



Home Office

Referral and Investigation Scheme

The Home Office takes decisive action to tackle sham marriages and civil partnerships. These are entered into by a couple who are not in a genuine relationship in an attempt to obtain an immigration advantage for one or both of them.

On 2 March 2015, a scheme to tackle sham marriages and civil partnerships was introduced across the UK, requiring registration officials to refer to the Home Office all proposed marriages and civil partnerships where either or both of the parties are not exempt.¹

Referral to the Home Office

You and/or your partner are not exempt from referral under the scheme. Your proposed marriage or civil partnership has therefore been referred to the Home Office for consideration.

The Home Office will decide whether you and your partner are exempt under the scheme. If both of you are not exempt, and if the Home Office has reasonable grounds to suspect that your proposed marriage or civil partnership is a sham, it may decide to investigate this and extend the notice period in your case from 28 days to 70 days in order to do so.

The Home Office will make this decision and inform you of it in writing before the end of the 28-day notice period. In the meantime, when planning your marriage or civil partnership you should bear in mind that a 70-day notice period may apply.

¹ To be exempt from referral you must be a British citizen; an Irish Citizen; or a person with EU Settlement Scheme SS status (either settled status, pre-settled status, or a pending decision on an application for EUSS leave submitted before 1 July 2021) or a person who has provided the registration official with the required evidence of an exemption from immigration control or settled status in the UK, or of a valid marriage or civil partnership visa.

If the Home Office informs you that it has decided not to conduct an investigation into your case, and if the registration official is satisfied that there is no legal reason why they cannot issue or complete the required certificate or schedule, your proposed marriage or civil partnership will be able to take place after the 28-day notice period.

Investigation

If the Home Office informs you that it has decided to investigate whether your proposed marriage or civil partnership is a sham, your notice period will be extended from 28 days to 70 days and you and your partner will be required to comply with the investigation. The Home Office will inform you at that stage about the requirements of the investigation. These may include for example being interviewed by the Home Office and providing the Home Office with additional information or evidence.

The Home Office must decide whether you and your partner have complied with the investigation and inform you of its decision in writing before the end of the 70-day notice period.

If the Home Office decides that you and/or your partner have not complied with the investigation, it must also tell you why. If you and/or your partner haven't complied, you will be unable to marry or enter into a civil partnership on the basis of the notice you have given. You would need to give notice again if you still wished to do so.

If the Home Office determines that your marriage or civil partnership is a sham (whether before or after it takes place and whether or not the Home Office conducts an investigation under this scheme), the Home Office may take immigration enforcement actions where appropriate against you or your partner². This could include cancelling or refusing permission to enter or stay in the UK on the basis that you are, or have been, involved in a sham marriage.

² The Secretary of State or an immigration officer may also decide to take appropriate immigration enforcement action against any immigration offender identified following a referral to the Home Office

Change of address

You are now required to inform the Home Office of any change in your usual address or in your UK contact address (if you have been asked to provide one). If you gave notice in England and Wales and your new usual address is outside the UK, you must also provide the Home Office with a UK contact address.

You must inform the Home Office in writing of any change of address within 4 working days of the date on which the change occurs.

You must provide the Home Office with one piece of specified evidence of any new usual address within 7 working days of the date on which the change occurs. This evidence can include:

- utility bill *
- bank or building society statement or passbook *
- council tax bill or rate bill *
- current residential tenancy agreement
- mortgage statement *
- valid driving licence
- letter from the owner or proprietor of the address which confirms that you live at the address, states that person's name and address and that they are the owner or proprietor of the address, and is signed and dated by them *

* These types of evidence must be dated no more than one week before the date on which you gave notice of the change in your usual address.

If you share your new usual address with your partner, only one of you need contact the Home Office to notify of the change. The same specified evidence of your new usual address can be provided for you both if it shows both your names.

If you fail without reasonable excuse to comply with these requirements concerning change of address, the Home Office may decide that you have not complied with the investigation and you

may be unable to marry or enter into a civil partnership on the basis of the notice you have given.

Written notification of any change of address, and the specified evidence of a new usual address, must be sent to:

Marriage Referral and Assessment Unit
Dept 158
PO Box 306
Liverpool
L2 0QN

Or emailed to: MarriageReferralTeamGeneral@homeoffice.gov.uk

Home Office contact details

You will receive a letter from the Home Office about your referral before the end of the 28-day notice period. Staff at the Register Office you attended or wrote to will not be able to tell you how your referral is progressing.

If you need to contact the Home Office about your referral, you should do so at the above postal or email addresses given above. You should include your name, date of birth, nationality and usual address.

Further information about the referral and investigation scheme can be found on GOV.UK: [Marriage and civil partnership investigations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/marriage-and-civil-partnership-investigations)

Your personal information

The Data Protection Act 2018 governs how the Home Office use personal data. For details of how the Home Office will use your personal information and who they may share it with please see the Privacy Notice for the Border, Immigration and Citizenship system at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-information-use-in-borders-immigration-and-citizenship>. This also explains your key rights under the Act, how you can access your personal information and how to complain if you have concerns.