder’s home and often collect school-aged children from a nearby school.
- **Day nurseries** – provide care for children from birth to four or five and beyond, often integrated with early education.

**Occasional care or regular part-time care**

- **Crèches** – provide occasional care for children under eight. Usually charge on an hourly basis.
- **Toddler groups** – informal groups of parents that meet locally with their children on a regular basis, usually with children who are under five. Normally free, or with a minimal contribution, but parents must often be present.
- **Pre-schools and playgroups** – provide play time and often early education to under-fives. Sessions last a maximum of four hours. Organised on a not-for-profit basis so generally cheaper than day nurseries or crèches.
- **Out-of-school or ‘kids’ clubs** – offer children aged four to 12 a safe and stimulating environment in which they can play and learn outside school hours.
- **Babysitters** – offer occasional care in your own home, for example if you want to go out in the evening.

**Finding good quality child care**

You can search for child care all over the UK using the Childcare link website at www.childcarelink.gov.uk and you can access reports on the quality of child care from the government inspectorates:

- **England** – Ofsted: www.ofsted.gov.uk
- **Wales** – Estyn: www.estyn.gov.uk
- **Scotland** – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education: www.hmie.gov.uk
- **Northern Ireland** – Department of Education, Northern Ireland: www.deni.gov.uk

If you want to find a childminder you should contact your local Children’s Information Service, the details of which are on the Childcare link website.

Whatever the type of child care you choose for your child, you should ensure that it is has been approved and you check this either through the Childcare Approval Scheme, or Ofsted in England, the Care Standards Inspectorate for Wales, the Care Commission in Scotland and the Northern Childcare Partnership in Northern Ireland.

**Help with child care costs**

All three- and four-year-olds are entitled to 12½ hours of free early education per week for 38 weeks a year. In addition, if you are eligible for Working Tax credit there is an element which is based on childcare costs. Find out more on the Directgov website.
Education

If you and your child have the right to reside in the UK, then your child should be entitled to a free education, which is provided by state schools. However, if your child will only be in the UK for a short period of time, the school has the right to refuse admission. Admission to schools is co-ordinated by the local education authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, and the Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland. Some parents in the UK choose to send their children to independent schools (sometimes called public schools) which charge fees.

Education structure

Education in the UK is compulsory for all children aged five to 16. After 16, students can choose to continue their education at school or a further education institute, and after this, if they have achieved adequate grades, they can go to university or other institutes of higher education.

- **Early years education.** Three- and four-year-old children are entitled to free early years education, which consists of 12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year. This can be given by registered child care providers, including childminders and day-nurseries, as well as schools with nursery or reception classes.

- **Primary school.** Your child will usually attend primary school from the age of five to 11. During this time your child will follow the first two stages of the National Curriculum: Key Stages one and two.

- **Secondary school.** When your child is 11 they will normally move to secondary school, where (up to the age of 16) they study Key Stages three and four. At the age of 16, children in England, Wales and Northern Ireland take GCSE exams (General Certificate of Secondary Education) in a range of subjects. In Scotland, pupils take Standard Grades instead of GCSEs.

- **After 16**, children can decide to study for A levels (or ‘Highers’ in Scotland), or a vocational qualification, or they can leave education entirely. If they decide to continue their education they can do this at school or at a further education institute or ‘Sixth Form College’.

Higher education

Students wishing to continue their education after the age of 18 may apply to attend a university or higher education institute. Each university has its own admissions policy, and sets the minimum entry requirements for each of its courses. Students coming from abroad will have to demonstrate that their level of English is sufficient and that any qualifications they have are of equivalent value to those demanded by the individual university. There are different levels of fees for students depending on whether they are eligible to pay ‘home’ or ‘overseas’ fees. For more information visit the UKCISA and Education UK websites.

There are several government websites targeted at parents, where you can find out more about education in England (www.parentscentre.gov.uk), Scotland (www.lts.scotland.org.uk/parentzone), Wales (www.new.wales.gov.uk) and Northern Ireland (www.education-support.org.uk), including how to choose a primary or secondary school, and the differences between state and independent schools.

You may also want to consider sending your child to an International school. The European Council of International Schools at www.ecis.org can provide information.

Useful websites

- Education UK www.educationuk.org
- UKCISA (the Council for International Student Affairs) www.ukcisa.org.uk
Benefits

If you bring your children to the UK you may be entitled to financial help from the government in order to support them. This comes in the form of Child Benefit and Tax Credits. If you are from the European Economic Area (or Switzerland) and have the right to reside in the UK, you will normally be able to apply for this financial support, although special rules may apply for nationals of accession states. Make sure that you have all the details of any previous child benefit that you have received from other countries.

If you are from outside the EEA, and your immigration status includes the condition ‘has no recourse to public funds’, you will not be eligible for Child Benefit and Tax Credits unless an agreement exists between your home country and the UK.

To find out more about Child Benefit and Tax Credits, visit the website of Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs at www.hmrc.gov.uk

For more information about family issues and links to relevant websites visit the Euraxess UK website: www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk

Health in Pregnancy grant
The Health in Pregnancy grant is a one-off payment to help pregnant women stay healthy in the later stages of pregnancy. If you have the right to reside in the UK and are 25 weeks pregnant or more, you may be eligible for this grant of £190. Ask your doctor or midwife about applying for the grant.

Child Trust Fund
The Child Trust Fund is a long-term savings and investment account designed to help parents save for their child’s future. To be eligible the child must be:
- born on, or after, 1 September 2002
- living in the UK
- eligible for child benefit
- not subject to immigration control.
The cost of living

Here are some rough examples of prices in the UK at the beginning of 2009. Remember the prices vary considerably depending on where you are in the country, and whether you live in the centre of a city, in the suburbs, or in a more rural area.

Rent
Monthly rent for a one-bedroom, furnished flat:
(2009 prices)
London: £600–£800
Edinburgh: £400–£700
Cardiff: £450–£650
Belfast: £300–£600
You will normally have to pay a deposit of one month's rent which will be refunded at the end of the tenancy.

Council Tax
Council Tax is a local tax, set by councils to help pay for local services like policing and refuse collection. The amount of Council Tax you pay depends on where you live and the size of the property you live in. It can range from around £400 to around £2,000 pounds per year. Remember, if you are a PhD student or on a low income, you may be able to apply for an exemption from Council Tax, or a reduction. You can find out more about this from the Home and community section on the Directgov website.

House insurance
The average annual premiums for buildings insurance (to cover the structure of the house) and contents insurance (to cover the contents; your furniture, personal possessions, etc.) are around £150 and £100, respectively. However, prices vary depending on the provider and where you are in the country. If you live in private rented accommodation the buildings insurance is usually covered by the landlord, but you will probably have to take out your own contents insurance. Check with your landlord to find out exactly what you are covered for.

Utility bills
The average annual cost per household in the UK for gas and electricity is currently around £1,000. Water supplies may be metered or charged at a fixed rate.

Internet
Costs vary between £10 and £25 per month. See page 69 for more information.

Television licence
Everyone who has a television must get a television licence. A colour TV licence currently costs £142.50 per year and you can pay monthly or yearly. You can find out more on the TV Licensing website at www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Units of measurement
Although the metric system is in general use some things are still described in imperial measures, such as distances along roads (miles), volumes of drinks, like milk and beer (pints), and people's weight (stones).
1 mile = 1.6 kilometres
1 pint = 0.568 litres
1 stone = 6.35 kilograms
1 pound = 454 grams

Food and drink
Loaf of bread (800g): £1.20
Pint of milk: £0.45
Bottle of wine: £4 to £10
Pint of beer in a pub: £2.50 to £3
Keeping in touch

When you come to the UK you will probably want to stay in close contact with friends and relatives from around the world. There are many ways of doing this, from calling directly via your computer to posting an old-fashioned letter.

Calling abroad
If you will be calling abroad a lot it is probably cheaper not to do this simply via your normal landline telephone provider. There are several ways of calling cheaply abroad including:

- **International calling cards.** You buy cards with a certain amount of balance on them and use them to call abroad. When the balance is used up you can often top them up. Sometimes these cards can be used from more than one country.

- **Additional international call providers.** This is where you have an account with an international calls provider, as well as your normal telephone provider, and you use a prefix before you dial abroad from your normal telephone. You receive bills from both providers.

- **Instant dial services.** These are where you do not have to create an account with a separate provider. You simply dial an access number from your normal telephone and then dial the international number. You will be charged only for the costs of the access number by your normal telephone provider. This may also work with some mobile phone providers.

- **Calling by computer.** There are a number of freely available programmes that allow you to make voice calls from computer to computer, without any cost. Some programmes also allow free calls from your PC to normal telephones in some countries, but you may have to pay a small amount to set up the service. Using your computer to telephone is probably the cheapest way to call abroad, and the quality of the connection is often very good.

**Time zone**
In winter, the time zone for the UK is Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC).
On the last Sunday in March British Summer Time starts (UTC + 1), when the clocks go forward by one hour. British Summer Time ends when the clocks go back one hour on the last Sunday of October.

**Internet connections**
There are two main types of internet connection in the UK, dial-up and broadband. You should think about how much you will use the internet, and whether you will be downloading large files, before you decide on a provider.

**Broadband.** You have a monthly charge and can use the internet at any time. You can often get packages which include free off-peak phone calls. Broadband connections are much faster than dial-up connections. Remember to check whether the download restrictions fit your requirements. Some providers also offer internet by cable, independent of the telephone line.

**Dial-up.** You dial up to the internet using your telephone line. You can either pay only for the amount of time that you are connected, or pay a monthly fee for unlimited usage.
Some providers now offer packages that can include internet, telephone, television and mobile phone.

**Mobile phones**
There are many different options for you if you would like to buy a mobile phone, with several large networks operating in the UK and various types of phone and contract. You should think about how much you will use your phone, and if you will not need to travel often you may be better off with a ‘Pay as you go’ account instead of paying monthly. The different networks offer a bewildering array of payment plans and it is advisable to shop around before you buy, particularly if you will be calling to or from other countries a lot, as the networks differ in their charges for international calls and roaming. Keep an eye out for promotions, which are constantly changing.
Culture and leisure

The UK has a strong cultural heritage and has produced world-famous artists, poets, playwrights, musicians, authors and designers. Whatever your interests, you’re sure to find something that’s worth spending your free time on.

Museums
The UK has museums dedicated to a multitude of subjects, from science to fine art, childhood to dungeons. Many museums are free to enter, although they often charge for temporary exhibitions. To search for a museum by topic or area, visit the Ecsite-UK website at www.ecsite-uk.net.

Science events
There are plenty of science-related events in the UK, from informal discussions such as Café Scientifique (www.cafescientifique.org), to public lectures and science festivals. You can find out more on the British Council Talking Science website www.britishcouncil.org/talkingscience-latest-news.htm.

Theatre
William Shakespeare is probably one of the most famous Englishmen of all time and his plays are still enjoyed today in theatres throughout the UK. This includes the famous Globe theatre in London, a replica of the 16th century wooden theatre where some of his plays were first seen. UK theatre is not limited to historical works however, but is also renowned for contemporary plays and musicals. Many of the world’s finest talents of the 20th century, including composers such as Andrew Lloyd Webber (Evita, Cats, Phantom of the Opera, etc.), and renowned playwrights like the 2005 Nobel Laureate, Harold Pinter. Although London is arguably the theatrical hub

The postal system
There are post offices in most towns and cities, and these offer a variety of services. As well as sending letters and parcels by Royal Mail, you can pick up many official leaflets and application forms (e.g. International Driving Licence) at your local post office. If you have stamps you can send letters by posting them into the red post-boxes which are found all over the place. These tell you when the collection times are, and whether there is a later collection at another location, in case you have missed the last post.

Royal Mail offers different classes of mail depending on when you want the post to arrive. First Class mail should arrive on the next working day; Second Class should arrive by the third working day after posting. The price of postage depends on the size and weight of the letter, as well as the class of delivery, and you can check the current prices by visiting the Royal Mail website.

Sending mail abroad
Airmail
Airmail usually arrives within three days to Western Europe, four days to Eastern Europe, and five days for the rest of the world.

Surface mail
Surface mail takes much longer than airmail to arrive: around two weeks to Western Europe, four weeks to Eastern Europe, and eight weeks to the rest of the world. You cannot send letters to Europe using surface mail, but you can send packages. If you are sending heavy packages that are not urgent it may be worth using surface mail.

Urgent or valuable mail
If you have urgent or valuable mail to send you could use one of the Royal Mail’s special delivery services. If you need a guaranteed delivery within a certain time you could consider using courier services such as Parcelforce, which often have next-day delivery to major European cities and delivery within two to three working days for other destinations.

For more information about the different delivery services available, visit the Royal Mail website.
of the UK, there are plenty of world-
class venues and stage companies
outside London; for example, the
Grand Opera House in Belfast,
Northern Ireland, the West Yorkshire
Playhouse in Leeds, and the Royal
Shakespeare Company in Stratford-
upon-Avon.

**Opera**

Opera has flourished in the UK in the
past few years, with innovative shows
attracting new audiences. Venues
include the Royal Opera House in
London and the Wales Millennium
Centre in Cardiff, home to the Welsh
National Opera.

**Edinburgh Festival**

There is actually a cluster of festivals
occurring in Edinburgh in August,
which are collectively known as the
Edinburgh Festival. They include
the original Edinburgh International
Festival of theatre, opera, music
and dance; the Edinburgh Festival
Fringe, which is now the world's
largest arts festival and includes
comedy, music, drama and dance;
the Edinburgh Military Tattoo; the
Edinburgh International Film Festival;
the Edinburgh International Book
Festival; the Edinburgh Jazz and
Blues Festival; and several others.

**Dance**

You can see world-class dance
performances in the UK, from
classical ballet productions
to contemporary dance. The
Rambert Dance Company,
established in 1926, is the UK's
flagship modern dance company,
showcasing work from established
international choreographers as
well as introducing challenging
and innovative new pieces. The
company tours throughout Britain
regularly and is also associated with
the famous Sadler's Wells theatre
in London. For more traditional
dance, you could visit the Royal
Ballet in London, or try to catch
a performance from one of the
excellent touring ballet companies,
such as the English National Ballet, or
Scottish Ballet.

**Comedy**

British comedy is a worldwide
export and there are many places
throughout the UK where you can
see up-and-coming new comedians
in live comedy shows. From stand-up
evenings in pubs, to cabaret, to
tours of world-famous comedians,
you can immerse yourself in the
UK's long tradition of comedy. For
news, reviews and listings of comedy
events, visit www.chortle.co.uk

**Visual arts**

There are many art galleries in the
UK catering for all tastes. Possibly the
most famous are the Tate
galleries: Tate Britain and Tate Modern, both in
London; Tate St Ives in the south-west of England; and Tate Liverpool in the North. You can find out more
about these online at www.tate.org.uk and you can search for other
galleries in different regions of the
UK at www.culture24.org.uk

**Television**

There are five terrestrial channels
in the UK; three public service
channels (BBC1, BBC2, and Channel
Four, which is public service, but
commercially funded) and two
commercial channels (ITV1 and Five).
As well as the terrestrial channels you
can see many more by getting digital
television (for example, by paying
a one-off fee for a digital box), or
cable or satellite television for which
you normally need to pay a regular
subscription.

**Film**

As well as the usual blockbusters,
some cinemas in the UK regularly
show more alternative or 'art-house'
films and you can find these out
by checking the film listings in the
local newspaper. International films
are normally shown in the original
language with subtitles, rather than
being dubbed. There are also several
film festivals throughout the UK,
including the London Film Festival
and the Edinburgh International Film
Festival. Find out more about films
and the movie industry from the
British Film Institute website, at
www.bfi.org.uk
Tourist boards
Visit Britain
www.visitbritain.com
Enjoy England
www.enjoyengland.com
Visit Wales
www.visitwales.co.uk
Visit Scotland
www.visitscotland.com
Discover Northern Ireland
www.discovernorthernireland.com

Music
The UK has a strong musical tradition and whatever your taste you should be able to find a gig which inspires you. You can often see new bands and performers for free in pubs or at free festivals, or you could visit one of the many music venues throughout the UK. London is an almost obligatory stopping point for most big bands on international tours and you can find out music listings for London and the rest of the UK by checking the Gig Guide website at www.gig-guide.co.uk

Heritage
Prehistoric monuments, medieval castles, Tudor palaces and aristocratic country houses – there are plenty of historical attractions to visit in the UK which bring to life its colourful past. The UK has 27 World Heritage sites including the Giant’s Causeway in Northern Ireland, Stonehenge in South England, the Old and New Town in Edinburgh, and the Castles of King Edward in Wales. The conservation organisations The National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk) and The National Trust for Scotland (www.nts.org.uk) preserve many sites of cultural and historical importance and you can find out more about places to visit on their websites, or those for the national tourist boards.

Countryside
Although fairly populous, the UK also has plenty of natural beauty spots, from the World Heritage coastline in Dorset in the South, to the beautiful and remote Shetland Islands off the north of Scotland, where in summer you can watch the spectacular aurora borealis. There are currently 14 national parks in the UK and 35 designated ‘Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty’, and the National Trust organisations protect a lot more of the UK’s countryside and coastline. To find out about places to visit near you, contact the tourist board for your area.

Climate
The UK has a temperate climate, staying mild in the winter (1–5°C) and not too hot in the summer (14–30°C).

Rain
The amount of rainfall depends on where you are in the country and some parts are surprisingly dry. The county of Essex in the south sometimes receives less than 45 cm of rain in a year, less than the annual rainfall in some Mediterranean countries. On the other hand, the Lake District in the north has an average annual rainfall of more than 2 metres!

Sport
Sport has always been an important part of UK life and now, in the run up to the 2012 Olympics, it is even more so. Whether you would like to take part in a sport yourself, or simply be a spectator, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in the UK’s sporting life. The BBC Sport website (www.bbc.co.uk/sport) has news, background information and features, as well as a calendar of sporting events, and if you’d like to get active yourself you can search for clubs and sporting venues at www.sportsbase.co.uk

Public holidays
England and Wales
■ New Year’s Day (1 January)
■ Good Friday (Friday before Easter Sunday)
■ Easter Monday
■ May Day (first Monday in May)
■ Spring Bank Holiday (usually last Monday in May)
■ August Bank Holiday (usually last Monday in August)
■ Christmas Day (25 December)
■ Boxing Day (26 December)

Scotland
As for England and Wales apart from:
■ extra Bank Holiday for New Year
■ no Easter Monday holiday
■ August Bank Holiday is at the beginning of August instead of the end.

Northern Ireland
As for England and Wales apart from extra holidays:
■ St Patrick’s Day (17 March)
■ Battle of the Boyne (12 July)
Public transport

Getting around is generally quite easy in the UK, as it has an extensive public transport network. However the costs of different types of transport are quite variable, and it is often cheaper to buy tickets in advance.

Rail

Britain’s rail network connects over 2,000 stations around the country and the trains are run by a number of different rail companies. You can normally buy a variety of different tickets for your journey, which differ in the class of travel (first or standard class) and the flexibility of the ticket. The cheapest tickets are normally bought in advance and are only valid on specific trains, so if you miss your train you will have to pay extra to catch a different one. Find out the prices of single and return journeys, as for long-distance journeys there is no set rule as to whether a return is cheaper than two single tickets. For more information about rail journeys in the UK visit www.rail.co.uk

Coach and bus

Within most cities, towns and rural areas there is a local bus service for short to medium distance journeys. For longer distance journeys there are scheduled coach services, run by National Express (www.nationalexpress.com) and Scottish Citylink (www.citylink.co.uk). Although normally slower than trains, coach services can be a cheap alternative to rail travel.

London Underground

Also known as the 'Tube', the London Underground is the world's oldest underground railway network. You can buy single, return, or one-day travelcard tickets, but if you are staying for a few days or more, you should consider getting an Oyster card. This is a card which you top up when needed, and is valid on the Tube, as well as on London buses, trams and the Docklands Light Railway. It will always automatically calculate the cheapest fare for the journeys you make in a single day, and Oyster fares are always cheaper than cash.

Useful transport websites

Directgov Travel and Transport pages
www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport

Department for Transport
www.dft.gov.uk

Door to Door
www.dptac.gov.uk/door-to-door

Transport for London
www.tfl.gov.uk

Boat

Ferry services connect Britain to mainland Europe, Ireland, the Channel Islands and to the numerous other islands around the British Isles. There is no single ferry operator, but to find details of some of the major routes you could try www.ferrybooker.com

To find out more about travel in the UK you can visit the Directgov pages on travel and transport, where you can plan your journey in the UK and follow links to buy tickets online. If you live in London, or plan to visit there, you could also visit the Transport for London website.

Special access for disabled people

The Department for Transport is aiming to improve access to public transport for disabled people but shortfalls do exist, for example in access to Underground stations, which make some journeys more difficult for people with certain disabilities. Useful websites are Door to Door, which is a national guide to transport for disabled persons, and the Transport for London Accessibility page, where you can find information about travelling around London. If you are disabled and live in London you may be eligible for a freedom pass which allows you to travel free on London's public transport network.

Wherever you live in the UK, you can apply for a disabled person’s railcard which, if you are eligible, allows you discounts of up to a third on rail tickets.
Driving

Bringing a car to the UK
You can bring your car to the UK but if you plan to use it for more than six months it must be registered and licensed in the UK. To find out how to do this visit the Directgov website on vehicle import. If your car is new (under six months old) or you are bringing it from outside the EEA, you should contact HM Revenue and Customs as you may need to pay import tax.

Driving licences
In general, if you have a driving licence from the EEA, you can drive in the UK for as long as your licence is valid (or until you are 70 years old). If you are from outside the EEA and will be staying for more than 12 months you may need to apply for a provisional UK driving licence and will have to take a driving test if you want to continue driving after the 12-month period is finished.

There are exceptions to these rules: for example if you are from one of the following countries you may be able to exchange your licence for a GB licence without having to take a driving test:
- Australia, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Falkland Islands, Hong Kong, Japan, Monaco, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland and Zimbabwe.

Some basic driving rules
- Drive on the left.
- Don’t drive after drinking alcohol.
- Don’t use a mobile phone while driving.
- The driver and ALL passengers must wear a seatbelt.
- Motorbike riders and passengers must wear a helmet.
- Children up to the age of 12 must be in a child seat or booster seat.
- In built up areas the speed limit is 30 miles per hour (48 kph).
- On national single carriage roads (not motorways) the speed limit for cars is 60 miles per hour (96 kph).
- On motorways and dual carriageways the speed limit for cars is 70 miles per hour (112 kph).
- Drivers must have a valid driving licence and be insured to drive the car they are in (insurance is car AND driver specific).
- The car must have a valid MOT certificate and road tax.
- At roundabouts (full-sized and mini) give priority to cars coming from the right, unless otherwise indicated.
- At junctions there is no general priority rule; you must obey the signs.
- You MUST stop at zebra crossings (black and white stripes on the ground and flashing yellow lights at the edge of the road) if a pedestrian wants to cross.

For further information about driving regulations read the Highway Code at www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode

Driving on the wrong side of the road
Did you know that the entrance to the Savoy Hotel in London is one of the only places in the world where cars drive on the wrong side of the road to normal? Instead of driving on the left, cars have to enter Savoy Court by the right. This is supposedly because it allowed the important passengers of horse-drawn carriages to enter the hotel more easily.

You should check which regulations apply to you on the Directgov website, and bear in mind that the rules are different for drivers of large or vocational vehicles.

Motor insurance
There are different types of motor insurance depending on the level of cover you require: some policies cover theft and damage to your car, but the cheapest insurance (and the legal minimum requirement) only covers third parties, i.e. if you harm someone or damage their property. You should shop around for different insurance policies from well-known providers; some offer cheaper premiums for women, or people who use their car only at the weekends, and often the premium will depend on the area where you live.
Politics and voting

MOT certificate
An MOT (Ministry of Transport) certificate states that your car is, at the time of the test, legally roadworthy and up to environmental standards. You can get an MOT from most garages, but make sure that they have the blue MOT logo. You can find out more about MOTs and when they are needed on the Directgov motoring pages at www.direct.gov.uk/Motoring

Vehicle tax
You can pay vehicle tax at any main post office if you bring your registration, insurance and MOT certificates with you. There is also a Directgov section on vehicle tax, where you can find out how much your road tax is likely to cost, along with other information.

Registering as a disabled driver/passenger
You can apply for a blue badge if you travel either as a driver or a passenger and have difficulty in walking. This allows you parking concessions in some areas and enables you to park close to your destination.

Tolls on motorways and in cities
Some motorways, tunnels and bridges charge a toll, and the transport section of Visit Britain (www.visitbritain.com) has details of where you will have to pay. There is a congestion charge in central London, which means that if you drive within a designated area between 0700 and 1830, on Monday to Friday, you will have to pay a fee of £8 per day. If you are a resident within the congestion charge zone, have a car running on alternative fuel, or are a registered disabled driver, you may be entitled to a reduction. Visit the Transport for London congestion charge pages for more details.

Parliament
The UK is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch as Head of State. Parliament consists of three parts, the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Crown. The public can vote only for Members of Parliament (MPs) to sit in the House of Commons; members of the House of Lords are normally appointed by the Crown on the advice of the Prime Minister (life peers), or are bishops or archbishops or elected hereditary peers. Queen Elizabeth II, as constitutional monarch, has the right to ‘be consulted, to encourage and to warn’, but her influence is mainly informal. She is required, on the advice of Ministers, to assent to all Bills, and the Royal Assent (a sovereign agreeing to a measure becoming law) has not been refused since 1707.

Parliament is responsible for making laws, examining the work of government, controlling finance, protecting the individual, examining European proposals, and debating.

At the end of the 20th century, legislation was passed by the UK Parliament to create devolved Parliaments/Assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Issues such as education and health are dealt with by the devolved governments, whereas areas such as defence and foreign affairs are still governed centrally.
By international standards, the UK is a safe country, with low levels of violence and street crime. However, as in most societies, there are sometimes risks to your person or your belongings and there are things which you can do to minimise these risks. We produce a safety guide for international students called Comfort Zone which is available on the Education UK website at www.educationuk.org. It discusses issues such as safety on the streets, laws in the UK, using public transport or taxis and looking after your belongings.

The Directgov pages on crime, justice and the law also have information about tackling crime, reporting minor crime incidents, victim support, and practical advice about keeping safe and reducing crime: www.direct.gov.uk/en/CrimeJusticeAndTheLaw

Identity theft
You should also be aware of the growing cases of identity fraud in the UK. This is where people use your personal details to open bank accounts and get credit cards, loans, state benefits and documents such as passports and driving licences in your name. The Home Office has set up an Identity Theft website which gives you advice about how to protect yourself from identity theft (such as by destroying any documents with your personal details on, before throwing them away), and tells you what to do if you believe you are a victim of identity theft: www.identity-theft.org.uk

Main political parties
There are three main political parties in the UK, the Conservative (or ‘Tory’) Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Party. Since 1945 either Labour (traditionally left-wing) or the Conservatives (traditionally right-wing) have been in power. Other political parties include the Green Party (focusing on environmental issues) and the national parties Plaid Cymru (the Party of Wales) and the Scottish National Party. Northern Ireland has a number of political parties represented in the NI Assembly, namely: Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Féin, Ulster Unionist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, Alliance party, Green Party, Independent Health Coalition and Progressive Unionist Party.

How to vote in the UK

General parliamentary elections
Only British Citizens, or citizens of the Irish Republic or Commonwealth countries, living in the UK, are allowed to vote in General Parliamentary Elections.

Local and European elections
If you are a European Union citizen living in the UK, you can vote at local government, devolved legislature and European parliamentary elections. You can register to vote at local, national and European elections, and find out more about how to vote, on the Electoral Commission website ‘About my vote’ at www.aboutmyvote.com

Useful contacts

Emergency service (police/ambulance/fire)
Dial 999 or 112

NHS Direct (for non-emergency medical situations)
Dial 0845 4647

Local police forces
www.police.uk/forces
Learning English

If English isn’t your main language, you can do a course to help you improve. These courses are called ESOL or English for Speakers of other Languages. They are at different levels and you can get advice about which course is best for you and where to study, by calling the Get On helpline on 0800 100 900. You can also visit the British Council Learn English website at www.learnenglish.org.uk to find out about English courses in the UK and the rest of the world, and access resources to enable you to learn English online.
Euraxess UK: Checklist

Before you arrive

- Check whether you need a visa, work permit or other documentation to allow you to work (e.g. accession worker card or registration certificate).
- Arrange accommodation (possibly via your employer).
- Inform your bank of your new address and ask them to send a statement to your UK address as soon as you have arrived (not before, as this could be a security issue).
- Ensure that you have your last three months of bank statements.

If you are bringing your family:
- Find out about childcare/schools in the area and register your child.
- Make sure you have all the details of any child benefit you are currently receiving.

Once you get here

- Open a bank account.
- Fill in tax form P86.
- Visit your local tax office if you need advice on double taxation.
- Apply for a National Insurance number.
- Arrange to pay bills such as gas, electricity, water, Council Tax.
- If you have a television, get a television licence.
- Find out if your employer has a company pension scheme and whether it is worth you transferring any benefits from existing pension schemes.
- Register with your local GP (doctor).
- Get a European Health Insurance card (EHIC), which may entitle you to reduced-cost medical treatment throughout the EEA.
- Arrange a telephone and internet connection.
- Arrange insurance (motor insurance, personal possessions, etc.).
- If you need to, apply for a UK provisional driving licence.
- Register to vote in local and European elections if you are eligible.

If you have brought your children:
- Enrol your child in school/childcare.
- Apply for Child Tax Credits or Child Benefit if you are eligible.
Useful contacts

The telephone numbers here are for calls from within the UK. From outside the UK remove the first 0 and prefix with the international dialling code for the UK (+44).

**General**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency number (Fire/Ambulance)</td>
<td>999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euraxess UK e-mail</td>
<td><a href="mailto:euraxess@britishcouncil.org">euraxess@britishcouncil.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euraxess UK website</td>
<td><a href="http://www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk">www.britishcouncil.org/euraxess-uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EURAXESS Portal</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess">www.ec.europa.eu/euraxess</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directgov (General information on several topics)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk">www.direct.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Entry requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK visas</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk">www.ukvisas.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in the UK</td>
<td><a href="http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk">www.workingintheuk.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Health**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NHS Direct (24-hour medical helpline)</td>
<td>0845 4647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS England</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk">www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Wales</td>
<td><a href="http://www.wales.nhs.uk">www.wales.nhs.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Scotland</td>
<td><a href="http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk">www.show.scot.nhs.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Northern Ireland</td>
<td><a href="http://www.n-i.nhs.uk">www.n-i.nhs.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Working**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HMRC (Tax office)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hmrc.gov.uk">www.hmrc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services Authority</td>
<td><a href="http://www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk">www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobseekers Direct (finding a job)</td>
<td>0845 6060234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus (arranging a National Insurance number)</td>
<td>0845 6000643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension Advisory Service</td>
<td>0845 6012923</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Families**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Childbirth Trust</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nct.org.uk">www.nct.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted (childcare and education in England)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk">www.ofsted.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estyn (childcare and education in Wales)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.estyn.gov.uk">www.estyn.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMIE (childcare and education in Scotland)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hmie.gov.uk">www.hmie.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DENI (childcare and education in Northern Ireland)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.deni.gov.uk">www.deni.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit helpline</td>
<td>0845 302 1444 (Great Britain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0845 603 2000 (Northern Ireland)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax credit helpline</td>
<td>0845 3003900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Transport**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Transport Traveline</td>
<td>0870 6082608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Rail Enquiries (Train times and fare information)</td>
<td>08457 484950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.nationalrail.co.uk">www.nationalrail.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport for London</td>
<td>020 72221234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.tfl.gov.uk">www.tfl.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congestion Charge for London</td>
<td>0845 900 1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.trafficengland.com">www.trafficengland.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highways Agency (roads)</td>
<td>08457 504030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.highways.gov.uk">www.highways.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disclaimer
This guide was written in September 2009 and all the information derives from that period. It is possible that there may have been changes since that time. We do not assume liability for the content. All content is general in nature and cannot be binding in its cover of every individual case. The information is neither necessarily exhaustive nor comprehensive, nor does it necessarily represent the status quo. As information the contents of this guide are not legally binding and cannot substitute for experts' information on the particular topic.